

Contest Soapbox

2003 ARRL January VHF Sweepstakes

43 Soapbox entries available

KC2GOW -- Jun 5, 2003 16:48 ET

Contest this year was one of the best. Enjoyed the 6m opening here in FN20. Hope to catch everyone during the June Contest.

73's Andy -- *KC2GOW*

AA2UK -- Apr 22, 2003 22:26 ET



Antennas

It sure was cold it never got over 50 degrees in the shack even with 3-8877's on the lower 3 bands. The 6 meter band opening was great. Special thanks to Warren, WB2ONA for putting my 5.7/10ghz dish and 4 foot side arm in windy 10 degree weather two days before the contest. This was my personal best January contest with over 320K! I am looking forward to the June contest and summer band openings from FM29PN. 73 All Bill AA2UK -- *AA2UK*



Equipment rack

WB2FKO -- Apr 8, 2003 21:52 ET



Running 170 Watts to stacked 5-el beams on 2-m; 100 Watts to a KB6KQ loop on 6-m.

This was my fourth VHF contest as a rover and this time I concentrated on 2-meter meteor scatter using WSJT. Photo taken in grid DM73 (central New Mexico) where I completed five random meteor scatter contacts including a new personal DX record of 1004 miles with K6AAW in northern California. Also used JT44 to great effectiveness on an otherwise dead 6-meter band. I made a total of ten meteor scatter contacts during the contest. Every multiplier helps, as there are only a half dozen or so VHF contesters in this part of the country. Activated 6 grids on 50 and 144 MHz. -- *WB2FKO*

K3EAR -- Mar 24, 2003 21:45 ET



432 stack, KT34A & 2M FM heavily iced



The K3EAR Multi-op at South Mountain



The Saga of K3EAR, the Sweepstakes Multi-op Station, the icing on the cake, this was an operation that almost did not happen. In early December we were hit by 3 ice storms in a row plus the never ending snow. Our huge 6m stack was taken out. First the ice along with the heavy winds, stripped the rotor box, next the massive ice loading helped by the winds, sheared the main boom off. The FM vertical was completely cleaned from the mast and parts of it have never yet been found! The 2m stack was found damaged one week, which we repaired only to find it near totally destroyed the following week, booms snapped and vertical also gone! The 432 tower was almost completely lost due to melting ice sliding down the guy wires, shearing off at ground level one of the top guys. The tower was leaning 5ft out of plum still loaded with ice! Both of the on site HF tri-banders were damaged, one of which there was nothing left but the mast to boom plate. As some of our available pictures show, our antennas took a beating. Russ (N3EMF) and myself (WA1HHN) journeyed to our site some 5 consecutive weekends to repair, stay ahead of the damage and dig the place out, not really knowing if we would have to sit out the contest! Each weekend various members (who all ended up operating with us) of the Murgas Radio Club showed up and helped us repair the carnage. The 6m rotor that failed, even though its wind load rating was sufficient, being no match for the heavy ice loads encountered, was upgraded to a much heavier geared unit! Without the help that we received from all who were involved right up until the last minute, the results of this contest would never have happened. We are truly grateful to all who participated and would like to also thank all the fine operators we worked during the contest who made this years Sweepstakes a remarkable operation that will be well remembered! Our cast of usual suspects is as follows; N3FA, N3RN, N3TKK, N3WV,

The Crew in the main operating room



Broken guy, 432 tower leaning...

N3PBH, N3IKO, KE3OA, WB3FKQ, K3MKZ, K3RDA, WA3JWP, KA1ZE, N1ROZ, N3EMF, and WA1HHN. Main Rovers were N2GKM and N2DVQ who endured the weather and drove over 1100 miles each to bolster our score.

-- *K3EAR*



2M stack heavily iced, note vertical

K1DS -- Mar 4, 2003 23:11 ET

My best rover score ever-101K. All the radio gear worked great, rotor control improvements were especially helpful on 5G and 10G. The biggest problem was the van's starter and fuel-pump, which both died just after the contest ended! 24G addition is planned. 73, Rick -- *K1DS*



11 bands(50-10G+Laser)in FM29

N2IM -- Feb 18, 2003 16:39 ET



Rover array turned Portable array!

This was supposed to be a GREAT year for my roving, but I got very sick with a flu, and could not venture outside. On Sunday night, however, I knew I had to get out for just a little while to help the club and use the equipment I spend so much time on integrating! On my way to my first operating location, I decided I was going to change my category to Single Op Portable and would stay out as long as possible. I arrive at 2350, and began to work the rovers and some others. The thrill was knowing that most of my stuff seemed to work! I made my first contacts ever on 903, 2304, and 3456. I was only able to last for about an hour, and then I had lost my

voice again, so I headed for home. I did my best Single Op Portable score ever in just an hour! Oh well! It was still fun! -- *N2IM*

N8ZM -- Feb 6, 2003 22:56 ET

Our first January contest from our favorite hilltop in EN80. No longer running Field Day style (generator, tents, no A/C or heat) now that we have real 200 Amp service installed. Three 1500 watt heaters plus the exhaust from the amps and we were toasty, except for the draft across the ankles (see pix). Crockpot full of chili helped, too. Missed all of Saturday on 6m due to broken matching network on the M2 11 element, but the big opening into the northeast late Sunday afternoon help make up for it. 2m was steady all weekend, and 432 also worked well. -- *N8ZM*

N6NB -- Feb 6, 2003 04:17 ET



N6NB/R in FN10, nearly 3,000 miles from home.

