



Scuttlebutt

October 2016

Issue 238

Next Meeting: Sunday: October 9th – 1:00pm–4:00pm
Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center
366 Main Street, Sturbridge, Massachusetts 01566

Captain's Cabin

Tony Brock-Fisher, K1KP

What? Another Scuttlebutt so soon? And another meeting? Well yes! The ARRL did not check with me when they scheduled the Boxboro Convention, so we ended up with back-to-back meetings only a month apart. So much the better to get into the contesting spirit! Contest season is now rapidly approaching, with just under one revolution of the sun until CQWW SSB as you read this.

So of course, I'm going to urge everyone to get ready for it. Why? Simply put, it is one of the two best weekends in ham radio! You can argue, based on your personal preferences, which is better – SSB vs CW – but either way, these are the biggest and most exciting contests of the year. When the leaves start to fall and the air turns crisp, and the football scores actually count, many folks think of Halloween or Thanksgiving – not me, no siree! My thoughts turn to the last minute preparation for these two great weekends of contesting. To me they are so much fun that the planning for the next one starts the Monday morning after!

CQWW is the big daddy of them all, because it is so popular and creates so much activity on the bands. Folks travel to DX locations, making the DX appeal of the event second to none. It's everyone-works-everyone, so all of the rest of the world can operate the full 48 hours without big lulls in activity caused by the bands being closed to North America. And this in turn creates more activity, because this is the one contest everyone makes an effort to work.

Half an hour before the opening gun (Friday evening for us), the bands will be jumping with folks staking claims to their frequencies. Europe will be open on 40, and maybe there will be a bit of JA hanging on up on 20 – will it last into the start of the contest? One short tune up the band and you know it's not just ANY Friday night – it's almost time for the BIG ONE. Local and US hams will be warming up their vocal cords as well as their amplifiers, working folks fairly rapidly, slowing down as old friends pop in for a quick check of their signal strength and a 'Good Luck in the Contest!' The bands will get more crowded as zero hour approaches, but there will still seem to be some open frequencies. As the GMT clock strikes 00:00, all hell seems to break loose! Call signs miraculously morph from the familiar to the unusual as folks 'turn on' the special calls they got for the contest. The individual operator calls at the multi-ops become the well-known station calls.

Where a minute before there had been a few kHz here and there to set up shop, now there is none! All available spaces will be filled on 40 and 20 at the opening gun. This year there will likely be little propagation on 15 at the start, except perhaps for some South America. So everyone looking for a great start out of the box will be on 40 or 20. The smart ones will be on 40, and those who can't hold a spot on 40 will seek refuge on 20. Of course there will be plenty of activity on 80 as well, but not quite the wall-to-wall crowd on 40. The problem with 80 is that the Europeans are all working each other. Their close (but still DX) neighbors with a low dipole are waay louder than even the East Coast of the US, and they are easy to work 'counters' so they will get the attention. That's why despite great propagation and tons of activity, the second night can be so much more productive for us to Europe on the low bands.

(Continued on page 3)

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Directions to Sturbridge Host Hotel

Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center is located on Route 20.

- From the North, East and West, take the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) to Exit 9, Route 20 West.

- From the South, take either Interstate 84 or Route 131 to Route 20 West.

Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conference Center is located on the shore of Cedar Lake, just past the first set of traffic lights.



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Paddles Wanted!

Bring your (contemporary) contesting CW paddles to the upcoming meeting for 'Show & Tell'!!

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(Captain's Cabin: Continued from Page 1)

The contest continues into the night, lasting as long as your determination to fight that first circadian sleepiness. One way or the other, you'll be awake before dawn, awaiting that glorious 20 meter opening to Europe. As you tune 20 in the gray dawn, you first hear some of the big gun Europeans coming through, and being an early bird you snag them easily. The day brightens, and with it the band comes alive! Before you know it, in a matter of minutes, it goes from having room to being two and three deep! If you can hold onto your chair and your run frequency, now is the highest G-factor of the contest as your score accelerates from 0-100+ in minutes. If you can't find or hold a frequency, you can still pick off Q's lickety-split (or lickety-simplex) at better than 100/hour. Just by keeping the butt in the chair from dawn to noon, most single ops can bag their quota of rate and mults to put a respectable score in the log. As they say, if you can only do 4 hours, do these four!

As the rate accelerates, you start to think about shifting into second gear – you know, moving up to 15 for another burst of speed. This will be a good plan as long as the propagation holds. Jump up there and see if you can find a clear spot to set up shop. Competition might be a bit less fierce and you can likely get a good run going. Hang in there on 15. Check 10 occasionally – hope against hope – so you don't miss a short opening for another dozen mults or more. Don't forget to turn the beam to around 90 degrees for a possible skew path. As the morning develops and the sun gets high overhead, often the higher bands will go into the 'doldrums' for a while. And around 1pm local time, it can really pay to move back down to 20. Early afternoon openings on 20 can be quite productive, and often bring in a bunch of new mults as the band moves farther east.

Now here's a bit of advice for the NE contesters when the 'spots are down. Around 4pm local, take a look on 40. If you have a beam, swing it NW and see if by any chance there are some nice JA's coming in. If you are SO2R capable, you can pick up Q's from 20 or 15 to Europe while also scanning 40 for early Pacific/JA openings.

As the sun rolls down, it's almost the halfway mark, and now is the time to go to town on Europe on the low bands. Hopefully they have all worked out their local buddies and will be training their ears to the NW for us – U.S! They'll be working split on 40 – so watch your VFO carefully, and check those packet frequencies carefully (another reason why packet use can be harmful). Don't forget to check 160 on the hour to pick up another nice handful of mults. And don't forget zones 3,4 and 5 to the US on the low bands!

The slow, steady decline in rate on Saturday night is what separates the women from the girls. If you're anything less than an iron-pants, BIC contester, you'll probably think up some excuse to leave the chair now. I know, had to mow the lawn, had to get your taxes done, of yes, and that late-night root canal appointment! But if you are less than 100% committed (remember the breakfast analogy: The chicken is 'involved', but the pig is committed), you'll get some rest after European sunrise. Just don't sleep the same time both nights; try to cover all the propagation at least once during the weekend.

Sunday morning dawns and with it another great run time. Follow the advice of the previous paragraph: if you opened 20 yesterday, try opening 15 today. Or, just follow the rate. You've got 90% of your multipliers by now, so rate is king. Make the most of it, as the waning morning run is the last you will see of the high-rate western Europeans. As the sun's apogee crosses W1 for the last time, it's time to formulate your stretch goals. Look at your score and figure out how many Q's to make in the next hour; which next million milestone to set your sights on. Make mini-goals every hour to help you get to the overall goal for the finish line. If you are assisted, check out cqcontest.net. Find someone close to you in score and try to catch up or beat their score. These goals will help you find some extra Adrenalin to keep you going in the final afternoon. Don't get too caught up chasing mults, even though this seems like the only thing left. Finally, as the sun declines, be ready to hit 40 for the final hour. Or maybe jump back and forth between 40 and 20 to take you to the final gun.

We have a great meeting coming up! Rich, K1CC will present a slide show of his trip to Friedrichshafen, which included a visit to 4O3A, SP7GIQ and PI4DX. Charlie, N1RR will show you what happens when you leave your towers and antennas untended for 20 years, and his progress in reclaiming his antennas from the Seekonk jungle. Fred, K1VR will reprise his popular surveys with a special on CW paddles for Contesting – bring yours for 'Show & Tell'! Gerry W1VE will give us an update on DHFE (postponed from Boxboro). And finally, we will have the annual Awards Program! Pick up your well-deserved Participation, Improvement, or Achievement Awards at the meeting! Don't forget, our constitution specifies that you must be current in your dues to receive awards.

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Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2016

Tony K1KP called to order the September 10th General Meeting of the Yankee Clipper Contest club at the Boxboro Convention at 2:05.

Tony asked the members and guests present to add their CQWW DX contest plans to the usual member roll call.

Brian NJ1F gave the secretary's report and Tony K1KP gave the treasurer's report. Paul K1XM made a motion to accept the reports, which was seconded by Ed WA1ZAM. The motion Carried.

Tony K1KP asked if there was any unfinished business, there was no unfinished business.

Tony K1KP asked if there was any new business, there was none.

Tony K1KP asked if there were any announcements:

Fred K1VR announced that the Yankee Clipper Contest Club won the club competition in last year's WAE contests and showed the award which will be displayed at K1LZ's station.

Wes NA1CC announced that his station will be using as a special event station N1A and is looking for operators.

Tony K1KP announced that if there is anyone interested in joining the YCCC to see Brian NJ1F for a membership application.

Tony K1KP then introduced Mark K1RX and Igor N1YX who gave a presentation on their recent DXpedition to White Island in the Island of Shoals group off the coast of New Hampshire during the recent IOTA contest.

Tom K1KI presented Tony K1KP the QST cover award for his featured article and cover photo in April's QST titled "Can Amateur Radio and Solar Coexist?" While accepting the award Tony thanked Chuck W1HIS for all of his help and assistance.

Tony K1KP announced a 10 minute break for socializing and paying dues.

Tony K1KP called the meeting back to order and asked if there were further announcements.

Charlie N1RR announced that he is accepting applications to operate as WR1TC in the upcoming Worked all Germany contest.

Tom W1TO announced that he is putting together an order for Club QSL cards and any interested please contact him.

Tony K1KP asked the 6 new members to tell the club a little about themselves, K1XM made a motion to welcome them aboard. Seconded by Tom W1TO and the motion carried.

Tony K1KP then announced that the next part of the meeting is an interactive panel discussion of contesting. He introduced the expert panel members, W1RM, K5ZD, N1MM and K1XM. The panel fielded questions from the members for over 30 minutes.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Paul K1XM and Seconded by Ed WA1ZAM, the motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 4:05

Submitted

Brian Szewczyk NJ1F

YCCC Secretary

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YCCC GENERAL MEETING SCHEDULE	
October 9, 2016	Sturbridge MA
December 4, 2016	Auburn, MA
February 4, 2017	Enfield, CT.