Our Next Meeting

Monday February 9th, 6pm Mingle, 7pm Chow
BPL - Why you should care?
Presented by Bob Vallio, W6RGG

Everything you always wanted to know about WPX but were afraid to ask?
Presented by Andy Faber, AE6Y

Location:
The Old Spaghetti Factory,
62 Jack London Square, Oakland
510-893-0222

Multiple MMTTY Windows in WriteLog

Ed Muns, W0YK

Here is a great way to have multiple Rttyrite/MMTTY windows in WriteLog for RTTY contesting. You may remember from the RTTY Contesting presentation at the NCCC September meeting that having multiple demodulators working on the same signal can be advantageous for the RTTY contester. The reason for doing this is to deploy different demodulation techniques on the same signal simultaneously in order to increase the probability that good copy can be made.

Until a few days ago, this meant assigning each Rttyrite window to a different WriteLog "Radio," which resulted in also creating a separate Entry window for each "Radio"/Rttyrite window. Furthermore, if you are running SO2R, you quickly max out the number of "Radios" in WriteLog which currently has a limit of fourr. But probably the most confusing thing is having multiple Entry windows and trying to keep track of where the focus should be.

Since MMTTY includes four different signal reception profiles (Standard RTTY, Flutter, Flutter (FIR) and Multi-

Path), it is desirable to open two to three simultaneous Rttyrite/MMTTY windows on the same signal; or four to six windows in SO2R! Unfortunately, each window requires its own dedicated sound card, so the real problem is finding slots in your computer for a gaggle of sound cards.

Well, both these issues have been addressed with a Windows discovery and a fulfilled request for a WriteLog feature. I put a query out on the RTTY reflector about how one could drive multiple Rttyrite/MMTTY windows from one sound card audio stream. The unanimous response was, "You can't!" Then VE3IAY emailed me that he had just tried it with Windows XP and, in fact, it did work. No one had tried it before because Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000 can't connect multiple applications, or multiple instances of the same application, to one sound card. I quickly upgraded one of my shack computers from Windows 2000 to Windows XP and was able to open up several MMTTY windows on the same sound card audio.

At the same time, I started pestering W5XD, WriteLog author, about allowing multiple Rttyrite windows to connect to one WriteLog "Radio" and a single Entry window. Wayne came back with an even better solution than I asked for. He modified the Rttyrite program to add a "Clone (receive only)" item to the File menu. So, once you open the first Rttyrite window from the Windows menu in the main WriteLog window, you can open additional Rttyrite clone windows. Only the first Rttyrite window will transmit, so that is where you setup your FSK keying or AFSK sound card parameters. All of these Rttyrite

windows (the "main" one and all the clones) can run off the same sound card if you are running Windows XP, so be sure and set the Sound Card ID to '-1,' or the actual ID, if you know it. For WriteLog 10.44 or earlier, get this new Rttyrite program at http://www.writelog.com/Downloads/Rttyrite1045.zip. UnZip the file and replace the current rttyrite.exe file in your WriteLog installation, typically, in the WriteLog/Programs folder.

You might want to save the old rttyrite.exe file just in case. For WriteLog 10.45 or later, this new version of Rttyrite is already included. I tested Rttyrite 10.45 with WriteLog 10.44 in the BARTG Sprint, and it worked great.

Now, most signals will print the same in all the Rttyrite windows, and you can click call signs and reports into the single Entry window for logging. Each Rttyrite/MMTTY window can be setup with a different MMTTY "profile" so that you can simultaneously use the Standard RTTY, Flutter and Multi-Path profiles on each received signal. While you could try changing the profile in a single MMTTY window until you got good copy, it takes about three seconds to do so. In a contest, the transmission is finished before the profile changes, resulting in many frustrating repeats while you try to decode successfully.

While my primary interest was in getting multiple MMTTY windows working better in WriteLog, these developments are also applicable to those who want to simultaneously run MMTTY, RITTY and/or the HAL DXP38 hardware demodulator. Even with SO2R, I prefer to use one PC, but AA5AU (and, I think,

our own AC6JT) uses two PCs, one on each radio and networked together with WriteLog. He uses a MMTTY and HAL DXP38 on each radio/PC and runs the left keyboard/mouse with his left hand and the right side with the other hand, twisting his head between the two CRTs. It obviously works well, since Don wins most RTTY contests he enters seriously, but my brain blows a fuse just imagining myself doing this!

