

The VHF Journal



Official Newsletter of The Rochester VHF Group

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October 1999  
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Club Station: W2UTH

*This month's saying:
"If you build it, they will come."*

Meeting: Friday, 08 OCT 1999
Monroe Co. Social Services Building
111 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY
Rover operating in VHF Contests:
Paul, N2OPW

To subscribe: Send your address, call, and \$10 US funds (or \$15 CDN funds), to: The Rochester VHF Group, PO Box 92122, Rochester, NY, 14692.

Commentary and articles via e-mail to editor VE3IEY:
tantonr@kingston.net (Please note the change of ISP address!). Use standard ASCII text, Word Perfect 6.1 or send as a regular e-mail message.

Post editing, Printing & Distribution are courtesy of Judy, N2KXS.

Meeting Schedule for the rest of 1999

Oct. 8 <Rover rally - N2OPW>
Nov. 12 <Tune-up clinic- K2DH>
Dec. 10 <Internet Resources for the VHF Operator>
Jan. 14 <January contest rev-up>

"As Pericles said to the Athenians, I really need another beer"
"Opportunity Knocks", film

Editorial License

de VE3IEY

Roving as a contest entry class started out hotter than lava mixed with nitric acid and made into a sort of tea with jalapeno peppers. Thanks to Rovers, everyone's scores soared. But several years ago, certain amateurs in FN31 decided that there was an evil inherent in the scoring system of the rover class, and decided that it would be "fun" to make an example of it. The resulting 1M++ score skewed the entire January VHF SS club competition, and the Contest Advisory Committee began its tinkering with the rules. Since then, nobody has been happy with the result, and Roving is just recovering now. I am sure, with the rule changes, reversals, and modifications over the last decade I couldn't figure out what a Rover stations' score was! This month, Paul N2OPW will be trying to make sense out of it for us all.



Also affecting Rovers is the question of removing "unique call signs" from logs submitted to the League: Evidently there are so many VHF+ ops and so many new calls that the folks in CT are having a tough time keeping up (e.g.: note W2SZ and W3SZ- both heard in the Sept contest and both are legitimate calls). By using computers **they can remove that rare rover QSO in EN95** or the random MS QSO into Arizona from your log, and penalize you to boot! Essentially, you could forget unique calls for contest credit unless the other station in the QSO submits a log.



I assumed the League was already using a cross-checking program, looking for errors in calls and multipliers- but evidently they claim that they are just starting now. I personally don't mind this, as I work so few people up here in FN14 that I could probably paper log and still be fine- but it's not the absolute accuracy that bothers me about this whole thing: it's a question of *integrity* for me- or, to put it more succinctly, *dammit, if I say I worked W3SZ, I worked W3SZ*. Most of us have cross-checked enough logs to know a bad call, and a bad grid when we see one ("no- there is no land mass in FM30! What grid do YOU think it is, Bozo?"). You know how it is.

CQ evidently applied this concept to one of their big international contests last year and BOY were people mad! I want to emphasize, *this is not at this time being implemented by the League* But look at the past history of how rule changes are handled by these guys, and you should see -*it could happen!*. Don't say you weren't warned..



Losers

abciey

Meeting Minutes - September 1999

The September 10 meeting of the RVHFG was called to order at 7:40 PM by Chairman Tim Stoffel NS9E. All members and guests introduced themselves and gave brief activity reports. The minutes of the May 1999 meeting were read, amended and accepted. The finance numbers were presented by our treasurer, Paul Myers N2OPW. The Contest Committee report was given by Mark KA2RDO and Jim N2JMH. Topics included the September VHF QSO Party which now features club competition. The upcoming Fall Sprints and the RVHFG All-Band Sprint (Nov. 11) were also covered in their report.

The elected post of Vice Chairman for this year was filled with an overwhelming majority vote for Mark Hoffman KA2RDO. This position had been vacant since the May 1999 election.

