



MS 1-Day Bike Ride

by George, KØZZT

Saturday, May 8, 2010, Nebraska Chapter National MS Society held their 1-DAY SPRING INTO CYCLING BIKE RIDE. This years route started and ended at Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) in Council Bluffs, IA. The route proceeded north along the Railroad Highway Route 191, and several county roads going through the communities of Underwood, Neola, Minden, and Bently.

The amateur radio operators listed below put in a total of 133 volunteer hours (including travel time). These hams represented Bellevue ARC, Ak-Sar-Ben ARC, Southwest Iowa ARC, Plattsmouth ARC, Heartlands ARC, and Auburn, NE. These Hams provided communications support for water stops, strategic route locations, and SAG support.

George H Bellairs, KØZZT (Net Control)
Wayne Jorns, KE6DZD (Assistant Net Control)
Ladonna Clark, KØOUO (IWCC)
Mark Hansen, KDØKJJ (Check Point)
Robert F McCoy, NBØB (Check Point)
Kenneth C Lemke, ACØDQ (Water Stop)
Mark Chastain, NØWQK (Check Point)
Theresa M Ratekin, KDØHWG (Water Stop)
James L Harper, KCØSHZ (SAG)
Martin A Jones, KØSY (Check Point)
Ryan A Jones, KDØAVT (Check Point)
Dennis Mitchell, KCØYKN (Water Stop)
Wayne Fry, WH6BUL (SAG)
John A Sheffield, N4OWG (SAG)
Raymund F Mc Nally, Jr, N5SEZ (SAG)
Charles T Burmester, KDØBWI (SAG)
John Titsworth, KCØHYD (SAG)
Thomas C Huber, WDØBFO (SAG)
William J Venter, KGØAR (Bike Repair Vehicle)

My thanks to the Southwest Iowa ARC for the use of their KØSWI 146.82 repeater; and to Paul Blain,

WBØGXD, for having his 442.525 repeater available for back-up. The KØSWI 146.82 repeater provided fantastic coverage all day along the entire bike route. Paul's repeater was not used since a back-up repeater was not necessary.

There were 120 riders registered, but only 99 rode the ride. The riders consisting of five organized bike teams, and numerous non-team single and family riders. The weather was rather chilly and windy. The sun appeared later in the day to provide some welcome warmth to the riders. Riders started at 10:00am. Council Bluffs Police and Hams escorted the cyclists from IWCC, across Hwy 6, and down to Hwy 191. A few cyclists had to be SAGed due to cold weather. The last rider returned to IWCC at 3:00pm, five hours after starting the route. Everything went VERY well!

Non-ham support consisted of 12 non-paid volunteers, and 7 paid MS office staff.

Logistics wise: IWCC staff and security were very accommodating for permitting to their facilities. The location worked out perfectly. We were able to place cones and signage out the campus drive where necessary. Water stops, including lunch stop were well covered with plenty of food and beverages to accommodate everyone!

The MS Society was able to get great coverage/exposure about the event in the CB Nonpareil and the Omaha World Herald. That was wonderful for marketing!

ZS8 – Marion Island – **ZS8M** by operator Pierre **ZS1HF** has been reported as active on 20 and 17 Meters this past week. Look around 0630 – 1000 Z. Other reports have him also on 40 and 15 M. It has been a long dry spell for good activity from this island so catch him if you can. He will be there until late this year but on a work assignment.



VP2M – Montserrat – This one has become more rare since the onset of volcanic activity there several years ago. **MOAEP** will operate as **VP2MDD** from June 14 through to July 12. He will concentrate on 6 Meters with some HF activity possible. Antennas will be a Windom on HF and a 5 element yagi on 6 M. QSL to home call.

6W – Senegal – A group of Spanish ops will activate this one as **6V7W** from July 24 to 31. Three stations are planned so you shouldn't have trouble working them. All HF bands plus 6M are planned CW, SSB and RTTY. QSL via **EA5KA**.

8Q – Maldives – **8Q7AT** will be active by now through June 4th. Operation on 20 and 40 Meters. QSL to the home call **OE2ATN**.

V3 – Belize – Look for **V31XB** from now until June 14. Mike **VE2XB** will operate CW and SSB on all HF bands plus 6 Meters. QSL via his home call.

JT – Mongolia – A group from UA – land will be active from a Mongolian Nation Park from 3 to 8 June. Activity will be on all HF bands plus 6 Meters. QSL to LoTW or direct to the home call address as given by the operator.

It has been interesting to watch the face of DX'ing change over time as trends, fads and other influences continually mold this aspect of the hobby. One thing that has really come of it's own in the last

few years is the tremendous growth in DX'ing using digital modes. For many years there were simply Phone or CW modes. There were a few die hard fans of RTTY back in those years but the popularity of the mode was greatly hampered by the fact that the only way to communicate using that mode was to acquire a surplus, bulky and very noisy teletype machine. You needed a transmitter capable of FSK mode and to decode on-air RTTY tone signals and turn them into loop current pulses required a sophisticated tone decoder. You could either buy one of the few but expensive decoders on the market or build one of the several TU designs from scratch. The mode was susceptible to atmospheric disturbances when copying weak signals and wasn't popular with the XYL, especially if you operated late into the night. The infernal teleprinter could be heard everywhere in the house.