For those of you that haven't yet tried RTTY contesting, give it a whirl sometime. The CQWW WPX RTTY and NAQP RTTY contests are coming up in February. A lot of NCCCers are having a blast with it although some (K6XX's soapbox from the ARRL RTTY Roundup comes to mind) find it a silly and boring way to contest. The RTTY Roundup was my first experience with the mode and I have to admit that I somehow fell into the "What a Hoot!" camp.

K6XX – Today and Tomorrow
Rob Brownstein, K6RB

For the last two years or so, Bob Wolbert, K6XX, has been even more of a contesting force to be reckoned with. So, on the trip up to the summit of the Santa Cruz Mountains, along Empire Grade, one expects to see multiple towers, stacked yagis, and all the accoutrements of a modern "super station." Surprise! Bob has been garnering those big scores with a TH-7, a TH-5, and a handful of wire antennas. For now, what he really has going for him is location – and tenacity. But, watch out. He's not finished by a long shot.

Bob's TH-5 looms above the new shack

In the few years since he bought his 70-acres of forest, Bob has cleared and built a house with a to-die-for view to the south and south east. But he's also done his share of clearing several tower sites that will one day serve as the launch pads for signals in six key directions on 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters. As for the low bands, look for a 160-meter vertical, a four-square, an inverted vee and eight beverages! On 80 meters, Bob has plans for wire beams and "maybe a rotary."

The ultimate goal, says Bob, is "six antennas on every HF contest band, except for 80 and 160." And, inside the shack, there will be five stations – two SO2Rs and three single-band set ups for a multi-multi effort. Currently, the two SO2R set ups feature a pair of FT-1000 MPs, and a TS-950 and Elecraft K2-100.

Bob pointing out TR-Log's SO2R "modes" operation.

Of course, these positions are bolstered by amplifiers. But what is really innovative is Bob's elaborate switching system. Using transfer relays, he's devised homespun rotary-and-toggle switch controllers at each SO2R station that allows an operator to easily switch among the antenna options at either position. In the center of each controller is a polar projection centered on K6XX and showing the regions to which the rotary and toggle switch actions pertain. It is almost fully automated, but not quite. "The processing involved in controlling the actions of eight transfer relays and nine n-of-6 relays is very complex, and I'm not there yet."

Climb the poison-oak bedecked hill to the north/northwest of Bob's house, and you find the original K6XX "shack" from where he first began operating from his 70 acres, using generators, a small tower, and a TH-7.

The original K6XX "shack."

You'll also discover a treasure trove of Rohn 25 and 45 sections, plus a trailer-load of aluminum for making booms and elements for dozens of plumber's delight monobanders. With towers and beams located hundreds of feet from the current shack, Bob runs hardline to each antenna. After all, when you're building gain antennas for 14, 21 and 28 MHz, you don't want coax losses to negate too

many of those "dBs." But you've got to watch your step to avoid crushing the hardline or scraping against the ubiquitous poison oak.
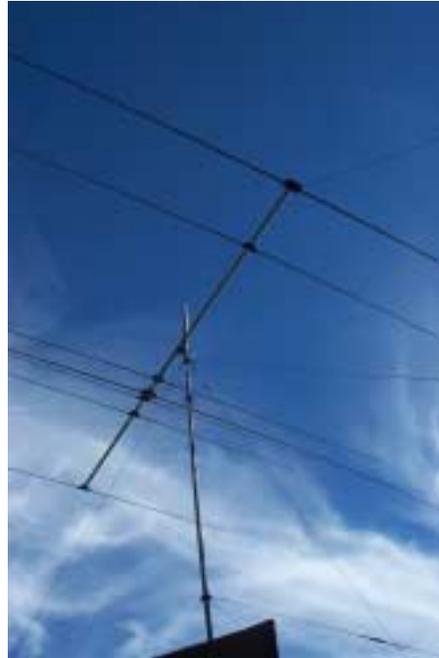
The original TH-7

Most recently, Bob installed a pair of beverages which he tried out in the recent CQ WW 160 contest. "The North American beverage worked fine," he said, "but the one for JA had problems." The problem, it turned out, was a non-existent ground connection to the transformer. "It was just sticking up in the air," Bob chuckled, "no where near connected."

