

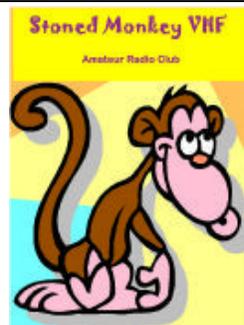
WeLCARS



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Lake County Ham Radio Journal

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www.welcars.org

March 2008

www.stonedmonkey.org

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Meeting Schedule

2M/440 Antenna Project
February 27 - 7PM
Fox Lake Community Center
23 South St., Fox Lake, IL

WeLCARS Meeting
March 5 - 7PM
Fox Lake Community Center

VE Testing
March 12 - 7PM
Fox Lake Community Center

Technician License Classes
Beginning March 12 - 7PM
Fox Lake Community Center

WeLCARS Meeting
March 19 - 7PM
Dino's Den Restaurant
88 E. Grand Ave., Fox Lake

Contesting

ARRL International DX Phone
March 1-2
www.arrl.org/contest

North American RTTY Sprint
March 9
www.ncjweb.com

Wisconsin QSO Party
March 9-10
www.warac.org

10-10 Mobile QSO Party
March 15
www.ten-ten.org

Russian DX Contest
March 15-16
www.rdx.org

CQ WPX SSB Contest
March 29-30
www.cqwp.com

Hamfests

Sterling-Rock Falls ARC
March 9 - Sterling, IL
www.sterlinghamfest.com

Amateur Equipment Auction
March 15 - Eau Claire, WI
www.ecarc.org

W9MQB Hamfest 2008
March 16 - Jefferson, WI
www.cmdline.com/tcarc

AES Superfest 2008
March 28-29 - Milwaukee, WI
www.aesham.com

Madison Hamfest and Comp. Fair
April 19 - Stoughton, WI
www.qsl.net/mara

TechFest III: Revenge of TechFest
Sometime in July!

Welcome...

...to the first issue of the Lake County Ham Radio Journal. Our goal is to showcase hams across Lake County and Northern Illinois out there "doing" ham radio. We'll showcase projects, operating activities, ham fests, social gatherings, and just about any other tom foolery that involves ham radio. If you've got something you think other local hams would like to see, lay it on us!

WeLCARS Meeting Minutes 2/20/08

By N9YH Chris Burke

Our meeting on February 20 saw most of the usual suspects at Dino's Den in Fox Lake. Group discussion was a little short, I'm sure in no small part due to the children running around. Yes, most of there were mine. And, yes, my wife and I know what causes them. Unfortunately, we seem to have found out only recently. So, without further ado, and in no particular order:

1) WeLCARS Antenna Building Project

Our PVC antenna building will continue on February 27th where we'll put everything together and hope it all works! If nothing else, the smoke from fried transmitters should be at least as entertaining as watching Dave K9RUF saw through metal...

2) Tech Fest II: The Return of Tech Fest

Most of the discussion centered around the looming Tech Fest II on Saturday, February 23. Our man Joe N9IFG reports that everything is going well. Food will be handled by the Boy Scouts as a separate venture from the club. The two major vendors committed are DC Ace Electronics and Penninger Radio. Joe plans to be at WeLCARS Worldwide Headquarters at around noon on Friday so vendors can start setting up the day before. Society of Midwest Contesters, Lake County RACES, and AMers will be manning tables to talk about their respective clubs.

Some Spotty Spots & QRN

by Dave Cooper, KA9OZP

With expectations of the new Cycle 24 showing up on Old Sol, I wish I could offer a stellar report, but patience is still the word. There are some reports of openings on 10 meters, but you have to catch the moment. 17 meters is a good choice when 20m is open but noisy. I have worked some western hemisphere DX on 40 meters. If you go to the CW portion, you can catch more exotic DX in Europe, Africa, and some other regions.

Some of your greatest challenges and opportunities will be present on 60, 80 and 160 meters after dark. Europe has been blasting in some nights on 80 meters. GM3PPG was on "holiday" on Europe IOTA EU-10 (island off Scotland). For a portable station, he was working the world with ease. I gave him a 5-9 with 100 watts LSB and a dipole. He was hitting 10 over 9 here.

Every Winter I make it a point to have at least one QSO with good ole dependable George (EI6S), in Ireland. We chatted a couple weeks ago. Now Spring can come, hi--hi !