Then a few years ago, there began a revolution in on-air digital communications. Some very clever folks started writing code to use the very common and inexpensive computer sound card to both generate and decode the data signals. With the right software and a Sound Blaster you could not only communicate using digital encoding but you could do so under very weak signal conditions. All using a low transmitter power, typically less than 50 Watts and using a very simple interface between the sound card and the microphone input to the radio.

Today in addition to HF RTTY, there are literally dozens of modes being used on the bands. Some such as PSK31 are much more popular than others and once you give it a try, you might get hooked. If you look at the list of upcoming operations, more and more you see where Digital modes are going along on expeditions. I personally have operated just a little HF PSK31 but I did find it very intriguing. Both Arlyce and I operated from Rhodes, SV5, several years ago and although propagation during our days on the island was terrible (not one W/K contact) we worked dozens of Eastern European and Russian stations using PSK31. We couldn't believe how much activity was out there. And this was nearly 10 years ago.

If you would like to get started in RTTY, then I would recommend to following page where a very detailed and straight forward guide can be found to

The June BARC meeting will be the final organizational meeting before the big event.

[Ed. note: The following article is reprinted from the September 2009 Spark Gap.]

Future Field Days

Always try something different. Make each FD a new event. Don't repeat the same setup as in years past. It's more fun to have different FDs instead of repeating the same FD 20 times.

detailed planning. Divide the chores into site planning (including information table, signs, etc.), food and amenity planning, and station planning. Choose a good, public site and get all the required permissions. Ensure that there is adequate support planning, operator training, and publicity prior to the event.

plan stations. Instead of having individuals provide everything for one station, take advantage of FD to plan station collectively so that no one is forced to provide everything. Dennis, KC0YKN, is a great candidate for someone to show how to plan a portable station. These items can be divided among several people, who could test the combined effort before FD: antenna, antenna supports, rig, including mic and keyer, table, chairs, shelter, tuner, power supply, lamps and other amenities.

workers. Plan to have plenty of workers to fulfill the required support needs. Someone must take charge of food. Another must arrange for general help to be available. This should include choosing hosts to explain the event as well as people with "strong backs and weak minds" to help general and station setup.

visitor-friendly site. An information table works well, but a host to speak with individuals is even more effective. Bob, NB0B did a great job for FD 09. He explained both the site operation and the ability of amateur radio to provide communication in an emergency. Hosting doesn't stop at the entry point, though. Stations can be set up to be visitor-friendly. The first station behind the picnic shelter included the club's station, a Kenwood TS-430. Also in the shelter were two chairs in addition to the operator chair so that visitors could sit and watch QSOs accumulate and ask questions about opera-

tion. Also, the receiver sound came from a speaker, rather than headphones, although that puts a considerable disadvantage on the operator who is trying to pull weak signals out of noise and interference. Another visitor-friendly idea is for the operator to offer to let visitors make QSOs with the help of the regular operator. Understandably, not many people were clambering to be turned loose to make CW QSOs in the club tent, but phone and digital operators should be able to make good use of visitors. We could even have buttons for visitors made that reads "I made a Field Day Contact!"



something different. At last year's FD (2008) I set up a dipole antenna for 160M. The antenna was, of necessity, very long, taking up the entire length of the BVFD picnic area and then some. It work okay, as I made contacts from stations that were as far away as Texas and the East Coast, but the total number of contacts was only about half a dozen, as not very many FD sites bothered to make an effort on 160. This year Chuck tried to run high power. Due to equipment failure he wasn't able to get his signal to his antenna, but it was a good try. Here are some things, some easy, some hard, that we might try for FD:

- Use a helium balloon to support an antenna.
- Pair 10M with a lower band, such as 80M so that the station can switch to the band with the best QSO rate. Pair 6M with a similar band so that, if 6M and 10M are both open (and they usually open together) we take advantage of any E-skip openings on both bands simultaneously.
- Using computer decoding set up a CW station which can be used by operators who haven't learned to copy CW well yet (or at all).

- Have a digital station on several bands.
- Use a slingshot, a bow and arrow, a potato cannon, or other device to string an antenna from a high tree branch.
- Encourage operator training by pairing off experienced in inexperienced operators to operate contests and special-events stations throughout the year.
- Get more bonus points by having someone send an FD message so the SM (section manager), copy the W1AW Field Day message, operate a satellite-mode station, give educational demonstrations to the public, and pass formal traffic.
- Have at least one station with a KW output into a decent antenna.

--WOKT

[Ed. note: The following article is reprinted from the March 2009 Spark Gap.]

Field Day 2010 Planning

by Rick, WOKT

Field Day this year begins on Saturday, June 26. This installment discusses computer logging.

The club has chosen the N3FJP FD program for logging, as it is easy to combine the outputs of several computers together in order to submit a contest entry.

N3FJP Program Bug

The following problem actually occurred to BARC's FD composite log in 2007 and required manual editing of many lines of log entries.