A request for volunteers to fill the following appointed positions was made by Chairman Tim:
Summer Picnic Chairman, April Banquet Chairman, Refreshments Chairman and VHF Academy Chairman. Anyone with interest in leading these activities is requested to contact Tim NS9E.

Paul Myers reminded the group of the upcoming October meeting program, Rover Operation in VHF Contests.

On a sad note, Dave K2DH reported that two VHF'ers had become Silent Keys: Hoppy N6BQ who was a prominent 1296 MHz EME operator and Dave Schwitek NW2T who was a RVHFG member and former RVHFG Journal Editor.

There were no responses to the call for old business. Under new business, there were 13 members interested in a group purchase of the soon to be available DEM 10 GHz Transverter Kit. The proposed ARRL logging review system which may apply to VHF contests was discussed. This logging review will show unique (U), busted calls (B) and not-in-log (N) calls and makes it imperative for operators to be precise in their contest logging. The B and N categories will have penalty consequences. A motion was made by Rajiv N2RD to request clarification of the unique call category as it applies to rovers in the VHF contests. The motion was seconded by Mark KA2RDO. Jeff Luce KB2VGH described the open listserv option on the RVHFG website.

Norm KA2TYT requested info in the possible repair of an aircraft receiver synthesizer. Norm also advised the group of a surplus dealer in Billings MT who stocks microwave components. (ed note: see <http://www.fix.net/dans.html>)

The winner of the 50-50 raffle was Jim N2JMH. The business meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM. The meeting was attended by 24 members and guests. After a refreshment break, a program was presented by Frank K2OS on Basic VHF Operating and Propagation.

Minutes submitted by Frank Pollino K2OS - Secretary

The Rochester VHF Group "Who's Who":



Officers:

Chairman: NS9E
Vice Chairman: KA2RDO
Secretary: K2OS
Treasurer: N2OPW
Director (Even year): KB2VGH

Director (Odd year): K2DH

Past Chairman: N2ULL

Appointees:

Contest Chairman: N2YB
Assistant: KA2RDO
Assistant: N2JMH
Awards manager: <open, new!>
Banquet Chairman: <open>



Picnic Chairman: <open, has been for several years>

Newsletter Editor: VE3IEY

Newsletter Publishing: N2KXS

Membership Manager: N2KXS

Internet Webmaster: N2KXS

How to contact them:

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N2OPW Paul Meyers

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N2ULL Steve Obenhofer

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N2YB Mark Wasserbauer

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NS9E Tim Stoffel

(716)-247-4798 lionlamb@servtech.com

VE3IEY Tom Richmond

(613)-634-1855 tantonr@kingston.net

• **Jeff, KB2VGH sez:**

"There is only *one* mailing list [you'll ever need...]"

Rvhfg@vhfgroup.rochesterny.org

It is setup to broadcast to all RVHFG members.

• **He also sez:**

I have setup an address for Sprint Log Submission.

sprint99@vhfgroup.rochesterny.org

For Sale:

2 x CC 424B (432mhz) plus power divider \$100.00 pick up only

2 x CC 4218 (144mhz) \$80.00 One ant needs to replacement elements pickup only

Contact: N2WK <wfking@worldnet.att.net>



Hamfest Calendar... (courtesy of N2FMC)

OCT 2 RAGS Syracuse, NY Hamfest Pompey Hills

OCT 3 Pack Rats - Philla, PA

OCT 10 Columbia ARA- West Friendship, MD

OCT 17 RF Hill ARC Sellersville, PA

OCT ?? Hamilton, ONT. hamfest (was 10/17/98)

OCT 24 + Carroll Co. ARC- Westminster, MD

NOV?? Newmarket, ONT (was 11/14/98)

-
- *I've got the twenty-first century breathing down my neck" (The Smiths)*
-

WHEN THE BUG BIT: NS9E

"As far as I can remember, it was a 2 meter contact during the June 1989 VHF contest. I used a Yaesu FT480R I had just purchased and still own. The antenna was a vertical whip intended for FM."



The editor wonders if this is the same FT480R used by Mark, KA2RDO (subject of last month's inquiry)?