It was fun working WP3UX on 60 meters. This is a moderate DX accomplishment with the QRP-like restrictions of 60 meters. In December, I worked Bermuda on channel 4, the same frequency.

About the only band I do not use is 160 metres. Perhaps our Editor could encourage some of you to describe what you use for 160 meters? By next Winter I would like to have a resonant antenna ready for 160m. Let me know what you are doing on 160 meters. Reports have been good this Winter for this band.

We tend to go low band when the numbers are low. However, with evidence of the beginning of the new cycle observed recently, coupled with lengthening days, we can expect to work DX on the bands from 20 meters and up soon.

Better DX days are on the way!

Frozen VHF QSO's

By Tom Staley, K9TMS

How soon we are lulled in to a false sense of well being when it comes to mother nature. The Stoned Monkeys planned around the Holidays to participate in the January VHF Sweepstakes. In the previous two years January has seen comparably mild weather which allowed us the ability to get our antennas set and get on the air. Things weren't perfect but our presence was known.

This year however mother nature decided we needed a real taste of winter. With temperatures at 20 and headed to significant minus levels I had no choice but to cancel our planned contest effort that was to have taken place at the Pioneer Tree Farm in McHenry. No contest is worth risking the injury or frostbite.

With disappointment heard from all of the troop of Monkeys that were to have braved the frigid weather, I tried to slap together an opportunity to do some contesting from my home QTH. Mother Nature strikes again, Frozen Rotors and feedline issues. It started to look like no contest for any of us.

Not willing to concede defeat I cobbled together some antennas on my mobile rover mount and managed to get them atop the van. Nothing much just Par Omni Angles on 6, 2, & 432 and verticals for 2/432 & 223. Armed with these antennas and my IC706, IC2720 and Alinco 235 I set out to Rove EN52 and EN62 on Saturday afternoon. My hope was to at least provide some needed contacts to the W9WLC rover team who had been freezing their assets north of the Cheddar Curtain as well as those that had home stations up and running.

First stop WalMart's parking lot in Antioch. It isn't that high but has easy access and not many folks to bother you. At first it seemed as though there weren't many about the airwaves. But persistence slowly started to accumulate some QSO's on the bands. After working a few at Wally World and taking a brief tour of the facilities, I set out for EN62 and setup near Gurnee Mills and ran through several more contacts. With the temps heading below 0 and only a couple dozen contacts in the log, I set out for home and a warm cup of tea!

The next morning I decided to investigate a couple of issues I notice the evening before. First was that two meters just didn't seem to perform as well as I would like. After a quick look I found that one the of the feed lines I had chosen to use was intermittent. After a few well chosen words and a bit of rummaging around a frozen motor home I finally found a replacement.

I also wanted to investigate expanding my operation to include 1296, well actually 1294.5 FM. I mounted the Diamond whip onto a window mount and laid the Icom quad band HT on the seat.

With a quick check of things from the Home QTH I set off to EN51 where I was able to get a number of QSO's from stations around the area. From there it was a quick stop at EN61 and a quick run through the bands with the stations I found earlier.

With it already dark I left for the northern burbs again and stopped by EN62 again to provide contacts with those I had missed the evening before. The high point was getting a quick call from K9BTW who wanted to try the 1296 FM band quick.

Back at home I wrapped things up and headed in for the warmth and comfort of the home QTH. A review of the log found 100 total QSO's on 6, 2, 222, 432, 1296 and Light with a total of ~2800 points from 4 Grids, not a wonderful outing but fun just the same.

Each time I contest I always look to learn from my efforts. This outing was no different, here are my lessons:

1. Never handle aluminum at temperatures of less than 20 with out gloves. If you had gloves on and your hands are damp it is akin to licking the proverbial flag pole.
2. Omni directional antennas work but you have to listen real closely!
3. Notebook computers do a great job of keeping the log, how ever trying to lean over and use them on the seat next to you sucks. A remote keyboard to can set in your lap solves the issue.
4. 223.5 FM is growing in popularity!

Well the next outing for the Stoned Monkeys will be the June VHF contest. Hopefully we won't be concerned with frozen ground, snow and frostbite. Hope to work you all in June.

73 Tom, K9TMS WeLCARS Contest Coordinator

Tech Fest II

by Tom Staley, K9TMS & Joe Serocki, N9IFG

To those of us that attended the first Tech Fest last July we were surprised at how well a Technology only Fest was received. For those of us involved directly with the Fest we took note of what worked and immediately began plotting what to do for Tech Fest II.

