



The Maritime Contester

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Volume 2, Number 1

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President's Column



Welcome to the second issue of The Maritime Contester. This newsletter provides Maritime Contest Club (MCC) members with information related to contesting. It also provides a platform for members to write articles on contesting. The intent is to have the newsletter published quarterly and the focus will be on quality and not quantity.

First of all, I want to thank Scott for suggesting that The Maritime Contester be resurrected. This newsletter will only be as good as the articles it contains. So let's support your editor with thought provoking articles.

MCC Membership has continually decreased. If we are going to continue to be successful, we need to attract new members. Having been an amateur for some 30 years now, I know that this is easier said than done. So let's make 2016 our MCC "comeback year"!

A while ago, I was asked by a member: "What am I getting for my dues"? Well, there is access to the forum and expert contesting knowledge from our members. To me, MCC is about the sharing of contesting information. What works and what doesn't. How to solve problems. What strategies work best in the various contests, and the list goes on. In my view, sharing of information will be the key to our success.

ANS is back!!! Thanks to Bruce, Scott, and Gary for volunteering to get this previously very successful MCC award program back on track.

This is your newsletter, so I need your input. What would you like to see in The Maritime Contester? We also need articles and columnists. MCC has a lot of expertise in its membership, so why not volunteer to write a column on a topic of interest. Articles are always welcome and encouraged.

I joined MCC because I was interested in contesting and was looking for ways to increase my knowledge. I can honestly say that I've managed to do that since becoming a member of MCC. We all complain about the Yahoo Forum, but it does allow members to quickly exchange information relating to contesting. The newsletter will focus on more detailed articles related to contesting. As long as it pertains to contesting, we'd love to publish your article. So get your thinking cap on and start writing.

JP LeBlanc, VE9BK Editor

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40 Meter Vertical Antenna



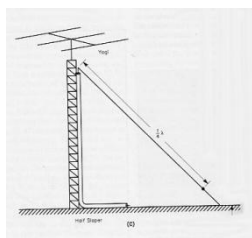
My favorite band has always been 40 Meters. The good news is that it's very easy to put up a really good performing antenna for this band. I first started using a 40M vertical when I was living in Ontario. I had a very small backyard and after looking at a number of options, decided to use a WW2 telescopic mast I had for 40M since it just happened to be 35 ft long. I added a few radials and I was up and running in no time. Except for radials, a 40M vertical takes up very little space.

When Marcel and I started building the VE9ML antenna farm, the decision was made to use vertical antennas for the lower bands.

Since I had three telescopic masts, we phased two of verticals towards Europe. The phased verticals worked so good, that eventually the decision was made to build a 40M 4-square since we have the required real estate to do so. The phased 40M verticals towards Europe are still being used by the multiplier station at VE9ML, while the 40M 4-square is used by the run station in our multi category efforts. The phased verticals are ground mounted, while the 40M 4-square verticals are mounted about 6 feet off the ground with raised radials. There are lots of plans available in the ON4UN Low Band DXing book or on the Internet for the construction of 40M vertical antennas. If you don't already have one as part of your contesting antenna farm, you need one of these. You will be rewarded with an increase in your 40M band scores.

JP, VE9BK

The Sloper Antenna



Another antenna that is being used successfully at VE9ML is the sloper. Since I have a 65ft tower, it was decided to put up three 80m $\frac{1}{4}$ wave slopers in various directions. They do give a small bit of directivity, but the sloper is basically a vertical antenna with an omni directional radiation pattern. This is a very easy way to improve your 80m signal/reception. Vertical antennas work very well on the lower bands since they have a low take off angle.

The sloper will also work on a 35 or 48ft tower and takes very little space. It will also allow you to increase your 80m scores. The best part is that if you already have a tower or high structure, then it's relatively easy to add a sloper to your contest station. We followed the directions in the ARRL antenna book and the installation was very easy and took very little time. It is important to follow the directions since the tower being used provides the grounding for the sloper.