Tower sections…lots of tower sections

As we trekked around the property, surveying future tower sites, and examining existing ones, Bob noted another elevated radial that had somehow come undone. "Maintaining this station is a full-time job," Bob admitted. But he looked anything but ready to throw in the towel. No, Bob has plans. I look at a bare spot, cleared of shrubs, bushes and trees, and Bob sees a tower and antennas with a favorable look at North America. And, behind us and up the hill is another empty pad to me, but one that Bob knows will hold the tower and antennas with effective low-angle lobes toward Japan.

Yep, Bob has his work cut out for him. There are still lots of places to clear, radials to mend, hardline to pull, and switching matrices to build. But with the scores he's been able to garner with just a TH-5, TH-7, some wires and some grit, the potential of his station in years ahead as the new towers sprout and beverages go snaking in eight different directions are simply awesome to contemplate.

Getting Ready For The Contest ("the race to the race") Part II

Kurt Andress, K7NV

The rest of the WX7M operation is a blur. Everything worked fine, I was pretty tired, and didn't push R2 very hard. I did connect another set of headphones for Patrick to listen to see how the two-radio thing works. That was some fun. I got a great plate of Chinese food in the middle of my 40m run, which took me an hour to eat.. Cold Chinese food is good too!

Patrick peeled off around 10pm and I did my thing until 1:02 am; worked a couple of extra Q's after the magic 12 hour marker. Then, I sat there for a while, trying to figure out what I was supposed to do. I disconnected all my stuff and put it in my truck. I had to start the truck right away, to warm it up, as everything was covered in ice. I think it was about 18 degrees out there. Then, I blasted off for home at 1:40 am.

Now, between WX7M and home is a lot of "the middle of nowhere." I was trying to make good time, but didn't know how icy the roads were, so tried to keep it under control. I was passing thru a narrow canyon, when a coyote jumped down on the road 50 yards in front of me. I know I yelled, couldn't hear the coyote, but his mouth was open.... He went left and squatted down in the other lane, I went right and puckered up. In five seconds everything was just like normal, just me bombing along on my little SS adventure, the coyote probably thinking "I better try and follow that guy, he's gonna nail a rabbit for sure".

Smart coyote...two miles later thump...thump...rabbit #1..."Honest Mom, I swerved, almost went in the ditch." Three miles later ... rabbit #2....sigh. Ok, no more swerving We've got a contest to pull off here. Rusty's gonna really be pissed if I tell him I spent my second day of SS stuck in the mud, in the middle of nowhere.

Idle time driving is a horrible thing......did I remember to get everything I need to connect up my station when I get home. Ya... Ya...

Ya... not sure, uh oh? Should I pull off and check? No, you got it, remember? Sigh, I can't......oh to heck with it, too far now, we'll just see what happens when we get home.

I got home around 2:30 am and carted all my toys into the garage and started connecting things. Hmmm....why's that not working, oh ya, gotta plug this one into that one! Oops, that's not working right....just wiggle the plug....presto! Ok, don't touch that one .... it's working now.
Crap! It's really cold out here! I know.... plug the 220v extension chord into the dryer plug in the laundry and turn on the heater and the amps.

What time is it anyway? Should I go take a nap now? It's 3am and the greyline map says it's East Coast sunrise. Let's see if the breakfast bunch wants to work some fresh meat.......well I'll be darned, they do!

Fresh meat
As K7NV, I work 107 Q's in the first hour and 20 min. Okay, enough of that, I'm really tired now. Straight to the couch in my office.