Chairman's Letter: de NS9E

Well, it's October already. Soon, we will start seeing frost on the feedlines. I hope your antenna work is nearly done. I know mine isn't!

September has been a busy month for me, both for work and ham. I am currently working on several projects for WXXI TV, one of which is a routing switcher for digital TV. This switcher is a non-virtual, non- packetized

switcher, which means there is a cross point for each and every one of it's 128 x 128 video and 256 x 256 audio circuits. The video switcher's backplane can support data rates up to 1.5 GB/sec! The net result of this is that every cable in and out of this switcher, and the patch panel they pass through must be of microwave grade construction! And to think just 5 years ago, all a switcher like this had to pass was 4.2 MHz bandwidth baseband video!

On the ham side, the big news was the September contest. I had a lot of trouble freeing myself from the aforementioned work requirements, but was it ever worth it. As usual, I was with the N2HLT contest team, and we operated from a hilltop near Bath, NY. This was the best contest in years! Conditions started out with a general enhancement on Saturday, which made activity high until well after Midnight. Our score was over 80 K by this point, our best ever for the 'midpoint'. We started Sunday with some successful scatter skeds on 6 meters that put our score over 100 K. After that, things really slowed down until midafternoon. It was then our 6 meter op, Steve Raas, N2JDQ heard aurora! I confirmed it by running over to 2 and hearing it there as well. Most of the ops were taking a nap, which is usual practice for us Sunday afternoon. Let's just say the naps were shortened! It turned out to be a really fine aurora session with a number of 222 and 432 au contacts! The aurora eventually faded, but returned later in the evening, along with E- skip on 6. (There was a nice visual aurora as well!) Activity was so intense that the team was burned out by the time everything was over. We ended up shutting down half an hour early, but not before blowing away our all time team September record with a score of 230 K (Limited Multi. Previous record was 190 K.) Contesting just doesn't get any better than this, and it makes up for all those contests where conditions are just plain flat!

Our first meeting of the season went well, too. We had excellent attendance, certainly better than the last few years. Frank Pollion, K2OS did a fine paper on general weak sign l operating. In other meeting related news, Mark Hoffman, KA2RDO, offered to be our Vice Chairman for the 1999-2000 season, and was voted in at the meeting. I would be hard put to find a better person for this job than Mark!

The potential club construction project was also discussed at the September meeting; a 10 GHz narrowband transverter. This project would be based on the new kit being offered by Down East Microwave. This kit looks to offer good performance and a small package with a very reasonable price (\$250). It is also a complete kit. All you need to add is an IF rig, a SMA coax relay and an antenna. If that isn't enough, construction should be simple enough that most any experienced kit builders should be able to successfully build it! A show of hands showed considerable interest in this project, so it was officially adopted as the 1999-2000 RVHFG Club Project. Start saving your shekels now! We will probably place the order in November or December.

One kind of disturbing subject that was discussed at the meeting was some rumors that the ARRL was going to make some changes in the way unique calls are handled during contest log processing. A unique call in a contest log is a call that appears in your log, or perhaps a couple other peoples' as well, but not in many other peoples' log. Furthermore, the owner of the unique call did not turn in a log. Rumor has it

September BOD Meeting Minutes

that the unique call would be removed from the log, along with three other contacts as a penalty. This would be a major disincentive to casual operating, and would unfairly penalize someone who didn't know they were working a casual operator. **Fortunately, I am finding that this rumor is simply NOT TRUE!** Unique calls will not be removed from your log at all! What is true, however, is that log checking is going to get a whole lot tougher in the future, even for casual operators. Starting with the January contest, all electronically submitted logs will be fully cross-checked! So, make sure you comb your log carefully for logging errors. If you want to learn more about catching logging errors, read the paper on my VHF Contesting website. You can find it at: <http://www.lionlmb.org/vhftest.html>

We were all saddened by the passing of Dave Schwittek, NW2T on September 5th He died after an extended fight with cancer. Dave was very active in the club, and was the newsletter editor just a couple of years back. He was a good person, and was both a professional and ham friend. Dave, you will be missed!

