

# Contest Soapbox

## 2003 ARRL 10 GHz and Up Contest

8 Soapbox entries available

### W0JT -- Oct 21, 2003 20:55 ET

Work committments prevented me from joining my fellow Northern Lights Radio Society members in the jaunt to Lake Superior for the first weekend of the contest, but I made sure I was free to participate in the second weekend's activities closer to the Twin Cities (Minneapolis St. Paul) area. I managed to borrow a 10 GHz rig from Bob, W0AUS. I was not only one of the least experienced operator among the NLRS group, I was also at a bit of a disadvantage antenna-wise, having to make do with a 17 db horn instead of the 23 db (or thereabouts) dish commonly used my most of the rest of the folks. But beggars can't be too picky, and this was a far superior system to the WBFM loaner I used in the 2002 contest (as KB0ZEV), and my enjoyment was many orders of magnitude greater.

I met up with several of the NLRS'ers on Saturday morning at Mounds Park in St. Paul, where I made a few "warm up" contacts of 5 and 20 Km. I then tagged along with Donn, WA2VOI/0, one of the most experienced of the local 10 GHz operators. We stopped at a couple of familiar locations in St. Paul, and falling behind schedule, we jumped ahead to a new location near Chubb Lake, MN. From there, I made one easy contact of 38 Km back to Burnsville, MN, and three extremely challenging contacts of 138 Km with Jon (W0ZQ), Mel (KC0P), and Carol (N0HZO). My 6 db disadvantage compared to the rest of the crowd who had showed up at Chubb Lake almost prevented me from making the QSO's, but we toughed it out and finally completed all three of them. But I knew that there was not much hope of another QSO with them from their next stop, planned to be even further away. So I slipped in one easier 74-Km QSO with W0AUS who was in Fletcher, MN, before packing up the gear and heading one sub-grid North so I could work all the folks at Chubb Lake to make sure I (and they) didn't miss the opportunity to work each other at least once. As it turned out, these would be only "insurance" QSO's, because they were all worked at least one more time during the contest.

On Sunday, I got up without really knowing what the plans would be for the day. Unable to raise anyone on the planned 2M liason frequency, I decided to go to one of the popular local sites close to my home, in Burnsville, and see if I could scare up any activity by myself. I was pleased as could be to hook up with Gary, WB0LJC and WA2VOI/0 who were in St. Anthony, MN, and who happened to be pointed at the downtown Minneapolis buildings like I was. A couple more QSO's in the log, but more importantly, we were able to make plans for the rest of the day. Donn would meet me on the highway on the way to New Trier, MN, while Gary would split up and visit other sites from which he could work us and the other NLRS'ers. As it turned out, I switched off the 10 GHz system a bit too quickly, as Donn was trying to tell me he would

need a bit more time to reach our rendezvous location than I might otherwise expect. After a quick QSO with Eric (KT8O) who was only 14 Km away (from the roof of his house, just prior to leaving home for church services!), I packed up my loaner gear, jumped into my vehicle, turned on the 2M rig, and headed towards my expected meeting point.

Along the way, I called and called for Donn on the 2M liason freq, but to no avail. As it turned out, my temporary 2M antenna was performing horribly poorly, and we simply could not hear each other at all. With much anxiety, I proceeded to New Trier guided only by my GPS and the site coordinates stored in my Palm Pilot's GL program, never having been to the site before. I found what looked like the right location, called some more on 2M vainly, and decided to set up and point at (what I thought was) downtown. As it turned out, I was actually pointing at a local refinery (next time I'll remember to bring the binoculars!), but in spite of this, I was treated to strong signals from Jon (W0ZQ), Chris (N0UK), and Doug (N0NAS) and a little boost to my confidence. When I heard some of the folks I had worked calling Mel (KC0P) in Cannon Falls, I worked him with some difficulty by bouncing my signal off downtown. As it would turn out, I later realized that he was very close by and when I pointed my rig to the direct path, his signal boomed right in. At that point, we were able to "ragchew" a little bit on 10 GHz, and I realized that he had heard from Donn on the 2M liason frequency. I asked him to tell Donn I was already at New Trier, not simply wandering the countryside lost (which is what Donn had feared, when he couldn't find me at either our planned meeting point or on the 2M liason). He then knew he need not worry further, and he proceeded directly to New Trier where we hooked up for the remainder of the contest. After another 8 QSO's with other NLRs'ers who were moving around to our North, we talked Mel into waiting for us at Cannon Falls, where we met him, made a few more Q's, and moved together to our next stop, Vasa. Unfortunately, by the time we reached Vasa, conditions had worsened considerably. Neither Donn nor I managed any successful contacts from there, while Mel managed to eke out a couple of CW rain scatter QSO's that sounded very aurora-like. After that, we decided to call it quits rather than moving to an even more distant location.

