

Smoky Mountain Signals

Journal of the Smoky Mountain Amateur Radio Club

Our 76th year of Amateur Radio Fellowship



August
2018

Rich Mountain, seen from the Tipton Place in Cades Cove



Bob Wilson, KK4XA
Club President

From The President's Key...

Hang Out With Hams!

First of all I can't believe we are already in August. Where has summer gone? It was just yesterday I was chomping at the bit to hear from my daughter that my granddaughter was here. I remember sitting in the waiting room, checking the dx reflector and thinking how insignificant ham radio is compared to the miracle of birth. Wow, what a comparison! I can only hope that my 2-month-old Raylee (see Pic) will be a ham. I wonder if I would be talking to her on, say, 40 meter phone or digital via the DMR network. Either way would be nice, but if she doesn't turn out to be a ham, that's okay. I'll spoil her no matter what, HIHI.

I can't help but reflect often on the camaraderie we hams have. It's one thing to be on the air conversing, rag-chewing, and discussing everything under the sun, but it's another thing to hang out in person with a bunch of hams. A good example is the antenna party I attended the other day at Carl's, KI5SF, house where a few of us gathered to erect Carl's vertical and install some ground radials at his new house. There was Dave N9KMY, Kurt KC4NX, and myself, along with Carl. And, of course, I can't leave out Elissa because her fixings were out of this world. Such a wonderful and beautiful spread of food that refreshed our spirits when we needed it. Thanks, Elissa! Being a diabetic, I needed the boost. By the way, while we were there we encouraged her to get her ham ticket too.

Back to the camaraderie, there was lots of good discussion of the project and, as always, I learned a lot just by listening and following project leader Kurt, KC4NX. Fellowship with hams while working on a project or at Field Day is nothing but the best of memories. I gain companionship at its best. It's all about helping other hams anyway, isn't it? I can't encourage it enough.....get involved with other hams and share experiences.

In summary I often reflect upon the Amateurs Code – as all hams should, by the way – and I quote from it:

“The Radio Amateur is...FRIENDLY. He/She operates slowly and patiently when requested; offers friendly advice and counsel to beginners; kind assistance, cooperation and consideration for the interests of others. These are the marks of the amateur spirit.”

Until next time, 73,
Bob, KK4XA



Carroll Peabody, W4PCA
Secretary-Treasurer

From The Secretary/Treasurer...

Club Meeting Minutes

Minutes for July, 2018:

7:00 PM, 07/23/18, at the USW Union Hall.
President Bob Wilson, KK4XA, presiding.

>32 members and 3 visitors.

The Smoky Mountain Amateur Radio Club met at 7:00 PM, 07/23/17 at the USW Union Hall with Bob, KK4XA presiding.

Bob welcomed the members to the meeting, telling that the main purpose was to give a report on the club 2018 Field Day activity.

Bob reminded everyone about the SMARC weekly net Thursday's at 7:00 pm on the club repeater.

Randy read the treasurer's report indicating the club still has some Field Day expenses yet to be paid.

Carroll reported that the next VE session will be held in September and the last session for the year will be in December. The date is always the second Monday of the month. The location and time is the St. Andrew's Church hall on East Broadway at 7:00 PM.

Randy opened a discussion about a proposal to donate the 10 year old club trailer to the Blount County ARES/RACES group since the club has only used the trailer on Field Day. He explained that the trailer sits out in the weather and has experienced some deterioration over the years. After some discussion a motion was made and approved to approach the ARES/RACES group about the matter. Carroll was requested to write an informational letter addressed to a member of the group.

Jordan K4AVG read the 2018 Field Day results. Due to poor band conditions this year the score was lower than last year at 5092 points versus 8422 in 2017.

Bob thanked everyone that worked to make this year's Field Day a success.

A short break for drinks and eats was taken while the program was being set up.

The program, presented by Dave Kaun, N9KMY, centered on the 911 Emergency System.

The meeting closed at 8:45 p.m.

Upcoming in Ham Radio

Tennessee QSO Party

Sunday, September 2
1800 UTC until 0300 UTC Monday
Full Details at: tnqp.org

SEDCO/W4DXCC

Friday, September 21 – Saturday, September 22
Mainstay Suites, Pigeon Forge, TN
Full Details at: w4dxcc.com

Chattanooga Hamfest

ARRL TN State Convention
Saturday, October 20
Camp Jordan Arena, East Ridge, TN
Full Details at: w4am.net



Bob Loving, K9JU
DX Editor

World of DX

Get Started Building Your DX Total

Hello again fellow SMARC members. Welcome back to the fascinating world of DX.

In the previous column, I listed several ways to get started with DXing. In this column, I will concentrate on working a DX contest in search of entities.

During any calendar year, there are many contests activated by various organizations. Some contests are what we could refer to as “free-for-all,” in which everyone works everyone. As a “W” or “K” (or other US prefix), you can contact other US stations as well as foreign stations. Other contests are not as universal; from the US, you can contact only non-US stations. From a DXing and ultimately DXCC standpoint, you are looking for contacts that are outside the United States of America. By the way, for the purposes of DXCC and a DX contest, Alaska (KL) and Hawaii (KH6) are considered DX and fair game for us in the continental U.S.

