

The 2011 Kansas Sesquicentennial QSO Party by W0BH operating K0S/m

2011 is the 150th anniversary of Kansas statehood which made this the Kansas Sesquicentennial QSO Party. This year, we celebrated by spelling KANSAS and SUNFLOWER with the last letter of 33 1x1 calls. Several years ago, Jerry, K5YAA came up with the idea for the Oklahoma Centennial QSO Party. The Georgia QSO Party very successfully did it again this year for their 50th anniversary. I started out by hoping I could find 12 operators to spell KANSAS. When I saw how enthusiastic everyone was, we added SUNFLOWER! Besides 19 plaques to try for, operators who spell either KANSAS or SUNFLOWER get a certificate if they apply for one and send in a log. If they spell both, the certificate includes the 1964 Amateur Radio stamp issued by the postal service. Kansas stations activated all 105 counties, and preliminary reports indicate that John/N6MU worked them all!

On to the run. XYL Lorna (K0WHY - also a 1x1 call if you think about it!) and I were closely watching the weather forecast for storms and excessive heat advisories. When the weather service raised the forecast to 105 degrees in southwest Kansas, I decided on Friday afternoon, to switch vans to one that had air conditioning. I already had antenna mounts in place, but I had never installed a complete QSO party setup in the '91 Mazda MPV. After a hurried two-hour installation with wires running everywhere, the setup actually worked except for 15m SSB. With dark coming on and a morning departure, I called it good for the evening and crossed my fingers.

Saturday

Since the 14 Kansas mobiles had almost all the counties covered multiple times, I could actually start from home this year. With the sun up and the air still cool (well, cooler anyway), I rechecked tuning, spent a little time trying to get 15m SSB to work with no success, and got ready to head out for the 9 am start. The equipment included an Icom 7000 with remote mounted head, Logikey K-4 keyer, MFJ travel paddle, three Hustler vertical sets on triple mag-mounts (20SSB/40SSB/10, 20CW/40CW/15 and 80CW), two Dell laptops, Lind DC-DC converters for both laptops to eliminate inverter noise, NA software for logging, keying and rig control, and DeLorme GPS and Street Atlas software for navigation.

The Icom radio, GPS computer and FM car radio interface (so Lorna could listen in) are powered by the van battery. Everything else is powered by a big deep-cycle marine battery which runs the logging computer, keyers, and level converter the full 12 hours. A second identical battery is along for Sunday or for a jump start in case we stay too long at a county line. An external 12v fan blows air continuously on the radio. All antennas are tuned for my operating frequencies, so no tuner was installed, and I didn't have time to move over the voice keyer. I previously had major computer keying / RF feedback issues in this van, so I built a parallel port keying interface using a 4N25 opto-coupler. I used it in the Astro for the Oklahoma QSO Party but had never tested it in the Mazda. It worked. My CW no longer locked on whenever I went to 20m CW.

8:55 am found me ready to go at the McPherson / Marion / Harvey county line, three miles from my farm. Lorna stayed at home and finished packing. I got on 7038 as published, and there was John/N6MU waiting for me. We chatted for a few minutes, then logged 3 quick Qs, the first of 76 contacts John and I would make throughout the weekend. My friend Alan/K07X from Wyoming was next and it went from there. Great starting conditions on both 40 and 20. After ten or so minutes of CW operating with the van running to keep the battery voltage up, I realized I was smelling exhaust. I'd parked with the rear of the van facing a very light wind, so I turned the van around before carbon monoxide poisoning became part of my writeup!

At 1426, I started SSB on schedule and had a nice run going for ten minutes. Then the computer crashed. I occasionally lock up the computer and can easily reset it, but this was a real crash. When I

reloaded, the log file with 123 contacts wouldn't load. I tried to fix it for five minutes with no luck, so I left the pileup and headed for home to pick up Lorna. While Lorna finished packing, I sat in the driveway, switched to my backup computer, and started a clean, empty log file. Twenty minutes after the "crash" and fifteen minutes behind schedule, we headed out once again.

Band conditions stayed great on 40 and 20 throughout the morning, but the computer kept crashing. After awhile, I figured out that it only crashed when I was on SSB, and only on 20m .. exactly where I had RF issues before on CW. Every time the computer would crash, I had to restart, copy a new, clean log file, and start over logging from scratch. Losing the call history hurt the most. I wasn't worried about recovering the log file, but it certainly slowed down the rate. Finally I figured out that if I didn't press any keys while actually transmitting, no crash. That took a bit of extra concentration to do and I forgot a few more times, but it worked. Never a dull moment on 20m!