The program for the October meeting promises to be very interesting. **Paul Meyers, N2OPW, is heading up a Rover Forum.** Various rover owners will be on hand to share information about how their rover vehicles came to be. **We will then hear about adventures on the open road with these mobile porcupines!** We may even cap off the evening with a retelling of that epic rover legend, **The Night the Lights Went Out in Bergen!** You certainly do not want to miss this fun and informative forum!

There is a good lineup of meeting programs scheduled well into 2000. In November, Dave Hallidy will host the ever popular tune-up night. This will give you a chance to get those preamps and transverters tweaked for the upcoming winter season. In December, we will learn about Internet resources for the VHFer. January is the annual contest rev up, and February is slated to be a 'post mortem' of the June 1999 and the just completed January contest. Of course, if you have a good program idea, contact Mark Hoffman, KA2RDO with it. He is always looking for more topics.

The Rochester VHF Group is still looking for a few people to fill appointed positions. We still need an awards Chairman, a picnic chairman and a refreshments chairman. If you are interested in any of these, please call or E-mail me at the address elsewhere in this Journal.

Of course, I can't end this article without some mention of the upcoming November all band sprint! The RVHFG is hosting it's first national contest, an all band sprint, scheduled for the evening of Thursday, November 11th. See our website, or last month's newsletter for the official rules. Hope you can participate!

See you on the bands! Tim Stoffel, NS9E

The RVHFG Board of Directors meeting was held on 10 September at 5:30 PM. In attendance were Tim NS9E, Dave K2DH, Paul N2OPW, Frank K2OS, Mark KA2RDO, Jim N2JMH, Jeff KB2VGH, and Judy N2KXS.

Paul reported that the checking and savings accounts were the same as last month. There are 66 paid members as of 10 September.

Mark KA2RDO and Jim N2JMH will devise our strategy for the January VHF SS Contest along with Contest Chairman Mark N2YB.

Tim NS9E will ask the membership for input on club projects at the regular September meeting. The board discussed incentives to bring on new members and to get lapsed members back into the RVHFG. The cost of mailing the complimentary RVHFG Journal to lapsed members would be approximately \$60.00.

Mark KA2RDO expressed interest in the vacant Vice Chairman position.

It was decided to discuss the proposed ARRL log checking system at the regular September meeting. This proposed change in review of ARRL VHF contest logs could affect scores of stations who work rovers.

Jeff KB2VGH and Mark KA2RDO explained the open membership listserv.

It was decided that VHF Academy II requires an organizer. Past speakers were willing to participate again. A chairman will be sought.

The topic of a basic concept program being held at each regular meeting was brainstormed. It would be a brief 10 minute program on a specific topic such as coaxial relays, feedlines, etc.

It was decided to resurrect the swap table at the regular meetings. Meeting attendees can bring in equipment, components, etc to sell before or after the meeting.

The program for the December meeting was confirmed; it will be "Internet Resources for the VHF Operator". There will also be a logging software demo of "VHFTTEST".

Since there is now club competition in the ARRL September VHF QSO Party, members will be asked to mark their summary sheets appropriately for club competition.

The whereabouts of a missing key to the club PO Box is unknown. It is requested that the key holder turn the key in to Tim NS9E. The US Postal Service performed an evaluation

of our Journal in their automatic equipment. Judy N2KXS was shown how to prepare the Journal for faster processing in the USPS equipment.

Paul N2OPW reported that DECAP wishes to sponsor a trophy for the January VHF SS Contest. Details need to be addressed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Frank Pollino - Secretary

Looney Rover

Norm, N2GKM & Jim, KC2EBH

Members of the Hudson Watershed VHF Society (K2TVI)



I am happy to report that the "LOONEY-ROVER" effort was successful. We DID manage to activate 15 grids without (serious) incident (no police reports filed). Actually, things went more-or-less according to schedule, and we were able to activate all the grids before the wheels stopped rolling. I strongly caution against paper logging by the

driver.

