

The VHF Column

by Kevin Kaufhold (W9GKA)

Hopefully, this will be the start of a regular column on VHF activities in a regularly issued SMC Black Hole. At least, that is what I strive for in this column – to coordinate VHF contest and operating activities for the club on an on-going basis.

Announcing the SMC VHF Web Page

Brian, K9QQ, has done a great job setting up a new VHF contesting page on the SMC web site. This is in addition to the VHF Contesting Records and High scores pages that he previously put onto the web site.

The new VHF page is designed to be a ‘first stop’ for information pertaining to VHF Operating and Contesting. It can grow and evolve pretty much as we see fit. I envision the following:

I have already placed a SMC VHF Operator Survey on the VHF page. This is similar to the VHF ops lists that I sent out to the SMC reflector for the 2003 June VHF contest, except with a nicer format. Could you please send any corrections or updates directly to me, at w9gka@arrl.net. I am looking for more detailed info, such as grid squares, bands of operation, current contesting activities, and VHF accomplishments, (such as high scores / certificates received or VUCC obtained - and on what bands).

I also have now assembled an SMC VHF Club competition sub-page, accessible from the VHF page. This page is designed to emphasize SMC activities on the VHF contests with club competition. I am especially in need of corrections for the winner of the intra-club certificate. For those people that have previously run with the SMC in the VHF competitions, could you please let me know who had the high intra-club score for each contest.

I also have on the web site the latest version of my VHF Historical Notes. I am quite proud of the Notes, as they are possibly the most complete rendition of 80 years of VHF contesting activities and VHF rules changes contained in any one single source anywhere. I am always looking for more info for the Notes, so please let me know of any historical items of VHF contesting that might be of interest to you.

Also, please review the contest records and high scores for the 5 listed VHF contests. Please keep sending in any revisions or corrections to the line scores.

If there are any VHF links that you want on the VHF page, please let me know what those are, and we can see about expanding the links section of the VHF page. I am thinking of a grouping of links, like one set of links for VHF clubs, another set for JT44, a third for MS, etc. Please send to me your favorite VHF links.

If you have any historical or current pictures of your contest activities, please attach them to me, as I want to build a photo album of SMC member activity on VHF. I may want to couple the pictures with past and current accomplishments of the SMC members. For example, I am quite happy that 3 SMC members set division records in the 2003 January VHF SS, and I crave for pictures celebrating these types of things.

In addition, if you have published any operating or technical articles / papers of a VHF amateur nature, we can always scan them into a PDF file for downloading from the VHF page. I have two such articles myself, and have obtained a third from another SMC member, so we can start with those, but give me anything you may have done over the years. I want something on MS, JT44, or EME operator procedures, for instance. Simple technical matters – such as how 2 and 4 bay VHF antennas are properly and cheaply phased together using only coax lines - would be of great interest, as well. Another great article would be on the use of cheap CATV lines for VHF freqs, and the associated mismatch and connector problems on those freqs (especially by 222 and 432). A ditty on the cheap and effective switching of VHF transverters using a single IF source would be super, too (Bob, K2DRH, has already worked out a great little way to switch microwave transverters in and out of a FT-726 acting as the IF!). But anything someone may have already written would be fine. A technical article sup-page would serve as a great reference point for old and new VHF'ers, alike.

A VHF contest calendar (including months of the various meteor storms) could be easily developed on the main VHF Page, itself.

We could also develop a listing of SMC area VHF beacons and SMC area VHF nets. Could you please send to me any knowledge of such beacons and nets, and I can begin to develop a list that would link into the VHF Page.

Anything else that you want included on the VHF page, please let me know.

Current and Future Contest / Operating Events

Over 30 SMC members ran in the 2003 June VHF QSO Party. The League electronically received 26 SMC logs by the 30-day mark, and there may be some stragglers that I do not know about. SMC members in the contest generated over 1.86 Million points. This bodes very well next year for the 2004 June QSO Party, when the club competition begins in the event.

Numerous operators have reported to me and the club reflector tremendous 6-meter conditions both during and after the June Contest. Considering where we are at in the solar cycle, I am not sure anyone was anticipating such a contest run. There was also some good propagation for the SMIRK 6 meter contest the following week. Conditions have been good on a daily basis into local areas, as well. Chuck, KI9A, reported that he has now worked over 170 grids on 6 meters this summer alone, and the Eskip season isn't over yet! By the way, Chuck worked many of these grids using a G5RV tuned to 6 meters – he just recently got a small 6-meter beam up 25 feet! This shows that the HF crowd can succeed on at least 6 meter VHF, and without spending one plug nickel in the effort.

I know of 3 SMC members who were active on the CQ VHF, and 5 logs of SMC member calls have been received by the League Robot so far for the August UHF. As I write this, the Persieds Meteor Storm is scheduled to generate peak MS conditions on August 11-13. The Persieds is, by far, the biggest MS event of the year for VHF ops, and it can be a real operating treat. At its peak, the Persieds has the capability of producing 20 meter like band openings on both 6 and 2 meters – all in 10 to 30 second bursts, or course (sometimes even longer on 6 meters)! I have worked schedules in the Persieds as high as 222, and have attempted schedules on 432, too (and that was pre-JT 44,

to boot). So, this particular meteor shower can be a big event, at times. Please let me know of SMC member activity reports for the shower.

The September VHF QSO Party is right around the corner, the weekend of September 13-15, 2003. This is a club competition event, and has been since 1999. Last year, and without much by way of club organization, the SMC scored 4th in the medium club category, with 9 entries and 469K in total points. The winner on the medium club category since the club competition's inception 4 years ago has been the PVRC, running between 2.2 to 4.2 million points in any one year. Last year, PVRC had 2.9 million points, with only 28 entries. To date, no club in the nation (and this includes Mt. Airy, PVRC, and Rochester) has been able to muster 50+ members for any unlimited club entry. Can we be the first club to do so? I challenge the serious VHF ops to run in the September contest. Just by relying on the existing VHF folks in the club, we should be able to easily double the number of entries and the number of points from last year. Then, I challenge the HF crowd within the SMC (i.e. almost everyone) to tune their dipoles for 6 and even 2 meters, and venture beyond 30 MHz. If even a fraction of the SMC club membership would get on 6 and / or 2 with their HF rigs, dipoles or beams (a 10 meter beam works nicely as a tunable driven element for 6 meters – you lose most of the gain of a 10 meter beam, but you at least end up gaining a rotatable 6 meter dipole in the process), we could easily burst into an unlimited entry. Let's shoot for being the 1st and only club to so far have an unlimited club entry in the September VHF run.