I know this sounds a little crazy, but I drove my van almost 7,000 miles (from California to the northeast and back) in the middle of a cold, snowy winter just to for the 2003 January VHF contest. The station worked fine during the long trip, but little else went right. There were near-record low temperatures during the contest. Several of the sites I had in mind were snowbound. I spent nearly half of the contest looking for places to operate. I missed easy multipliers by not being on when other rovers were on. I also failed to tap the potential of 903 and 1296. I wasn't even on the bands above 1296. At least the six-meter opening Sunday afternoon went well. Luckily, as it turned out, my intended site in FN20 was snowed in, so I operated at an overlook on I-80. That site is blocked in several directions, but it has a good shot to the west--something my planned site lacks. So I did okay for a rover with a low 3-element Yagi (52

multipliers on six). I operated several VHF contests in the east in the 1970s, using a van and a tower trailer that I left back there. I didn't leave a van this time, but I definitely intend to be back. This is just too much fun to miss. It was a pleasure to reconnect with old friends and make new ones during the January 2003 contest. -- *N6NB*

K0NR -- Feb 4, 2003 21:40 ET



QRP operating from Mt Herman (DM79)

The weather has been so unusually warm here in Colorado, I decided to combine hiking and radio operating for the January VHF contest. On Saturday afternoon, I hiked to the summit of Mount Herman, a reasonably small peak (DM79, 9063 feet in elevation) west of my home near Monument, CO. The weather was excellent--- little wind, about 45 deg F, sunny. I operated Single Op Portable (I still think of it as "QRP Portable") using an FT-817, a dualband (2M/70cm) Arrow yagi antenna and a dipole for 6M.

This was a true "backpack portable QRP" operation so I carried all of the gear up the mountain.

OK, so maybe an FT-817 and a few batteries aren't all THAT heavy. The hike in was relatively easy as there was very little snow (unusual for this time of year in that location). But there were nasty patches of ice on the trail.

Activity on Saturday afternoon was constant enough to keep me working the radio, switching bands and not getting bored. No real "dx" to report as most of the contacts were only a grid or two away. I took along a dualband HT and worked quite a few stations on FM. No records set, but I had a great time in the mountains playing radio. -- *K0NR*

WA5TKU -- Feb 3, 2003 11:47 ET



WA5TKU at the operating position between contacts.

This is my first VHF contest in several years. It was good to hear all the new local activity. In general conditions were like I remembered for a January contest, bands were pretty dead. Noise level on 6 was 20 over with the noise blanker and against the peg with it off. Two meter noise was pretty high during a lot of the contest as well. Six never opened up at my QTH. Best DX was N0JK in EM18 on 2 meters, a distance of about 400 miles. Would like to thank the guys who rovered, they sure helped increase the grid count. Need to do some work on the station but had a good time operating the contest. 73, Wes -- *WA5TKU*

N0JK -- Jan 30, 2003 10:32 ET



I agree with W9GKA 3830 post that "QRP Portable is a challenging experience in winter!" Just getting a portable station set up and running in January out in the heartland is a challenge. It is amazing how cold it gets out on the prairie when the sun goes down. :-)

Here in Kansas had a cold windy Saturday, freezing fog in the evening and a mild sunny Sunday with 50 deg. Saturday evening had some winter tropo to the south. I worked W5LUA, WA5TKU and WW2R/5 all EM13 in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex on 2 Meters. They are about 400 miles away from my QTH in the

Here I am at the famous "Cattle Pens" in EM18 south of Emporia, KS.



I set up my station on the right side of the bridge over the road.



Looking south across the Flint Hills to Oklahoma.

Flint Hills. I ran 10 watts and a 4 element yagi on 2 Meters. Heard WØEEA DM79 for over an hour on 144.205 but no QSO.

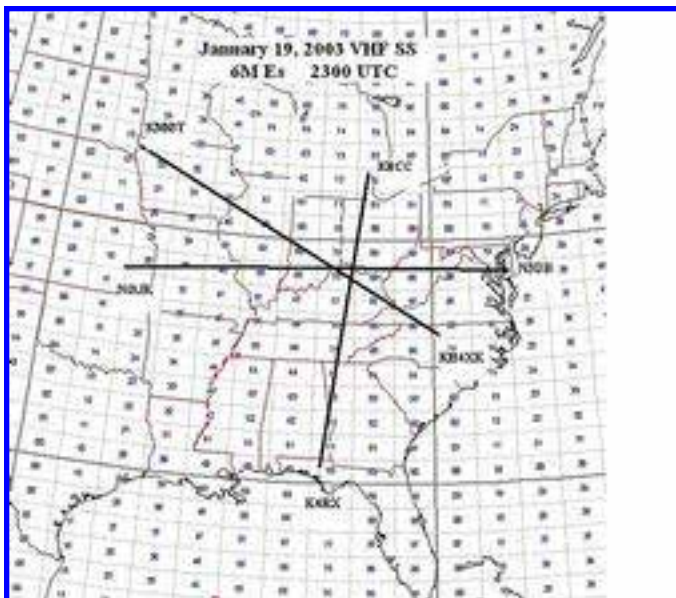
I duct taped a 432 quagi to the antenna mast. The duct tape wouldn't stick well because of the cold, but the antenna stayed up long enough to work 4 grids with it. Mostly local stuff - EM16, 17, 18 and 27. Sunday evening WØKT EM49 answered my CQ for another "DX" QSO on 2M.

The 6 Meter Es opening Sunday afternoon between the east coast and midwest in the VHF Sweepstakes was exciting, but I missed most of it.

I went out to lunch with my wife ~ 2:30 pm(2030 utc) Sunday afternoon - (usually a slow time for the Jan.contest) and got back home around 4 pm. I loaded the radios back in the car and drove back out to the "Cattle Pens" where I was operating single op port. It takes about an hour to make the drive. I listened to 6 on the way, but only some very weak stations heard.

Arrived at the 'Pens around 2300 utc and while getting the 2 el 6M yagi up I heard NG4C and KN4SM on the mobile whip. No luck getting them to answer. Once the yagi was up they disappeared, but I heard N3DB FM18 with a good signal on 50.180. I worked N3DB at 2325 utc. Thanks Dave for the contact! This turned out to be my only 6M Es QSO for the contest. While I was working Dave; Steve, K0UO/rover pulled up. He could not hear N3DB at all on his whip antenna. The 2 element yagi made the difference.