Norm has the data, but here's the high points: We managed a total of 234 Q's, for a total of 61 grids + 15 grids (76 total mult), 320 Q pts x 320 yields 24,320 points. We worked **NS9E 27 times**, K3YTL 26, K3MQH 24, and K8GP 15.

I'm really pleased with the square loops, and "trolling" for Q's on the run. Even managed a few good hauls with the 432 loop on the barefoot 847 (50 W). I'm tempted to try a stacked pair of the 432 loops for the next effort. Yes, we're talking about a "next-time".

The rotor platform (stuck to the roof with suction cups) gave us no problem at all. I was worried about that, and we didn't get it finally assembled until the night before. Norm's "work station" put most of the operating controls within reach, even while rolling. "Fine-tuning the 736 on a bumpy road is (nearly) impossible. I had to slide between right seat and left when working guys up (or down) the bands. There is a painful seatbelt buckle in between.

We took some advantage from a 6M opening Sunday evening, but the "Propagation-Gods" did not smile on us from EN92. Things really dried up the last hour.

Contest Corner

N2YB

I have always thought that it would be wonderful to live on waterfront property. If you like the water, it is wonderful, if you want a great VHF contest station, it's not very wonderful. I have a hard time using familiar repeaters from down here in the hole on the shores of Conesus Lake let alone expect to work DX on 2meters. Like it or not, it is only a rental that expires at the end of May, then we're out of here.

The September Contest was a nice time. I was not at the N2PA site for the start but managed to drag myself in there shortly after midnight local time to find Russ and Jeff running circles around the station. Activity was about average for September, familiar multiops efforts and some surprising limited multiops. We had some nice enhancement on the bottom four bands, and the grid patterns on 432-1296 seems to suggest we had some short ducting at times. A few grids on 432 and 1296 were far removed from the usual core.

The contest committee has come up with some very good ideas for making the contest experience much improved over last year. I have heard talk of new categories for the single ops, and equipment loan system to optimize extra equipment in the Group, and even new contest events. The Fall Sprints and the All band Sprint on 11/11/99 will be a nice time to test your new or improved system, not to mention operating skills. (Some of us have agreed to operate CW only for this one, practice ya know.)

The Fall Sprint schedule is:

50:	Sept. 25-26	2300Z - 0300Z
144:	Sept. 27	7PM - 11PM
222:	Oct. 5	7PM - 11PM
432:	Oct. 13	7PM - 11PM
903+:	Oct. 18	7PM - 11PM

Logs DO NOT go to the ARRL for the Fall Sprints!

Each band has a contest manager. This information I'm sure is printed somewhere in this issue or contact the Contest Committee.

This last paragraph brings an old thought into my head and I am compelled to mention it again. NOW is the time to get the outdoor work finished before the cold and snow. I realize that this is a very busy time of year (and what time of year is not?) but ask yourself if your schedule gets any easier before New Years. Skip the sitcoms and / or the 'games that you don't really care about'. Get out there and put up any and all antennas that you have and check them out. Even if you do not have equipment for that 903 looper, find a place on the mast and get a cable on it. Someone may have a transverter for you to use and will be more inclined to loan it if they feel there is a good chance it will be on the air.

Now is a good time to be looking around for equipment that will be available for January, check the equipment loan board. Again, if you want to improve your contest score



significantly without moving to higher ground, you must ADD BANDS, particularly 903 and/or 1296.

The January contest falls between the last weekend of playoffs and the Super Bowl. With nothing on the Box and buried in snow and ice you should have lots of free time on the weekend to make some noise on the bands. Kidding aside, we have a calendar at our home that we use to schedule weekend events. Now is the time to, (use a pen), mark the calendar for the weekend of Jan 22-23 2000. I know how you may be feeling about the contest right now, because the same thing happens to me. I feel like perhaps I will just make a casual weekend of it or, not plan to operate, or just see what happens. A week or two before the contest as the excitement builds I begin to get fired up and wish I had the station in better shape. I wind up spending an



inordinate amount of time and effort fighting elements and frustration, only to have things fail and disappoint me during the show. Put aside the grumbling, do it now, do it right, when the time comes, you will be glad you did.

