

COUNTY HUNTING HISTORY



ICHN

**ANNUAL CONVENTION
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Amateur Radio Operators or "hams" since the conception of the art itself, have always been striving for achievement in that part of the hobby which appealed most to the individuals themselves. In the beginning it was the struggle to achieve any degree of success whether it was a successful construction project, a QSO across town or across an ocean. While many hams have always been satisfied with just "chewing the rag" with local friends the desire of many to achieve operating accomplishments led to the Awards Program which has proved so popular down through the years.

Starting in the 1930's some of the original operating awards were the International Amateur Radio Union's "Worked All Continents" followed by the popular American Radio Relay League's "Worked All States" and CQ Magazine's popular "Worked All Zones" and "Worked All Prefixes" programs. The latter, coupled with the ARRL's "DX Century Club" appealed to the many amateurs primarily interested in working foreign countries.

The resumption of Ham Radio following World War II led to greater efforts by the majority of hams to achieve even greater degrees of success in their operating efforts. As new and surplus equipment became available to the average ham, DX contacts became more plentiful. Sweepstakes scores became higher each year and "rare" states became easier to find and work. As the awards available for operating achievements became easier to obtain, they likewise became more popular. Sensing the need for more awards of various types to be available to any worthy ham operator was the father of an extensive Awards Program, Clif Evans, K6BX. During the 1950's K6BX created and developed the "Certificate Hunters Club" which immediately proved popular with many hundreds of ham operators who could work to achieve one or many of the countless certificates or awards created by K6BX. One of the most popular awards created by K6BX was the USA-CHA or the "County Hunters Award".

In 1960 county hunting activity was well under way. Certificate Hunters Club chapters were established

in many states which encouraged county hunting in each particular state. K6BX had become associated with CQ Magazine which provided a widespread media for collecting and disseminating information and news of County Hunting activity. The USA-CA Awards were created by classes USA-500, USA-1,000, USA-1,500, USA-2,000, USA-2,500 and USA-3,000. CQ Magazine printed and made available USA Counties Award Official Record Books. These books are necessary to obtain these awards, and are available from CQ for the same original price of \$1.25.

The first amateur to qualify for the USA-CA-500 Award was K2PFC. Others quickly following were K9EAB, WØMCX (now WØBK), W5AWT, W8IBX, W6YC, W8WT, W4UF, W5NXF, K1BUR, K5DGI, K6YMZ, W8NAN, K6SXA, W5PSB, K5YUF, VE3BKL, and W1GKJ. W4UF was the first YL to work 500 counties. Close behind were YLs W6PCA, W1YPH, W8WUT, K9QGR and KØGIC. DX stations also were interested with PJ2AF, ZL1TB, TG9AD, KL7MF, SM5WI, DL1QT, SM5CCE and KH6DKA also qualifying late in 1961 or early 1962. The first stations to work 1,000 counties were K4AI followed by K7NHG, K6YMZ, W5NXF, W8NAN, K9EAB and W6KG all in 1962.

There were no specific frequencies or nets for county hunting in the beginning. Very few indeed even dreamed of working all U.S.A. counties! AM was still the common mode of phone operation. While W9JR was the first operator to work 500 counties from his mobile, mobiles were not yet recognized by most as a possible source of county contacts. The majority of contacts were made on 40 meter phone and in 1963 a net was developed with county hunting the main activity. Also the CHC net and ISSB net on 14,333 kc was used by County Hunters. In March of 1963 the ISSB net moved to 14,332 kc and the CHC net moved to 14,340 kc where they are today. The 40 meter net ran through 1966 when it was forced to disband due to foreign broadcast stations taking over the frequencies. Recent efforts to re-establish a 40 meter net on 7,265 kc have been only partially successful due to broadcast QRM and poor band conditions.

Some of the farsighted County Hunters who created 7,225 kc 40 meter net in 1963 were K9UTI, K9EAB, K8IQB, K8CIR, K8IWI, K8KOM. It was at this time that mobile units started their real contribution to county

hunting. On September 5, 1963 K9UTI contacted W5JUG/M on 40 meters and stayed in contact with him through 40 counties. K9UTI enlisted help from K9EAB and the 40 meter net was off to a good start. Some of the first mobiles or "County Runners" to make this net a big success were W0KZZ, W4BPC, K3LXN, K8VSL (now W8OA), W0QA, W5EHY, WA9DCQ, W2QHH, W0JWD (now W0BL), W0MCX (now W0BK), W5HDK, W4OHP, WA0LPA, K4LSP, W8NXN, W9ICF, K5SGK, W4UNR, K8DCR, W4AUL, K4DYW, K4ISE, K0CML, K0VFE, WA5AEB, W0YGM, W5DAU, WA5BSV, W9HUF, W8UPH, W9JS, K8YGU, K5YWX, WA0CSL and K0RTH. With the help of these and many other mobile operators the County Hunters totals really started to rise. K9EAB was the first outstanding County Hunter and he did it all from an iron lung! Helped by many mobile operators, including his Dad, WA9DCQ, who made the first of many county expeditions yet to come, Cliff Corne Jr. was the first amateur to finish working all counties on August 14, 1965. Then W0BK got them all on November 9, 1965. All were completed by K8CIR in 1966 followed by W2QHH and W0BL in 1967.