All in all, I had a wonderful time. I was glad that there were some "new calls" out there who had never worked 10 GHz before, as well as many "old familiar calls". I especially appreciate the comraderie of my association with the folks in the Northern Lights Radio Society, who were instrumental in bringing the local microwave activity up from zero to a very substantial level in just a few years' time. Bravo to you, and keep up the good work! -- *W0JT*

**VE3FHM -- Oct 10, 2003 20:03 ET**

I really enjoyed this contest. The wx was perfect and conditions were good. Signals across Lake Erie on Sunday Sept. 21 were amazing. I turned the dish to the deepest null I could find and could still hear KB8VAO at 93 km Q5! The Michigan gang really missed out by going west.

My 13B2 mounted on a tripod with a rotor on the top of my van sure got a lot of attention. A



**Attention Getter**

photo is attached.

73,

Graham -- *VE3FHM*

**N6RMJ -- Oct 9, 2003 00:13 ET**



**DM03TW A WATER TANK IN ELSEGUNDO CALIFORNIA USED TO REFLECT SIGNALS OFF OF WORKS GREAT AT OVER 400KM THE RADIO NAME IS LAZARUS, AND CAME BACK TO LIFE SEVERAL TIMES, N6RMJ / PAT**

N6RMJ, PAT A very exciting 2 weekend contest, This was my second year at this contest and I tripled my score, it takes a lot of work to get ready and every failure produces a success , it is great to have a group of microwavers in the southern California area that are willing to do what ever it takes to get you on the air, weather before during or after the contest my thanks to the SAN BERNARDINO MICROWAVE SOCIETY the picture is one of the places we stop and use the tower in the back ground to reflect signals off of, 442km into mexico -- *N6RMJ*

**KF9US -- Oct 5, 2003 11:18 ET**

After hearing about the Northern Lights 10 gig project from W9FZ, I realized that my family



**KF9US in QSO with members of the Northern Lights Expedition. Near Ontonagon, MI**

and I would be in the vicinity of Lake Superior during the first weekend, so I made sure that I had my 10 gig portable rig handy. It's a Down East transverter, with a modified Qualcomm 1 watt PA and a Yaesu FT-290RII IF rig. The antenna was a 17 dB horn. I had to share the IF rig between co-ord and IF, so it took a while to get things lined up.

This proved to be a very minor problem, as the 10 gig signals across Lake Superior were stronger than 2 meters, by far.

My family was romping around on the beach, as I set up the tripod and lugged the battery to the water's edge. We were on the road to the Porcupine Mountain State Park, west of Ontonagon, Michigan. I couldn't believe how good the signals were...I worked hams on SSB on my side of the lake(line of sight), across the lake, and, to our great surprise, a group on my side of the lake (non-line-of-sight) by bouncing signals off of the far shoreline.

These super signals were in stark contrast to the nasty 10 gig conditions across Lake Michigan on the second weekend. I only managed 1 QSO that outing, and it was a CW contact, just above the noise.

All in all, the contest was a blast! I'll be back next year!

73,

Phil -- *KF9US*

### **W0ZQ -- Oct 4, 2003 12:14 ET**

The alarm clock went off at 3:00 AM Saturday morning and by 4:00 AM I was north bound on 35W headed to Duluth. My goal was to be to the Thompson Hill rest stop in time to meet up with my fellow Northern Lights Radio Society (NLRS) members to work across Lake Superior on 10 GHz. A second team of NLRS members had left a few days earlier and they were set up to work us from several spots in the Upper Peninsula (UP) of Michigan.

Working on my third cup of coffee, as I neared Duluth, there was Lenny, K0SHF calling me on 2m FM just as planned. A few minutes later, seven NLRS 10 GHz op's watched the sun rise over Duluth from the rest stop. The weather was spectacular.