Heard N3DB and another station in FM18 until about 2335 utc, then the band folded. Kansas



Plot of 6 Meter Es contacts occurring near the end of Sunday's opening in the contest. Note the Es cloud appears east of the midpoint between N3DB and me.

appeared to be on the western edge of the contest Es opening. NØLL EM09 reported 25 Es QSOs, WØRT EM27 Parsons, KS made about a dozen. Both Larry and Rick said the Es were mostly weak. Stations further east (KØAZ EM37 MO), northeast (KØHA EN10 NE) and southeast in Oklahoma and Arkansas had louder signals and more contacts with the east coast. After analyzing this opening, I don't believe I missed too many contacts... but another 10 or 20 QSOs and new grids would have sure helped my score.

I was pleased to make one 6 Meter Es QSO in the contest. Catching an Es opening in the January VHF SS is a rare treat, more so for a QRP Portable station. -- *NØJK*

KQ6EE -- Jan 30, 2003 11:07 ET

I had so much fun on vhf/uhf contest. On Jan 18,19, I hike up San Gabriel Peak which is 6000+ feet above sea level. I packup my FT-817, IC-T81A, dual beam antenna and mag. mount. I didn't do much on Saturday because I went to school. I did a lot contact on Sunday. I reached the peak at about 8:30 AM on Sunday. I setup my dual bander beam and mag. mount on the metal bench and started my contest. Many hikers hiked up to the peak too, and they asked me what I was doing. I told them I was doing HAM CONTESTING. One Japanese man asked me many watts was those radios. I told him it was only 5 Watt. he said "VOW". One man asked me how far I could talk. He ask "You talk to people around the world, right???" I told him this was only vhf/uhf, and I could talk to people in San Diego CA. San Gabriel Peak is 3-1/2 west of Mt. Wilson above Pasadena CA. I like hiking and bringing radios along to mountain peaks. I haven't decide where to go during the June contest or Field Day. I am thinking I might hike up to WHITE MOUNTAIN in Indyo county in Central California, or go to Colorado where there have a lot of 14000+ feet mountains. My coworker is a HAM too but he doesn't like contest. He says contest is a bunch of work: just write down the call sign and location. I enjoy every contest. 73

Hon Chu KQ6EE ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN -- *KQ6EE*

N9UM/R -- Jan 29, 2003 18:04 ET

N9UM/R is N9UM Mark and K9IJ John.



In the middle of nowhere EM59 in the snow!

3 days, 985 miles, 14 grids, 8 bands, and 0 degree temperatures!

What a great time. Thanks to our partners KF9US/R who also braved the weather for a great rover experience in the frozen Central Division. More pix available at www.vx5.com/~teampf

73 and Have Fun

Mark & John -- *N9UM*



Rover EME...It could be done!



-20 Windchill in EN64... Who needs coats, we're roving!

WD5AGO -- Jan 28, 2003 21:06 ET



Had a good time for the short amount of time operated. Just to cold and windy this time around to run QRP-Portable. Sundown Saturday about-5 hours was about it. Worked on 6,2,1.2m and 70,23 and 6cm. Equipment: Stacked 6m PAR's, Stacked 2m BigWheels, 222 - HB 8ele, 432 HB 18ele, 1296 - 25 ele, and 2'dish on 5760MHz. 10 watts to 1296 (3w)and 1w on 5760 MHz. AND YES, I got it all in the 2000 Chevy Cav. (only stuck out 2' past bumper). Driving time was only 10min. Conditions were fair here in NE Okla, EM26bd. -- *WD5AGO*

N6VMO -- Jan 28, 2003 15:19 ET



Note the 23cM coax dipole mounted to the mast between the 70cM and 2M yagi'.

Used 30' of RG-58 and made contacts 30 miles away with S9 signal report.

Great weekend and contest.

What could be better. Excellent Santa Barbara WX, fantastic VHF/UHF location and a contest.

Operated from CM94 in Santa Barbara.
LAT/LON 34,31',56.52" N 120,00',56.46" W.
Elevation ~3200'.

Bands operated: 6M, 2M, 70cM and 23cM

Equipment used on 2M, 70cM and 23cM:
Kenwood TS-790A, Mirage B5016G 2M amp, Mirage D3010 70cM amp, 4 ele. 2M yagi, 18 ele. 70cM crossed yagi, 23cM coax dipole (did not plan to run 1.2).

Equipment used on 6M: Icom IC-718, Ten-Tec 1208 transverter, Mirage A1015G 6M amp, 3 ele. yagi. -- *N6VMO*



Morning full moon setting in the west.



Could not have done it without KF6IJI assisting throughout the weekend.



Santa Barbara Channel Islands to our south.



Balcony operation.

I just moved to Atlanta, GA after two years of living / contesting mobile from the West coast. Again, no space to put decent antennas in my new apartment, but one day... It was very cold in the South East this weekend so I didn't risk a full operation mobile in unknown territory. I started on a little hill near my house, but the high noise levels and the cold temperatures forced me indoor after 4 hours.

Back home, I did setup a 13B2 yagi for 2M and a K1FO for 432MHz on my balcony facing the South for the rest of the contest at just 17 feet high.



The new shack in Atlanta

Made 27 QSO and 8 grids in total, my worse score ever :-(June be aware I want a re-match!. I'm already planning the June contest.

Had a lot of fun as usual. 73 de Rafael
-- VE2HKI



Saturday was really terrible here, conditions were dismal and QSOs were at least 100 fewer than last year. Sunday morning the bands seemed to pick up quite a bit and the high bands started working a lot better. Had a nice visit by Tim K0PG/R and Pat K9ILT/R for coffee on Sunday morning. After a number of local stations convinced me I was definitely a lot weaker than usual, I discovered that I had only been putting out about 20W on 2M! I found a

Need more aluminum!

bad coax jumper and fixed the problem, gaining back almost 10 db to my normal 170W output!

Conditions had definitely picked up too so I went at it hard to make up for lost time. The 6M Es opening Sunday afternoon was just what the doctor ordered to kick it up a notch with a good run that put over 100 Qs in the log in an hour. -- *K2DRH*

WA9TKK -- Jan 26, 2003 18:25 ET

Operated on the rocks above the Windy Vista Overlook on the Mt. Lemmon Highway overlooking Tucson, AZ at about 7000 feet elevation after a short 10 min. hike above the road. Operated alongside, but entirely separate from, Pete KD7OIW. We had hoped to hike to the north side of Mt. Lemmon at 9150 feet elevation with a view towards Phoenix but the upper road was covered with ice. After deciding not to invest in crampons and ice axes, we opted to operate on the south side of the mountain the next day (Sunday). Only contacts we made were with Tucson stations, but it was fun anyways with beautiful sunny weather with temp about 50 at this elev. -- *WA9TKK*

W4EUH -- Jan 25, 2003 22:08 ET



144MHZ Yagi Facing Atlanta & Florida

This January contest found me in the process of moving all my gear & antennae from my old "shack" over to my new home. I was able to get both towers up, but the extremely cold weather prevented me from getting the 222 & 432MHZ Yagis up. So, I was limited to 50 & 144MHZ and 440FM. I was happy to make more contacts on 446FM than I anticipated, but the grid totals suffered using an omni. Band conditions were average, noise levels were high towards the south. If there was a 50MHZ opening, I guess I missed it! Hats off to rovers! See ya'll in June on 50-432MHZ! 73 Kevin -- *W4EUH*

K2QO/R -- Jan 25, 2003 13:41 ET

The conditions seemed very flat throughout the contest as my rover partner Paul, W2TAU and I roved through EN92, FN01/02/03/12/13. We put together a minimalist affair with a "stop and shoot" instead of "run and gun" approach.

The highlights were watching my rover partner work N2UIO on laser and working MANY stations with my my new, and not quite finished, W1GHZ 222 transverter that was putting out a whopping 0.5W! The antenna stack was all homebrew highlighting the WA5VJB Cheap Beams



Paul, W2TAU, digging for hardware or tools to raise the antennas.

and a HB 3-el 6M Yagi.

Mistakes and score inhibiting problems? Yeah, there were many! First, I should have taken the 2' dish from K2DH when I borrowed the 10 GHz transverter. The horn worked OK, but the dish would have been super FB. Next, we couldn't always park on the level and this killed many a 10GHz contact. It would have been better to put the 10G horn on a tripod instead of up on the mast. Another problem was not being able to figure out how to get synchronous SSB/CW out of the IC706MkIIG. Next, we need to figure out a quicker way of putting the ends of the 6M beam on when the temp is 15F and the wind is 20MPH. Finally, I need to be better acquainted with the logging program. I went to make an edit on the 2nd q and got the program stuck in manual time

insertion so all the contacts in our first grid got logged with the same time. I hope we don't get DQ'ed for this!

All in all, not a bad effort for the K2QO/Rover team. Next contest will surely see the addition of 1296 as lots of guys in WNY have this band.

73-Mark -- *K2QO*

N3AWS -- Jan 25, 2003 06:24 ET



N3AWS Rover antenna tower--NOT!

First time Rover operation.

Due to miscommunication, we ended up inviting my daughter's school friend along for the weekend. Two adults, three kids, and a dog meant no room for setting up my Icom 706 MkIIG.

I was limited to 2 meter FM with my Realistic HTX-202. Despite calling "CQ Contest" over and over on 146.55 and other simplex frequencies, I made zero contacts from EM90, EL99, and EL98.



The photo shows our camping site at Patrick AFB in EL98. We are parked in front of the tower, but it most definitely IS NOT my antenna system!

No where to go but up from here! 73, Jim
N3AWS -- N3AWS

N3AWS Rover antenna tower--NOT!

K2AXX -- Jan 23, 2003 16:06 ET

Well, another VHF SS in the books! I was quite thrilled to even be on the air this time around. First, thanks to all the Rovers who braved the worst the Northeast could dish out!

I lost the first 4 hours of the contest (which usually equals death to any score!) thanks to broken gear. My 1296MHz transverter was smoked, 3456MHz wouldn't key, 903 wouldn't key and 432 had a bad input relay for the PA. Well, after fixing 3GHz, 903 and 432, the 1.2GHz stuff still was broken! Tail between legs, I called W2FU to ask if he had a spare. Well, he did. SO I left my house at 1:30pm, and drove the hour to his place. Picked it up with the contest already underway, and drove an hour home. Once I got it set up and working, I was back on 50MHz - 10GHz. Uncomfortably, of course. What's the cost of this? I guesstimate about 180K. Yep. I missed 3 rovers in 2 grids each, and by the end of the contest each 10-band new mult rover was worth about 30K each.

Activity seemed down. I didn't work a bunch of usuals, but did make some UNusual QSOs. WA8RJF and I tried on 903/1296 without success. For giggles, we tried 2304, and Tony's reply was "sheesh - you are LOUD". So we did 2304 then 3456, and walked down to 903/1296. And working WA2FGK randomly on 2304 was kinda fun as well.

The Es opening was quite the thrill. About 2 hours of Es here, mostly 9/0 at the beginning, then swinging down into 4/5 - about 100 QSOs and 30 grids or so.

Once the gear was on the air, it played well. I'm pleased with my outcome, and hope that I can avoid these same problems for next time!

Thanks for the QSOs!

Mark, K2AXX -- K2AXX

K4TO -- Jan 23, 2003 14:09 ET

What follows is a statement of gratitude, not an occasion to brag. I thoroughly enjoyed this contest. Everything operated perfectly from 50 mhz through 3456 Mhz. I've never had things go so smoothly. The weather was a different story. A double dose of thanks to the Rovers who braved the Winter conditions to put those rare grids on for the contest. Also I must say that the courtesy and operating skill of the participants that I heard was excellent. The longer I work the bands above 50 Mhz, the more I come to respect and enjoy the people I meet. I am sorry I only came to discover these bands a mere ten years ago. 73 to all. Dave, K4TO EM77wx -- K4TO

W4OZK -- Jan 23, 2003 13:04 ET



It's been a while operating a contest with spitting snow in North Alabama, EM64. I saw many changes in this contest, sky's were gray, 20 degrees and spitting snow on Saturday, on Sunday, sunny, 40 degrees and summer like? The bands went from nothing to slow, then a nice 6m opening on Sunday afternoon (mostly slow). I heard and worked very few station in the west direction, same thing happened in the last few contest, where are you guys?? Looking forward to the June contest!