Marcel, VE9ML

Contesting Unassisted



I have nothing against those who want to contest assisted. More power to them (no pun intended) if that's their gig. It just isn't mine. And might I say right up front that I have tried contesting assisted at both my own station and at other stations. In other words, my opinion about the merits or demerits of assisted contesting are based on experience, not theory

And I have concluded without a doubt that for LP CW contesting (my only mode) it makes absolutely no sense to operate assisted. There is more than one reason why I take that position and they all boil to a few prime considerations:

1. I do not (or did not when I had a station) have *adequate antennas* to capitalize on what happens when a new country (or state or whatever) gets spotted. My antennas have always been single element and essentially omni-directional and there is no way that I can focus the pitiful amount of energy from my station in the direction of the station of sudden interest;
2. I have always run *low power*. In any contest of any size at all – with a couple of exceptions – there is nothing except the legal limit on transmitted power. That means that the majority of my competitors are using signals several times stronger than mine. I don't have a hope in hell against them when a station of interest suddenly pops up on a spotting network.
3. *Personal preference*: I would rather find the stations using my own gear and my own ears, and then use guile to work them instead of having them fed to me.

My experience from a few tries at operating assisted is that a new spot attracts a cacophony of noise from high power stations (some, unfortunately illegally high power and over-driven into a state of distortion that is an embarrassment to the hobby), all transmitting precisely on the spotted frequency. It is the source of a mess where I have no interest in playing, wasting my time to no avail. Not then, anyhow. Are there alternatives for the little guy? Sure. Stay tuned for some of them in the next issue.

Gary, VE1RGB

N1MM + Contest Logging Software

Free Software for Phone, CW, and Digital Modes



So, what is so special about N1MM Logger+ contest logging software? Here is my background and a brief summary of what I found. After a 34-year hiatus from amateur radio and buying a transceiver and a multiband vertical, I discovered that there was actually free downloadable software for logging QSOs. This was a major revelation for someone like me who had only used a straight key and logged QSOs on paper.

I first found Ham Radio Deluxe and while it looked impressive, I did not think much of its logging abilities. Next was Logger32 and it did a reasonable job for logging QSOs and could even send an auto incremented serial number for contesting. After using Logger32 for a while, I started looking to see what else was available and found out there was even such a thing as dedicated contest logging software. Wow, what a concept!

I came across N1MM Logger, downloaded it and within an hour or two I was hooked. They even had a support group for when I didn't understand something. Over the next year or so, I asked every dumb question under the sun and always got useful answers to keep me on the straight and narrow.

N1MM+ has become a major player in the contesting arena based on usage and is used by many DXpeditions. N1MM+ has networking support for M/S, M/2, M/M and even DMM (Distributed Multi-Multi) usage.

N1MM Logger+ is focused on the following requirements:

- Do one task hundreds of times over and do it well with great reliability
- Only record essential information required by the contest
- Simple and easy to use interface

N1MM+ is Windows based, runs on most recent PC hardware, and provides support for all major ham radio equipment. There is even a manual mode to enable contest logging using "boat anchor" hardware technology.

N1MM+ fully supports virtually all popular contests from DX contests to state/province QSO parties. This includes quick support turnaround when changes are required or bugs pop up, sometimes with updates even during the contest weekend.

For the more esoteric contests, there are User Defined Contests (UDCs) that can easily be user configured to add sufficient support to operate in these contests. This feature has proved very popular and the UDC library is now up to 146 contests.

In addition to the diverse feature, hardware and contest coverage and the effort put into making the program easy and efficient to use, there is an excellent support team and facilities.

- <http://n1mmplus.hamdocs.com/> - website for documentation and downloads
- <https://groups.yahoo.com/groups/N1MMLoggerplus/> - online/email support

To summarize, it has everything a contester needs as well as excellent technical support and ongoing development to support new features and capabilities. And, of course, the price is right.

Gerald Boutin, VE1DT