There were those that told us we would never succeed with such an event, thank god we didn't listen!

The goal of Tech Fest was to provide some sort of local ham fest of the type that we enjoyed when those of us that can remember, or more correctly have been around that long, of the late 70's era.

First concern was getting the vendors in, to our surprise they loved the invite and really made it worth while for all concerned.



DC – Ace



Penninger Radio

It was also nice to see many of our local Hams return.



One area we had the most concern with was the presentations we wanted to do at Tech Fest I. This seems to be an area where many ham fests have lost interest over the years. But is one area that we desperately wanted to do in an effort to promote ham radio interests around the area. We also sought to provide space for Local clubs to come and present information on their efforts.

The presentations included D-STAR / Digital communications by WBQZB, IRLP and HSMM by N9IFG, Micro Wave operations by AA9IL and VHF Roving by K9TMS, K9JK and WB8BZK.



K9JK Rover Presentation



AA9IL Microwave Presentation



Lake County Races booth.

One service we again provided was VE Testing. This time our VE Team managed to license one new ham and one upgrade to General, congratulations to N9KTL on his upgrade to General. We also had two attempts at Extra Upgrades and one General upgrade. The VE team looks forward to seeing those that didn't get their upgrades at future VE testing sessions.

One area all of us have been concerned with is the Food offered at some of the local Ham Fests. Most are all about the same but cost is always worse than eating at the McDonalds down the street. Our local Scouting Venture Crew 743 again came through in the food department providing everyone with food and drink at what were very reasonable prices. The scouts involved made a few dollars for their group in the process. We are pleased we could provide an avenue of support for Venture Crew 734, many thanks for your help.

The Future for Tech Fest?????

So what does the future hold for Tech Fest? In our normal need to improve mentality we have already begun planning Tech Fest III. The next Tech Fest most likely to occur in July will also be known as "Rover Fest". We are asking that VHF Rovers around the area come and participate in what best could be described as a "Hot Rover Rod Show". Several of the area's VHF Rovers have already indicated a willingness to participate.

We will also be continuing to provide seminar time to willing speakers of the area. We already have a commitment for a presentation on HF DX/Contesting. In the next few weeks we will be looking to line up additional presentations.

We would also like to extend invitations to the area clubs to utilize the Fest to present information on their clubs. Invitations were extended to the area local clubs, MCWA, SMC and Lake County Races for Tech Fest II. We were extremely pleased to see the representatives for SMC and Lake County Races attend the fest with information on their respective groups.

Please check the WeLCARS and Stoned Monkey web sites in the near future for the date for Rover Fest. We are currently working to determine a date that will not conflict with other local ham fests nor the VHF Contests our rover presenters will be participating in during July and August. Joe, N9IFG, can be reached at joeserocki@gmail.com.

VE Testing Update

by Gregg Sperling, KB9DBC

Here are our statistics of our VE testing group since we started testing:

Total Test Takers: 25
Total Elements: 33
Total New Hams: 6
Total Upgrades: 8

July 11 2007

2 Test takers
1 Passed Element 3, Failed Element 4
1 Failed Element 2

July 14 2007 (TechFest #1)

9 Test Takers
1 Passed Element 3
1 Passed Element 2, Failed Element 3
1 Failed Element 2 Twice
1 Passed Element 2, Failed Element 3
1 Passed Element 3, Failed Element 4
1 Failed Element 2
1 Passed Element 2, Failed Element 3
1 Passed Element 3
1 Failed Element 4

September 12 2007

1 Test Taker
1 Passed Element 4

October 10 2007

2 Test Takers
1 Passed Element 2
1 Failed Element 3

November 14 2007

1 Test Taker
1 Passed Element 2, Failed Element 3

January 9 2008

2 Test Takers
1 Passed Element 3
1 Failed Element 3

February 13 2008

2 Test Takers
1 Failed Element 3
1 Passed Element 3, Failed Element 4

February 23 2008 (TechFest II: Revenge of TechFest)

6 Test Takers
1 Failed Element 4
1 Failed Element 3
1 Passed Element 3

1 Failed Element 4
1 Failed Element 3
1 Passed Element 2

Our next VE Testing Session will be held March 12 at 7PM at the Fox Lake Community Center otherwise known as the WeLCARS World Wide Headquarters.