73s Greg -- W4OZK

K0AWU -- Jan 23, 2003 12:34 ET

A GREAT contest from EN37ed (northern Minnesota), I had my second highest score of all the contests since Jan 1998. Conditions ranged from flat to quite good for winter tropo. Several 400+ mile contacts on 2m and K2DRH was doing great on 6, 2 and 432 at 433miles. Being 150+ miles from any concentration of activity, I'm happy with the 13,124 pts. The gear for 6,2,144,222,432 and 1296 all worked well. The rotator even worked in the -2 deg F temps!

The 6m E's provided 44 contacts and 12 grids in the hour and a half. FM19 was the most common grid with 12 worked from that grid alone. I heard W3CMP for hours Sunday before and after the E's at about S1, but I never worked him. I guess I needed more than the 200 watts and 5 elem.

This was my first contest with 222Mhz and discovered that like 1296 if I'm going to work many grids it has to be via the rovers. I did work KT8O EN34 on 222 CW and he was running 5watts (converted 2m Tentec transverter) with an 8 elem quagi. At over 160miles that was a highlight for both of us.

Nine FSK441 and JT44 schedules provided eight contacts on 6,2,432 during a few of the "wee hours". The only BAD thing is that I ran too late into the morning and missed the rovers in EN36! Kinda hurt the old score!

By June I'll have more power on 222 and pay better attention to when and where the rovers are! Thanks for looking toward "Northern Minnesota". -- *K0AWU*

KF9US/R -- Jan 23, 2003 12:26 ET



Those wild and crazy rovers are at it again!

Hi, all.

The intrepid US Rovers activated 14 grids in the frigid midwest this time around, ranging from the balmy St. Louis metro area on the south, to the frozen tundra of Green Bay up north. The Chicago-area-based team operated all bands from 6 meters through 2304, and laser.

The picture shows the crew, basking in the gentle Wisconsin breeze, in a farm field in EN53. Wendell, N9REP, is on the left; Phil, KF9US, is on the right. The wind chill at the time was approximately -20 degrees F.

Thanks to all of the operators who took the time to pull our microwave signals out of the noise, and the other rover teams who battled the elements along with us.

Best 73, Phil -- *KF9US*

W3KWH -- Jan 22, 2003 17:38 ET

THIS PICTURE OF THE HF/2 METER ANTENNA SHOWS IT WAS PRETTY COLD AND DREARY , BOTH IN WEATHER AND BAND CONDITIONS, HAD A PRETTY GOOD CREW OPERATING AND FIGHTING THE WX. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO HAVE BETTER BANDS TO WARM THINGS UP . SHORT 6 METER OPENING SUNDAY , BUT FLAT ON ALL OTHERS BANDS. I GUESS BEST OF ALL WAS WE MADE THE WEEKEND WITH NO RADIO/AMP FAILURES !! SEE YA ALL IN JUNE. THIS YEARS



BRAVEHEARTS WERE....

**A3S AND 2 METER M2 @ 70 FEET.... NICE
WX HUH ???**

W3IOH,W3SVJ,W3LA,AI3J,K3GJS,WA3TTS,WA3VXJ,N3LL -- *N3LL*

KA1VEC -- Jan 22, 2003 14:22 ET

NOT MUCH FM ACTIVITY THIS YEAR. JUST A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO FM WAS SO CROWDED THAT YOU HAD STATIONS FROM NJ PA NY QRMING CT STATIONS PERHAPS GETTINGS POINTS FOR WORKING STATIONS ON FM AND SSB/CW WOULD GET MORE STATIONS ON FM.

RUSTY HACK OP KA1VEC -- *NMIK*

K6AWO -- Jan 22, 2003 15:28 ET

Hello, I'm wondering if I should even send in my very small log sheet ?

I pack up my eq on Sat morning and drove out to DM 23 to give out as many Q's as possible, Well after two hrs I had 14 contacts and five grids. One 432.1 and that was it. So packed up my eq after parking in General Patton parking lot at 1730 ft.

I used my main station Yaesu FT-847 and 6 ele beam on 2M with a 5 ele on 432 at 12 ft. The Car battery was my 12 volts. I put up a table and chair and wx was just great. Some people came by and I explained what I was going to do and that at was fun.

The drive from my QTH is about 40 miles but in a grid sq. that has no hams living in it. I've worked this routine before in the pass and wanted to see if I could do this again, getting the eq up an really in a short time and into the back of my car.

After coming home I decided to get on Sunday and see what would take place. Now I had to reinstall my 847 back in to it's home. Remember it has four coax connectors and a few other connectors. After all of this, would you believe I got going and worked 14 more Q's. Picked up two 6 m contacts local and one 432 .

Now I'm had this in just under 2 hrs. I had to said "a new grid sq." so the ones that worked me on Saturday would come back to me. I failed to say Rover on all of my contacts on Sat. But as DM 23 is not a easy one to get you know they were happy to get me. I did down load the Rover sheet tonight and the VHF sweepstakes log sheet. Would have been better to do this before Saturday.

If you look at Palm Desert and see we are in a valley without a concentration of SSB VHF amateurs, you will understand why IM not showing a lot of contacts.

I used my home satellite antenna's on 2 m with 10 elements at 12' and 10 elements on 432 at the same height. All contacts were on the same heading WEST. I believe I used the mths to bounce from and the pwr to beams to help me. As I see it I was a rover on Saturday and a fix station on Sunday. You might let me know what you think. My log shows I worked 11 grids and for getting out of here I'm happy. My grid is DM 13 and this is not a hard one to get for anyone as Orange county has many hams living in it. But out here we are on the surface of the moon for sure. DM 03,04,05,12,13,14,22,24,25 working from DM 23 and DM 13.