In 1966 the 40 meter net was being rapidly abandoned due to Broadcast QRM and the need for longer skip to contact more remote counties. As most County Hunters were also members of the Certificate Hunters Club, county hunting increased even more on the 14,340 kc CHC net. As is often the case when many group together in any kind of an organization, differences of opinion arise. There were those active in the CHC and on the net who objected to County Hunting on the 14,340 kc CHC net. This led to the creation of the 14,336 kc "Independent County Hunters Net" in November, 1966. Founders of this net were WA4BMC, K8CIR and WB2FVO. As this net was devoted primarily to county hunting many mobiles quickly joined the ICHN on 14,336 kc. About this time K6BX resigned from the staff of CQ Magazine to direct the vast CHC organization from his home in California. However, CQ Magazine kept the USA-CA Awards Program under the direction of Ed Hopper, W2GT. This has always appealed to the many readers of CQ who are interested in County Hunting and other award programs. Current accomplishments are listed in each month's editions along with special write-ups of successful "3079'ers" as those are called

who have worked all 3,079 counties in United States.

County Hunting has increased greatly the last few years. Hunters are found on almost every phone net on every band. The CHC net on 3,943 kc is a very popular 75 meter net with most net time devoted to County Hunting. The advent of SSB and attention given to mobile operation by manufactures of amateur equipment has also increased mobile operation greatly. There are even some who operate mobile CW while county hunting. There are at least 2 nets devoted to CW county hunting activity. There are some who operate aeronautical mobile. Often heard while airborne are W4NUL, K5HKG, WAIPHE, K4FPF, W0WNF, K7OQZ and WA3RDU

County Hunting has developed a fellowship between this group of amateur operators that defies any description. While competition is friendly, cooperation and assistance is the order of the day. Unlike so many other amateur operating events, the "dog eat dog" and "devil take the hindmost" practices never applies to County Hunters. While every effort is made to contact counties, County Hunters, true to amateur tradition are always ready to assist in any emergency that might arise. There are numerous records where CHers have devoted many hours at considerable expense assisting in emergencies.

County Hunters are always welcome at any other CHers' home. To meet together for an "eye-ball" qso is a very commonplace thing. A few met together on March 8 and 9, 1969 in Jackson, Mississippi and from this meeting the conception of the Independent County Hunters Net Convention was formed. The first ICHN Convention was at Mountain Home, Arkansas the Fourth of July weekend in 1969. K5KDG was the host. From this convention came the plaque award for the "ICHN County Hunter of the Year". The first recipient of this coveted award was WB2SJQ. It was at this convention that the ICHN 303 Award was conceived by W0SJE and WA0WOB.

The second ICHN Convention was held in Knoxville, Tennessee the Fourth of July weekend of 1970. Those in attendance who had worked all 3,079 counties were asked to select the "County Hunter of the Year". The group selected K2PFC who became the second amateur to earn this coveted plaque. The third ICHN Convention

was held over July Fourth weekend in 1971 at Kansas City, Missouri with the plaque going to W4HA. The winner again was selected by the 3079ers. The conventions have proved to be real "bang-up" social affairs. Here everybody has the opportunity to get acquainted with all those "voices" heard so consistently on the nets or to meet that mobile operator who gave you the last county in Virginia (or some other state). Then there's the 303 Room, the real "happy room". The net committees meet to discuss ways to improve net and mobile operation. Suggestions are made to improve net controls. Seminars are given on mobile rig installations, how to combat motor noise, mobile antennas, and many other aspects of mobile operation. A special events station with a special prefix call is always in operation to "talk in" the mobiles arriving from far away places. Pictures are taken and manufacturers exhibit their latest equipment. A banquet is the final highlight with entertaining speakers and prize drawings. While attendance at the first convention in Arkansas was less than 100 the 1971 convention in Kansas City numbered in the hundreds. The 1972 convention is under the guidance of W9SOM and over a thousand is expected. These amateurs come from all over the country, even all over the world. ZL1KG and TG9UZ are two popular county hunters who have actually worked all USA counties. Both of these DX County Hunters, along with SM5EAC, attended the 1971 Convention. Several other overseas hunters are getting close to the coveted 3079! The DX hunters are to be especially admired for their persistence in overcoming the QRM and bad band conditions of the last couple of years.