Beware of couches! Psyco Doc's use them for a reason. While on the couch for two hours I have this really strange dream. I'm just getting pummeled in the contest by everyone. They are actually beating me up and I'm not having very much fun. I awake to realize that it is just my wife beating me about the head and shoulders, trying to wake me up. "Your alarm clock is going off, don't you want to go play with your friends in the contest?" After a series of incomprehensible drivel, "Oh, yes dear, thank

you. Where did we leave that coffee pot?"...."It's right where it always is honey." "And where might that be?" "Right here..." Oh, goodie, what's my name again?" "Where did we put that caffene IV kit I ordered?" "It's not here dear, remember, you never ordered it because you were too busy contesting!"
"Oh right!"
We'll just do it the old fashioned way, I'll need another pot in exactly 23.5 minutes." "Yes, dear....(unsaid. "You Nut Case")"

Oops! I've overslept again, it's past 15:00z. I'm always on before this. Better get with the program........

The second day at K7NV is mostly a big mystery, I do what I've trained myself to do in a contest, and have absolutely no feel for it.

Never been here before! It's obvious that I'm way behind! I'm way too tired to work the SO2R thing very diligently. After a few hours the bands go dead, and I'm checking everything to figure out why I don't hear too much. Oh, ya, that must be one of those special solar moments. It comes back, and I happen to hear it come back on 10m when it does. Okay, we'll just call CQ here....oh boy people can hear me! Good thing I stopped by the market on Saturday, those snacks are mighty tasty.

Now, the most embarrasing moment matarializes several hours after I've been on the high bands. I'm running on 10m and S&P'ing on 15m. I have noticed that my Aplha 78 is not real happy on 15m, not anything like it usually does, only 800w out. I do the best I can with it, and work lots

of stuff. Did I just wreck those expensive tubes? Then, I finally realize that the second radio (on 15m) is connected to the 40m beam (left there from the 3 am exercise). No wonder why I had no interference (like I usually have with the tribanders). Hmmmmm.......I just forgot to put R2 on a tribander, but maybe that's okay. I check it out all day, and yippie! The 40m beam is probably a better antenna for reducing my interference with myself on 15m, than the second tribander. Doesn't load right, doesn't put out as much power, but works everything, and doesn't trash myself! When on the right antennas, the amp is just fine. Well then, being a brain dead knucklehead can have its merits! I can't recommend this to everyone, but the bold (or stupid) may experiment. I tried both, bold & stupid. Just need to see which one works best for you.

Near the end of the contest, I go for the "what worked before" strategy. And stake out a freq at the bottom of 20m. I get a clear shot at 14.010 (or so) and pound away. It goes really good for a while, then a couple of guys come on and try to take me out of there. I get REAL grumpy and fight to keep the freq. Then, a little packet pileup ensues, and it's a bunch of NCCC folk. That chases off one of the "buttheads," and I get a bit more out of that frequency. Thanks NCCC spotters, and packet participants! As always, it peters out, and I go try it on 40m. Not so good, but better than a root canal!

The contest ends, and I'm paralyzed, wondering what just happened. Did I do well? Haven't a clue, looks like some pretty small numbers, oh well

at least I pulled off the two station experiment. Oh shoot, where's that floppy disc with the WX7M log ....? Uh oh, can't find it. Shutting everything down, I realize I never turned on the extra cooling fans for the rigs and amps. Sheesh! I ALWAYS do that.......And nothing blew up......Whew!

An hour later I find the missing floppy in my logging computer's floppy drive; just forgot I put it in there to backup the file at 3am.

Every outing is its own complete adventure. Few of them ever get done as we would like, but everyone is its own teacher, giving us something else to work on, to try and do better next time.

Was it a pain in the butt? Yup! Was it fun? Yup! Do I regret doing it? Nope! Would I do it again? Hmmmm....got a year to figure that one out.

Thanks to you all for the reason to have a different contest adventure and learn a little bit more. This would be a real hoot if it ever became a legitimate category.

Member News

From Jack, W6ISQ:
Seppo, OH1VR, known as Mr. Market Reef has been there 15 times and is planning another trip to OJ0 in June. He is looking for one or two volunteers to go to Market Reef with him in June. Seppo will be here another month or so...then back to Finland. He shows up at HRO lunch on Tuesdays (11:30). Anyone inerested should contact him. If you wanna go and can't contact Seppo, let me know and I'll pass your info.

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