Hope you can make something of all of this? 73 Bill K6AWO WDEWS@CS.COM

-- K6AWO

N3JFM -- Jan 22, 2003 02:30 ET



Sunday mid-morning there was a knock at the door. There was a fellow standing there wearing an Oakland Raiders hat and coat. He says "are you doing some kind of broadcasting in there?" As he asks the six meter stack just above him slowly rotates towards the north and the 220 stack just off to the side rotates towards the west. Yea, some kind of broadcasting, I said sheepishly. By this time all three rotators are buzzing away swinging aluminum in different directions. I'm having trouble with my television reception, I'm hearing strange sounding voices and the picture is scrambled, he says. Can't really make out what they are saying. Little did

Doug, N3JXB working hard on his "Worked All TV's and VCR's" Award!!!



Wilby, W1LBY giving the new Yaesu a workout. He hated it at first, couldn't pry it from him later.

he know I was ready for this and had a tv coax pigtail wrapped around a 43 mix'er with a high pass on the end. I handed it over and with some quick how-to installation instructions he was on his merry way with a smile. Must have done the trick he didn't return and we just kept on keeping on. Yea, some kind of broadcasting hi. Electrical noise was a major factor during this one. During the day it was terrible in all directions on 6 and to the northeast on everything else. All the gear survived and worked flawlessly. My hat's off to the crew, Wilby-W1LBY, Doug-N3JXB, and Joe-NM3N, you guys are the greatest! More upgrades coming for June, we will be heard!!! -- *N3JFM*

K1WY -- Jan 21, 2003 13:37 ET



K1WY FN31ps

Good to hear so many stations on. I had a great time in the contest. Looks like 1296 is the next band to be added to this station for June. -- *K1WY*

VA3NFA -- Jan 21, 2003 11:40 ET

Well, this was my fist ARRL VHF Jan contest. What a blast !! I worked as single op, low power



My limited antenna setup.. Cushcraft 4 ele for 144, 6 ele yagi for 432 (broken.. used a verticle instead) and a homebrew dipole for 220.

on 50, 144, 22, and 432 with a total claimed score of 4104. My QTH is just west of Ottawa, Canada, and I have been a ham for less than a year.

My shack consists of a FT847 for 50/144/432 and a ADI AR-247 for 222 FM contacts. I have a limited antenna setup consisting of a Par Omni Loop @35' for 50, 4 ele beam@15' for 144, a homebrew dipole for 220 and a Diamiond V2000a verticle@35; for 432. Certainly not the best anteann farm, but they did the trick !

My longest 2m QSO was with K3EAR in Fm19 (about 600 kms). There was a GREAT 6m E's opening on Sunday afternoon when I worked three VE1 stations and many folks in the southern USA. I was able to snag several new grids on 144 and 50 !

More details are here :

<http://members.rogers.com/tomzinck/ham/jan2003vhf.htm>

For the June contest I hope to have better antennas on 222 and 432.. so that should help out a lot !

73,

Tom VA3NFA FN25 -- *VA3NFA*

W7SP -- Jan 21, 2003 22:06 ET

Setup on an Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake in Utah. A 2 person operation but we operated 50 MHz, 144 MHz, 220 MHz, 432MHz, 1296 MHz and 10 GHz. Not a record number of contacts, but no one had more fun, and I have scars to prove it. While putting our stuff away after the contest, I tripped and hit my head and got 4 stitches. Can I count each stitch as a multipliers?

K7RJ - Ron with WJ7L - Dale -- *K7RJ*



Utah Wasatch Mountains from Antelope Island. A sampling of bands from 2 meters - 10 GHz. We had fun and K7RJ has the scars to prove it!!

K7MDL/R -- Jan 21, 2003 03:03 ET



K7MDL Rover Rig on the launch pad in CN87. Stacked KB6KQ loops on 2M and 432, single KB6KQ loops on 6M and 222. Stacked homebrew 1296 big wheels under the 222 loop. 13ft. total height, 17ft. raised.

No snow this January contest in most of Washington area. Ran only 7 grids this time out. Added 222 and 1296 which sure helped out with the points total. Lots of activity on both bands giving me almost 25% of QSO count. Highlight was making a 1296 contact with WA7TZY over 100+ miles distance over the Cascade Mountains range with a pair of stacked big wheels and 3 watts on my end. Was CW and took a while but finally made it. -- *K7MDL*



Stacked 1296 Big Wheels mounted off a power divider with N type Male-Male couplers. Had to reverse one side's loops direction since one was flipped with this mount method.

W4SHG -- Jan 20, 2003 23:00 ET



M2-6M5X(6m) M2-2M9SSB Stacked(2m) M2-222-10EZ (1.25m) M2-440-18 (70cm) and M2-23CM35EZ (23cm)

Well this is my first VHF Sweepstakes Contest and certainly one that will stick in my mind for some time to come. I have spent considerable time building my station over the past several months to better compete in VHF/UHF Contests. My last outing in September was incredibly pitiful and my score well lets just say it was a learning experience.

It started Saturday at 2:00pm EDST here in the East and my station was ready. I had been up on the tower the weekend prior correcting a bad cable to the 23cm M2 antenna and adding some desperately needed preamplifiers for 23cm, 70cm and 2 meters. It seems that the ole Yaesu 736 was designed with preamplifiers of some sort somewhat mandatory if you want to hear anyone. This was quite clear in the September outing. So Jerry up at SSB was kind enough to take my money and the additions were completed last weekend.



**W4SHG Shack - Yaesu 847 and Yaesu 736
with MD-1 and MD-200 Microphones**

With preamplifiers in place, and all coax cables checked and in good working order I prepared for the contest intending to go to bed at contest close with a good conscience and working as hard as possible to get the best score possible. All the amplifiers were checked and set to work at or below the power levels defined in the Low Power rules and off we went.