The Mazda goes faster than the Astro, so Lorna got us back on schedule after a few counties. The calls kept rolling in, and I started finding other 1x1 Kansas stations to work. Several hours in, I got my first Ohio QSO Party station and started keeping a count for them since their exchange requires a serial number. The Hawaii QSO Party made getting the Hawaii multiplier simple as well. Hurricane Irene also made her presence known by limiting calls from the northeast. I got updates from New York and other eastern seaboard states as I worked them, and I really missed hearing QSO party regular NT2A from NY (Gennady finally called in on Sunday). As the day warmed up, I finished my coffee and started looking around for the water jug. Nowhere to be found .. we'd forgotten to bring water .. not smart with a 105 degree forecast! A quick stop at a convenience store remedied that situation.

The day went smoothly and fast, but another intermittent problem popped up. Sometimes my audio would just stop. I'd wiggle headphone wires and the audio randomly came back on for extended periods before cutting out again. Finally, I realized I was accidentally stepping on the footswitch, a new addition this trip. I'd previously used finger push-to-talk, but that switch broke, so the footswitch was a late addition. The footswitch is a keeper for future trips .. it worked great. VOX doesn't work reliably in my mobile environment. Another time during a fast food stop, Lorna had just refilled her drink cup and noticed a wire crossing through the drink holder. I was operating CW. She moved the wire and everything went dead. Oops! After some frantic searching and nothing lighting up, I opened the hood and found the tripped circuit breaker in the radio / battery circuit. I reset it and all was well. No idea what happened, but as I said, a mess of wires!

The three-county lines are the most fun, but we weren't looking forward to the last one for the day because it was near a hog farm. Last year, the hogs won! This year, the wind was in our favor, but temperature wasn't. It was well over 100 degrees, so we parked and kept the engine and A/C on for 30 minutes. Besides the heat, the biting flies were out in full force. Lorna wasn't dressed for biting flies, so we were really glad we switched vans. After a nice run, Lorna put the van in gear and headed out. Suddenly, the check engine light came on, the first time it's ever done that in the Mazda. I suspected something with the cooling system. The engine temperature was fine. The oil was full, but the cap to the overflow container for the radiator had come completely loose. I added water, put the cap back on, and the check engine light stayed off for the rest of the trip.

Heading north for the final hour, we were treated to a beautiful sunset as I started thinking 80 meters. The antenna worked when I tested it at home, but when I switched to the 80m antenna and keyed up, there was a bang. At that exact moment, we'd hit a bird. Don't do that to me! We ended the day at Lorna's cousin's house a few miles across the Colorado border in Burlington with no idea how many Qs we had in the log. I stayed up late to recover and combine the 7 crashed logs. When I did, the total was 1290 combined contacts for the day, and I think I got them all back. I also added a string of ferrites to the level converter cable to try to solve the RF / computer crash issue. That worked, too. You can never have enough ferrites along in a mobile!

Sunday

Sunday found us heading back east on I-70 towards Goodland in Kansas. We crossed the border into Sherman county a few minutes before start time. The first 30 or so minutes were really slow with a few loud signals but not much activity on either 40 or 20. Lorna pulled into a fast food place in Goodland, picked up her morning coffee, and got breakfast for us both while I CQd on CW. About the time breakfast arrived, John/N6MU asked me to QSY to SSB. I told him we were eating and he immediately understood. A full mouth and CW work a lot better than a full mouth and SSB! While I was eating and CQing in the parking lot, several Harley motorcyclists were eyeing both our van full of antennas and the clear blue sky. One asked, "Do we need to be worried?" Mistaken for a storm-spotter once again! "Not until later," I replied. That turned out to be prophetic. Later in the day, severe thunderstorms were forecast and made their appearance in a number of northwestern counties including ours. Fortunately, the KSQP was over by then. Shortly after we got on the freeway, the bands suddenly opened and the pileups were back.

I-70 was fast and Lorna actually pulled ahead of schedule which gave me more time for our first three county line. Not to be. The GPS road didn't exist, and we used up our spare time trying to find an alternative location. That ended up being a wagon-train set of ruts between two fields which fortunately ended at a fence just past the Logan / Gove county line. We were dragging across a bunch of sagebrush, so when we stopped, a strong burning rope smell wafted into the van. Worried about a fire, Lorna stopped the engine and checked. No fire, and the smell went away after things cooled down. After a really nice run, we headed out on what my GPS said was Highway 40. Highway 40 turned out to be a gravel road, but at least it went through. Later when we stopped at another fast food place, the burning rope smell was back. Lorna (the resident prairie ecologist) said that sage is oily and she was right, it eventually burned off and no more smell.