The ARRL has added rules once again in an effort to close loop holes that contesters eventually find. This one has to do with unique calls in your log, ya know the station you worked that did not turn in a log, that no one else, who turned in a log, did. Again in English: if a call appears on your log, that appears on no other log, and no log was turned in under that call, YOU LOSE! More than just that QSO! How nice. In even simpler English: If you make even so much as ONE QSO during the contest, TURN IN A LOG, simple. (Ed note: see NS9E's article for the "last word" on this.)

I refuse to mention once again that the winning Gavels will be earned by the clubs that work together, or that no longer will there be such a thing as winning by default, or that we have some very formidable competition in the East when I know perfectly well that the Rochester VHF Group can make it very difficult for others to win by sheer membership numbers. I'm just not going to bring it up again.

There is a breeze blowing on the smoldering embers of 1999 contest participation. The Rochester VHF Group has a renewed fire in the leadership ranks and the heat at the core is rising. I have heard some new calls on the air and a stir in the membership. I have read a lot of mail and have heard many new ideas to enhance the contesting experience for RVHFG members. And since this is a millennium year, activity in January may prove to be one of the best in the last 10 years. Join the fun and get that station tuned up and checked out NOW. Be on the air for the Fall Sprints, the All Band Sprint, and as much of the January contest as you can. **TURN IN A LOG. The Rochester VHF Group needs YOUR participation! YOU ARE the Rochester VHF Group!** Now grab a hold of the rope and pull, and when the dust settles you just might find yourself on the winning team!

TREASURERS REPORT

The editor apologizes for having erroneously DUMPED the treasurers report! However, the Board of Directors meeting minutes from September indicated there was no change from last month. The report WAS properly received here, but with a change of computer, a new Internet server, a new browser and a new mail program, it's amazing that only the treasurers report was lost- whew!

Now I just need to transfer this 11MEG file to Judy for printing- let me know if it doesn't get there (hi!)

-abciey

Rule #2: Shut up and Jump!" tnx KB2VGH



WA2YTM , former Chairman, Journal Editor & GIZMO award recipient, pictured here with one of his muzzle-loaders

SHOOTING vs. AMATEUR RADIO: a comparison - Tom Hodge, WA2YTM

Amateur Radio

- 1) You can spend large amounts of money on equipment that you only have time to use a few times a year
- 2) You can go to club meetings where every one will complain about the way things are done but only a few guys are willing to be officers or participate in events
- 3) You can go to hamfests and impress the sellers with your arcane technical knowledge about items that you aren't going to buy anyway (Hey, didn't the HW-7 use a 40673 instead of a 3n204)
- 4) You can spend hundreds of dollars each year on magazines that will feature equipment you can't afford and articles on how the government is going to take away your hobby if you don't support this organization
- 5) Its a great way to meet women, and if one ever does show up at a meeting you will be ready to impress her with all the radios on your belt and tales of your last sporadicE opening.
- 6) You get to talk to hams all over the world who believe #5
- 7) When you actually get to operate you get stepped on in contests, wiped out by beacons, and take TVI complaints from neighbors

Shooting

- You can spend large amounts of money on equipment that you only have time to use a few times a year
- You can go to club meetings where every one will complain about the way things are done but only a few guys are willing to be officers or participate in events
- You can go to gun shows and impress the sellers with your arcane technical knowledge about items that you aren't going to buy anyway (Hey, didn't Remington have a .41 caliber cartridge in 1897)
- You can spend hundreds of dollars each year on magazines that will feature equipment you can't afford and articles on how the government is going to take away your hobby if you don't support this organization
- Well, you can't argue with that
- You get to wear earplugs and make lots of noise, so you can't talk to anyone.
- When you're holding a gun people are surprisingly polite

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PO Box 92122

Rochester, NY 14692

Meeting: Friday, 08 OCT 1999

Monroe Co. Social Services Building

111 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY