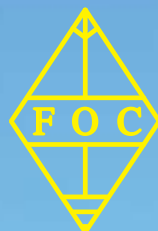
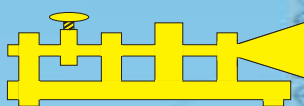


FOCUS



No. 85

Winter 2010



JOURNAL OF
THE FIRST CLASS
C.W. OPERATORS' CLUB
(<http://www.g4foc.org>)



The First Class CW Operators' Club



President and Chairman

Bob Whelan, G3PJT
36 Green End, Comberton
Cambridge CB3 7DY
Tel: +44 (0) 1223 263137
Email: g3pjt@btinternet.com



Secretary

Nick Henwood, G3RWF
Confers House, Church Road
Littlebourne, Canterbury,
Kent CT3 1UA
Tel: +44 (0) 1227 721791
Email: nick@henwood.demon.co.uk



Membership Secretary

Ivan Davies, G3IZD
13 Thurlow Way, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 5XP
Tel: +44 (0) 1229 828572
Email: g3izd@sky.com



Treasurer (Non-Committee)

Lionel Parker, G5LP
128 Northampton Road,
Wellingborough,
Northants NN8 3PJ
Tel: +44 (0) 1933 279539
Email: lionel@lppsltd.co.uk



Internet Services

Ray Goff, G4FON
27 Harley Road,
Oxford OX2 0HS
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 727142
E-mail: ray@g4fon.net



Committee
Kevin Gunstone, MØAGA
67 Woodside, Skegby
Notts NG17 3EB
Tel: +44 (0) 7974 671937
Email: kevin.gunstone@ntlworld.com

Non-Committee

- **Accounts Examiner**
Gerald Stancey, G3MCK

- **Awards Manager**
Bob Bagwell, G4HZV
Email: g4hzv@gmail.com

- **FOC QSO Party Administrator**
Art Suberbielle, KZ5D
Email: kz5d@aol.com

- **FOCUS Mailing – Overseas**
Christopher Page, G4BUE
E-mail: chris@g4bue.com

- **FOCUS Mailing – UK**
Derrick Webber, G3LHJ
Email: g3lhj@freeuk.com

- **International Advisors**
Karsten Koch, DL8LBK
Bo Lofstedt, F5VCT
Joe Green, K2VUI
John Swartz, WA9AQN

- **News Sheet, Call Book & FOCUS Editor**
Christopher Page, G4BUE
Email: chris@g4bue.com

- **Subscriptions – North & South America**
Joe Green, K2VUI
Email: k2vui@aol.com

- **Subscriptions – Overseas (non-America)**
Karsten Koch, DL8LBK
Email: dl8lbk@t-online.de

- **Subscriptions – UK**
Mick Puttick, G3LIK
Email: mick_g3lik@ntlworld.com

- **Straight Key Weekend & Monthly Activity**
Colin Turner, G3VTT
Email: g3vtt@aol.com

- **Webmaster – FOC Public Web-site**
Ed Tobias, KR3E
Email: edtobias@comcast.net

- **Webmaster – FOC Members' Web-site**
Vacant

- **Windle Award Administrator**
Puck Motley, W4PM
Email: hmmjr@comcast.net

Content

The 2010 FOC Annual Dinner	Colin Turner, G3VT	5
WRTC-2010 In Russia – Part 2	Richard King, K5NA	11
A Chance FOC Meeting in Ohio	Bill Gaines, AD8P	20
The 2011 FOC Con-Din	DJ6SI and DL1VDL	21
Obituary Hugh A. Turnbull, W3ABC	Fred Laun, K3ZO	22
Welcome to New Members	Ivan Davies, G3IZD	23
Contesting	Allen Singer, N2KW	25
Top Band – 160 Metres	Allen Singer, N2KW	28
The TW MagPad Paddle	Vic Abell, W9RGB	30
Lunch in Athens with SV1AOW	John DePrimo, K1JD	31
QSOs of 60 Years Ago	Randy Johnson, W6SJ	32
A 1975 Collins S-Line Recreation	Bob Peterson, W3YY	33
Obituary Frank H Bliss, G3IFB	Derek Thom, G3NKS	34
QRP in Andalucia, Spain	Pete Windle, G8VG	36
CW – Was There a Golden Age?	Clive Whelan, GW3NJW	37
The October FOC QSO Party	Art Suberbielle, KZ5D	38
A Simple Audio Filter	Colin Turner, G3VT	39
The 2011 W5FOC Weekend, Lafayette, Louisiana 18/20 March	Bill Eckenrode, W5SG	42
A Visit With John Sluymer, VE3EJ	Paul Dunphy, VE1DX	43
Obituary Jack Chapman, WØHZ	Christopher J Page G4BUE	44
A 12 Volt Power Supply Crowbar and Upgrade	Wes Spence, AC5K	45
Letters to the Editor	Doug Woolley, ZP6CW	47
FOC Awards News	Bob Bagwell, G4HZV	48
Station Perspectives	Dale Strieter W4QM	48
Why do we Contest?	Puck Motley Jnr, W4PM	49
Review of the Begali Graciella Junior Key	Carlo Consoli, IKØYGI	50

Front Cover Photograph

W1MO's new five-band Force12 XR-5 being installed in August 2010. Dan, K1TO, (of A-1 Tower) is at the top of the tower doing the 'real' work while Norm (in red shorts) shouts encouragement – see story on page 35.

Back Cover Photographs

Top: Bob, G3PJT, presiding over the first ever FOC Annual General Meeting before the 2010 Annual Dinner at Greenwich. The report of the Dinner starts on page 5 – *thanks photo G3TXF*.

Centre right upper: What are John, K1JD, (left) and George, SV1AOW, doing together in Athens? Read the answer and John's story on page 31.

Centre right lower: What are (l to r) Laura, KJ4HCU; Carole, N5TP/2; Pete, N5TP, and Mark, W4CK, doing in Tennessee on 31 October? See Mark's FOCAL on page 44.

Centre left: What is G3HJF doing on his local cricket ground? Read Jim's FOCAL on page 24.

Bottom: The 2010 Annual Dinner at Greenwich in full swing; the report of the Dinner starts on page 5 – *thanks photo G3TXF*.

FOCUS is the quarterly journal of FOC and is published four times a year (1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October). It is mailed to members, to some clubs and to a small number of subscribing non-members. Articles and contributions for FOCUS are always welcome and should be submitted to the G4BUE (see News Sheet & FOCUS Editor on page 2) by e-mail, CD, disk, typed or hand written. Drawings can be re-drawn if necessary and original photographs returned after scanning.



© First Class CW Operators' Club

(Articles may be re-published from FOCUS with permission from the Editor and with the usual credit given.)



From Your President, G3PJT

In the anticipation of a noticeable upswing in conditions, I spent quite a lot of time on the HF bands in September. And despite being perhaps a bit over-optimistic, I did have some quite interesting contacts. The highlight was undoubtedly the 15 metres long path, late evening, QSOs to Gary, ZL2IFB. Yes, it did take a bit of persistence, and reading of the signs to catch the right conditions, but in the end he was a good signal. Of course these contacts never come in ones and there were several other ZLs active too, most rewarding.

The *DX Code of Conduct* group led by Randy, W6SJ, is also starting to see quite a bit of success with people signing up to the Code on the website, and even DXpeditions telling us that behaviour was better! Now we are seeing DXpeditions signing up the DX operator side of the Code and putting links on their sites to the DX Code. FOC has enhanced its reputation by the role we have taken in the project and it just shows you can make a difference. Nick, G3RWF, and I had an article on best practice operating published by the RSGB in *RadCom* in October. Again enhancing the reputation of FOC.

October was a busy month, the first weekend, Rosemary and I attended the FOC Annual Dinner. Our first AGM was a lively affair and you can read all about the weekend in Colin's article opposite. Thanks to him for the organisation and for the Friday trip up the River Thames to *HMS Belfast* and central London. The following weekend we attended the RSGB Convention and met many members – it was an excellent event with good lectures and the usual FOC Pile-Up Challenge.

The Committee decided to liven up the activity days, so for October we spread the use of G4FOC amongst us and gave MØRSE its first airing. This was well received and we aim to repeat it. However, as I write this on the November activity day, the weather is very bad with high winds and propagation very poor, still we shall persevere.

Finally, Rosemary and I wish you a very happy, healthy and prosperous new year. A new year is a good time to try out fresh ideas but above all, please make a note to get on the air, often, very often.



From Your Editor, N4CJ (G4BUE)

No special theme for this edition of FOCUS because it contains a variety of articles. My thanks as always, and on your behalf, to everyone who has contributed to it.

Second, my apologies for the late publication of this edition. I have always mailed the Winter edition of FOCUS with the new Call Book, but for circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to complete the artwork for the Call Book and get it to the printer on time.

Third, nobody commented on the change of layout that I introduced in FOCUS 84 in an effort to create more content, and so I have taken that as approval and continued it with this edition. I have also introduced one further change to the layout in this edition, to create even more extra space, and would appreciate your feedback if you notice any difference, please.

The basic size of FOCUS is 52 pages and the Committee have asked me to consider adopting a basic size of 44 pages for 2011 to reduce costs, printing as well as mailing costs. When we return to the UK for Christmas, I will carry out some research into the various printing/mailing combinations to ensure that FOC receives the best value for the money it will spend on FOCUS. If you have any views about this, then I would be pleased to receive them.

Fourth, FOCUS has always been published to coincide with the publication of the January, April, July and October News Sheets so they can be mailed together. With the change over to the new (no mailing and via the Internet only) distribution system for the News Sheet from January 2011, this will no longer be necessary. This in turn will give me a little more flexibility with the publication of FOCUS and, perhaps, to publish it a little early if I consider something needs to be publicised before it would normally be or, conversely, delay the publication a little to include something rather than leave it to the following edition. Please bear this in mind if you don't receive your FOCUS at the usual time in 2011. I will, of course, announce this in the *News Sheet* if I decide to do this.

Finally, a plea for more articles and FOCALs, please, I am running short!



The 2010 FOC Annual Dinner

by Colin Turner, G3VTT

The 2010 FOC Annual Dinner was a two day affair this year, once again centred on the North Greenwich area. It is likely to be our last in this area – read more later on!

Friday

On Friday 1 October, a small initial party of guests from both the UK and overseas met at 'The Pilot' public house for a trip via the high speed Thames Clipper service to *HMS Belfast*. The river trip is to be recommended if you are in London and the Friday guests were quickly transported to the London Bridge Pier, being careful not to spill their coffee on the way due to the high speed of the river craft.

Luckily Ellan and Daniel, 4X1FC, had brought some extra sandwiches from Harrods and kept everybody fed and happy as they passed the sights of London on the river bank. Attending were Ella and 4X1FC, G3KTZ, Rosemary and G3PJT, Jo and G3RJV, Gwen and W6RGG and Hilary and myself.

At London Bridge Pier the party was met by Dave, G3JJZ, who kindly took plenty of pictures and joined the party for the trip around *HMS Belfast* before lunch.

The ladies opted to go shopping whilst the men bartered with the Imperial War Museum staff to get a discount on the normal entry rate. This involved telling them we were all either ex-Navy or Merchant Navy, and that even Bob, G3PJT, was an Admiral in the Cambridge Punting Fleet, and after a few laughs the group finally gained

entry to the *Belfast* at a particularly cheap party rate!

The FOC group was met by two Yeomen and, although the Radio Office was closed due to refurbishment, a trip was quickly organised after one of them recognised G3RJV from his numerous pictures in the radio magazines and decided we were amateur radio operators! The Yeoman himself was Rod, 2EØRPS, and he also knew G3JJZ from the Bromley Club. This was quite a coincidence which made a perfect start to the day as the radio room tour showed the group working B40 receivers and various unknown high power Naval transmitters. After the group had completed the main tour of the vessel and returned ashore, they attended a lunch along with the ladies at the 'Horniman at Hay', a well known Thames side pub and restaurant. The lunch was attractively priced and quite a lot of time was spent chatting before returning to Greenwich on the Clipper.

During the evening G3KTZ had planned a Chinese meal at the Holiday Inn with the group being joined by Derek, G3NKS. This proved again as successful as it did last year and the Committee thank Ron for stepping into the breach to organise this evening dinner almost at the last moment.

Saturday

On the Saturday, the day of the main event, I arrived early with the Greenwich Yacht Club staff to set up. I was quickly joined by G4FON who



Sylvia and Dick, G3RWL.



Sarah and David, G4HMC.



Gwen and Bob, W6RGG.

assembled the G4FOC station. The Club is indebted to Ray who provided a K3, a Yaesu amplifier and the multiband dipole antenna system, which was quickly assembled to put G4FOC on the air. The set-up was so effective that even Mort (SV5/G2JL) was worked! Ray very kindly disassembled the station in the dark and rain after the event working alone. Thanks to him as this is the second year he has had to disassemble the station in the dark!

Throughout the day the Yacht Club provided coffee and tea until members drifted off towards the 'Pilot' Inn for lunch. This local Thames-side pub is steeped in history and provided superb quality meals and drinks for all. G4FOC was closed down at 5pm local time for the AGM and EGM, which were well attended and have been reported in the News Sheet.

The Dinner and Speeches

The Dinner started at 7pm promptly, with menus kindly printed as a donation by our Treasurer, G5LP – (thanks again Lionel), after



Ray, G3KOJ, (left) and Rag, LA5HE.



Margaret and Ian, G3ROO.

which the traditional speeches were made. I made The Loyal Toast, acting as MC and our President and Chairman Bob, G3PJT, made the Toast for FOC. The Toast for Absent Members and Friends was to have been made by DL4CF, who unfortunately could not make the dinner at the last moment due to a reoccurring back injury – in fact he had to take the train home from the airport, whilst on his way to London, the previous day. Everyone present wished Joe well and luckily Miles, PA3CVV, stepped forward and read Joe's excellent speech, as follows:

"On behalf of all those attending and absent overseas members, I thank all of the organisers for their efforts to make this event another big success. And I also say thank you to all



Miles, PA3CVV.



Chuck, WB2YIP, (left) and Terry, GØTBD.



Graham, G4FNL, (left) and Bill, VE6BF.

UK members and friends for their warm welcome and hospitality.

“This is our second FOC Dinner at the Greenwich Yacht Club, which really is a wonderful place to be, especially for us coming from abroad, being easy to reach by public transport from Heathrow, the City or any other London airport. The Committee was asked for many years to return the Annual Dinner to the London area. Quite a few of us complained about previous dinners held in the countryside, which were hard to reach within an acceptable time, and I deeply regret that especially those who complained the most, are not showing up now.

“Allow me a few words about FOC from my personal point of view. I have been a member for 20 years now. Back in the late 1980s and early 90s, there was still a lot of activity on the bands. People like Al, G3FXB; Jack, W2BA, and Peter, ZL3GQ – just to name a few – were heard almost daily, showing their ability in having nice conversation with excellent CW. But these days the vast majority of Club members are just not as active as they used to be, for various reasons. It would have been a waste of time to analyse those reasons systematically, but the plain truth is that it is not just bad propagation that keeps many of us off the air. Within the last ten years we have spent too much time discussing off-topics and for the Club, unimportant issues, endlessly via email and Skype.

“It is obvious that the Club has been changing tremendously; 20 members have resigned by choice within the last year. Even so, I am fully convinced that we don’t have to worry about the Club’s future just by this decrease of membership numbers, as long as we focus on the basics and

what FOC has been all about for 72 years. It really doesn’t make any sense to promote CW mainly on the Internet, at amateur radio meetings and in club magazines; instead, let’s do what Al, Jack, Peter and many others have done before: get on the air, give a helping hand to newcomers, enjoy yourselves by improving your operating ability and broaden your minds and, last but not least, have fun. In this spirit, I wish everyone a very enjoyable evening.”

G3MCK then rose to toast Overseas Members, Guests and Absent Friends. Gerald said, “One of the many pleasures of belonging to FOC is attending dinners such as this. It is good to meet old friends and to make new ones. However, the icing on the cake is provided by our guests and overseas members, many of who have made long journeys to be present. To you we give our thanks. Before asking Colin to propose the toast may I ask only the UK FOC members to stand, the remainder to stay seated as it is you we are toasting”.

After Gerald’s speech, G3PJT outlined his thoughts about FOC over the last 12 months. Bob posed the question, “Why would anyone want to join FOC?”, and went on to say, “Well yes - why would they? Here is how I might answer that question, which these days you might well get asked when you talk to someone about joining FOC. In days gone by they might have been flattered to be even asked, but not in the 21st century when folks are more questioning and selective as to the clubs they join.

“My first answer is to say that FOC is for people who enjoy using CW and FOC is a club which promotes high quality on the air CW activity. Not just ‘599 tks’ but fluent conversational CW as well. FOC draws no distinction between chatters, DXers or testers, but if you contact an FOCer you know they can use the key to a high standard and might even be able to read what you send! Promotion of on-the-air activity is an important part of being an FOCer. But FOC members stand for more than that. FOC members are prepared to stand up for good operating; that is why it was FOC who started, and who is the driving force behind, the *DX Code of Conduct*.

“There is a growing problem of behaviour on the HF bands; poor operating and deliberate interference is now damaging DXing and making it a lot less fun. If you don’t believe it, just go and have a listen to any DXpedition operating

on HF. The October issue of *RadCom* carries a lead article, written by Nick, G3RWF, and myself, on this subject and says why we have to try and do something about it. FOC has taken the initiative and a core group: N7NG, W6SJ, S55R, ZL2IFB, ON4WW, ON4UN, G3SXW and G3PJT, has created a 12 point code of conduct for DXers and DXpeditioners that has seen a very rapid take up by clubs and magazines around the world. It is available in 29 languages, and clubs in 51 countries are spreading the word. Most importantly big new DXpeditions like 3D2KJ, 5V7TT, the A25 safari, FP/KV1J, H4ØKJ, PJ4, PJ6, T3ØRH, ZS8M and the planned Bouvet expedition have all added the Code to their sites.

“Are we preaching to you, the converted – well I hope so, but we need you to join the chorus and make it louder. FOCers espouse a code of conduct of courtesy and friendship which extends beyond on-the-air activity. Members actually enjoy each other’s company and respect each other’s social values. So we have a vibrant social calendar. And we are inclusive, we recognise the richness other non-radio family members and friends bring to our Club. FOC has a topical *News Sheet* and an excellent magazine, *FOCUS*, which is amongst the leading magazine for CW enthusiasts. We are an international club with its roots firmly in the British Isles, so we are stable, measured and open in our views. FOC members understand that they have to set a good example, both on the air and personally. They are true ambassadors for amateur radio.

“Like all clubs the members make the Club, and it is worth asking at this point what can you do to help the Club thrive? You can do a lot of things; be active on the air; if you can write, write some articles for *FOCUS*; keep the newsy items flowing into the *News Sheet* and if you have other

skills in organisation or the Internet, you can help us in building a modern 21st century club. We do need new members – the grim reaper sees to that. But prospective members have to accept our values if they are to truly join FOC and become part of our family”.

The Al Slater, G3FXB, Memorial Award

Bob’s speech was well received and G3MCK then proposed the recipient of the Al Slater, G3FXB, Memorial Award for 2011. After describing the history of the Award, and why it was being given, Gerald said, “The Al Slater Memorial Award was established in memory of Al who did so much for FOC and amateur radio. The recipient is someone who is deemed to have made a major contribution to amateur radio. As there are many aspects to amateur radio, it is not surprising that past recipients have been recognised for many different things.

“The current recipient started making valve audio amplifiers when he was a lad. After leaving school he was employed for a short time as a lowly lab assistant – his words – by a Humberside paint maker. There he had the good fortune to meet G3PDL, and forged a friendship that lasted until Pete’s sad death earlier this year. After a short time their paths parted; the recipient went to Birmingham and then to the old cotton town of Rochdale. However, before then Pete had convinced him of the joys of amateur radio, taught him Morse, and persuaded him to take the RAE.

“In 1962 a licence was acquired and a station was built, not bought. Student life and studies ensured that there was little amateur radio activity but at the end of the 1960s interest returned, but new things had to be learnt as transistors had taken over. Over the years the recipient has established an international reputation as a speaker and writer, and has travelled extensively, being in great demand. He has gained the reputation of being the purveyor of pithy sayings, for example: William of Occam – ‘It is vain to do more with what can be done with less’. His contributions to amateur radio are numerous, but the major ones can be summed up as encouraging people into the hobby and helping them when they are there.

“In 1972 he founded the G-QRP Club which, under his guidance, goes from strength to strength. It gives me great pleasure to announce the recipient of the 2010 Al Slater, G3FXB,



(l to r) Mandy, GØVQW/2; Angelika, GØTBD/2, and Sandy, GØVQW.

Memorial Award – the Rev George Dobbs, G3RJV”.

After receiving his award from G3FXB’s son, John Slater, G8FMJ, George kept everybody amused as he spoke in his own entertaining fashion about the point of amateur radio in this modern age, and what we could do to promote it with the current generation, and ensure its survival. He also said how much he admired FOC and how he would treasure his Award.



John, G8FMJ, (left) son of G3FXB, presenting the Al Slater, G3FXB, Memorial Award to Rev George Dobbs, G3RJV.

Awards Presentations

During the awards presentation part of the evening, Marathon Awards were made to Fraser, G4BJM, for winning the European Open Section and to Colin, G3VTT, for winning the Restricted QRP Section.

Pete, GW3KDB, was made a Vice President of FOC after many years of loyal and thorough service on behalf of the Club as Treasurer, a recognition he was delighted to receive. Before the evening, somebody had whispered that it was



Marguerite and Pete, GW3KDB.



2010 Marathon winners receiving their plaques from the President Bob, G3PJT – Fraser, G4BJM, (above) and Colin, G3VTT.

Marguerite and Pete’s Golden Wedding anniversary and a bunch of flowers was presented to the happy couple, accompanied by thunderous applause. Maud, the widow of G3FXB, was also presented with flowers as she had kindly attended Greenwich with her family and continues to show support for the Club.

The final part of the awards section of the dinner involved G3LIK receiving his FOC Worked All States Award, which had been posted across from the USA by W4CK to ensure Mick would receive it at Greenwich. Mick and Chris, G4BUE, are the only two non-USA members to achieve this award.

Our President G3PJT then thanked all of the unsung heroes in FOC who receive subscriptions, served in the PAG, arrange other FOC Dinners and engage in mailing magazines and tick-sheets, and singled out our G3LHJ for his many years of posting the *News Sheet* and *FOCUS* to UK members. A few days later Derrick was presented with a copy of a book about Morse keys written by K4TWJ and signed by the members present



Mick, G3LIK, (left) receiving his FOC WAS plaque for all 50 States from Bob, G3PJT.

at the Greenwich dinner. The Committee also thanks Derrick for the donation of a Ladies Raffle Prize of an Argos gift voucher. Incidentally G3HJF had also made a donation towards the running of the dinner earlier in the year despite being unable to come through ill-health, and the Committee thanks Jim for this generosity.

The Overseas guests this year were applauded: Ella and Daniel, 4X1FC; Yi Lee and Fred, A65BD; Miles, PA3CVV; Rag, LA5HE; Bill, VE6BF; Chuck, WB2YIP and Gwen and Bob, W6RGG, who was presented with a bottle of whiskey for attending his 20th FOC Annual Dinner in the UK.

Hilary, G3VTT/2, ran the raffle along with the Rosemary and the ladies – thanks for all your help team – with this important task to offset costs. FOC has been well supported over the years by various organisations for raffle prizes and this year was no exception with Messrs Waters & Stanton, Nevada, Icom and the RSGB providing substantial prizes. Many members were also very kind in providing prizes, a great effort by all.

Daniel, 4X1FC, kindly supplied a magnificent Begali paddle for a ‘members only’ prize, which was donated to celebrate his 30 years in FOC. This was won by G4BUE, with gasps all round, and it nicely complemented the ladies gift voucher sent by G3LHJ. I won that symbol of modern amateur radio – a G5RV antenna in a plastic bag – in the raffle, that has already been put to good use already as a marine antenna such is its construction and was supplied by WB2YIP.

By 11pm the party was over and folks drifted back to their homes or the hotels.

My thanks to 4X1FC, GØTBD, G3JJZ,



Chris, G4BUE, (left) receiving the Begali paddle from Daniel, 4X1FC.

G3LIK and G3TXF for supplying the photographs in this report.

What of the future?

Ever since I have been involved with planning the Annual Dinners, and there have been quite a number, the various Committees have reviewed locations, attendance and costing. It has become obvious that London is no longer the area for an FOC Annual Dinner or social gathering due to ever increasing price rises of accommodation, which are set to increase even further with the advent of the London Olympics in 2012. It has therefore been the subject of intense discussion and research during the last few months to find a venue worthy enough of our Club and AGM, and the Committee is pleased to announce an exciting change in our annual meeting.

The Committee proposes to have a social gathering and AGM to take place at the RSGB HF Convention on 8 October 2011. This meeting combined with the Convention, already attended by many overseas members, will benefit both RSGB and FOC alike, and is ideally located in the Home Counties with excellent travel connections. There will be more information about it in the *News Sheet* in the near future.

Finally, on behalf of Hilary and myself, I thank all of you who have attended the various London FOC Annual Dinners over the years and helped to make them a success. Many of you travelled great distances to attend and it is much appreciated. Our Committees deserve thanks and recognition for their help and support over the years too.

Start planning now for 8 October 2011.

WRTC-2010 In Russia – Part 2

by Richard King, K5NA

(continued from page 11 of FOCUS 84)



The station of IK2QEI and IK2NCJ (above) and (below) behind the radios!

The purpose of this team competition is for the two operators to make as many contacts around the world on their short-wave transmitters and receivers as they can in a 24 hour period. The international contest used for the event is the IARU Contest. They are allowed to operate their own radios at the same time as long as they never actually transmit at the same time. As a result, the teams have engineered devices that inhibit one radio from transmitting while the other is transmitting, and vice-versa. IK2QEI and IK2NCJ had gone all out to make sure that they couldn't transmit at the same time by engineering a lot of hardware, devices and wiring to connect between the two stations. It took them over two hours to get it all put together and tested to some degree.

At that time I connected the other devices that the referee was required to attach. There was a wireless router that interfaced with the

operators' laptops whose purpose was to extract their score standing every few minutes. These reports were sent back to the hotel where many guests would watch a running score total from all the entrants. I also installed hardware that would tell me if their transmitters were running more than the allowed power and also instantly tell me if they had transmitted at the same time. My other job would be to sit and listen to the operators for the full 24 hours of the contest and watch for rule infractions. The cell-phone I had been issued with was a back-up to the wireless system that would track their scores. I was supposed to report their score every hour on the hour using text messaging. I was a little worried that I might need to call one of my grandchildren to tell me how to send a text-message, but I was able to figure it out on my own!

By 11am (0700z) everything was working perfectly and my Italians were ready to relax. It was five hours before the contest started at 4pm (1200z) and I was invited to sit down at the second radio (IC-7600) and make some QSOs. I had applied for and received a Russian amateur radio licence for the call R3/K5NA, but I hadn't had the opportunity to make any contacts. Actually I had not brought a radio with me to Russia and was hoping for a chance to use someone else's setup. Luca even made a program file for me to use with the *WinTest* program while operating with his radio and computer. After a few false starts and mishaps from not knowing the program, I finally got into a rhythm and started making some QSOs on CW. They had not brought a key paddle with them and had planned to do all their sending from the computer memories, or from the keyboard, and so I had to get used to not having a key paddle available.

After making about 12 contacts a bad thing happened: the transmitter locked up in transmit mode sending a constant signal out. Every time I tried to send something, I would get only a solid

constant signal. I called to Luca to come and check it and I was hoping that it was something that I didn't understand about the *WinTest* program but, alas, something was really broken. For the next three hours the team tried to troubleshoot the problem and I was feeling worse and worse because I thought I had broken one of their stations. The contest was going to start in two hours and the guys were still working hard on the problem instead of resting before the contest started. I used the cell-phone and called one of the other judges, Dave, K1ZZ, to explain our problem. Dave called back in a few minutes and asked for more information. Meanwhile, my team had concluded that something was wrong in the keying from the computer to the radio and asked if I could find an LPT keying cable.



Judges (l to r) FOC members Don, G3XTT, and Dave, K1ZZ, with Nodir, EY8MM.

Then Nodir, EY8MM, who is also a judge, called for more information and I relayed the request for the keying cable to him. Nodir said he would see what he could do and hung up. It was 2.30pm local time and 1½ hours before the competition starts, when Nodir called me back. He had found a USB keying device (complete with CD drivers) that belonged to Igor, UT7QF, and asked me to send one of the site volunteers to the Atlas Park hotel to pick it up. I did this and a volunteer jumped to his car and sped away. He was back about 3pm and must have driven like a race car driver!

The Italian team pounced on the hardware and software and had the keying working by 3.15pm, only 45 minutes before the contest was to start. They were relieved, and I was especially relieved because I blamed myself for what had happened. Stefano and Luca said it was better

for this to happen before the contest rather than after it had started, and that it hadn't been my fault, but I felt bad anyway.

Fifteen minutes before the competition started the volume on the receivers was turned down. At that time, I opened the sealed envelope and we discovered what callsign they were to use - R32W. They both blurted out together, "Radio thirty-two willy". They were really pumped! In the next 15 minutes they programmed the callsign into their computers and both operators turned off their cell-phones and gave them to me to hold. I said it wasn't necessary for me to hold them but they insisted I did. One of the rules of the competition is that no one is allowed to contact the outside world and reveal what callsign they are using.

The contest started and the Italians began with a burst of energy. These two guys had operated together before and they were very good as a team. I found that I was fascinated by their ability to operate and time their transmissions so that they wouldn't transmit at the same time. The few times they tried to transmit together, the second station was locked out anyway. It takes some experience to do team operating and they had it. I had settled into my role as a monitor and score reporter.



Why is K5NA making a note?

At 5.45pm a thunder storm cell appeared from the east and was moving our way. I could hear the static through the headphones and could hear some actual thunder in the distance. We started getting some high winds and I held on to an inside tent pole on the windward side in case a gust tried to take the tent with it. It probably didn't help matters but it made me feel better to hold on to the tent! However the storm missed

us and moved away in about 45 minutes. We feared having to shut down but it never came to that. The rest of the 24 hours of the competition was spent making contacts as the team and I tried hard to stay awake. It had been a long day even before the contest started and the site volunteers brought us coffee, tea, water and ice cream to help us make it through to the end.

Back at the Atlas Park Hotel, Susan fired up the five watts QRP station and looked for WRTC competitors after she returned from more touring in Moscow. She worked five stations; three WRTC stations and two others (see photograph on back cover). It was late at night for her by then and she shut down. She had no idea which team was which and couldn't play favourites.

Sunday 11 July - the WRTC Contest

I need to say a few words about the site volunteers. These were the nicest people and were always there to help do anything we needed doing. When they weren't needed, they faded back to their tent to wait to help again. Meeting and getting to know these people is probably my best experience in Russia. They were marvellous and wonderful to us. Our site had Alex, RA6ATN; Nick, RW6DZ; Igor RN3AHT, and Igor's son and daughter. Igor's daughter was a medical student and spoke the best English of the group and often served as a translator.

Sunday was a long hot day in the tent with my Italian team working hard on keeping the QSO rate up. Every hour on the hour, I faithfully sent my cell-phone text message to the scoring centre. I didn't know then that the system with the on-site routers and auto-scoring had failed and the referees reporting the scores by text messaging was the only input the WRTC administrators had. They maintained a big board at the hotel that kept up with the hourly updates. The teams in the field had no idea if they were first or last in the competition.

When the contest was over at 4pm, we were all relieved. We were hot, sweaty and tired, but there was a lot of hardware to dismantle and it took several hours to get the station and the site disassembled. I returned Stefano's and Luca's cell phones to them and collected the router and power monitor hardware for me to return. We were finally packed up and ready to return to the hotel, but not without some handshakes and bear hugs with the volunteer crew, and we all had tears in our eyes when we left them behind.

I noticed that other people were also quite exhausted as we finally loaded into the bus for the return journey to the Atlas Park Hotel. At this point we had all been up for over 38 hours and I especially remember seeing Stan, K5GO, sitting on the bus looking off into space with his eyelids slightly twitching. He had a cold beer in his hand that was hanging straight down towards the floor but he was too tired to lift it up to his lips. I don't think he moved during the entire trip back! Meanwhile his son Kevin, N5DX, looked ready to go another 24 hours in a contest.

Finally we got back to the hotel and after I found Susan in our room, we went to the restaurant for dinner. She told me about having fun operating with Gary's little radio and she had managed to work 38 stations in the IARU and 11 of those were WRTC competitors. No, she did not work my guys (see photograph on back cover).



A typical operating tent and antennas.

After dinner we went back to the room where a shower was definitely necessary for me and I settled in to relax. My plan was to just take it easy for the evening and watch the FIFA World Cup Football final that was to start about 10pm, however, I fell asleep well before it started!

Monday 12 July - the Awards Ceremony

We slept late and strolled into the breakfast buffet and I immediately headed for the coffee machine. I don't usually drink strong coffee, but I needed it that morning. Once I took a few sips, I was alive and awake. After breakfast I had to ask my new friend Juan, EA5RS, about

the score in the Football World Cup Final and he happily told me about the result – Spain had won. He managed to stay up and watch the whole game until the early hours, even though he had served as a referee for a team. He was very excited.

We spent the day relaxing and recovering from the contest and walked around a little to see the Atlas Park grounds. I made a few QSOs using Gary's little QRP rig. Leslie and Gary had gone off to another Moscow tour that day and Susan and I stayed at the hotel to relax. What a wonderful time we were having at the WRTC event in Russia. The Russian WRTC committee were doing a great job of organising, timing, managing and making this a great event. I don't think I had expected to have this much fun.

At 8pm we went dressed in our best to the big pavilion that had been decorated for the banquet. Our tables were covered with platters of food and bottles of wines and vodka and there was no bare spot to put down another plate! We sat with fellow Texans and with new friends from Idaho, Auba and Indiana. We ate and drank, and then ate and drank some more! It was a feast that was more bountiful than any feast I had ever attended before.

The closing ceremony was spectacular with music, Russian singers and dancers that entertained us and the wonderful rocker-accordionist played again. The awards ceremony was interspersed with the entertainment and nothing interrupted the celebration. It was almost fitting that the host nation Russia, had the championship team this year with RW1AC and team-mate RA1AIP. The Russians were ecstatic that they had won and I was pleased to be a part of their celebration. In my view the station arrangements and set-ups were the fairest that they could possibly be. The Russians had set a new standard of station equality that will be hard to match anywhere else in the world.

I kept thinking that what I have enjoyed most about Russia have been the people. I have spoken with people on the



Judy and Marv, N5AW.



(l to r) Stefano, IK2QEI; Rich, K5NA, and Luca, IK2NCJ.

street, people on the subway, people in restaurants, people in hotels, and the volunteers at the WRTC sites and they were always pleasant and kind. Coming to Russia to meet them has been an honour. When all the wine was drunk and half the food was eaten, we went to our room to sleep.

Tuesday 13 July 13, 2010 – Atlas Park Hotel to St. Petersburg

We woke early for breakfast and goodbyes. We had so many new friends to exchange QSL cards and addresses with and last minute photographs to take. Our pick-up to take us to the train station for St Petersburg was scheduled for 9:30am but where was he? About eight of us were travelling from Domodedovo, 30 miles south of Moscow to various points in Moscow; our end point, the Leningradsky Station, was at the north end of Moscow and we had lots of time for our train at 1pm.

We were loaded into the luxurious Mercedes minibus, put on our seat belts, and settled back for a one-hour trip to the station, but when we got to the security check-point at the hotel exit, the driver was turned back to the main entrance and everyone got out of the bus and we were herded back inside the hotel. We needed proof that we had all paid the hotel bills and that we had the immigration statements for when we left the country. We already had those documents but we didn't understand the security guards questions in Russian.

Again we set off for Moscow but there was traffic, and traffic, and more traffic! Four lanes of traffic on the three lane roads, five lanes on roads marked for four lanes and buses, trucks, cars, red lights, grid lock and worry! Our driver

was the only non-aggressive one we had ever seen in Russia and was careful, sure, and slow. One fellow passenger from Estonia spoke Russian and asked the driver how much longer, explaining we had reservations on the only high speed train, the Sapsan Express, that we had already paid for and had electronic tickets.

At noon the driver said that it would take another hour and we thought we would miss the train. But, somehow, at 12.30pm we pulled up to the Leningradsky Station and our Estonian friend, ES5MC, helped drag some of our luggage up all the steps for us, and there were many steps! Russia makes little accommodation for those who cannot climb up and down stairs. Then we were in the big station with no idea where to find our train or what we needed to show to get on it. Thanks again to ES5MC who told us we needed only to bring our tickets to the train. I found the platform and we ran down to our car. There was a 10 inch gap between the train and the platform. Susan jumped over and I handed all the baggage over to her. Oh! We need to show our passports? Dig them out, show them to our car's conductor, then find our seats and relax – it was luxury.

Our Sapsan Express is first class reserved seat only, and takes 4¾ hours to travel the more than 400 miles between Moscow and St Petersburg. We had thought that our Singapore Airlines flight to Moscow was luxury but the Sapsan was better



Sapsan high speed train.

because the scenery was more interesting and we didn't have to worry about landing! I always love a train ride, even at 160 MPH. There was plenty of leg room, even for tall people, and large clean windows with sills wide enough for comfortable leaning, plus individual reading lights, train magazines and newspapers and even slippers! The rails were long welded stretches with few 'clickety clacks'.

After getting underway, the lunch service began. The first pass was an attendant who unfolded a napkin on each large fold down table from the seat back in front of you, but unlike

airline seats, the table was wide and there was plenty of room. On the next pass the attendant offered wine, soft drinks or juice and then she brought the lunch trays with real plates of salad, real cutlery, pats of butter and a wrapped up chocolate pastry. We thought that was lunch but next she asked if we wanted beef or fish! Susan had fish and I beef. The meal was good as was that chocolate pastry and after tea for Susan and a Coke for me, we relaxed for the rest of the trip. We asked the attendant to help us fill out the slip requesting a taxi meet us at the station.

Travelling by train gives you a look into a country's 'back yard' and we passed cities, small towns and tiny villages. Everywhere we saw people walking, waiting for local trains or strolling in parks. Every stream had someone fishing or swimming in and we saw houses with very neat garden plots and houses with overgrown gardens, and factories and farms. Finally we slowed down and rolled into St Petersburg and I immediately saw that it was a special place. What a beautiful city. We stepped out on the platform and found taxi #2 waiting for us and the driver managed to carry most of the baggage for us out to his car.

The cab ride from the train station to the hotel was extremely fast. I was thinking that our cab driver would make a great Formula One driver, as he wove in and out of the crowded streets of St Petersburg at 60 MPH. He drove very fast through the most beautiful city on this continent right to our hotel where he carried our baggage into the Courtyard Marriott Vasilievsky Hotel on Vasilievsky Island. I believe he may have been in a race with the other cab driver that was driving Leslie and Gary, W5ZL, from the train to the same hotel but our driver won by a large margin.

Tuesday evening, after we settled in, the four of us strolled around our part of town until we found some restaurants. We chose a Latvian restaurant and the food was excellent but expensive. I had a small salad with grilled shrimp, lettuce, tomatoes and avocados and my entree was a grilled steak. The menu didn't say what cut of meat it was but it looked and tasted like a rib eye. Yes, the steak was excellent, even by Texas standards! Nights are bright in St Petersburg in July but we were tired and went back to the hotel where we fell into bed.

Wednesday 14 July – St Petersburg

We got up and caught the Metro to the main

part of St Petersburg to catch a tour of the Peterhof, Peter the Great's summer palace outside of St Petersburg. The area of St Petersburg where the tours started was crowded with lots of buses, ticket windows and street vendors. We bought our tickets for the Peterhof at a kiosk and waited and soon someone directed us to our Mercedes minivan. I was following just behind Susan to get on the bus when suddenly a rather large guy pushed between Susan and me as she stepped up onto the minivan. I thought it was odd that someone was rude to push between us as he was unlike all the other people we had experienced in Russia. I had paid for the tickets just before that and had pushed my billfold and change, several 100 rouble notes, into my right front pocket. My billfold was at the bottom of the pocket and the rouble notes were just loose in my pocket above the billfold. The man who had pushed in front of me asked the minivan driver a question in Russian. I have no idea what he said but then, as if he were at the wrong bus, he started to leave. But instead of turning and leaving in the direction he had pushed in from, he started backing straight back into me. I immediately thought something was weird about this and tried to stand my ground against him as he moved back. I then felt something move in my right pocket, put my hand in and it wrapped around someone else's hand as I whirled around and held on! I was face-to-face with a clean cut young man who looked like he could be a college kid. My hand was wrapped around his right hand and in his hand were several of my 100 rouble notes. The only thing I could think to say was, "Hey". The young man shrugged and turned loose of the rubles as I stripped them from his fingers. As he stepped back I wish I had thought of something clever to do or say, but all I could do was point my finger at him and shout, "Pickpocket". Not exactly my cleverest moment but the young man made a gesture to me, said something in Russian, and turned to walk calmly away. I guess the moral of this story is to be careful, especially in areas where a lot of tourists congregate. Obviously the two men were working together and I had been targeted from the time I had bought the tickets and was lucky I caught them at it. This is something that could happen anywhere in the world.

The tour to Peterhof went off without a problem. The Peterhof is a beautiful place. We were in a guided group of seven people with a

tour guide who told us about the buildings we passed along the way, the history of the buildings we would see and about the new buildings under construction between the central city and the Peterhof. This is how Susan describes it, "Imagine buildings greater than life size, endless fountains, lush gardens and you are part-way to imagining Peterhof. Imagine room after room of gold leaf, stoves of blue and white tiles, carvings on the walls, parquet floors, grand halls and staircases. Now find that all this was heavily damaged by German occupation during WWII and restored after the war. It is like imagining that Disney World is real". We saw rooms with silk wallpapers with matching upholstery. When one ruler wanted a different style from the one before, she just had rooms or buildings rebuilt and redecorated. The sun was hot, the sky was blue and we were happy to eat ice cream and walk under the trees to the fountains away from the main palace.



Fountains at the Peterhof in St Petersburg.

When we got back from Peterhof about 6pm, the four of us walked to the Fontanka Canal and boarded a canal tour boat. All the commentary was in Russian but we didn't mind as we just wanted to relax and enjoy the breeze. We took lots of pictures of the Fontanka Canal and the Moika River. Afterwards we found a nice place for the four of us to have dinner; Susan and I shared a Greek Salad and a small pizza which was good.

Thursday 15 July - St Petersburg

The four of us got up and went to the Hermitage museum where Russia has many art treasures at this museum. This is how Susan describes the visit, "We took one of the city



Boat ride on the canals.

trolley buses from Vasilievskiy Island to the Hermitage. Our hotel is a sponsor of the museum enabling us to get in without waiting in the endless ticket lines. We rented audio guides; Richard and I have always found the audio guides to be a worthwhile purchase. We clutched the tiny maps that came with the audio guides and set out to see the millions of pieces of valuable art. First we had to try to avoid a temporary Picasso exhibit. Yeah, I know, we should have looked at every piece, but that's not what I came for. We found the buildings themselves as fascinating and lovely as the art they held. I tried not to want too many of the paintings I saw, but I do like the soft paintings by Murillo. People were climbing on top of each other to take cell-phone photographs of the one tiny DaVinci painting in the museum. That seemed silly to me and I didn't try to take pictures inside because we bought a picture book. We could have spent years in the museum but our eyes and brains overflowed with magnificence".

We left the museum about 1pm and walked to a river boat that was to go up and down the



Looking down a canal from a boat on the Neva River.

Neva River. Susan and I had lunch on the boat, a nice Caesar salad and afterwards walked to a beautiful church called Church of the Savior on the Spilt Blood. The church was built to commemorate the assassination of Alexander II at that spot in 1881 and the architecture and mosaics on the exterior are overwhelming. When you step inside you look around and up and stop and gasp; every inch is covered with intricate mosaics of saints and other Biblical creatures and events, and the ceiling is high and covered with more mosaics. Like other St Petersburg churches and buildings, this Church was heavily damaged during the war and an exhibit showed some before and after views of the restoration



Facade of the Hermitage Museum.

We returned to our hotel room about 4pm and a few hours later the four of us went to dinner at our favourite Latvian restaurant where we had eaten on Tuesday evening. After dinner we said goodbye to our travelling companions Leslie and Gary, as they were getting up early the following day to catch the train to Helsinki, and from there head back to Austin. Susan and I were remaining in St Petersburg until Saturday, when we catch the fast train back to Moscow and our 10am Sunday morning flight to Houston.

Friday 16 July – St Petersburg

Our last whole day in St Petersburg and we planned to relax and visit our new friend Zoya, RA1AGN, who we had met at Atlas Park. We ate bread and butter and some cheese we bought without understanding the label; the rye bread and butter were fine but the cheese was odd – one wedge tasted of chocolate and another of something we couldn't name! About 11am we gave up waiting for Zoya's call and went out.

This was our first day to explore alone and we walked to the Metro at Srednii Prospect several blocks from our hotel. The long streets in this neighbourhood on Vasilievsky Island have names in the series 1, 2 Linea and 3, 4 Linea and 4, 5 Linea and so on. Originally the streets were planned to be canals so each side of the street has a different number, and the pavements are wide and lined with trees.

The big old apartment buildings lining the street are mostly five stories high, I don't know whether they have lifts. Each apartment building has an entry to a courtyard with most apartment entry-ways from the courtyard. The bottom floors along the street mostly have small shops for soda, water, doughnuts, etc and we could see into some courtyards; some were just paved parking and others had gardens or play-grounds. Almost every building had a dam along the edge of the roof directing any rainwater or melting snow into a big pipe running down the outside of the building and ending just above the pavement. I wondered what would happen if it rained? Even the Hermitage, decorated and gilded, had those pipes but they were painted to match the building.

Russia was in the midst of a long drought, temperatures were around 93°F (34°C) in the daytime, and it hadn't rained on us at all since we had arrived there. We went one stop on the Metro to the Gostinny Dvor, the big shopping mall, surrounded on all sides by a shady colonnade which was a relief from the sun and heat.

From Gostinny Dvor we walked to Saint Isaac's Cathedral, dedicated to the patron saint of St Petersburg. The Cathedral was surrounded by a sea of tour buses. Like the other Russian Orthodox churches we went into, St Isaacs had no pews, the worshippers stood well-separated by distance and an iconostasis from the priests at the altar. One small chapel was full of people praying and lighting candles and the rest of the church was filled with tourists like us. Various exhibits showed the construction of the church and its dome and, like most other churches we saw, restoration work was underway fixing damage done during WWII or during Stalin's era.

Susan and I started thinking of souvenir tee shirts and looked for them at Gostinny Dvor and other souvenir shops, but no luck in seeing anything we liked. By then we were tired and getting overloaded with looking so we caught

the Metro back to the island and walked back to the hotel where we rested and used the 24 hours Internet access we had bought. Something then sounded like running water, was someone above us taking a bath? No, after weeks of clear, hot and over 86°F (30°C) weather, it was pouring with rain and water did in fact pour from those roof down-spouts in rivers across the pavements. The rain soon changed to a light drizzle and we went out again to hunt for the tee shirts. As we left the lift I found a small coin saying *Republika Hrvatska 20 Lipa* from Croatia. We took the #1 trolley bus to the Hermitage where there were clusters of souvenir stands but no joy. We walked around the Alexander Column to check every stand, but because of the drizzle most were covered in plastic sheets and others had probably already gone for the day. Souvenirless we walked back to the clearly-marked (once we had figured out the code) bus stop and waited and waited for the number #1 bus. Finally it came and took us across the bridge to our island, and left us back at Srednii Prospect.

We went to Mama Roma Italian restaurant near the bus and Metro stop which our hotel concierge had recommended. It was cool, quiet, inexpensive and delicious. Back at the hotel we packed for the trip on the train back to Moscow to the Airhotel at Domodedovo and found a telephone message from Zoya, RA1AGN, but it was too late at night to return his call. I hope she comes to Texas one day so we can repay her hospitality. We ordered a taxi for 11am the following morning to take us to the train station, we didn't want to be late for the train this time!

Saturday 17 July – St Petersburg to Domodedovo Airhotel in Moscow

Our last morning in St Petersburg and although there are more sights we could have seen, after two weeks of travel our feet were tired and things were starting to run together. We ate the last of our bread and cheese for breakfast in our hotel room and our taxi came right on schedule to take us to the train station. Cars and taxis cannot get too close to the station because it is already surrounded with cars and taxis and so the driver helped us get our baggage up the steps to the station. The information about our train was easy to find, but we were early and our train was not there yet and so we took turns looking around at the shops; I sat with the baggage while Susan looked for tee shirts, then

she sat while I looked, but still no tee shirts! While we waited Susan talked about what she had liked best in St Petersburg: the outside of buildings with decorative mouldings and statues, the inlaid floors in the Peterhof and the Hermitage, the great silver cisterns in the museums and the silk wall coverings in the Hermitage. Her favourite was the mosaics in the Church on the Spilt Blood. We talked about how nice all the people were, how no one laughed at her attempts to pronounce words in Russian and how clean the streets were. Why were there so many churches and why were so many draped in scaffolding? Is there a resurgence of religious feeling there? Many people in the street were wearing crosses and crucifixes and, according to the newspapers in English, there is an intensified religious feeling in Russia today.

Our train, the Sapsan Express, glided into the station. Sapsan is Russian for peregrine falcon, a fitting name for this fast sleek train. We had the same seats as before but this time we were riding backwards, which was not as awkward as we had expected. Again we relaxed, ate a great lunch on the train, and watched the scenery pass by. Several stations we passed had preserved old steam engines on display.

We arrived in Moscow right on time and were met by the driver we had arranged before we had left Atlas Park and he knew where to find the ramps and avoid the steps that we had struggled with when we had travelled on our own four days earlier. He drove us quickly and efficiently to the Airhotel at Domodedovo, within sight of the airport terminal building. Driving through Moscow and the country between it and Domodedovo felt like old home to us.

The Airhotel was to be our home for only one night. Our guide book called it Spartan which was kind. Our room was tiny and hot, too hot. We went down to the desk and asked if they had air-conditioned rooms and for an extra 500 roubles, we moved to a room on an air-conditioned corridor. Our room here was supposedly air-conditioned but we couldn't make it cool! By now we were very tired and, as it was only for one night, we stayed there. Dinner was a buffet at the hotel and the food was plentiful. Susan had vegetables and kasha and I ate mashed potatoes with beef tips and gravy. We then made sure everything was ready for our flight home the next day and went to bed hot and tired.

Sunday 18 July – Domodedovo to home

We woke up early ready to go home and got to the hotel breakfast buffet about 15 minutes before it was scheduled to open. People were already eating and so we went in and examined the offerings. There was hot and cold cereals, objects that looked like shrunken bagels, hot cakes, bread to toast, perhaps scrambled eggs and the ubiquitous sausages. Hot water and instant coffee was a surprise after the good strong coffee everywhere else. Our bags were packed and ready and the hotel minibus drove us the half mile to the airport.

Inside the airport we found Terry, N4TZ, and his daughter, Teresa, waiting in a crowd to check baggage. They were travelling on the same Singapore Airlines flight to Houston before going onto their homes. We casually went up to say hello and somehow managed to end up in line in front of them! We checked our bags full of dirty laundry and carried the WRTC souvenirs in our carry-on, which were more important.

Our visas were checked and our immigration papers were accepted and we moved on to security. We were each given a little packet of blue plastic booties to put on over socks or bare feet. What a good idea. Susan passed through the security scan with no problems but I had to empty my pockets. Once through security we relaxed; I don't know why we always worry about security, we have never smuggled anything or done anything suspicious but we do worry. It was our last opportunity to look for tee shirts and we found several with the map of the Moscow Metro system on, one for each of us, and I also found one with the Romanov double-headed eagle.

Singapore Airlines checked our passports and boarding passes and we switched seats with each other because I had the window seat and Susan the aisle seat – the airline had somehow got our seat assignments backwards. Susan needs the window seat because she gets claustrophobia in the plane and I like the extra leg room of the aisle seat. Some unfortunate single traveller usually gets stuck between us but if we are lucky, the middle seat stays empty. This flight was almost full and a young girl sat between us. A flight attendant came by as we got seated and asked if we were in the right seats. We said yes, but that we had swapped and she asked if we would change back, which we declined to do. The head attendant then came and asked if we

would move and again we said no. Finally he said we must move because the girl in the middle was an unaccompanied minor and couldn't sit next to a male. We could move closer to the front in an exit door row with much more leg room and a window and as I didn't think we had any choice at that point, we moved.

The exit row did have much more leg room and we could stretch out, but the window was in the emergency exit, really small, forward of the seat, and looked only at the wide wing. Oh, well, it was a nice trip and we were going home. Susan sat at the windowless window seat and I sat in the middle next to a friendly Vietnamese gentleman who was returning to his home in Houston after visiting relatives in Saigon. This flight actually originated in Singapore and flew to Moscow before continuing on to Houston.

US Customs and Immigration in Houston was no problem and were only asked if we had brought back any caviar, which we hadn't! Terry, N4TZ, who had sat further back in the plane, asked what had happened to us at the start of the flight as he thought security had dragged us off and back to Lubyanka (KGB HQ) for life! We said goodbye to Teresa and Terry and went to catch the short flight to Austin. It was great to see our son David, KT2Z, waiting for us at the Austin airport. We rounded up our baggage and David took us home where we found the grass around the house was about a foot deep!

WRTC was a wonderful experience. Susan and I are both ready to pack for Bulgaria, Boston or wherever it is next. *(It has since been decided that WRTC-2014 will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, USA - G4BUE.)*

A Chance FOC Meeting in Ohio by Bill Gaines, AD8P

On 15 October 2010 my wife and I went out to dinner. One of her favourite restaurants to visit is a small Mexican family owned spot in Lima, Ohio which is our county seat and about 15 miles south of our QTH.

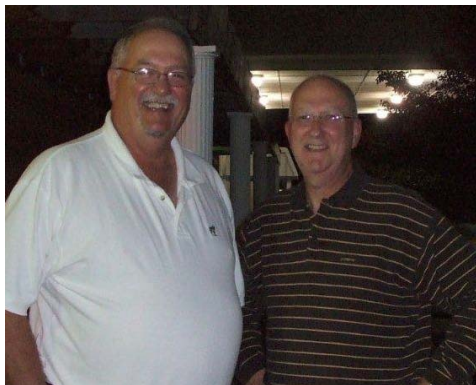
After a very enjoyable dinner we left the restaurant to return to the truck to go back home. Oh no! There was a note attached to the windshield. The first thought that crossed my mind was that someone had sideswiped my almost pristine Chevy truck and left a note telling me it was somehow my fault for parking near the door.

I read the note and what a pleasant surprise. It was from Ron, K5XK, who I later discovered to be inside the same restaurant we had just left. Ron and Debbie had followed the instructions from their GPS system searching for a non-chain family style restaurant. They had left Logansport, Indiana and went to visit family in western Pennsylvania and were on their way back to Logansport, when they felt the need to stop at a restaurant visited by us maybe once a month, and also on the particular day and time we were there. How about those long odds? What a delightful visit we had. The food was pretty good too!

Writing a week later, Ron says, "Debbie and I made an absolutely random and totally

unexpected encounter with fellow FOC member AD8P, and his wife Brenda, on our way back to Arkansas from Pennsylvania after visiting a new grandbaby in the family. What an interesting and chance meeting.

"The photograph below, which one of our wives took, shows Bill on the left and me on the right outside the restaurant. Great fun...and yes, great food, too!"



The 2011 FOC Con-Din by Baldur Drobница, DJ6SI and Hartmut Buettig, DL1VDL

We are pleased to announce the 2011 FOC Continental Dinner will be held 10/12 June in Dresden, Germany at the Dorint Hotel Dresden, Grunaer Strasse 14, 01069 Dresden; tel +49 351 4915-0; fax +49 351 4915-0; web-site <<http://www.dorint.com/en/hotel-dresden>>. The hotel is located 10 minutes walking distance from the city centre.

Hotel Booking

We have been able to reserve 15 double bed rooms (this number can be increased up to 28 April). The special FOC booking code is 'CondinFOC' (or reservation number 727846) via email to <Anke.Boehmer@Dorint.com> or fax to +49 351 4915112. Please also let us (Baldur: <dj6si@t-online.de> and Hartmut: <dl1vdl@gmx.de>) know when you book.

A 'Standard' room is 22m², a double bed and a view of the town (road). The 'Standard' daily price is 109€ per double bedroom, free cancellation until 24 hours before arrival.

The 'Flex Rate' is 93€ per double bedroom, reservation only with a credit card, the card will be charged with the costs for one night when booked, free cancellation until three days before arrival. The 'Early Bird Rate' is 82€ per double bed-room, no cancellation, credit card only and must be paid when ordered.

'Comfort' rooms (the same standard but with a view to the garden) add 10€ per day and category!

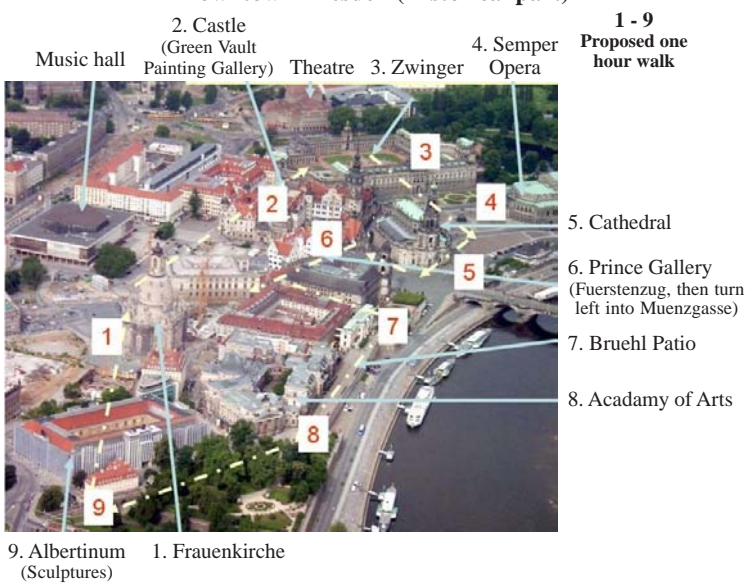


The rooms are available after 3pm (arrival) and the latest check-out is 12 midday. You may arrive earlier and/or depart later using the comparable good 'CondinFOC' booking reference.

An extensive German breakfast is available for an additional 16€ per person and the use of the sauna, swimming pool and whirlpool is free. WLAN (Internet) is available for 5€ per hour and a public garage for 11€ per day (or off-street parking nearby).

Please don't hesitate to ask either of us if you would like to have any additional further information.

Downtown Dresden (Historical part)



Travel

The airport has S-bahn connection and tram (35 minutes) (ask for assistance). The price for a return flight from Heathrow Airport (London) to Dresden with Lufthansa on 10/12 June 2011 is 124.15€/per person (including taxes).

Program

Friday 10 June: 6pm guided tour (maximum two hours in English) of the historical city of Dresden; by bus or by boat is also possible, (let

us know if you would like that) – please see route and places on page 21).

Saturday 11 June: guided tour by bus and steam ship to the Saxon Alps returning to the hotel about 5pm for the Con-Din at 7pm. We will specify the menu in the spring; the Dorint Hotel is well known for good German home-style cooking, please plan about 25€ for the ConDin).

Sunday 12 June: brunch and for those who can stay longer, individually guided walking tours (Meissen and Moritzburg).

Obituary Hugh A. Turnbull, W3ABC

Republished from The Washington Post, 10 October 2010

Submitted by Fred Laun, K3ZO

Hugh A. Turnbull, 93, who helped oversee satellite-tracking stations for NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in Greenbelt, and who was also an amateur radio expert, died 14 September at Crofton Care and Rehabilitation Center in Anne Arundel County. He had pneumonia.

Mr Turnbull worked for the federal government for 37 years and was a NASA employee for 16 years. At Goddard, Mr Turnbull was responsible for administering and technically supporting its global data-gathering network. In his work with satellite-tracking stations, he was often called on to assist NASA stations overseas. He retired in 1998.

Aside from his government service, Mr Turnbull had a passion for radio. Before and after World War II, he worked with the Radio Intelligence Division of the Federal Communications Commission in New York. He moved to College Park in 1955 and worked as a broadcast engineer with Voice of America until joining NASA in 1961.



Over the years, Mr Turnbull was Vice President of the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), President of the Goddard Space Flight Center Amateur Radio Club and a fellow of the Radio Club of America. His call sign was W3ABC.

In the 1990s, Mr Turnbull was honoured by the Smithsonian Institution for his years of volunteer service with NN3SI, the National Museum of American History's amateur radio station.

Hugh Alexander Turnbull was a native of Rahway, New Jersey. He was a 1938 graduate of Lafayette College in Pennsylvania and received a Masters Degree in physics from West Virginia University in 1940. He was a Navy veteran of World War II. His wife, the former Mary E. 'Betty' Spillane, died in 2006. Survivors include two children, Mark Turnbull of Philadelphia and Karen Shangraw of Crofton; and two grandsons.

(Hugh joined FOC in December 1974, member 1253 - G4BUE.)

Welcome to New Members

by Ivan Davies, G3IZD

James Noe, K6AR, (1942)

Jim was first licensed at the age of 15 as WN6CWD in 1962 after mentoring by W6BAM. He quickly upgraded to WB6CWD after only a couple of months and was then very active DXing and contesting until 1968 when he focused onto engineering studies, leading to a career in semi-conductor sales and marketing, plus acquisition of an MBA degree. Jim had the call N6SO from 1977 to 1996 when he changed to K6AR.



Jim lives with his wife Grace on a good site some 1¼ miles from the Pacific Ocean with good long-path, plus short-path, into Europe take-offs. The current station comprises FT-1000MP/Mk5 with a Force12-C3 at 72 feet and a WARC bands rotary dipole at 82 feet. With working and family raising now completed, Jim is planning upgrades to his station and antennas. He also says that avidly chasing DX is no longer his prime interest and now prefers longer, more interesting QSOs on CW.

Charles (Chuck) W. Sanders, NO5W, (1944)

Chuck was originally licensed as KN5MPM in 1957, but following an upgrade to K5MPM, it was allowed to lapse in 1968. In 1984 the presence of a special event station in New Orleans encouraged him to take all the examinations and code tests, at one hit, at the local FCC office and obtain the Extra call NO5W. This was no doubt a fine achievement after a 16 years



layoff. The call phonetics seemed to spell 'Need Only 5 Watts' which led to the acquisition of the Heathkit HW9 QRP transceiver which, with wire antennas, provided a great many late night CW chats, notably some with G3FXB who provided much advice and encouragement.

Chuck is a Professor of Electrical Engineering, and latterly employed as a software engineer prior to retirement, but still produces software related to amateur radio, including a GPS-enabled item for mobile contesting and one for running pile-up competitions (see <<http://www.no5w.com>>). He is currently coordinator for the Texas QSO Party and, enjoying ragchews also, is looking forward to making more friends within FOC.

Rumen (Rumi) Stefanov, LZ2RS, (1945)

Rumi started his amateur radio activities in 1968 at his local club station LZ2KAD, and received his own in 1982. He served in the army for two years as a radio operator, following which he studied at the Sofia Institute of Communications. It was there that he joined the students radio club with station LZ1KDP, where there was much competition in sending and receiving of high speed telegraphy, and in 1981 Rumi became Bulgarian champion in this art. His first station included a home brew 45 watts CW transmitter to a Russian design followed by a TS-520X, and later by an Elecraft K1 and K2, the current rig being the K3.

Rumi has also employed a variety of antennas, the latest setup including dipoles for the lower bands and the A4S, atop a 22 feet mast above a seven storey building. With a preference



for QRP operation, Rumi has an impressive list of awards in this category, which remarkably includes 750 United States counties. He is a technician at his local radio relay and TV station and, apart from amateur radio, enjoys fishing, sport tourism, table tennis and reading and improving his knowledge of English, Russian and Japanese. Finally looking forward to many contacts with members, he says that Morse sounds to him like good classical music.

Hans-Christof (Tof) Schmige, DJ6ZM, (1946)

Tof started his amateur radio career in 1961, with some pauses brought about by his business of marketing furniture, and for the last ten years has confined his activity solely to CW, his favourite band being 40 metres. He enjoys using

many different keys from single/dual paddles to Vibroplex and to a side-swiper. His antenna array is mounted on the flat roof of the family business, and the station is assembled primarily for contesting, welcoming less well equipped amateurs to visit and



operate from his station for general QSOs and also for contests. Tof expresses his pride in being recommended for membership of FOC and looks forward to many enjoyable QSOs with fellow members.

FOCAL

Writing on 19 October, Jim says, “Although I have been into QRP on and off over the years, I finally got around to joining the G-QRP Club; I wish now that I had done so long ago. The Spring issue of *SPRAT* encouraged me to get the Elecraft K1 and K2/QRP from the shelf and dust them off. In the last three months I have had so much enjoyment, particularly operating /P, and it has reawakened my interest and reminded me of what real amateur radio can still be. I have found it is a good idea to call CQ QSO, and calling ‘CQ QRP’ at a modest speed to be very effective; it keeps the ‘heavyweights’ away and encourages another QRPer to try.

“From late August until mid-September, GM3JKS and his partner were on holiday in France in their camper van and every day, in the early evening, Frank and I kept a sked on 7027kHz with remarkable success, even when

they were right down in southwestern France. On only four occasions did we miss out, two when I was unavailable and two when perverse propagation defeated us, otherwise signals were often Q5 and S4 -S8. We were both using a K2 about eight watts. Frank was using a vertical antenna and I an inverted vee dipole. It reminded me just how effective a few watts can still be, even on today’s bands.

“In the photograph (*on the back cover - G4BUE*), I am using an Elecraft K1 and paddle, and a 12 volt gel-cel. The antenna is a very light weight 40 metre dipole carried on a short telescopic tripod telescopic mast with a fishing pole extension about 15 feet. The location is usually the local village cricket field, which I have all to myself during the week and Boswell, my loyal companion, is sitting under the operating table.”

FOCAL

Nigel, G3TXF, and Roger, G3SXW, were QRV 16/ 17 October as SV5/G3SXW and SV5/G3TXF, and 18/ 19 October as SV9/G3SXW and SV9/G3TXF. They made 450 QSOs from the Hotel Pylea on Rhodes (SV5) and 1090 QSOs from the Rinela Beach Hotel on Crete (SV9), all 20 metres CW. The photograph shows Roger operating as SV5/G3SXW with his K2 and ETM-9 keyer running a CW pile-up on 20 metres in amongst the WAG Contest. The antenna was a 20 metre dipole strung from the hotel roof down to the ground – *thanks photo G3TXF*.



Contesting

by Allen Singer, N2KW

'A well-rounded operator can do it all'

Dead of Winter. Contest season. Snow on the ground tells you that this is no time to be working in the garden; let's hope the antenna work you did last summer will hold until spring, at least. QRN is *way* down. Now is the time for the LF bands, especially 160 metres (Top Band), which is so quiet now! It isn't too early to start planning for the Marathon. Top Band and the Marathon will be the topics we will visit this month.

I get a kick out of those who insist on saying, "The Marathon is not a contest!". Let's see – the event is scored; there are four different sections, each has a winner; there are plaques awarded to the highest score for each continent, and certificates for runners-up who achieve at least 50% of the winner's score. Then too, there are the 'All-time records' that are carefully preserved.

It sure sounds like a contest to me! But it is a *special* contest, because all of the competitors are friends. It is a contest that you can work everyone on the band if you are too fast, so slow down a bit and chat. The winner will be the one who spends the most time in the chair, not the flash-in-the-pan who runs 300 stations in an hour, and then goes QRT.

As far as I know, the Marathon is unique, in that it rewards (heavily) both five and six-band QSOs. If you haven't realised it already, it is those five and six-band contacts that will determine the winner! Your operating strategy will have to maximise those bonus points, if you want to prevail. But exactly *how* does one go about doing this? I am sure that there are *many* answers, but here is one that I have found successful. Before I reveal it, I must make the disclaimer that this strategy is only useful for USA members, and that other parts of the world will have their *own* techniques for maximising score.

This tip is about how to conduct yourself during the first 20 or 30 minutes of the Marathon. At that time of day, USA members would find their best rate on 20 metres. Europeans would probably find their best rate on 40, or even 80 metres, where they can work each other. But I open up on 10 metres and stick it out on that

band for the first 10 or 15 minutes. After the first 15 minutes, you will find me on 15 metres, again only for 10 or 15 minutes. The stations that opened up on 20 metres have (easily) twice as many stations worked at the end of the first hour! Why don't I go where the rate is?

I will tell you why! Because the stations that I worked on 10 metres, are the *same* stations that QSY to 15 metres, and it would appear that anyone who makes it into both the 10 and 15 metre log, ends up being a five or a six-bander by the time the weekend is over! Remember, this contest is about *bonus*, not about *rate* (FOCQP is about *rate*).

Have you ever noticed how frantic the last hour of the contest gets? People gravitate to 40 metres and ask others to QSY to whatever band is needed. But propagation doesn't always co-operate, which brings us to our second tip: don't wait until the last hour to fill needed bands – it is *never* too early to QSY. It is the higher frequencies that are difficult. Concentrate on 10, 15 and 20 metres during the daytime, they will be closed after dark. If you have someone on 10 and 15, move them to 20 while you have conditions.

It is a funny thing, but many of our members don't want to QSY unless you already have them on four bands. This is almost always a mistake. There are three day-time bands and three night-time bands. You need to fill three in daylight, and three after dark. This means moving someone with as little as two bands in the log. Think about it! Wouldn't it be grand to come to 40 metres in the last hour, only to find that every single station you hear is already a five or a six-band? Don't be frustrated that you can't make more points – what you are hearing shows that you did *very* well in the contest!

There is an expression amongst East Coast (USA) testers, "There's *no* metres like 10 metres", and it's true! Because the skip zones are so small on 10 metres, because the ionosphere is such an efficient reflector when the MUF gets



that high, because the band is large enough to find a truly clear frequency, you will find your best rate on 10. But again, the Marathon is about *bonus*, not *rate*, and you *need* to work someone on 10 metres if they are to become a six-bander. This means checking the band often, calling CQ even when you don't hear any activity. It takes very little to slide up from 15 metres, and you can be back on 15 quickly, if 10 isn't co-operative. Sometimes the openings are very short; often, it seems that 10 opens on Saturday, but not on Sunday! Make hay while the sun shines! Don't expect it to be as good the next day, it seldom is!

Likewise, you may not have much of a signal on 160 metres, but you *must* make QSOs on that band if you are to have any six-banders and frankly, it is *much* easier to log a five-bander that includes 160 metres than one that includes 10 metres. It is frustrating to make the fourth band on Sunday and to then realise that there will not be any opportunities to fill any other bands because you had to do *that* on Saturday! Unless you have a hungry pile-up on frequency, QSY when asked!

I have always known that *some* sleep is better than *no* sleep, but in recent years I have been taught about sleep cycles. The human body gets its maximum rest when you sleep in 90 minute periods. I go to sleep shortly after European sunrise (0730z) and get back on the air by 1000z. I do this both nights and find that I have abundant energy when the contest is over! Again, I must remind you that those times are optimised for *my* QTH, and that your times might vary considerably.

Keep track of your scores. Each year should be a higher score than the year before. You are only competing with one person - yourself. You can appreciate someone else's stellar performance that way. You can feel good about someone's victory, even feel that you were a part of that victory (provided you worked them!). You cannot be a 'good sport' and a 'sore loser' at the same time.

The choice is completely yours. Do you want to be angry because someone else did well? Do you want to stay up all night figuring what you would have/should have/could have done, or do you want to smile at someone else's outstanding achievement, and then truly mean it when you tell them they, "Did great" The choice is yours alone.

Whilst preparing this column, I felt a European perspective was needed, and so I asked G4BJM to put a few words down that summarised the Marathon from *his* end. Fraser's observations are reprinted here verbatim and I find it amazing, yet quite plausible, that we see so many things the same way! Thank you Fraser!

"Since I joined FOC in 1990 I have taken part in the Marathon each year, from three different locations. I am fortunate in being fairly central in southern England, which gives me an advantage when making five and six-banders with G stations, particularly during years of low sunspot activity.

"One of the fun parts of the Marathon is moving or following stations around the bands, as propagation changes to different parts of the world. To enable rapid band changes I use a band decoder/antenna selector (see *TS-940S Antenna Switching*, page 45 of *FOCUS* 15), an auto-band changing amplifier, and PC logging linked to the radio. EI5DI's *Super Duper* (SD) logger caters superbly for the Marathon. With this setup all that is needed is to enter the QSY frequency on the PC, and the log and station are instantly on the new band ready for action. I key with the paddle most of the time, although using the PC or a memory keyer is handy for CQing.

"It is important to maximise QSOs on the more difficult bands when propagation is available, aiming towards an even spread of QSOs across the bands. Computer logging makes it easy to keep track of who you have worked on which band; it's easy to lose track when hopping round the bands using paper logging and/or tick sheets, especially when tired. Again, *SD* is excellent for showing missing band slots; convert as many four-banders to five or six-banders as possible.

"Also, when tuning the bands often you hear the FOC number being given rather than the call, tapping this into *SD* gives the callsign and name, along with which bands that station is needed on. This speeds up the *Search and Pounce* process. Incidentally, *SD* produces a fully scored and documented log, but even so, I use G3WGV's excellent *Marabella* program as a final check and to submit the log.

"The Marathon isn't so called for nothing; to achieve a high score you need staying power. Much has been written on techniques for staying

Top Band restrictions and known bad frequencies. (Up-to-date as of December, 2010)

Good frequencies: (AVOID THE DX WINDOW 1830-1835 KHz!)

1800-1808.5 1811-1817 1821-1823.5 1824.8-1826.5 1830.5-1831 1832.5-1834 1835-1835.5 1837.5-1838.5 1840.5-1844.5 1845.5-1849.5



|<==== JA TX Segment ==>| |<==== EA, EA6, AF 1830-1850 ==>|

|<==== EU, EX, EY, EZ, UJ, UR, 4J, 4L ==

|<====Most of Europe 1810 -1850KHz. =====>

Known bad frequencies:

1809-1811, 1817-1820.5, 1823.5-1824.7, 1827-1830, 1831-1832, 1834.5-1837, 1839-1840, 1845, 1850 KHz

awake in contests, from ‘banking sleep’ beforehand, to ‘power naps’, what to eat and drink, and what to avoid. That’s a whole subject in itself.

For myself, I always used to operate through the first night, then sleep on the second night between about 0100-0500z, when things are pretty quiet anyway. I did once attempt to stick at it the whole 48 hours, but ended up in a zombie like state and fell asleep anyway! In recent years I have adopted a more relaxed approach, and take a nap when I feel tired. Although less competitive this works pretty well. After all, it is supposed to be enjoyable. The main thing is to be active and alert for the best periods of propagation and activity.

“The Marathon is FOC’s premier operating event, so it would be great if all members would make an effort to be active for at least an hour or two. Some members are anti-contest, but for most, the Marathon isn’t a competitive event, and rag-chews or short chats are not uncommon, so please join in and say hello.”

Top Band – 160 Metres

I have lived in New York City all of my life. Growing up, it was only the very few fortunate radio amateurs, that actually had rotary antennas. Often with an antenna only ten feet above the roof, they still heard (and worked) stuff that we could barely tell was in there. Low frequencies were regarded as only being suitable for traffic nets or pig farmers.

It wasn’t until I joined the multi-operator team at K1TTT that I realised that there was lots of DX to be had on LF, provided you had the room for a decent antenna. In addition to lacking the space for a proper transmitting antenna, cities are noisy. Noisy from an RF point of view. You can hear two or three layers of DX under that urban noise, once you get out in the countryside. Top Band quickly became my favourite, once I experienced it with full-sized antennas. (K1TTT has an inverted-el, an inverted-vee [apex at 197 feet !] and a full Rosette of Beverages.) Antennas will be the subject of a future article.

There are problems that arise on 80 and 160 metres that you rarely see elsewhere. One of the biggest problems here, is that you can hear most of the stations calling the DX. Not only can you *hear* them, but they are *all* louder than the DX. Sometimes it seems that they *all* want to be the

last one calling, and the pile-up just goes on and on. More than one DX station has simply given up when subjected to this, because it is frustrating to come back to someone, and the callers don’t even slow down! ‘Split’ (duplex) operation is one possible solution, but in a small and crowded band, ‘split’ is a luxury that is difficult to justify. I have found another solution, one that I have never seen in print before.

It all started with an audio filter called FL-1 by Datong (an English manufacturer). The FL-1 gave me excellent selectivity, but had an unacceptable insertion loss. Perhaps the headphones that I was using with FL-1 compounded the problem. Then I found out about the FL-2, that has an audio amplifier built in, probably to avoid the pitfalls found in the FL-1.

I use both! The FL-1 goes in line first, and delivers a pre-filtered low level signal to the FL-2, which then filters it some more and boosts the level back to ‘normal’. When I crank both those filters down, my selectivity is about 10Hz. I can copy signals 40-50dB below the QRM, provided they are 10Hz removed from the desired signal. I hear the DX come back to me, give him his report, and move on, without the pile-up losing intensity.

Up until now, nobody knew how I was able to hear the DX under the ‘dogpile’. If the DX is S5, it doesn’t matter how big the pile-up is, I will hear him when he transmits!

I touched on this in my last *Contesting* column in *FOCUS* 84, but it bears repeating – sunrise and sunset in the target area is when you want to be on 160. From the East Coast of the USA, European sunrise is something everyone should experience at least once! Want to log a rare Pacific multiplier on Top Band? Be there at his sunset! Otherwise, you are probably better off on 40 metres.

Frequency selection on Top Band is less than obvious. US stations are allowed 1800-2000kHz, but CW is rare above 1860kHz, and many Europeans/Africans are not allowed below 1810kHz. That leaves 1810-1860kHz, which is only 50kHz and of which 5kHz is reserved for weak signals (the ‘DX Window’ 1830-1835kHz). I have always had better luck finding a clear frequency above the ‘DX Window’ rather than below it.

Radiation angle (‘take-off angle’) is probably even *more* important than Azimuth. What? –

I'll say it again. Take-off" angle is probably more important than azimuth. This means that if you cannot get your antenna up a half-wave, you had better use vertical polarisation. The 'lobes' on a vertical are *exactly* where the 'nulls' are on a horizontal antenna (provided the feedpoint is at the same height). If you understand this fact, it becomes obvious that you need two complimentary antennas, one vertical and the other horizontal. If you only have room for one, make sure that it is a vertical (remember, this is about 160 metres!).

Unfortunately, there are other signals on Top Band that we have to work around. There are drifting fish-nets, each one with a radio beacon attached, so the Captain can find it! Why they are all on 160 metres is a mystery to me, but I don't want to be on the same frequency, trying to work a station that hears the fish beacon at S9! Fortunately, most of these intruders are on exact kilohertz channels (eg 1832kHz, 1827kHz, etc).

Strong broadcast stations can mix with each other, and the signal can be the sum, difference, as well as the fundamental frequency. But these too, are on even frequencies. If you learned nothing else from this article, remember *never* to operate on an even frequency! You will do far better on 1821.5kHz than you would on

1820kHz. Even if you don't hear the QRM, it doesn't mean that it isn't loud in JA.

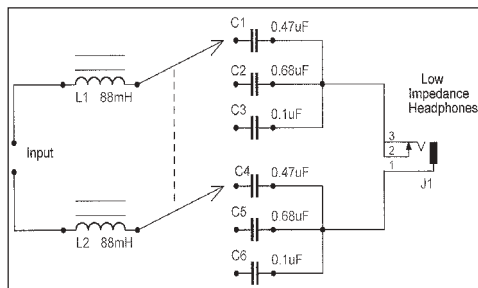
I have compiled a chart (see page 27) that shows 'good' and 'bad' frequencies, but I must warn you that the chart is only good for this current (2010/2011) season. Intruders come, and intruders go, and they don't announce their moves. The information in the chart was obtained the hard way, and will quite likely be useless in a year or two.

There is a program called *DX Atlas* which has the best grey-line display I have ever seen. It isn't free though. The *NIMM* software does have a free grey-line program, it just isn't as clear. You really need to display the grey-line on your computer screen, at the operating point. It is truly amazing to watch the sunrise creep across Europe, and hear how stations disappear once they are in the light. Stations that were only working to their east, now hear you, even though you are west of them, simply because the stations that are to their east are no longer audible. Not only do they hear you, but they hear you well (very well, as in S9+). You just have to be in the right place at the right time.

I hope that there was something in this Top Band article that will help you find 'the right place at the right time'. I suspect it will now be harder to find an FL-1 or FL-2 filter though!

A Simple Audio Filter by Colin Turner, G3VTT

Here is another rainy day project that might be worth playing with. You will need two 88mH toroids, the sort that W3NQN used in his audio filter of many years ago.



I read somewhere on the Internet, I think it was the Drake reflector, that a simple series tuned

circuit using a toroid with a high value capacitor could be used to clean up the audio in a receiver with hum. I wanted a filter to use on my Corsair II and was surprised at the pleasant tone it gave.

Having two toroids, I decided having two toroids and an ancient double-pole three-way switch, I could work out some values to give some useful curves.

According to my schoolboy maths, these are 360Hz, 530Hz and 780Hz. Don't forget this a low impedance unit and will slip in line between the wireless and your shiny modern 8 ohm headphones.



The TW MagPad Paddle

by Vic Abell, W9RGB

One day in a QSO with Tom Withers, G3HGE, I mentioned a USA paddle maker had told me he wasn't using magnets for tension on his paddles, because, "Magnets are tricky". Tom must have taken that as a challenge or a matter of curiosity, because the next thing I knew, he had modified one of the spring-tensioned paddles he had made for himself, to use magnets instead of springs. It was so successful that he soon made two for Rob, MØTIX. I was not far behind. In all I believe Tom made six prototypes in addition to his own and because of the magnets, the name MagPad became its obvious designation.

Tom was kind enough to send me my prototype MagPad when he visited his daughter in Virginia in late March 2010. I was amazed at how good it looked and performed. To test it, I put it in place of the Begali Signature that I had been using, and it remains there to this day while the Begali gathers dust on my shelf.



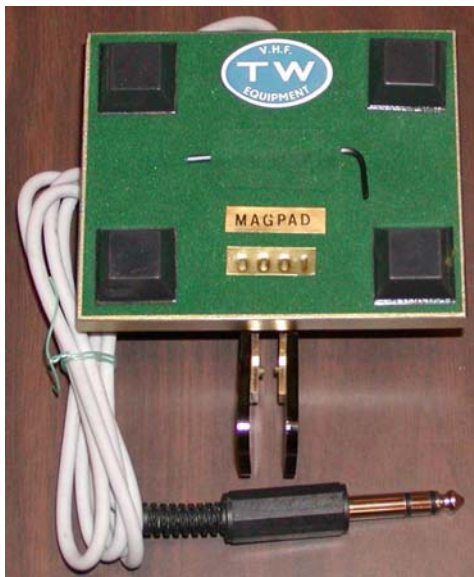
G3HGE's prototype MagPad paddle, 0003.

The photograph shows the top of my prototype, number 0003, resting on an anti-skid mat. As the picture attests, it is a beautifully simple dual-lever paddle. The base is mild steel finished in brass-effect enamel over three coats of primer and all the brass items are hand polished and lacquered. Both levers are pivoted on silver steel shafts inserted into precision ball races, the contacts are plated with three microns of 24k gold, and tensioning is done with Neodymium magnets. It weighs 2.2 pounds.

The magnets and their sliding adjustment arms are to the left in the photograph and the contacts with the original coarse threads are to the right. The heads of the hex locking screws are just visible to the left of the magnet arms and

to the right of the contact arms. Tom attached the cable and ¼ inch (6.35 mm) stereo plug during manufacture.

By the time I visited him in Virginia in April 2010, Tom was seriously considering producing the paddles for sale. We discussed what might need to be done before then and agreed that finer threading on the adjustment screws was necessary. I also mentioned that the paddle needed a fixture on the base to retain the hex key that locks the adjustment screws in place. Those changes have been made in the production model and the hex key pouch and the base of production serial 0001 are shown in the photograph below.



G3HGE's production MagPad paddle, 0001.

The most important question to most of us is, "How does it play?" and my answer is that it 'plays' very well. It has a feel equivalent to my Begali but the MagPad base is a bit lighter. Since I have a heavy touch, (Bob, K5AY, calls me a

‘slapper’), I found I was moving it around on my operating table and so I put a piece of non-skid kitchen shelf material under it, and that stopped the movement. The mat is shown in the photograph of the prototype 0003 (Tom includes a mat with production models).

The things that make the MagPad ‘play’ well include its simple and elegant movement. The arms pivot smoothly on their silver steel shafts and ball races and the gold plating on the contacts makes them extremely reliable. The micro fine threading on the contact arms makes close settings possible and easy to achieve and the magnet arms can be adjusted to provide 10 to 60 grams of tension. The hex locking screws on magnet and contact arms preserve settings reliably. The only thing I could wish for would be a heavier base.

While constructing it, Tom aimed at a moderate price point, high enough to ensure quality components, yet low enough to make the paddle good value for money. The paddle is priced at £98 (currently \$150 US) and shipping to the US is \$25. Tom can make arrangements for USA purchasers to pay in dollars and he accepts payment via *PayPal*.

Tom carefully assembles each MagPad by hand and then thoroughly tests it. He places the purchaser’s call sign (or one designated by the purchaser) on the top and a serial number on the bottom. The MagPad is accompanied by a signed certificate of origin, an attached cord with a ¼ inch (6.35 mm) stereo plug, a hex key for locking the adjustment screws, and a non-skid mat. For more information on obtaining a MagPad, please contact Tom at <tomwithers@btinternet.com>.

Lunch in Athens with SV1AOW by John DePrimo, K1JD

Betsy and I left Rhode Island on 6 September for Rome, where we boarded the *Celebrity Equinox* on 9 September for their eastern Mediterranean cruise. The first stop was on 11 September in Piraeus, Greece near Athens, where we had arranged a land tour for the day. Prior to the trip, we had contacted George SV1AOW, with whom I have enjoyed many memorable QSOs over the years, and he agreed to meet us in Athens for lunch, making the trip from Marathon for the day.

The land tour schedule was not rigorously set because of the many variables such as traffic, but following the trip to the Parthenon, we found ourselves getting off the bus in Athens around 1pm local time. Thank goodness for cell phones; we were able to contact George to let him know when and where to meet us.

Departing the bus and finding George was really simple because of the *FOC Call Book* and the other pictures available and the instant recognition was two-way! Unfortunately, George’s wife Amalia was not able to join us due to a prior commitment with her church group.

George immediately marched us to a local eatery which he knew passed muster with respect to authentic Greek food and drink. There we enjoyed a large serving of moussaka that was truly outstanding, a Greek salad and local Mythos beer. Needless to say, both the conversation and the company were outstanding!



FOCAL

Congratulations to Mike, G3IAF, who won the John Donnington Trophy for winning the UK Entrants Restricted Section in the RSGB’s 2010 Commonwealth Contest (formerly BERU).

The photograph shows Bob, G4HZV, being presented with the trophy on behalf of Mike at the RSGB’s 2010 HF Convention in October (which is to be the venue for the FOC Annual Dinner and AGM in 2011) - *thanks G3PJT photo*.



QSOs of 60 Years Ago

by Randy Johnson, W6SJ

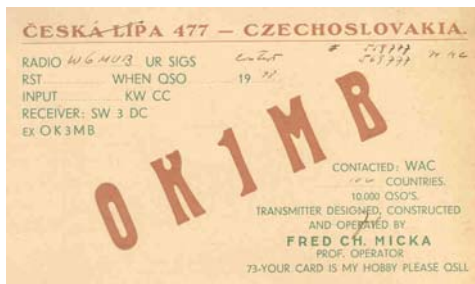
We had a nice opening to Europe on 20 metres one night in July and a callsign I heard brought memories flooding back from almost 60 years ago. The call sign was OK1MBZ and it reminded me of OK1MB with whom I had regular contacts in the early 1950s. I was licensed at age 14 as W1UNG in Connecticut and was on the air with 40 watts on 40 metres with an Army surplus ARC-5 transmitter. Although it was a low period of sunspots, my Hallicrafters S-40B could pick up signals from Europe. It seemed as if I got home from school in the late afternoon about the time when Beda, OK1MB, got on the air. Quite regularly we would do a quick signal check to assess propagation. I felt a very special and close connection with this man who was probably my grandfather's age.

I mentioned this memory to Martin, OK1RR, and he remembers Beda from when he was a young SWLer. I always thought Beda had some kind of favoured position with the Communist hierarchy and that was how he was able to obtain a licence. Of course, we didn't talk politics, particularly with someone on the other side of the 'Iron Curtain'. I remember hearing later that he was one of the 'grand old gentlemen' in the Czech amateur radio community. Martin said that, in fact, he was *persona non grata* with the Czech regime and after losing his son in 1956, he emigrated to Switzerland in the 1960s and became a Silent Key a few years later; older members may remember him as FOC 603.

This got me to thinking about the hardships endured by many radio amateurs who lived under oppressive regimes such as those behind the 'Iron Curtain'. Today, with a few notable exceptions, there are no political requirements to get a licence and everyone can get whatever station he can afford. Imagine what it was like to try to get a station together anywhere in Europe just a few years after the end of World War II, no easy feat. It must have been even tougher for people in Eastern Europe during the 'Cold War'. Perhaps it is not much different than people in North Korea or other places where, even today, they live under the thumb of a totalitarian regime.

I know I am not the only one who appreciates hearing stories about people who have the courage to persevere and succeed and triumph

in the face of adversity. I think such stories are interesting, motivating, and inspiring. So before the members of that generation disappear entirely, I thought it would be interesting to collect stories from that era. I ask that those who remember those days, certainly from Western Europe but perhaps more particularly those who grew up in areas subject to domination, might share their recollections with us.



I kept my QSL cards from that era for many years but haven't seen them for a long time. I found OK1MB's card on the Internet but wish I had my original which, as I remember, was different from this one. If anyone has one, I would sure like to see it. You can either send your stories directly to Chris, G4BUE, or perhaps send them to me, and if there are enough, I will try to edit them in some kind of coherent publication. I hope this article will jog some of our members into action. We clearly have some members with memories of that era and I hope this will encourage them to write them down and share them with us.

(Randy, and other members who enjoy reading these types of stories, might like to look at page 22 of FOCUS 2 – *The End of November in Czechoslovakia* by OK1CZ, page 2 of FOCUS 4 – *Hot Nights Running the Net* by YO3APJ and page 28 of FOCUS 73 – *The Race with Obstacles* by YO4PX, (all available on the 2010 FOC CD and the FOC Members' web-site – G4BUE.)

A 1975 Collins S-Line Recreation

by Bob Peterson, W3YY

On 5 October 2010, the apparently mint condition Collins 32S-3A arrived to accomplish my goal of acquiring the exact S-Line setup I had in 1975. This was the final piece I needed to go with the Collins 75S-3C. I will use the recreation for all QSOs in the FOCQP. There were only about 550 of the Collins 32S-3A made and, I would guess, only 400 or so still in existence. This one, after 50 years, looks like it just came off the assembly line.

The two pictures below show me and my S-Line in 1975 (left, when I was W3GZQ, and my latest S-Line and myself today. It took me a couple of years to acquire all the equipment in such excellent condition, but I am really excited to now look in my shack and see a recreation of my 1975 S-Line setup. I also have a vintage Collins 75A-4 receiver.



See my S-Line page on my web-site at <www.w3yy.com/sline.htm> for some words. I wrote that page when I was temporarily interested in doing some phone operation, but before and since then, I have been 98% CW. The S-Line does an excellent job on CW.

When I am not enjoying my vintage S-Line or the 75A-4, the main rig here is a FT-2000 and Alpha 87A.

I have two towers, 100 feet and 120 feet, with a 160 metres sloper at 110 feet; an 80 metres inverted vee at 105 feet, a two element Force 12 Magnum 240N 40 metres beam at 120 feet, a 30 metres inverted vee, and a four element Steppir at 100 feet.



FOCAL

What are (l to r) OZ1LO, OY1CT and OZ5DX doing by one of Leif's verticals (right photo)? Caen and Hans recently called on Leif to see his new 80 metre four-square and the picture shows them by one of the verticals. The picture below shows the complete four-square with Leif's tower on the right.



Obituary Frank H Bliss, G3IFB

by Derek Thom, G3NKS

It is with much sadness that we record the death of Frank, G3IFB, on 23 October 2010 after a long illness at the age of 81. Frank was born in May 1929 in Hackney, London. On leaving school he joined the telecommunications side of the GPO at Dollis Hill and then served in the RAF from 1951 to 1953 (deferred National Service).

Frank spent most of 1960 in Sydney, Australia. On his return to the UK, he joined the technical side of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and while working for them at Hanslope Park he met Betty; they were married in 1965; she predeceased him in July 2010. In the early 1960s Frank worked for the Admiralty at Bath on sonar projects and in 1966 was transferred to GCHQ in Cheltenham to work on technical procurement management.

In the mid-1970s Frank developed a life-threatening brain tumour which necessitated, at short notice, a major surgical operation and a long period on sick leave recuperating. Although he made a good recovery, and was able to return to work at GCHQ, he continued to suffer residual health problems which meant that he did not reach his earlier potential. He retired in 1988.

Frank's abiding past-time was amateur radio. He was introduced to home constructed wireless sets in the 1930s by his father, a GPO engineer and after the war he started to build his own radios for the SW bands. His first project was a regenerative receiver using 955 acorn valves and in 1949 he acquired a BC348 and became a very active SWL, collecting QSL cards from all over the world. He obtained his licence in 1952. His first transmitter was built



into a TU5B case with a 6V6 oscillator and a 6V6 PA. In 1953 he built an Elizabethan transmitter with 807s in the PA running AM and CW on 80 to 10 metres. In 1958 he joined the GC3AAE DXpedition to Jersey (now GJ) and made the first SSB contacts from the island using a KWM-1. Also in 1958 he became a member of FOC (611). While in Australia in 1960 he held the callsign VK2GP and was active on HF with a DX40. He was an RSGB QSL Bureau sub-manager in the 1960s.

Frank's main interest in amateur radio was working DX. He had an enviable DXCC record; his all-time confirmed totals were 367 mixed, 324 CW and 335 phone. His DXCC records list such deleted calls as VK9RY, VK9GA, UN1AB, ZC5AL, FQ8AP, OQØDZ, 9S4CH, FQ8APO and his 32 deleted countries confirmed show he started serious DXing early in his amateur radio life. He was on the *DXCC Honor Role* but was missing three entities for top spot - KH7, P4 and 4W (Yemen). Yemen was particularly annoying because he had confirmed Aden, Kuria Muria Is and Kamaran Is, all of which now come under 4W!

Frank was one of the few Gs to hold Five-Band WAZ and he also had various RSGB Commonwealth awards. His *LoTW* account shows six pending credits, including K5K (Kingman Reef) on 30 metres that will up his CW total to 325. It is believed he only ever had a modest station. Certainly this was the case during his 44 years in Cheltenham where he had an 80/40 metres trap dipole at 26 feet (that he also used on 160 metres) and a TA33/TB3 type three-element tri-band yagi at 33 feet. He used mid-range rigs and had a small linear.

His all-time confirmed scores are: 160 metres - 61, 80m - 235, 40m - 287, 30m - 228, 20m - 339, 17m - 231, 15m - 312, 12m - 208 and 10m - 299. To have achieved all this with his modest radio station is a testimony to his skill and perseverance. He was a member of RSGB, CDXC, FOC, RAFARS. RNARS and Cheltenham ARA.

When on the air, Frank projected a BBC quality voice, and would have easily passed muster as an announcer in the days when proper English was spoken on the wireless!

Frank was a very private person, as was Betty but perhaps to a lesser extent, and at times they kept very much to themselves. They chose their closest friends sparingly, and such friends were rewarded with kind-hearted affection, good companionship and sincere concern when problems arose. They were a loving, loyal and devoted couple and spent many very happy hours in each others company. They cared greatly for each other and once they had both retired from work, were rarely apart from each other for very long.

Frank was keen on technical gadgets, often buying, or wanting to buy, the latest 'gizmo' advertised in a magazine or a newspaper. He enjoyed smoking his pipe with an enthusiasm

that his colleagues at work in the same office did not always share! He loved sporty cars and adored his last car, a top of the range Honda Civic. I suspect that if it were not for Betty's sensible restraining influence, he would have been driving fast open top sports cars well into retirement!

Frank was gentle and kind. He was always willing to offer advice and could be very generous to causes he thought worthwhile. He had a dry sense of humour and could be very quick witted, replying to banter in a light hearted, rapid fire, manner.

Frank rarely spoke of his early life or indeed the past at all; he was more interested in the today and the tomorrow. He could be very phlegmatic, rarely complaining about his problems and even in the last years of his life, when it was clear that he was very unwell, he usually made light of his condition, often looking to his future with an optimism that the rest of us found difficult to share.

Frank will be much missed, especially those of us who were lucky to be his close friends. But we all have treasured memories which will remain with us for ever.

(My thanks to Tony Woolford, G3SNN, who assisted to compile this Obituary.)

FOCAL

Writing on 23 September, W1MO says, "Here is a photograph (*see front cover - G4BUE*) of my new five-band antenna, a Force12 XR-5 being installed in August. That is Dan, K1TO, (of A-1 Tower) at the top doing the real work while I (in red shorts) shout encouragement. The XR-5 covers 20-10 metres, including the WARC bands, and is and is performing quite satisfactorily to date.

"My three element Steppir developed problems which were not easily correctible, so I opted for a less complex antenna. The problem was of my own making; I have an automatic antenna tuner - a Palstar AT-AUTO - which is very good, too good as it turns out! Normally, I didn't have the AT-AUTO in the circuit when using the Steppir. However, being human, I made a mistake and fired up at 1kW of 20 metres energy into my Steppir set for 17 metres. The AT-AUTO matched it nicely and I didn't notice

the frequency band discrepancy but the Steppir balun apparently fried before I came to my senses.

"The problem then became one of repairing the Steppir. My towers are both guyed and I could no longer climb safely (after my bicycle accident in August 2009). Fixing the Steppir therefore became a very expensive proposition, considering the cost of crane and climber for at least two days and so I decided to replace the Steppir with a conventional (all aluminium) yagi.

"If I had a fold-over tower, then I would still have the Steppir. It worked great, while it worked, but I could see fixing it this time only to have a motor go bad or some other problem in the future and more maintenance bills. So, I took the easy way out. The Steppir is now on a seven feet mast in my pasture, where I can troubleshoot it at leisure and fix it easily, and will then sell it."

QRP in Andalucia, Spain

by Pete Windle, G8VG

I had planned to take a rig to the Costa del Sol in February 2010 but bad weather prevented me from leaving my house, let alone the country, so the trip was postponed until this October. Then, for an enjoyable two weeks (12/26 October), I stayed in an hotel in Nerja, Andalucia, an attractive Spanish coastal town with all the usual attractions. The sun shone for the entire two weeks and day temperatures were 77 to 82°F.

I travelled around the region and was most impressed with the spectacular views and beauty of the Sierra Nevada and on most afternoons I managed to get on the HF bands. Ten and 12 metres were not very productive, and some local QRM was sometimes a nuisance, but generally band conditions were pretty good except for deep QSB when an S9 signal could be down to noise level in a couple of seconds.

My original plan was to take my Yaesu FT-450 but with weight very much in mind, I decided to take my ageing and trusty K2 which greatly reduced the power available to me. However, the magic ATU in the K2 meant that I could quickly switch bands, and that is something I could not have done with the Yaesu with its rather fussy internal ATU.

I used only one antenna - the MP1 'Miracle Whip'. I left my Vibroplex at home and took my Palm paddle, which again saved a lot of weight. The K2, running at 10 watts, and the MP1 looking east on the hotel balcony, worked well together. My room was on the third floor of six.



Pete's complete hotel room station.



Some of the loutish behaviour that has arisen on the bands over the past few years rather spoiled it for the serious DX hunters. At one time I found that 17 metres was full of stations sending their own callsigns, and after a while I discovered there were three or four different DX stations spaced throughout the band looking for callers 'up'. The uproar was deafening in parts of the band and it must have been difficult for the DX to decide who was calling whom. There was the usual idiot on the DX frequency sending, "callsign ?" and usual policemen who were there sending, "up up" and then the, "up urs" response from the comic! I am not surprised that amateur radio has lost its attraction to many. I just switched bands to get away from the mess. There were some DX stations who kept their numerous callers under control, and who regularly sent their callsigns, and they included Nigel, G3TXF, and Roger, G3SXW, who both managed to copy my weak signal in SV9 – thanks fellas.

Modern technology has provided us with great opportunities; it is now possible to avoid having to carefully search for the rare DX station because that information is usually displayed on the web for all to see. This results in colossal pile-ups and the mob behaviour that accompanies them. Progress? Unfortunately, we don't now use our ears and skill to find the DX, it is now there on a plate. I shall now leave my soap box!

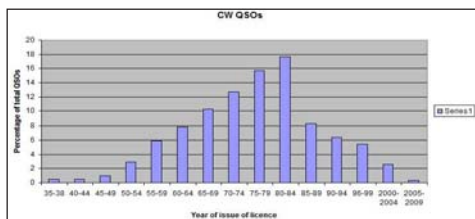
My QSOs were on all CW on the HF bands (20-10m); QRM and QRN on the bands below 20 metres made operating impossible. Total QSOs were 146, including 43 with FOC members, and 42 countries worked. QRM and QSB made QSOs with 5N7M and VQ9LA impossible, although both tried valiantly to copy me; but I was delighted to have solid QSOs with Fred, A65BD, (on two bands) and Bert, W5ZR, during the FOCQP. I had great fun with just 10 watts and a whip, and it was interesting to be able to continue working stations with five watts or less. Who needs a beam and QRO?

CW – Was There a Golden Age?

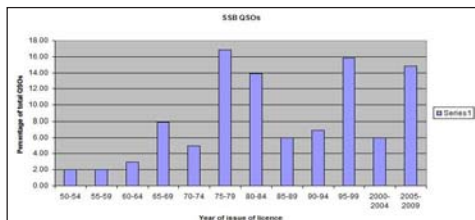
by Clive Whelan, GW3NJW



I am not sure what this proves, if anything, and it is certainly not scientifically rigorous to say the least! The recent EUHFC CW contest, with QSOs only between European stations over a 12 hour period, includes in the exchange, to the ubiquitous RST, the last two digits of the year of the issue of licence of the operator (as opposed to the station licence). I made 204 QSOs in a couple of hours on 20 metres, and the chart below details the percentage of operators worked who were licenced in each five year period from immediately pre-war to the 'noughties'.



I posted some general information to the *UK-Contest Reflector*, and said it was a shame there wasn't an SSB section of the contest for comparison. I was promptly disabused of this view by my good friend GW4BLE, an outstanding SSB operator, who had coincidentally been active in the SSB section of the contest, albeit on three bands (20, 40 and 80 metres) making just over 100 QSOs. Steve used *Writelog* and I had used *NIMM*, but after some fiddling around he produced a .csv file that I was able to import into my *Excel* spreadsheet and able to produce an equivalent chart as below for the SSB section.



What does this tell us about our hobby? I am not really sure. It is often speculated that the removal of mandatory CW proficiency would result in an inexorable decline in the mode. However, we know that is certainly not true in its most general sense. In fact CW contest

activity is probably higher today than it has ever been. Does this mean new licensees are as keen on CW as ever they were? Not necessarily, as the observed high activity levels might be due to eg the 'baby boomers' reaching retirement age and having more time and money to enjoy their passion for CW. What the figures seem to suggest is that there was a decline in the issue of licences used primarily by CW operators from the mid-1980s onwards, and this was a step change, with a continuing decline. This might be due (speculation) to a decline in the popularity of the hobby in general, which most of us are aware took place around this time, but there does not seem to be strong (or any) evidence that the removal of mandatory CW tests have caused a decline in the mode (but read on).

The SSB chart is much less clear cut, possibly due to the smaller number of sample QSOs. It is clear however that there are less early licensees active on SSB, with none prior to 1950. This might mean CW operators live longer, remain keener in old age or is perhaps just a statistical aberration. Personally I tend to favour the second possibility. With the benefit of the knowledge of the CW chart, it might also be the case that a general late 1980s decline is obvious, but it is certainly clear that the decline didn't continue into the 1990s and onwards. I believe this must be due to the relaxing of CW requirements in this era which wouldn't be surprising. So whilst the removal of mandatory CW proficiency might not have resulted in the decline that some had predicted, CW activity doesn't seem to have kept pace with that of SSB, clearly boosted by the self same licence relaxation. Since I am a 99% CW operator I have no personal perspective on this matter. Either way, does it really matter? I would contend not, and CW seems to me to be in rude health and elevated spirits!

As ever, statistics can prove almost anything so I will just continue to enjoy CW, the only 'glue' which binds me to radio!

The October FOC QSO Party

by Art Suberbielle, KZ5D

New Name, New Game Breaks all Records

This most recent FOCQP (formerly known as BWQP) broke all previous records for the number of FOC members reporting, non-members reporting, and the total number of contacts by the top participants. Could it be that the new name really attracted a lot more attention? Or perhaps did the additional publicity do the trick? Or was it the terrific propagation in most parts of the world? My guess is that all three contributed to our success!

Congratulations go to Allen, N2KW, who broke the previous high QSO total held by myself, KZ5D, from the November 2009 event with 506 QSOs. Allen chalked up an amazing 573 contacts to set the new record. But Andy, EA8CN, also beat the previous high with his 531 contacts from Europe. Just amazing results from these two! (see their stories below).

The number of FOC members reporting their results hit a new high of 105. Previously, the highest number of reports received was 98 in November 2009. Non-member activity was significantly higher with a total of 37 reports received.

Handsome new FOCQP certificates will be in the mail to the following FOC member continental winners:

N America	N2KW	573/439	Africa	ZS1EL	230/168
Europe	EA8CN	531/404	S America	P43JB	217
Asia	A65BD	277	Oceania	DU3NXX	32

Non-members turned in some amazing scores. Our congratulations to the two highest scoring non-members who finished only three QSOs apart, both being in Europe: R6AF reported 328 contacts, while F5IN had 325. In North America it was N4BP operating W1SOC with the top score of 283. CN8YR was the only report from Africa with seven QSOs and 7Z1HL had the highest report from Asia with 27. All these stations will also receive certificates.

Many of us (including myself) could not spend as much time as we would have liked in this event, much to our dismay. Set the 2011 dates on your calendar now, if not, you could miss another record breaking event: Saturday 14 May (including a special tribute to G3NOH) and Saturday 22 October.

Scores – Members

N2KW	573	439
EA8CN	531	404
G4RCG	475	332
K4LTA	466	
AA3B	425	278
MDØCCE	368	201
W1FJ	362	256
W5ZR	345	264
GØORH	340	230
N4AF	340	250
SM6CNN	335	261
W9RGB	328	263
DJ6ZM	325	219
GW3KDB	323	230
DF4BV	316	242
UU5JZ	311	254
WØUCE	300	249
DK5AD	292	221
WA1FOC	278	225

(Op: K1SA)

A65BD	277	
K4XU	277	197
MØIKE	276	242
K2QMF	275	206
KZ5D	270	203
OK1RR	255	194
SM5CCE	252	182
W4PM	250	195
LZ2RS	246	184
GW3KGV	242	201
N8DE	234	202
W3MC	231	181
ZS1EL	230	168
W3YY	225	
G4BJM	220	160
KR3E	218	180
P43JB	217	
DL1VDL	214	174
WA9AQN	214	186
F5VCT	210	161
G3LIK	208	145
9A8W	200	153
AD8P	200	
LZ1AF	200	161
G3PDH	192	135
S57NW	190	121
K3ZO	188	147
OZ4UN	184	159
K2LE	173	145
SV5/G2JL	172	171
G3LHJ	164	136
SM5COP	160	123
WB2YQH	160	141
G4HZV	141	131
SM6CUK	141	117



IKØYGY	135	98
S57WJ	134	94
K6RB	132	
G3NKS	126	101
K4OSO	126	103
LA8XM	126	117
PA5TT	126	95
G3ZGC	125	
NO5W	120	111
K5AX	116	60
KU8E	113	91
G3LNC	110	109
WG4FOC	108	87
(Op: K3TW/4)		
AC2K	107	96
W1RM	100	71
W5ZL	100	85
F3AT	99	93
GM3YOR	96	75
MØRSE	91	60
(Op: G3PJT)		
W5SG	91	80
DK7VW	87	65
K6KII	77	71
W4YE	77	71
G3SJJ	75	64
PAØDIN	75	65
G3RVM	73	67
VE3BHZ	71	67
N4XR	69	66
OZ4FF	68	60
G4AFU	61	54
W1EBI	61	45
GØTBD	57	53
OZ7YL	57	42
SM7BVO	53	40
G4BUE	52	36
W4DGJ	51	51
W7QC	50	37
G4HMC	48	47
K8NW	44	43
SMØBDS	42	41
WB4FSF	38	35
W2QM	34	32
WL7E/W7	34	28

DU3NXE	32	28	GØGKH	17	9
WB2YIP	32	28	G3ZRJ	10	10
G4PDQ	31	30	VE2AEJ	9	8
K2SG	23	23	(Op: VE3HX)		
KJ9I	20	16			

Scores – Non-members

R6AF	328	N4DSP	68	7Z1HL	27
F5IN	325	N6MA	68	PAØATG	27
W1SOC	283	DK9HE	67	DL5CL	23
(Op: N4BP)		KL5DX	63	VU2PTT	21
N8NA	176	OK1AVG	58	LZ1FJ	19
G5CL	121	NK3Y	54	OZ1DGQ	18
OK1WF	115	HB9BJL	53	YB3XM	17
SM5DJZ	111	OK2BLD	52	G6CSY	12
US9PA	106	S57U	52	LZ1VB	12
DL8PG	101	G14CFQ	50	LZ1WF	11
SM3AHM	100	AE1T	36	CN8YR	7
TF3DC	88	W7GKF	32	R2SA	4
PA7RA	72				

Soapbox – Members

A65BD: My 277 QSOs included a fantastic 146 QSOs on 10 metres!

AD8P: I thought the newly emphasised exposure of the event brought a lot more visitors to see what was going on. There were still some snide remarks to be heard as I did get a response to one CQ as “Snob”. I made nine QSPs with starred or nominated individuals. I took Paul’s list of members from his web-site and added the Starred List and Other Nominations to that list and gave them membership numbers of all zeros. By doing this I was able to say “Hello” in *N1MM* and call them by name.

G3NKS: After the event, a non-member who is keen on CW who took part in the FOCQP, told me he was rather disappointed by the all-to-brief exchanges with some FOC members who seemed to be treating the event simply as a major contest. He felt that if non-members are to be encouraged to take part, and may be encouraged into the Club, then something better than a rapid contest type exchange is desirable in their case. Even a few words of greeting and enquiry about their interest in FOC would help. My own view is that the event does seem to be turning away from the initial format of a relaxed, but major, activity day into yet another high rate contest. Is this really what we want? *Response from G3PJT:* The main issue is getting members on the air and the FOCQP certainly did that very well. As to the nature of the event, each to his own would be my view; as operator of MØRSE I had chats with folks I knew and rapid exchanges with those who wanted just the QSO/QL. As far as the

non-member is concerned, it is really up to him, if there are a lot of folks waiting then it’s a good idea to move along smartly; on the other hand if things are slow, then a chat is ok, providing it’s not a rubber stamp QSO – which doesn’t count as a chat in my view. And with propagation the way it has been, then you never know when things are going to drop out.

G4RCG: Thanks N2KW for the only five-bander with a USA station and who, along with me, was the only station to use the on-line logging that had been provided by *Getscores.org*.

K2LE: Too bad the 3830 reflector does not accept FOCQP scores – maybe we should contact WA7BNM about it for the future?

K3ZO: Thanks to GØORH for pointing out that 10 metres was open between here and G. At first no QSO was made, but 90 minutes later I did find Ken on 10. The K index was actually 4 for most of the duration of the Party, but my experience shows that a slightly elevated K index can actually increase the MUF for a while.

KR3E: I was amazed as I watched the solar A Index slide up and up during the day to a high of 18 at day’s end. Some of the European stations sounded like locals. My highlights included four-banders with ZS1EL and EA8CN (I couldn’t bust Vidi’s 10 metre pile-up with my 100 watts and G5RV) and adding seven Augies to my log.

PA5TT: I worked four members I need for my Augie (10 left now).

S57WJ: Conditions amazing; best propagation in past three years.

SM5CCE: Ten metres still almost useless up here at 59° north.

SV5/G2JL: All I did was search for Augies and found just two of 14.

WØUCE: I was amazed to see so many 10 metre spots but could barely hear but a few signals and couldn’t work anyone on 10. Hopefully the new Hexbeam going up next week will help elevate me to ‘Mort Category’ for the next FOCQP.

W1EBI: Inclusion of the FOCQP in the on-line Contest Calendar, plus the new support by *N1MM Logger*, seems to have encouraged more non-FOC member activity, which is a good thing.

W3YY: Thanks to K3CT for fine-tuning the FOCQP template for *N1MM* on Friday night. John provides such great support. He not only fixed the problems but got on and gave me a QSO! Talk about software support – this guy is fantastic.

W4PM: The little K2 did a great job. I missed having the 400-500 watts but I did a lot better than I thought I would. I was not really QRP because I ran 10-15 watts (a maximum of 4.77dB above the five watt nominal QRP level) but with my single-wire antenna, while not a great score it was much better than I expected.

W5ZR: Biggest surprise: XU7ACY called me on 40 metres and long lost friend DU3NXE on 20 and 40 metres.

WA1FOC (K1SA): Non-member participation seemed up from last year. 'CQ BW' seemed to be less ambiguous for non-members than 'CQ FOC' which seemed to generate some confusion as to whether non-members could participate.

ZS1EL: Bands were really hopping; 10 metres was the biggest surprise with USA and Europe coming in strong right up to our sunset!

Soapbox – Non-members

7Z1HL: I have this great call sign but unfortunately the weekends here in Saudi Arabia are Thursday and Friday, and when I am on the radio the rest of the amateurs are working, and vice versa. Also, when the sun sets at around 6pm now, all the bands go dead, only 40 metres remains reasonably workable.

AE1T: Nice to work old friends and make some new ones.

GØEFO: I have been taking a special interest in FOC in recent months. I managed to grab a few contacts on five bands with FOC members, many of whom I had not worked before. I had a great deal of fun!

G6CSY: Many thanks for a delightful 24 hours of polite CW! Only running QRP and a trap vertical here, but I managed to work W3, W4 and W9 across 40, 20 and 15 metres.

GI4CFQ: Worked on 20 metres with my old 'Boat Anchor' rig and dipole; great fun; very enjoyable indeed; hope to join you all one day.

HB9BJL: My first FOCQP, very pleasant and rewarding occasion and I hope it helped to improve my CW as well.

LZ1VB: My first FOCQP, thanks to LZ1AF for inviting me.

OK2BLD: Thank you for beautiful CW activity.

R6AF: My first FOCQP and I enjoyed real First Class Operator skills of all participants!

VU2PTT: Enjoyed the conditions on 10 metres the most. Heard MØRSE on 20 but conditions were not good enough at that time to break through.

W7GKF: It was fun to meet more of the FOC members, especially those in the UK.

W1SOC (N4BP): W1SOC is the club call of the Second Class Operators Club. All but one member welcomed me with open arms, and it was great to swap reports with many old friends. Many members were logged on three and four bands, and even a couple on five. FOC operators in general are a great bunch of guys and gals!

EA8CN Report

To me the FQP really is a *Party*, like when you mingle with a glass in your hand among friends; some of them you have seen frequently and just stop by to say hi, others you have not seen for ages, so you stop for a while to get updated on what has happened since last time.



We arrived from cold Sweden on the Monday of the same week as the FOCQP. You can imagine the mail and the 'must be done things' waiting for us after being away for almost half a year. The most important thing was to get on the air again since the trusty vertical got destroyed by the ultraviolet light after five years of good service.

My friend EA8NC, who sells antennas, promised me that I would have a new vertical up before the Saturday of the FOCQP. On the Friday at noon he arrived with a 20 feet telescopic aluminium base and with a perfect fitting to the 33 feet telescopic fibreglass pole. Hence, my earlier 36 feet vertical was now 52 feet high – very interesting! He left at 4pm and I also added three inverted vees for the 20, 15 and 10 metres bands, finishing at 8pm; I was exhausted and went to bed for some hours of sleep.

The FOCQP started with W8KJP on 40 metres. I obviously had a good signal on 40 metres in North America as I made 35 QSOs in the first hour. The first QSO on 80 metres was N4AF and I have always been astonished by the good ears of VE9DX and he didn't disappoint me this time either!

After some three hours, the European stations were waking up and they filled in the log on the lower bands.

I have always considered the Marathon to be the utmost of contests (if you make it a contest). There is nothing like many of the stations taking over the bands, and you really appreciate the skill of the operators, so this is the way I worked the FOCQP – the first night you go for the LF bands and in the day you go for the HF bands. If 10 metres is open you try to get the stations to QSY to 15 and also 20. This feeling of getting a five, or even a six-bander, is indescribable, and so I made quite a few five-banders that way (I didn't even try 160 metres because of all the noise there).

When you have been away for a while, and with a new antenna, it is interesting to see how the two biggest continents contribute to your total. Here are the results of contacts with just the FOC members:

	80m	40m	20m	15m	10m
NA	14	60	50	43	13
EU	28	53	56	51	25

Another benefit is that for the month of October, I made 172 Windles where approximately 160 were in the FOCQP. It is not up to me to judge if the Windle scoring really reflects the activity of us, since the October FOCQP is almost a third of my total for this year (with also the June BWQP included). My main interest for participating is to have fun and I really did enjoy it! Thank you for organising this event and to you guys (and two girls) for making 23 October a memorable day.

N2KW Report

Did you ever hear the story about the five blind men, who encounter an elephant for the first time? One hugs his leg, and exclaims, "Why, an elephant is like a tree!". Another blind man grabs the tail, and says, "No, it's like a snake!". The third man feels the trunk, and says, "It's more like a python than a snake". The fourth man feels the tusks, the fifth man grabs an earall of them have their own impression of what an elephant 'looks like'.



Whilst sunspots are still dismally low, seasonal variation as we approached the Vernal Equinox allowed for some spectacular openings on 15 metres, and even supported propagation 'across the pond' on 10! Many members remarked how good conditions were, but not me. Only 15 minutes before the start, a coronal hole allowed a high-speed stream to escape from the sun, causing the Boulder K-index to jump from 1 to 4, and a corresponding increase in the A-index. Fortunately this had little or no effect on the higher frequencies, as both 80 and 160 metres were disasters. Top band got hit so badly, that many stations operating in the preliminary Stew Perry Challenge, just shut down!

I want to thank G4PDQ, G4RCG, DL1VDL, MDØCCE, AA3B, K1JD, and W1RM for my only six-band contacts. Honourable mention goes to EA8CN, GØORH, G3ZGC, GW3KGV, GW3KDB, ZS1EL, W1AO, W1FJ, WA1FOC, K3ZO, K4LTA and W5ZR, who made it into the N2KW log on five bands.

The FOCQP netted me 119 Windles, which is more points during this 24-hour event than I made in any month previously, with the exception of June (which had its own BWQP!) I also found my last three Augie hold-outs, so I am back to zero, until new members are inducted.

Stations on the *Starred List* that made it into my log include 7Z1HL, DL8PG, G3JKB, N2ATB, R6AF, US9PA and W7GKF. Honourable mention goes to W2RU whose application for membership withered on the vine for lack of a UK sponsor. TF3DC was everywhere at once, as was F5IN.

AA3B shut down early because he arranged a surprise birthday party for his wife. He told her that they were going to a 'retirement party' for someone at work. She had absolutely no clue! Bud was so secretive, he even told *me* that he was going to a 'retirement party' (and I've never even met his wife!). K4LTA was going great guns, but he shut down early for a Yankee game that slammed their hopes for the pennant! EA8CN did very well and he probably would have won if he had operated until the bitter end.

My statistics: 194 unique member calls, 92 unique non-member calls, 119 Windles (23 not previously worked in 2010) and three Augies. Total of 573 QSOs. Thanks to everyone who came, I had a grand time at the Party!

(I had to omit and/or edit some of the Soapbox comments to save space - G4BUE.)

The 2011 W5FOC Weekend

Lafayette, Louisiana 18/20 March 2011

by Bill Eckenrode, W5SG

Host hotel

Courtyard (by Marriott), Lafayette Airport, 214 East Kaliste Saloom Road, Lafayette LA 70508, USA. To make a reservation you may either call the hotel at (337) 232-5005 and press '2' for reservations, and then ask for the First Class Operators group rate, or you may go on-line to <marriott.com/lftcy> and enter the following in the group code field (click on 'Special Rates & Awards' to see the Group Rate box): for a room with a king bed and a pull-out sofa: FIRFIRA, and for a room with two queen beds: FIRFIRB. The cut-off date for these rooms is 24 February 2011 so please reserve your rooms before then to ensure availability. The special group rate is \$89 which includes a complete hot breakfast. The hotel has agreed to honour these special rates for those who may wish to arrive earlier or stay later.

Friday 18 March

3pm: Hospitality suite opens; beer, wine and cold drinks included in your registration fee or BYOB. We will have W5FOC on the bands.

6pm: Mulate's Cajun Restaurant, 325 Mills Avenue, Breau Bridge, LA (337) 332-4648, <<http://home.netcom.com/~rkiser/>>; directions <<http://www.mapquest.com/mq/4-uh316ffj>>.

9pm: Hospitality room open until 11.45pm.

Saturday 19 March

8am: W5FOC CW Challenge in the Hospitality room. Check out your skills against the latest FOC CW Pile-up CD.

9am: Tour of a local venue; details later.

10am: Travel to N5AN's QTH for a tour and luncheon; directions <http://www.mapquest.com/mq/7-3XAs*GfjkLTz7RT>.

Afternoon: Hospitality Room open for:

- W5FOC available for CW contacts.
- Table display of keys and paddles.
- Show and tell items.
- Serious gabbing and relaxing.

6.30pm: Dinner at the Original Don's Seafood and Steakhouse, 301 E. Vermillion, Lafayette, LA 70501, (337) 235-3551; <<http://www.donsdowntown.com/>>. Choice of six entrees (crabmeat au gratin, half fried shrimp and

half fried catfish, hamburger steak, grilled chicken breast, broiled catfish, or fried shrimp, plus salad, dessert and iced tea. Cost is \$18.75, includes tax and tip. Directions <<http://www.mapquest.com/mq/7-Ujx5>>.

9pm: Hospitality room open until 11.45 pm.

Sunday 20 March

9.30am: Event 'business' meeting and general discussion.

11am: Visit and lunch at W5ZR's QTH; directions <<http://www.mapquest.com/mq/4-ttS3CcVhbyDG>>.

Attire for the weekend is casual by all means. Please provide me with the following:

- Call and names of attendees.
- Will you have a vehicle during your stay?
- Number staying at the host hotel.
- Number to attend Friday evening dinner.
- Number to attend N5AN QTH on Saturday.
- Number to attend local tour on Saturday.
- Number to attend dinner on Saturday evening.
- Number to visit W5ZR QTH on Sunday.
- Listing of paddles or keys you will bring.
- Listing of show and tell items you will bring.

Expenses in addition to your hotel fees:

Registration fee of \$25 per person, Friday night dinner and dance, individual payment at the restaurant; Saturday dinner of \$18.75 with individual payment person at the restaurant. Please make payment for the registration fee of \$25 per person before 1 March to me at 18211 Mahogany Forest Dr, Spring, TX 77379-3916.

If you have joined us in the past, thanks for your participation, and we look forward to a great get-together in 2011. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact any of the event committee members via e-mail or telephone:

KZ5D (337) 369-9981 <kz5d@aol.com>

N5AN (337) 981-2336 <n5an@cox.net>

W5SG (281) 370-4258 <w5sg@comcast.net>

W5ZR (337) 394-8334 <w5zr@hughes.net>

WR5U (337) 364-2777 <mpitr@usa.net>



A Visit With John Sluymer, VE3EJ

by Paul Dunphy, VE1DX

On 26 October 2010, my wife Heather and I had the pleasure of visiting John, VE3EJ. We were in VE3 land to visit my son, and we took a couple of hours to drive to John's QTH in Grassie, Ontario. I had been there once before in April 2008 and I wanted my wife to see what a world class contest and DXing station looked like. We were not disappointed.

John's station is a radio amateur's dream when it comes to antennas. Centre stage is his 160 metre vertical beam, switchable in four directions. It consists of a quarter-wave radiator in the centre of four parasitic elements that can remotely be engaged as directors or reflectors – or they can be disconnected and the radiator used as a single vertical to broaden the bandwidth in contests.

On 80 metres John has a full sized four-square array (bottom right) with over 120,000 feet of radials! Truly a low bander's dream and they are augmented for listening by beverages and a DX Engineering four-square RX system.

On 40 metres, there is a full sized three element Yagi (bottom left) that, due to its height near the top of one of his towers, I first mistook for a 203BA 20 metre beam! Yes, it is that high! The upper bands are flushed with stacked arrays on towers that are at least 200 feet or higher. While each beam in the stack adds about 3dB of gain, John explains that the real advantage is that they capture various radiation angles that a single Yagi would not.

John's shack is also a joy to behold. Two duplicate stations consisting of Elecraft K3s and

Alpha 87 amplifiers ensure the antennas are properly fed. Everything is extremely well organised and neatly arranged, a product of John's strong engineering background and attention to detail.

If you plan on being in the Ontario area, it is worth contacting John ahead of time, and seeing if he will be available for a short visit. He is a friendly guy who has a wealth of information on antenna design, tower construction, contesting and DXing. John is one of the top contesters in North America and has been on several major DXpeditions, such as FT5XO (Kerguelen in 2005). He will be operating from the South Orkneys as part of the VP8ORK team in January-February 2011.



John with the cable connections.



Obituary Jack Chapman, WØHZ

Compiled by Christopher J Page G4BUE

from *Daily DX* and *Star Tribune* (thanks K6NA)

Jack Chapman, WØHZ, became a Silent Key on 12 November, age 87. He was born in St Paul, Minnesota and got his first amateur radio licence W9JRI when he was 15 in 1938, later becoming WØJRI.

Jack graduated from Cretin High School and in 1941 entered the University of Minnesota Electrical Engineering (EE) program, but in 1942 enlisted in the US Marine Corps as a Staff

Sergeant. He hoped to become a marine operator, but because of his amateur radio experience, the Marines sent him to learn the new science of radar at the prestigious and demanding Bellevue Radio Material School at the US Naval Research Laboratory in Washington DC. He was then assigned to the Marine Night Fighters 531 NAW FNF in the South Pacific, the first to use radar at night, and earned two Bronze Service Stars on the



Asiatic-Pacific campaign.

After being discharged in 1945, Jack returned to the University of Minnesota and graduated with a BS degree. He then began working for the 3M company where he worked for his entire career. He holds a patent for inventing the high speed video duplicator with a team of scientists at 3M. Jack retired in 1982 and volunteered for 25 years at Pax Christi Catholic

Church and 20 years at Bridging Inc, which provides household goods to the needy. He met Genevieve, the sister of a pal, and they married in 1949 and had seven children.

Amateur radio was Jack's lifelong hobby, leading him to the Night Fighters, engineering and friendships around the world. He later became WØHZ and joined FOC (1675) in March 1997. He is on the CQ DX Honor Roll with 333 countries on CW.

FOCAL

Carole and Pete, N5TP, celebrated Pete's birthday on 31 October in Tennessee with Laura, KJ4HCU, and Mark, W4CK. Although we all know that Mark plays the guitar very well, how many of you know that Carole plays the dulcimer very well?



A 12 Volt Power Supply Crowbar and Upgrade

by Wes Spence, AC5K



Adding a Crowbar

I recently had the regulator circuit fail in a power supply that I have used for over 30 years. Eighteen volts were applied to my new Elecraft K3. Fortunately, the K3 has a large 15 volt zener diode that saved my radio from damage. After finding and replacing two shorted regulator transistors and one large series resistor to repair the power supply, I made a decision that I would not tolerate any risk of ever having an over voltage failure again. As I have two of these power supplies, I decided to upgrade both of them.

A 'crowbar circuit' is a circuit that is intended to short the output of a power supply to ground that has gone into an over-voltage failure mode. The old timers said that it would work like placing a crowbar across the output of the power supply, and that name has stuck all these years.

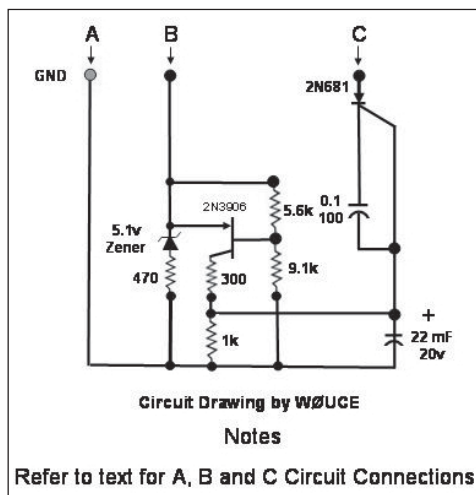


Fig 1: Diagram of Wes's crowbar circuit.

Fig 1 shows a schematic of a fairly simple and easily reproducible crowbar circuit. This circuit was adapted from a schematic of an Astron power supply that was kindly sent to me by Tom, NØSS, answering a plea from me on our Club Reflector for a usable complete crowbar

schematic. This circuit can be built quite inexpensively, especially when you consider you may literally be saving your radio from major damage. Jack, WØUCE, helped by redrawing the circuit and eliminating everything but the actual crowbar.

I made one design change by replacing the 5.6 volts zener with one for 5.1 volts. This change allowed the trigger voltage to be lowered from 17.5 volts to 16.5. This may still seem high, but if this is engineered too close to the operating voltage, the crowbar could trigger falsely. It is also expected that if power supply regulation fails, it will fail above 16.5 volts.

The circuit in Fig 1 works by sensing the output voltage of the regulator section of the power supply, and if it exceeds the trigger voltage, the SCR will be turned on shorting the power supply and blowing the DC fuse, thus protecting the radio. There are just three connections to the power supply from the crowbar: 'A' goes to power supply ground, 'B' to the output of the regulator and 'C' to the radio side of the DC fuse in the power supply. If your supply doesn't have a fuse in the DC line, you will have to add one. Just be sure to not introduce too much voltage drop across the fuse and fuse holder when high current flows during transmit. Higher quality fuse holders will help this.

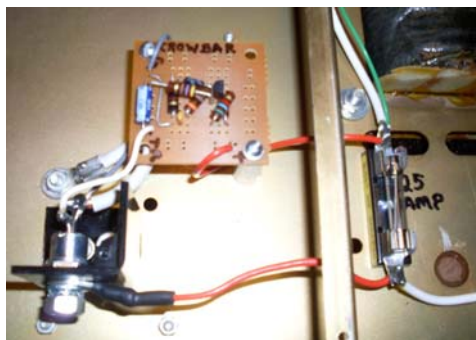


Fig 2: Wes's crowbar that he installed in his first power supply.

Fig 2 shows what I built and installed in my power supply. All the parts, except the SCR, are mounted on a Radio Shack 'breadboard' (RS Part #276-159). Unfortunately for crowbar builders, SCRs are all manufactured 'upside down' for crowbar use in positive supplies. In other words, the part of the SCR that looks like a bolt goes to the plus side of the DC output, and the large connection on the other end goes to ground. If the standard was the other way around, it would be easy to mount. I used a cut away corner of a bakelite box for the SCR in Fig 2.

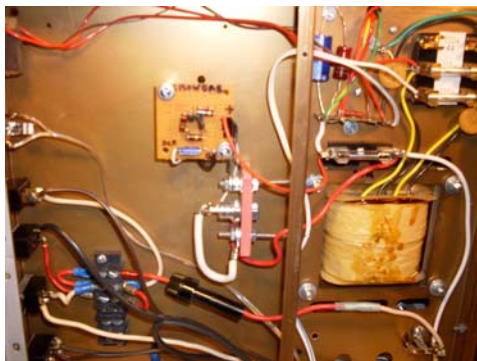


Fig 3: An alternative mounting for the crowbar in Wes's second power supply.

Fig 3 shows an alternative mounting in a second power supply that I built a crowbar for, that I think works better. There is nothing magic or critical in either method of SCR mounting and you make think of something even better. The crowbar circuit can be tested by removing the fuse and measuring for a short between the radio side of the DC fuse holder and ground when the regulator is turned up above about 16.5 volts. Be sure to reset the regulator voltage to normal after this test and then replace the fuse.

Replacing Filter Capacitors in Older Power Supplies

After completing the initial repair and testing of the power supply that failed, I found that the 40,000 mF 25 volt main filter capacitor had a continuous voltage of 29.2 volts on in and was leaking. As the power supply is some 30 years old, the older standard AC line voltage was 110 volts then and something just above 120 volts now. That probably is the reason the DC output of the power supply is higher than expected, but the supply was also originally designed with the

maximum filter capacitor voltage too close the operating voltage (probably as a tradeoff to find a capacitor that would physically fit in the space allotted). Fortunately, capacitor technology has made some improvements in 30 years, so now it is fairly easy to find physically small capacitors with high capacitance.

Fig 4 shows the single large 40,000 mF 25 volt capacitor and the two smaller ones I replaced it with. Together, the smaller capacitors in parallel give 44,000 mF at 50 volts which is quite a change. The down-side to the new improved capacitors is the physical connections are now very small and cannot support the strain from the large wires that the original capacitor held.



Fig 4: The single large capacitor and the two smaller ones that replaced it.



Fig 5: Wes's answer of how to overcome the strain of the original large wires.

Fig 5 shows my version of how to overcome this shortfall. I made a rack from some blank fiberglass stock (that incidentally I bought a few years ago at Skycraft Surplus in Orlando while attending the FOC Florida Dinner there). I drilled holes for the capacitors and used two bolts to hold the fiberglass. On top of the capacitors, I used some copper clad printed circuit board material and used a hand grinder to cut away the copper between the positive and negative connections. With the larger surface of the circuit

board, connections to the capacitors can be made easily by just drilling the proper sized holes and soldering the wires to it. It works great and should carry any reasonable current without any problems. I made sure that the capacitors were held securely but not in any mechanical bind. I also spaced the printed circuit board a bit off the tops the capacitors.

In the second power supply that I replaced the main filter capacitor in, I just used one section of blank fibreglass board as two for such light capacitors in the first supply was probably overkill. If you do something similar to this in your power supply, please take extra care to observe the polarity of the capacitors when installing them and which wires go to positive and negative.

While I was inside the power supplies, I also found that they had placed another electrolytic capacitor too near a large resistor that runs quite hot. In both supplies the outside of the

electrolytic capacitors were discoloured from heat and so I replaced both of them with new ones and rewired the resistor so that it would no longer be as close to the new capacitors. Lastly, I torqued down the bolts of the main transformer to eliminate an annoying mechanical hum that had developed over the many years of service.

This project was very useful, and I am reporting my adventures here in hopes that others can upgrade their power supplies and provide a measure of safety and protection to their radios. I have tried to briefly describe what I did here, but if any of you have any further questions, please feel free to e-mail me or ask me on the air, and I will help in any way I can.

(Members who found Wes's article of interest may like to refer back to the articles by G3JVC, 'TS-930 and TS-940 PSU Protection Failure' on page 30 of FOCUS 67 and 'TS-930 and TS-940 PSU Protection Failure Update' on page 46 of FOCUS 68 - G4BUE.)

Letters to the Editor

From Doug Woolley, ZP6CW, 6 November 2010

After looking at the last issue of FOCUS, I thought I would send you a few pictures of my 16 element RLP just for a space filler if needed. Since it went up in July 2009, over 18,000 QSOs, and all have been sent a QSL via the bureau, plus I have answered hundreds of direct requests. Also all are at *LoTW* and even *eQSL*. I am not much into contesting any more, but I do enjoy giving ZP to big and small guns!

Amazing, there have been over 700 new members since I joined FOC back in 1974. During that time I have been able to go to dinners in London, Connecticut, New York State and Florida. So much history and so many friends! I remember watching the OM himself (G8VG Senior) keying CW with an upside-down ETM2 keyer!



FOCUS Contributions

Articles, photographs and contributions for FOCUS are always needed and should be submitted to the Editor, Chris Page, G4BUE, by e-mail, disk, typed or hand-written. Drawings can be redrawn if necessary and photographs returned after scanning. Don't try and reproduce the page layout of FOCUS, my software does that. I just need the basic text and image files. If you use *Word*, please send the text without drawings and photographs in one file, indicating in the text where they should go, and then send the drawings and photographs as separate files. If you see something in another magazine of interest to members, please let me know and I will try to obtain permission to republish it in FOCUS - *thanks, G4BUE*.

FOC Awards News

by Bob Bagwell, G4HZV

Please note that the list below is based on careful examination of George's spreadsheets. If anyone spots any omissions or errors, please let me know so that I can correct the records.

Congratulations to the following members who were recently awarded certificates and stickers:

New Certificates

WAFOC: DF4BV (360); N2KW (361); PA3CVV (362).

WAFOCC: DF4BV (385); S59AR (386); W1EBI (387).

WAFOCC DX-100: S59AR (88); W1EBI (89); W5SG (90).

Stickers

WAFOC: DF4BV 1000; G3IAF 16000; K9QVB 20000; N2KW 7500; N4XR 13500; W4PM 7500; W4VQ 20000.

WAFOCC: DF4BV 50, S59AR 180, W1EBI 100, W5SG 100.

WAFOCC Bands: W1EBI 160m 10, 80m 25, 40m 75, 20m 75, 15m 25.

The WAFOCC DX-100 award will be discontinued after 31 December 2010. Although there has been a sudden burst of interest in the last few weeks, very few of these awards have been issued in the past ten years and the standard WAFOCC, with a 100 country sticker, is effectively the same thing.

The next Award News will be the annual Honour Roll listing, so please let me have your latest scores early in 2011 please.



Station Perspectives

by Dale Strieter W4QM

(Republished from the October 2010 *Contest Gazette*, journal of the Florida Contest Group)

In 1958, I moved from Michigan to Florida on accepting a job with General Electric as a missile guidance engineer. As a recent graduate from Michigan State University with a MS degree in EE, my starting salary was \$7000 per year. BS EEs were getting \$6500 per year. Then, the 'dream station' for a radio amateur was a Collins 75A4 receiver and a Collins KWS1 transmitter. The KWS1 could operate 80-10 metres giving a full kW input on CW and SSB. By 1960, I knew personally two people that had this set up; one was a commercial pilot in Lansing, Michigan and the other was a physics professor at a Georgia college. The 75A4 cost \$750 and the KWS1 ran \$2200 for an approximate total cost of \$3000.

As a possible comparison, I bought a brand new Studebaker Scotsman automobile to make the trip from Michigan to Florida and its cost was \$1800. A Ford Plymouth, or a Chevrolet sedan, cost about \$2000 and a mid-range

automobile like an Oldsmobile 88 or Buick ran about \$3000. A low-end Mercedes Benz cost about \$3500. So a 'dream rig' back then was equivalent in cost to buying a mid-range automobile.

In 1964, I was fortunate to be able to purchase a used Collins 75A4 and KWS1 at a cost of \$1000 and these were used until about 1984 when I upgraded to a newer transceiver and amplifier. Fast forward to 2010 and the 'dream station' would probably be an Elecraft K3 transceiver with all the options at around \$4000 plus an Alpha 9500 linear amplifier capable of 1.5kW output at a cost of about \$8000; total cost would be in the range of \$12,000. There are not too many new cars that one can buy for less than \$20,000 and a new mid-range automobile would be \$30,000 or so. A low-end Mercedes is in the



range of \$35,000. The starting salary for a graduate engineer with a BS degree is in the area of \$55,000+ per year.

So, a 'dream station' in 2010 is a real bargain when one compares its real cost to the 1958 era. The cost is a lot lower as \$12,000 may get you a pre-owned automobile but certainly not a new mid-range one. And think of all the wonderful features of the new rigs – no tuning needed when

changing bands and one can have the transceiver and amplifier synchronised which allows a band change in a second. Not like back in 1958 when it took many seconds as a minimum to change bands. On the KWS1, it took probably 20 to 30 seconds when going from 40 to 80 metres; the higher bands were in the order of five to ten seconds or so if you were skilled. We never have had it so good!

Why do we Contest?

by Puck Motley Jrn, W4PM

Here is something I posted a number of years ago on a reflector in response to a question about what was the point of radio contesting. I know a number of you don't care for contests, and some avoid them at all costs. I hope you won't begrudge me my simple pleasure. This is not very eloquently or professionally stated but it was the best I could do at the time.

While working Sweepstakes this year, a good friend of mine asked me, "What do you win, when you win? What is the prize? If there is no prize other than a certificate or your name in *QST*, what's the point?". In another light, throwing out the winning part, why spend a weekend working a radio contest at all? What do we gain? Hmm – good questions.

It all seems to have to do with the competitive nature of man. Ever since the caveman tried to throw a rock farther than his buddy, we have been competing. We play all sorts of sports and games. What is the point to knocking down pins with a bowling ball? What is the point of playing nine innings of baseball or chasing a white ball around a green field trying to knock it into a hole? What is the point in kicking a ball around a field or trying to bowl down a few sticky wickets or shooting a puck or a ball into a goal? Is the world a better place because we did it? We just seem to enjoy competing and feel good when we win or even when we don't lose badly or do better than we did last time.

Radio contests are another type of sport or competition. We try to see how our skills match up with others. We like to test out our 'toys' to see if our new amplifier and/or that new antenna we devised can put out a signal that will allow us to run 80, 90, 100 or more stations per hour; or we try to see just how many contacts we can

make running low power or even five watts or less. Can we make half or three quarters as many contacts as the kilowatt guys? Can operator skill make up for rig or antenna deficiencies?

What is the point to a lot of the games and sports we play? Maybe you can see the point only after you have played the game. Competition is the name of the game, no matter what the game, and we humans tend to thrive on it! Anyhow that's how I see it and I love games of any sort.

After reading my article, K6RB wrote, "There is even more to it than that. In Radio Sport, unlike any other, all players are welcome in the tournament - the professionals, the up-and-comers, the newcomers. And, all benefit from the additional numbers of players. In addition to competing with others, as Puck points out, there is also the opportunity to compete with oneself. If I put in 24 hours in Sweepstakes and got X number of points, maybe the next year I can try doing something different and get a higher point total. When you play golf in a threesome or foursome, how you play does not necessarily affect the other players' scores. In Radio Sport, everyone benefits from the QSO – everyone goes away with a point or points.

"For me, personally, contests give me a chance to challenge myself, to see if I can find a little extra endurance, if I can reduce copy errors, if I can come up with a tailored band strategy that works a little better than the last time around."



Review of the Begali Graciella Junior Key

by Carlo Consoli, IKØYGY



The Begali Graciella Junior key arrived from Piero about a month ago. As always, unboxing Piero's crafts is an experience by itself; the cardboard packaging keeps my hands and eyes from the stunning object inside and I am simply amazed by the wonderful look of the key when it is finally fully exposed.

The Graciella Junior is a very particular kind of key; heavy and shiny like a star, placed vertically on a round base and sports very comfortable right-angle paddles. The paddles

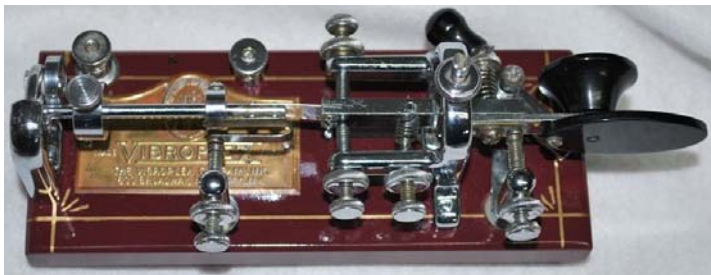


are made in such a way that their spacing is wider in the upper part and tighter in the lower part, and in this way each operator is able to find the position that is more comfortable for his natural finger distance at rest, thus significantly reducing the fatigue when manipulating it.

The Graciella Junior is a magnetic retention paddle, very solidly built and heavy; moving it while manipulating it is fairly impossible. The key is a little bit noisy because of the rest pole, made of a slightly resonant material but is simply outstanding in terms of precision up to 40 WPM. The video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBPXQiLFB08> shows the key in action while self-decoding with the Begali CW Machine at this speed. For higher speeds it is advisable to resort to Piero's higher end production – the Stealth or Signature paddles. It is not a mechanical problem, rather an intrinsic limit of having a longer lever ratio than it is convenient for QRQ operation; the right angle paddles are quite longer when compared to a horizontally-layered paddle. Bottom line, the Begali Graciella Junior is a very good key, extremely well built and aesthetically impacting, and will last for a life-time in terms of construction quality and will serve a radio amateur for a great part of his amateur radio career.

FOCAL

Here is a picture of K4OSO's 1954 Vibroplex Blue Racer that he recently restored. Milt writes, "As you can see from the photo-graph, it is now maroon. When I bought the key the paint was peeling all over the base with lots and lots of



rust but luckily the chrome was still in good shape. Since the key is a very good sender, I was determined to bring it back cosmetically.

“Originally, I set out to use a japanning finish on the base and many hours were spent on stripping, rust removal and draw-filing edges in preparation for this premier finish. The japanning process is very time consuming, requiring nearly four hours of progressively higher temperature baking per coat – and the job requires four to five coats!

After applying and drying the first coat of asphaltum varnish, a combination of linseed oil,

turpentine, asphaltum powder and rosin powder, things were looking good. The second coat however never seemed to dry, no matter how much I baked it.

“Out of frustration, I abandoned the japanning and decided to use paint on the base instead. This required stripping the base all over again (groan). After seeing a maroon key owned by Fred, KT5X, I thought my key would look nice in that colour too. What you see is the result of several coats of baked enamel paint and finishing touches with gold paint pencil for the pinstripping and birds feet.”

FOCAL

Writing on 3 October, Bruce, K6ZB, says, “My wife Cathy and I had the greatest pleasure of meeting Shin, JA1NUT, and his wife Chiaki. They are wonderful hosts and we enjoyed seeing their beautiful QTH in the countryside outside Tokyo. Also with us was Atsu, JE1TRV, who I am sure is familiar to many members as he is very active on CW, and founder of the A1 Club of Japan. Getting to their place is pretty easy by Japan Railway (JR) train from Tokyo and takes about two hours each way. There is a fine hotel next to the train station in the nearby town. So, thank you Shin and Chiaki and we will see you on the air.



Bruce (left) and Shin in Shin's shack.



Half of one of the directors of Shi's four element 10 metre yagi is missing.



Shin's wife Chiaki standing outside their QTH at Tochigi.