73 Gregg, KB9DBC, WeLCARS VE Coordinator

Other Area VE Testing

MCWA VE Testing - 3rd Tuesday of March. & May, Free Methodist Church Woostock, by appointment—contact KB9OLD at 847-516-1292

Lake County Races – 2nd Monday of every month, 7:00PM at the Lake County E.O.C. in Libertyville

Editorial Note: It is advised that you call ahead for either MCWA or Lake County Races to let them know you would like to test on a given test night.

MCWA Meeting Announcement

The next MCWA meeting will take place on Tuesday March 4th at 7:30 PM at the Nunda Township offices north of Crystal Lake.

March Program

Modulation "What good is it" -- Jack Hudson W9MU
A brief description of the common types of modulation, including AM, SSB, DSBSC, FM, PM with reference to applications. The description will include use of carriers and base band signals with functional diagram for producing various types of modulation. Reference to demodulation also time domain representations are shown as well as frequency domain descriptions

DX FROM VP6DX SUPERB!

As I write this DX article, I think of the excellent job the VP6DX Expedition has been doing. Today one of the ops confirmed that they will be leaving the island on February 27. This team has done just about everything right. The expertise and courtesy in dealing with the pile-ups has been excellent. Their schedules have been right on target. Their equipment has performed well.

This is no small accomplishment. Getting to the uninhabited island was no minor thing. Running shifts in stifling heat, night ops trying to sleep in the heat of the day, staying upbeat and healthy under desolate conditions and putting out thousands of dollars to do this for the ham community are all sacrificial in nature! I believe this operation will be a paradigm for future expeditions.

I have been able to do SSB contacts with them on 80m, 40m, 20m, 17m and 15m. Others in our area have worked them on additional bands and modes. I still hope to make contacts on 12m and 10m before they start packing. This may happen as there were band openings on 10m up to about 0200utc this evening. In chatting with Todd, KC4TVZ (nr Atlanta), on 10m a while ago, I learned that there are now a couple sunspots on the backside of Old Sol! This may increase my chances.

So far I had easy contacts on the 5 bands mentioned above. With some sunny enhancement, I may catch a couple more bands. I worked them all 5 times with dipoles and 100w or less. I think 17m was about 70w out, but conditions were right that day. No big guns were necessary, but a beam up high might have given me the extra edge to work them on 12m and 10m this past week. May Monday be the day (the 25th).

I have worked some other DX recently. CT9L (Walt @ Madeira Island) was very strong on 20m. This station, along with others, are stretching their muscles in preparation for the ARRL DX contest coming up the first weekend of March. Get ready to log some easy DX that weekend on the main HF bands. With lengthening daylight and a couple of pushes from the sun, this may be a good weekend. Also, listen for them tuning up for the contest. You

can often work them in advance of the contest.

Lately, I have been using the <www.oh2aq.kolumbus.com> site for DX spotting. This updates every minute, 24/7. Give it a try, if you have not used a DX Cluster site. Also stop by the VP6DX site. It is <ducie2008.dl1mgb.com>.

This has been a cold winter, but DX usually takes us to warmer climates, like Ducie Island!

Good DX to all!

73----- Dave KA9OZP

WeLCARS Technician Classes

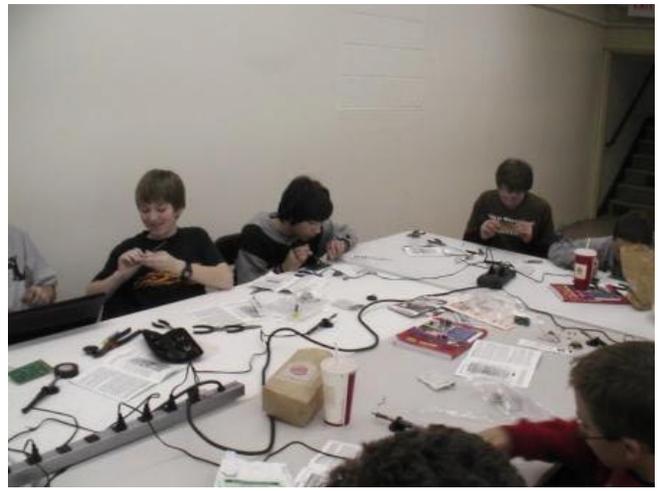
By Joe Serocki, N9IFG

John "Bluto" Blutarsky: "Oh, we're afraid to go with you Bluto. We might get in trouble." Well, just kiss my ass from now on! Not me. I'm not gonna take this! Wormer, he's a dead man! Marmalard, dead! Niedermeyer . . .