Most of the contests that are run on weekends limit the operating time. Some may be only 6 or 12-hours in length. The big ones such as the CQ (Magazine) World Wide DX Contests and the ARRL International DX Contests are 48-hours long. Personally, in my advancing years, I am not about to spend 48-hours glued to the radio. Besides being unhealthy, your family may object to your absence. As one of our members, K9ANN, has shown this year, you can rapidly increase your entity/country totals with a few hours here and there in several contests. Ann has accumulated over 70 DXCC entities in the matter of 15-hours spread over three contests since the beginning of 2018.

Now that your appetite has been whetted, you may ask, “how do I get into this contest and what should I do?” Fair enough questions for which I will give you my take of the answers. First of all, I am going to relate all from the viewpoint of a casual contest operator. I am not in it to win or even come in first in TN. In DX contests, I am looking to increase my DXCC totals on a per band basis. Not many of the entities I still require for listing in the DXCC Honor Roll are going to be operating contests. It can happen but I am not going to hold my breath and neither should you.

Other assumptions I am making are you are not blessed with a 50', 70' or 100' tower with stacked monoband beams or a large multi-band beam and wires hung high in the air all fed with a “Killer-Watt” amplifier. I will also assume you are not a CW (Morse Code) operator. You are a phone operator using SSB, you have a basic multi-band transceiver capable of generating 100-Watts of output power and a wire(s) for antenna(s).

For this example of contest operating, I will use the CQWW DX Phone contest. It occurs on the last full weekend of October each year. [2018 Saturday 27 to Sunday 28.] The contest starts at 0000Z (UTC) which translates to 8 PM EDT Friday night. The contest period is 48-hours (ends at 23:59:59 UTC Sunday). Let's look at a possible step by step scenario for this contest.

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- 1) You could jump into the contest when the gun goes off, not literally but this is TN. Don't even think of calling "CQ Test" on 20M and below (in frequency) as those bands will generally be packed with some B-I-G signals from contest stations. If for some reason 15M, or even 10M, is open, you might have a chance calling CQ although I still do not advise doing so. Remember, you are running low power to a hunk of wire. Your signal is not exactly going to make S-meters "pin" far right.
- 2) Tune a band and look for strong signals. This is best done on a band with little activity at the very start of a contest. Many of the "big gun" contest stations will have radios operating simultaneously on every band for which the contest is slated. Stations in the Caribbean, Central America and South America should be heard on 15M and possibly on 10M. It is amazing how a dead band will suddenly open when a contest occurs.
- 3) Personally, I think your best chance of working DX in a major contest is to avoid Friday night. Take the family to dinner and enjoy a pleasant evening. Wait until Saturday morning to make your plunge into the contest.
- 4) It is Saturday morning and time to head to the ham shack to fire up the rig. I will say this again--forget calling CQ. Look for strong signals to contact. During the daytime, 20M should be filled with many stations on the air. If propagation is good, 15M might be open. 15M is a wide band and like 10M, it seems you can work almost anything you hear. The 15M band is the one I have always had the most luck for making contacts.
- 5) You have now tried to contact stations on 20M and it seems like banging your head against the wall... it feels good when you stop. Move up to 15M. If the band is closed, walk away from the radio. In fact, maybe stay away until Sunday.
- 6) It is Sunday. I know, there are a lot of activities that may occur on Sunday. Hopefully, you can get some "air time". This is your best chance to make contacts with stations that ignored you on Friday night and Saturday. The big stations are hungry for contacts and the rate at which they make them falls off as the end of the contest approaches. Like a fishing tournament with most of the fish gone, if landing a minnow helps win the contest, they will do it.
- 7) Put in what time you have to operate in the contest but do it smartly. Don't spend time trying to work a weak signal unless that is the only station on the band you have not worked. Sometimes the signal from the other station is weak for a reason like a lousy antenna or a QRP (5-Watts or less of output power) transmitter. Here is something to keep in mind: NO contests are held on the WARC bands of 30M (which is a CW and data only band), 17M and 12M, and the WRC band (or channels in the US) of 60M. These are the bands to escape the roar of contests.

To find the dates and times of contests and links to the rules for a particular contest, check QST magazine, CQ magazine, the ARRL Contest Calendar or the WB7BNM www.contestcalendar.com website. You will also find information by listening to the announcement of operating events and DX activities on the Thursday night net on the SMARC repeater, W4OLB/R, 146.655-MHz (-600-kHz offset) with CTCSS tone of 100-Hz.

As mentioned in passing in the above paragraph, check the rules for the contest. And also be aware of any frequency limitations connected with your FCC issued Amateur Radio license. Even Extra Class operators can not operate phone modes below certain frequencies in the bands.

Until next time, "73 ES GUD DX."

Bob K9JU

Please email any comments and suggestions to "k9ju@arrl.net".