Saturday started off with all equipment working, amazing however the bands seemed somewhat dead, by the end of that night working till about 12:00 midnight I had a whopping score of around 4800 points. Again we fall into the pitiful category however this was an

improvement over the September Contest so I took a little 4 hour nap to prepare for Sunday. I got up early, around 5:30am in hopes we would get an opening on 2m at sunrise. It's was extremely cold here and nothing materialized. Now I might have been discouraged but considering I am at 62 feet above sea level here in Stafford, Virginia (FM18GK) I might just get accustomed to scores in the pitiful range as working from this location is not ideal.

On Sunday things were just a bit different I started working stations pretty hard and with the help of some extremely competent and technically proficient operators, AA2UK-Bill, K4RTS – Richard and the Multi guys K3DNE and N3HBX we started racking up some serious points. Guys thanks for putting up with a Technician Class Operator trying to work 1296. I worked absolutely everyone I could hear and settled in on really focusing on the North East. What a thrill to work K1FO on 432 up in FN31, 300+ miles and that call will put a smile on your face. As usual the big guns, K4QI and W4RX pinned the needle on both the 847 and 736. Thought I had Russ down in FM06 on 1296 as of course he was loud but my 10 watts just didn't quite get back to him. I couldn't get to W4RX either so it appears my 1296 still needs some work. I guess it's time to get some LMR-1700. Kudos to Bill – AA2UK for spending a considerable amount of time and effort finally working us from NJ on all the bands including 1296.

Then it happened, the conditions changed and the Mid-West came rolling in on 6 meters. For about 90 minutes we were rolling off new grids on 6 meters working some mini pile ups and cranking the score up until around 6:45pm all of that disappeared.

We then went back to the weak signal work and pointed the array north. Again new operators and complete band runnings were pretty good as we worked most everyone we heard if they had the bands.

Toward the end I found I was missing some really close grids, FM07 and FM18. Yes it happens

to me every time. I miss contacts in my own grid square. Then KG4HOT fired up down in FM07 and we ran the bands with 20 minutes to spare, Thanks Tim for the 220 contact and the new grid in 432 and 222.

I had a blast and increased my score considerably this contest. Next time I will be hunting the top Low Power Ops as we are going to the mountain. Thanks to all who worked with us or attempted too.

73 de -- W4SHG

K7AWB -- Jan 20, 2003 22:13 ET



Waiting for the next contact was slower than charging batteries. Next June, I WILL HAVE SEPARATE RIGS FOR EACH BAND so I won't miss anyone coming through or IDing and leaving. Best contact was three hours before the contest started when I worked Wyoming W1IPL as a new state on 6 meters!! Steve K7AWB -- K7AWB

The K7AWB antennas: 6 halo, 70 cm, 222,7 element 6 meter, used GP6 vertical for 2 meters

W1MRQ -- Jan 20, 2003 20:34 ET

Anybody reluctant to try microwaves from home read on! This is the first time ever I had so many bands AND working at 2:00 PM. This was a maximum effort for W1MRQ. Has anyone mentioned yet how cold it was in the NE? My shack is in my bedroom in my apartment, that has a tiny third floor deck outside. I had to erect my entire antenna farm on a 8 X 4 deck. I have 1 section of Rohn 25G tower standing on the deck and bracketed to the building. I have 4 yagis on that for the bottom 4 bands. I have a separate mast for the loop yagis tied to one rail as far away from the tower as I could get it. Actually the top antenna is about 45 feet above ground level and the terrain around me is best described as pretty flat, nothing blocking me locally. The

antennas are up in the clear and there is no trees around me. But, living in-town, I have a bunch of local QRM from computers, sdnow mobiles, and scanners! I ran 6 thru 2304 and had a ball running the bands. It is always amazing that you put all this crap together and it actually works. I had 10 watts on 903, 18 on 1296 and 4~5 on 2304. I couldn't work everyone and frasnkly didn't try much beyond New England, because I knew the odds were against me. The most memorable was a long QSO with W1FKF in FN42 on 2304 with S9 sigs both ways. Conditions were pretty flat except for some e-skip Sunday afternoon on 6 Meters. Each year it just gets bigger and better. Wait till next year. -- *WIMRQ*

NØURW -- Jan 20, 2003 19:12 ET

NØURW EN41go Iowa (ø¿ô)

Saturday:

One word describes Saturday,,,, Educational !!! With noise levels reaching an all time high at my qth , the term weak signal , really hit the spot. This was a great time to evaluate my stations performance (transmitting & receiving) . Most signals being heard Saturday were wrapped up in a hornets nest of humming,popping,splatting,hissing, & frying. Even with my DSP & a good set of head phones my score at the end of the day was embarrassing to say the least. Activity seemed way down , However it may of just looked that way due to the hi level of noise.

Sunday:

What a difference a day makes. Most of the noise is gone. 6 meters opened up to the east coast. Hello FN31 , FN41 , FM05 , FM06 & surrounding areas. 2 meters started showing signs of life as contacts (400+ miles) as far away as Northern Minn. , Northern Michigan , Canada , Ohio & Arkansas were logged. Signals were way up on 222 also. Sometimes even better than on 2 meters... Again this band continues to amaze me..... If you don't have 222 , your missing out on a real treasure.(In my opinion) My 432 mhz. setup was not working at 100 % & cost me lots of points... Grrrrr....

Sum it all up:

Saturday was very educational on the art of plucking weak signals out of the noise...

Sunday was a victory !!! Tons of activity!!! & a nice band opening!!!

Looking forward >>(ø¿ø)>> to June.....Will you be there?

If you missed me during the contest its because I ran in the low power section this time.

I was the zero land station you kept asking to repeat his call,, hi hi. 73's *Đañ* -- *NØURW*

WR7X -- Jan 20, 2003 19:01 ET



Stuck in the fog and ice on Saturday.