**The author, W0ZQ, at the Thompson Hill rest stop, Duluth, MN.**



**Two stops along Lake Superior on the Minnesota side. Top photo is near Split Rock Lighthouse. Bottom photo is north of Duluth.**

On schedule, and in preparation to hear those weak weak 10 GHz signals from over 300km away (from the UP side of the lake) , I donned my headphones and started to tune. Almost immediately I heard W9FZ's CW beacon, but it wasn't weak, it was S9 !! After dish peaking on both ends, signals were up to S9 + 10 to 20 dB and easy SSB contacts were exchanged by all members. We were all amazed at the signal strengths. The headphones went back into the box never to be used again.

From that point on the group made many stops on both Saturday and Sunday. Hundreds of 10 GHz contacts were made over Lake Superior at distances from 100 to 330 km. Our group also worked a third group of NLRs op's who were set up in Northern Wisconsin. We even worked KF9US who was kayak mobile in the Apostle Islands and who was using a 17 dB horn. Our 10 GHz equipment was in the 200mW to 2 watt range with 19 to 22" dishes. With the exception of Saturday afternoon when signals dipped down to S5 or so, signal strengths were simply amazing.

Without a doubt this is the most fun that I've had in any contest (HF, VHF) for some time. I encourage all those who are interested in DXing, weak signal work, equipment building, and/or club activities, to explore the world of

microwaves .... 10 GHz is a perfect place to start.

CU on 10 GHz.

73, Jon W0ZQ -- W0ZQ

**K0KFC -- Sep 27, 2003 23:59 ET**

9/27/03

The Northern Lights Radio Society (NLRs), with members from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa &



**A small squall line with light rain crosses the NLRS Eagle Harbor, MI operating site. The dish is looking west (314 km) toward the Minnesota side of Lake Superior.**

the Dakotas, organized several teams to explore propagation conditions on various multiple paths across Lake Superior as part of the 10 ghz contest. One team traveled up the West side of Lake Superior North of Duluth, MN; another on the Southern end of the lake along the Wisconsin shore, and, a third group traveled East to the upper peninsula of Michigan near Eagle Harbor, Michigan. Fifteen 10 ghz stations from the NLRS took part in the Lake Superior experiment.

Propagation conditions were astounding in that a suspected evaporation duct phenomena may have accounted for the typically S9 signals (and often +20 db) experienced over open water paths

of up to 300 km. In one case, signals were S9 using open waveguide pointed in the general direction of the Michigan team across the lake. While duct conditions are often seen in warm water Gulf areas, our interest was to observe conditions across the cold water of Lake Superior.

As a part of the group traveling to the upper peninsula Michigan, the biggest thrill of the weekend was hearing both ends of a 10 ghz QSO taking place on a largely North to South path from Northern Minnesota to Northern Wisconsin. At the time, while we were nearly 275 km East and almost perpendicular to that path.

73s

-- KOKFC

**KM3T -- Sep 24, 2003 12:24 ET**

First time out in this contest and had a blast. Operated first weekend from Mt. Wachusett (MA) and Mt. Equinox (VT). Second weekend spent time at Mt. Wachusett again and Mt. Washington (NH). I was only able to operate about 3-4 hours average each of the days. Best DX was K2TXB at 573km. Special thanks to Paul W1GHZ for letting me borrow his spare 10 GHz rig. Hope to be back next year!

73, Dave KM3T -- KM3T



**Dave KM3T atop Mt. Washington (FN44ig)  
in New Hampshire. Elevation ~6200' MSL**

**CM88QP St. Helena -- Aug 19, 2003 00:07 ET**



**John Ekiss AA6HA Coordinating on  
"Cactus" system.**

**Brian Yee W6BY - John Ekiss AA6HA - Randy  
Bynum NR6CA - Al Rendon WT6K**

**Saturday, August 16th and Sunday August 17,  
2003 on Mt. Saint Helena, Napa Valley CA.**

**Longest Contact: 335 miles - W6BY St. Helena  
Northern California to AD6A Dave, Frazer Peak  
Southern California -- WT6K**



**Randy Bynum Saturday morning setup and ready to start contest.**



**NR6CA - Rear View of Randy Bynum's 10GHZ and 24GHZ station.**





**Brian Yee, W6BY with his 6 watt 10GHz setup.**



**All Smiles after making first 10GHz contact - AI WT6K**

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