Eric "Otter" Stratton: Dead! Bluto's right, psychotic, but absolutely right. We gotta take these bastards. Now, we could fight 'em with conventional weapons, that could take years, and cost millions of lives. No, in this case, I think we have to go all out. I think that this situation absolutely requires a really futile and stupid gesture be done on somebody's part.

Anyway...

It's time for teenagers to learn more about technology than Gameboys, Instant Messenger, MP3 players, XBox, Wii, cell phones, and iTunes! It's time for the WeLCARS Electricity, Electronics, Radio and Technician License classes! WeLCARS and Boy Scouts of America Venture Crew 743 present "Electronics for Scouts", a class to teach teenagers (and tolerant adults) the fundamentals of electronics, amateur and broadcast radio!



There are those that think it can't be done.

- You can't teach teenagers this ancient stuff, they have no interest.
- They have too many other toys.
- Radio is antiquated.
- You can't expect them to take a test that they may actually fail!



- Helping them achieve a shift towards meaningful, measurable achievements in life, learning that they need to EARN something and not be coddled, helping them to overcome the need to be "Narcissistic Praise Junkies".

Well, it may be a futile gesture, but somebody's got to do it! Our track record is:

- 20 youth attendees passed their Merit Badges!
- 2 adult attendees passed their Tech license!
- 4 teenage boys passed their Tech licenses; one did better on the test than his Dad, an RF Engineer with a Master's Degree!!!

So it is class time again! We take the gauntlet, and the goals are:

- At least 20 kids passing their Merit Badge requirements
- At least 5 getting licensed
- Producing a 30 minute broadcast radio show to be aired on WRLR!

We have kids all the way down from Schaumburg/Roselle attending, with Scoutmasters recommending this class because of the fantastic job we all did last year! Help is always welcome! Come out and do some "forward mentoring" as well as "reverse mentoring" working with the future technicians and engineers of America!

73 Joe, N9IFG

The Legend of the Stoned Monkey

by Penny Staley, K9PLS

Over the years there have always been a lot of people who have asked how the Stoned Monkey VHF contest group got its name. Since my notebook was the essential cog in the machinery of mayhem who better to tell the tale of the "Legend of the Stoned Monkey" than me!

The trouble all started at the June 2000 VHF QSO party. When my sweet husband was approached by the McHenry VHF nuts to come out and participate in the contest. In those days most of the group was just getting into computers and there weren't many portable computers to be had with in the group. Since Tom and I had our own notebooks he volunteered both his and my notebook to the cause of logging contacts for the contest. In those days the available contest software was mainly DOS based software. I am told the software they loved to use at the time was something called CT. During the same time frame viruses started to run rampant.

My brand new refurbished IBM notebook had just been configured with this new fangled software operating system called Windows 98 and some version of a virus checker I have long since forgotten the name of. In those days as I understand it the best logging programs used DOS and a primitive serial port networking scheme. Since my computer was setup to run Windows 98 and the logging software required DOS to run it, something called a boot floppy was required to run my computer and the logging program. As you may have already guessed, the DOS boot floppy was source of my problem. Now I don't really want to divulge the source of the boot floppy directly, let's just say his shiny top-knot is hard to miss.

Now the good news is that even though the computer got infected with the DOS Stoned Monkey Virus, the contest log was complete with out data loss, the same could not be said for my hard drive. After a rescue of the data and reformat all was again working just as before.

Now it is amazing that all you need to do is mention the existence of the virus in a private conversation on 145.410 MHz, and before you know it the Stoned Monkey VHF Contest group was born.

Needless to say the source of the infected boot floppy has been the target of constant kibitzing ever since. But it wasn't until later that summer that I found the perfect mascot for the group. It now searches for VHF contacts from its lookout position atop the 2 meter beam.

73 Penny – K9PLS

PS: To find out the nature of the mascot, plan on visiting the next Stoned Monkey contest effort.

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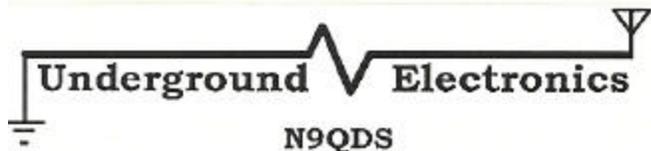
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