The date/time for QSOs, in some configurations may get out of sync when midnight arrives. In the midwest in the summer we are -5 hours from GMT,

and Windows makes an adjustment for daylight savings time. The N3FJP program attempts to take this into account but can make mistakes.

A simple solution is to go into your Windows computer and do the following in order to set your laptop to GMT so that it doesn't have to make any time conversions at all:

1. **Control Panel > Time/Date.**
2. In the dropdown box for your location select Greenwich England GMT, 0 hours offset. Leave the box for daylight savings time unchecked.
3. Set the computer time/date to GMT (currently five hours ahead).
4. Apply these settings.

Your files will be dated in GMT while these settings are in effect, but it will not cause you to speak with a British accent.

5. Run the N3FJP FD program. One of the beginning dialog boxes has an item titled "**Hours added for UTC:**" If you have done the above procedure, it will likely suggest **-1 hour**. This is a program bug.
6. Change the value to **0** and accept. If you opt not to change your PC temporarily to UTC/GMT, this number should be -5. (Of course REAL hams will set their PC to GMT.)

Your PC and its interaction with the N3FJP program are probably able to handle the problem okay; you might want to check. Just get up before midnight, log a few pretend QSOs just before midnight, then try some more a few minutes later; otherwise, just set the PC to GMT.

Exporting Logs with N3FJP FD Program

Be sure to check the ability of your FD program to share its results. The following procedure assumes that you are running the FD program and have a few QSOs logged in for test purposes.

1. **File > Export ADIF File.** The **Output Power?** dialog box appears with **100** as the default.
2. Click on **OK**. The **Mode?** dialog box appears with **PH** as the default.
3. Click on **OK**. The **File Written Successfully** popup appears. This contains the directory of the file you have just created. Jot it down so that you can navigate to it in order to transfer it to another PC.

4. Click on **OK** to dismiss the popup.
5. Using Windows Explorer or My Computer navigate to the location which you just jotted down.
6. Insert a removable memory device, such as a thumb drive, and copy the file **FldDay.adi** to the removable device.

If you are unable to perform the copy to an external device, your program is crippled and essentially worthless for club purposes, as QSOs logged but unshareable don't count. Reinstall the program, if necessary.

In order to get a copy of the FD software, check out www.n3fjp.com.

Ham Events

If you have an event that you want to have listed, be sure to send an e-mail to the *Spark Gap*. Editor-recommended events are **highlighted**.

event type	start date	event description
picnic	Jun 5	BARC summer picnic
contest	Jun 5	Ten-Ten Open Season - www.ten-ten.org
contest	Jun 5	DigiFest - www.mixw.net
special event	Jun 5	Edmund Fitzgerald Memorial - Lighthouse - www.kg8ef.com
BARC Bd mtg	Jun 10	7:30 PM, - www.bellevuearc.org
special event	Jun 12	Stars & Stripes Newspaper
contest	Jun 12	ARRL June VHF QSO Party - www.arrl.org
special event	Jun 12	150th Anniversary of the Pony Express, K7P - www.arrl.org
contest	Jun 12	World Wide QRP Contest - en.jaqrp.org
event	Jun 17	Papillion days - www.visitnebraska.gov/component/myplanner/detail/events/5016077

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event type	start date	event description
BARC club mtg	Jun 17	7:30 PM club meeting This meeting includes the final Field Day planning. - www.bellevuearc.org
special event	Jun 19	150th Anniversary of Pony Express at Fort Laramie, W7P - ae7ln@arrl.net
contest	Jun 19	Kids Day - www.arrl.org/FandES/ead/kd-rules.html
special event	Jun 19	Homestead Days, W0H, Beatrice, NE - lonnierech@windstream.net .
special event	Jun 20	Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Pony Express, W0KY - www.w0ky.kearney.net
education	Jun 24	amateur license testing in Lincoln, NE - kk0ih@arrl.net
contest	Jun 26	ARRL Field Day - www.arrl.org
contest	Jun 28	Ten-Ten Spirit of 76 QSO Party - www.ten-ten.org
contest	Jul 1	Canada Day Contest - www.rac.ca/service/contesting
contest	Jul 3	070 Club Firecracker PSK31 Sprint - www.podxs070.com
contest	Jul 4	MI QRP July 4th Sprint - www.miqrp.org
contest	Jul 10	IARU HF World Championship - www.arrl.org/contests
public service	Jul 10	MS 2-Day Bike Ride, Omaha to Lincoln - kb0zzt@usa.net
hamfest	Jul 17	Pioneer ARC, North Bend, NE
contest	Jul 17	NA RTTY QSO Party - www.ncjweb.com
contest	Jul 17	CQ WW VHF Contest - www.cqww-vhf.com
contest	Jul 24	IOTA Contest - www.rsgbcc.org/hf/rules/2010/riota.shtml
special event	Jul 28	Worlds Largest Airshow & Fly-in, W9ZL - www.arrl.org
education	Jul 29	amateur license testing in Lincoln, NE - kk0ih@arrl.net



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