Heading to our last stop, John/N6MU called in to report needing only one more county, and N0U/m was heading that way. A little later, success. All 105 counties in his log! I felt like celebrating for all of us right then and there, but we had some time left on the clock. Lorna delivered me to our last stop right on schedule. Like the previous stop, this line was a new one for me. The three county line was in the center of a paved road, so we decided to find a high point on the Ottawa / Dickinson county line instead, since both were new counties. The last half hour was a great pileup .. the reason I keep doing this over and over again. Thank you thank you all for being there and making this so much fun! It was also really fun to work a number of Kansas 1x1 stations as I drove along. All seemed to really be enjoying themselves. I didn't spell KANSAS or SUNFLOWER, but perhaps I can make up my own word from KSAULOWER! I'm glad ops like VE3KZ were more successful. Bob reports working 32/33 of the 1x1 calls. Once again, a tribute to us all!

Stats

We operated 17.6 hours, 2024 combined Qs, 426 unique calls, 3 dupes. Lorna ended up with 106 contacts in her log.

States not worked : ME RI VT ND

Canadian not worked : QC SK AB NT NB YU YT PE NL (worked NS ON MB BC)

KS worked (16 counties) : REN SMI MCP WYA JAC HVY LAB BUT JOH GEA SHA THO DEC
LEA LIN ELS

DX worked (15 countries) : 9A DL F G HA I LU OE OK OM SM SP TI UA1 XE

Six-hour Rates (W0BH only)

----- 2011--2010--2009
Saturday 1400-1959 - 129 -- 86 - 145 Qs/hr
Saturday 2000-0159 -- 86 -- 67 - 114 Qs/hr
Sunday 1400-1959 - 106 - 123 - 164 Qs/hr

County Breakdown (in visited order)

Saturday (474 miles during the QSO party)

01 MCP 49 McPherson
02 MRN 41 Marion
03 HVY 63 Harvey
04 REN 68 Reno
05 RIC 66 Rice
06 STA 46 Stafford
07 BRT 73 Barton
08 RUS 66 Rush
09 PAW 99 Pawnee
10 EDW 38 Edwards
11 FOR 50 Ford
12 HOG 53 Hodgeman
13 NES 48 Ness
14 LAN 25 Lane
15 SCO 83 Scott
16 FIN 70 Finney
17 KEA 70 Kearney
18 WIC 85 Wichita
19 HAM 68 Hamilton
20 GLY 73 Greeley
21 WAL 26 Wallace
22 SMN 27 Sherman

Sunday (383 miles during the QSO party)

22 SMN 26 Sherman (again)
23 THO 51 Thomas
24 LOG 48 Logan
25 GOV 76 Gove
26 SHE 16 Sheridan
27 TRE 61 Trego
28 ELL 42 Ellis
29 RSL 43 Russel
30 ELS 39 Ellsworth
31 LCN 48 Lincoln
32 SAL 57 Saline
33 DIC 62 Dickinson
34 OTT 62 Ottawa

Special thanks to the following ops for 10 or (way) more contacts:

- 76: N6MU - likely the first station ever to sweep Kansas in one weekend!
- 69: VE3KZ - loudest signal (3-way tie!)
- 62: N8II - loudest signal (3-way tie!)
- 61: K4ZGB - always there and often first
- 54: N4PN - loudest signal (3-way tie!)
- 33: W4UT
- 30: W4UCZ
- 29: K5WAF NU0Q
- 27: N2WN WB0TEV
- 26: N4CD
- 24: WA6KHK
- 21: K4BAI OM2VL
- 20: AC0BH WA0MHJ
- 19: NT5O
- 18: KS4X
- 17: K4AMC K4YT
- 16: LY5A
- 15: N4ARO N4PJ NN9K
- 14: KS5A W7ON
- 13: K0PC K7TM
- 12: K0MPH KO1U W5QP
- 11: KO7X N7EIE W0OXJ W4YWX
- 10: K4MIA W4SIG W5CW W6KC W6OAT

1x1 stations worked (12): W0K W0S N0A W0U N0U K0U W0L W0O K0W W0E W0R K0R
Kansas mobiles worked (5): N0U/m K0U/m W0L/m W0O/m WY0I/m

QSO Breakdown

	CW	PH
160	0	0
80	1	0
40	474	46
20	770	619
15	7	1
10	0	0
++	1252	666

1918 QSOs * 51 mults = 259,488 points

W0BH Award Winners - First Place ----- Very Honorable Mention

Most overall Qs	---- N6MU/76	----- VE3KZ/69	----- N8II/62
Most CW Qs	----- N6MU/42	----- K4ZGB/41	----- VE3KZ/37
Most PH Qs	----- N6MU/34	----- VE3KZ/32	----- N8II/29
Most counties	----- N6MU/34	----- VE3KZ/33	----- N8II/31