With the fog settled in the lowlands and bright sunshine all day Sunday, operating conditions were ideal for the contest.

I decided to operate from the top of Emigrant Hill southeast of the home QTH in Pendleton, Oregon (DN05). The almost 3000' of elevation gain certainly helped out! It was foggy and icy all day Saturday, but upon my return Sunday morning after a foggy drive up the hill, I was greeted with clear skies, an excellent sunrise and superb band conditions. Propagation to western Oregon and Washington was incredible on 2 meters, and all the rovers sure helped out, giving multipliers that otherwise wouldn't have been. Still, there were several grids on 6 and 432 on my wish list, but wasn't able to get. With cooperative weather and propagation, this was my most enjoyable outing for the winter event!
-- WR7X

N5QYC -- Jan 20, 2003 12:20 ET

Boy! Was this a tough one. Saturday was dismal with very few contacts being made. I made a few 2 meter contacts to the local area and when I went to 432 I found out, that portion of my radio had stopped transmitting. I could hear the number of operators drop as the contest progressed as they became frustrated with the poor band conditions. I spent a lot of time just listening to the static and trying to hear those that I could hear. The 6 meter opening Sunday Evening saved the day for those operators who stuck it out. Thanks to the activity of those dedicated operators, I was able to salvage my contest weekend and returned a respectable score



It doesn't pay to get too worked up when things go wrong!

for my efforts. Even when the band is bad, it pays to listen, listen, listen! You can never tell when the conditions will change, and that I feel is part of the magic of VHF/UHF contesting.

73, and see you next contest! -- *N5QYC*



**Sunday Sunset and a 6 meter opening.
Wow!**

N7CZ -- Jan 20, 2003 12:22 ET

Best DX was Bob N7AU in DN07 on 2M & 135cm. (TNX BOB!) We couldn't hear each other on 6M & 70cm as we have in past contests. Normally Bob and I can sweep 6M-70cm.

On Saturday I spent slightly over 6 hours calling CQ on FSK441/JT44 toward known population centers with no replies heard. Spent less time with this mode on Sunday with no



N7CZ shack

replies. After the contest ran with K1VOW in DM25 and completed easily on 2M.

No rovers in this area. Is it permissible to rig up a cow for rover operations? K7COW??? They are not fast, but they are reliable. Tasty too.. hi

Thanks goodness for locals on FM.

Generally speaking, condx were worse than last year from here.

73, Bob N7CZ DN47im Great Falls, Montana
-- N7CZ



N7CZ North (rear) 3219 for 2M, K1FO for 70cm. South Tower (foreground) 222-5WL for 135cm, and A50-5S for 6M.

AA1YN -- Jan 20, 2003 10:37 ET

Saturday was dismal, very little activity, cold temperatures (-10F), equipment breakage, and very high electrical interference kept my score down. By midnight, I only had 4000 points. Just before the contest, I blew the receive IF attenuator in my 903 transverter. Up the tower to retrieve it, fix it and get it back up by noon. Add a few station controls and a coil of RG58 to attenuate the drive to my 2mtr amp for low power and I'm ready. Then at the start of the contest, I knew there was something wrong with my 432 transverter as I could only hear the strongest of signals. Another trip up the tower at 4PM to retrieve it. I didn't worry about fixing it until 11PM. The receive IF amp was dead and I didn't have a spare MAV-11 mmic. Having attended the Microwave Update last fall, I got a handful of MAR-6 mmics so I put one of those in and adjusted its bias resistor for 20ma. By 10AM Sunday, it had warmed up to +5F so up the tower again. By 2PM, the points were looking ok but not the best. Grab a few zzzz's and back at it at



The Shack



**The Tower, Top to bottom - 432 30ele, 6mtr
5 ele, 222 16ele, 2mtr 14 ele, 903 47 ele, 1296
55ele, left box houses 903 & 1296
transverters, right box houses 432 and 222
transverters.**

4. Then came the blessing - a weak E Skip on 6 which lasted 1.5 hrs! It was better than last years F2 for me. Now I've got my 2002 score beat. Feeling a little better about the contest, I decided to persevere. I kept picking up a few new grids here and there up the bands and my score started to add up. One more contact and I've got my best VHF score beat! VE2XX in FN25 came back to add a new grid on 2 and pushed me over. I kept picking up new contacts and working up the bands. One more contact to break 22K - then 23K - then 24K. Now one more contact and I can break 25000 - WA3U in FM29 - new grid! Add a few more just in case I've messed up on a couple of entries and it's 11PM. 25872 is not a bad score. Its certainly in the class with WA1T and AC1J but a long way to go even to come close to AF1T. You have to know its AF1Ts fault I'm in this VHF mess in the first place. Now I have to figure how I'm going to beat this score. Big thanks to NS1O for loaning me his FT817 and to all those who I worked in the contest. -- AA1YN

KB1CJ -- Jan 20, 2003 10:30 ET

This was my first VHF contest, and I really enjoyed it. Except for a late Sunday afternoon 6M opening, everything was pretty much local. Despite the lack of openings from my QTH (just outside of Boston), I really learned a lot. For example, I discovered a much better way to manage my 6M preamps in the face of a terribly difficult local noise environment (I live in the shadow of a major Channel 2 broadcaster here). I also really enjoyed the sense of camaraderie as

stations in the northeast worked hard to make contacts on different bands. The whole tone seemed much more considerate than what I have encountered in crowded HF contests.

My one complaint/suggestion -- With such limited propagation conditions, why not make more use of digital modes? I tried many calls with JT44 (using WSJT) and only got one or two replies. Too bad -- JT44 can extend a station's reach compared to the usual SSB, even more so than CW. It's not as fast as a contact on SSB, but if you've worked most of the local stations and can't hear the others, why not reach out a bit farther? Even with low power, this mode has some real reach. In hindsight, wish I had scheduled some HSMS contacts before the contest, too. Live and learn.

Anyhow, this was a good learning experience! My thanks to all the stations (both big and small) that worked hard to make the contacts. -- *KB1CJ*

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