Some of the consistent county runners who have covered many states are WA9PRE, W6RP, K2PFC, K4LSP, W4HA, W0BK, W7BBX, WIUOP, W4BPC, W0KZZ, WB0CYD, K9DCJ, K4ZA, K9CSL, W2BLM, W6JHV, WA0DCQ, WA0RKQ, WA0WOB, K8DCR, K6HZI, W0BL, VE4QZ, VE4ZX, VE3CBY, WB4TNY, W5HDK, WA5UPI, WA0SBR, W4YWX, W4GGU, K9HRC, VE6AYU, W9CFS, WB6AUA, W6UNP, K7WQJ, K1OAZ, K1ZSI, K3ORP, WA0VBF, K6QQ, WA8TQD, WA0GZA, W5ULN, WA4MOA, K5JBC, W8MKM, WA0LPA, WIWHQ, WB6EXT, K8ODY, WB2WZE, WB2RWR, K3FFJ, K4BXU, W8HMB, K5RPC, WA5ALB, W4UVP, WA5RTB, W6LWM, K0IFL, K6BEP, K9GRQ, WA0MQM and WA4MGC

Some of the YLs who really get around are WAØSHE, WØAYL, W8WUT, WAØCSL, K9QGR, K2KQC, WA5SKI, KØITP, WA8FSX and W6CBA.

Mobile County expeditions are very popular. Probably the most extensive one so far was run by WB5DVT and W9SKB in March and April, 1972. These two County Runners gave out every county in Texas over a 9-day period! They ran up 7,500 miles and made almost 10,000 contacts! A record that will stand a long time!

As of April, 1972, 72 amateurs have been successful in working all counties and receiving the USA-CA 3079 Award. It is believed that several hundred more lack 100 or less counties to have them all. Many of those who have worked them all stay around the nets acting as net controls, running county expeditions, and helping newcomers to this phase of amateur radio. Some are even trying to work them all a second time! An award is available to those who contact those who have earned the USA CA 3079 Award. This award is the Cliff Corne Jr., K9EAB Memorial Award. WAØJRZ is award custodian. The theme of the 1972 ICHN Convention is in honor of K9EAB, now a silent key. It is hoped that Cliff's parents will be able to attend this convention. The convention will be held in Peoria, Illinois, the Corne's home town.

Many awards for county hunters are available from the CHC and its associated chapters. However, a new organization was formed several years ago by a group of dedicated mobile amateurs in the Kansas City area. This group created "MARAC" the Mobile Amateur Radio Awards Club, Inc. Starting out with 100 charter members the club has grown to over 300 amateurs primarily interested in county running, awards for county hunting and mobile operation. Many worthwhile awards are available from MARAC for County Hunting accomplishments. An interesting newsletter published by WØYLN is sent to the membership each month. Members operating mobile, using the club's call WBØDPD, have given out many counties in most of the United States. Information on MARAC is available from WA4BMC. County Hunters, to receive confirmation of counties when working mobiles, must send the mobile operators a "mobile reply card". This card is completely filled out, self-addressed with postage stamp so that all the

mobile operator needs to do is check the card for accuracy, validate it with his signature and drop it in the mail. Mobile reply cards are available from QSL Card printers or from WA7MVY, WA2AMM or K7LTV. W6CCM operates a County Hunters QSL Bureau for those who do not wish to mail cards direct. Considerable postage can be saved by using the bureau.

In April, 1972 under the direction of KIOME and WAØZCQ the first SSB County Hunters Contest was held. Net frequencies were not used. Even so, many made over 1,000 county contacts over a 3-day period.

Recently the American Radio Relay League has created two new awards for those interested in DX and working states. These are the 5-Band DX Century Club and the 5-Band Worked All States Awards. Very attractive plaques are provided for those who qualify. These awards provide a real challenge to the DXers and those who look for the states. Also the ARRL provides WAS endorsements for just about anything the applicant can qualify for. So if you are interested in operating awards or are a new County Hunter, or if you are thinking about becoming one, welcome to the fun!! You won't find a friendlier bunch of guys and gals anywhere.

We hope this brief history will give you some idea of how it all came about.

The writer is indebted to CQ Magazine and the following amateurs who contributed information making this article possible: K3LXN, WØKZZ, K9UTI, WØBL, WA4BMC, W9JR, K4LSP, WAØSHE, W4HA, W7PXA, WA4MGC, K4FPF, K9KKX and WB2FVO.

Good luck, County Hunters and happy travels!!

Don, W7OK

State	Number of Counties
Alabama	67
Alaska	4
Arizona	14
Arkansas	75
California	58
Colorado	63
Connecticut	8
Delaware	3
Florida	67
Georgia	159
Hawaii	5
Idaho	44
Illinois	102
Indiana	92
Iowa	99
Kansas	105
Kentucky	120
Louisiana	64
Maine	16
Maryland	24
Massachusetts	14
Michigan	83
Minnesota	87
Mississippi	82
Missouri	115

State	Number of Counties
Montana	56
Nebraska	93
Nevada	17
New Hampshire	10
New Jersey	21
New Mexico	32
New York	62
North Carolina	100
North Dakota	53
Ohio	88
Oklahoma	77
Oregon	36
Pennsylvania	67
Rhode Island	5
South Carolina	46
South Dakota	67
Tennessee	95
Texas	254
Utah	29
Vermont	14
Virginia	98
Washington	39
West Virginia	55
Wisconsin	72
Wyoming	23

Total 3079

