

Serendipitous Synergy

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What does grinding a crystal have in common with winning the CQ World Wide DX Contest? More than you might think...

It all started when Lisa Roberts, AL6Y, a protégé of Contributing Editor Eric Nichols, KL7AJ, submitted an article about learning from Eric how to hand-grind vintage crystals to bring them into the ham bands to use with vintage radios. Interesting article for some future issue, I thought. Next, I got KØNEB's Kit-Building column for this month (p. 50), which is focused on the Four States QRP Group's "Crystal Spotter," a kit you can build to tune your receiver to the exact frequency of a crystal-controlled transmitter (nowadays generally QRP). Hmm, I thought, "some future issue" for Lisa's article has just become this issue (and you'll find her article on p. 28).

Within Lisa's article is a link to a World War II-vintage newsreel-type movie called "The Crystal Goes to War." It's all about how radio crystals were manufactured to help the war effort (40 minutes of fascinating viewing!). It turned out that both the crystals and the movie were produced by Reeves Sound Laboratories in New York City. Reeves Sound was owned by Hazard "Buzz" Reeves. In the movie industry, Reeves was best known as the head of Cinerama and for developing the process to add a magnetic stripe to movie film. This allowed sound and picture to be recorded and played back on the same camera / projector, rather than being recorded separately and then synchronized for playback. In ham radio, though, Buzz Reeves was K2GL, owner of one of the early contest superstations at his home in Tuxedo Park, New York. Buzz hosted multi-multi (multi-operator, multi-transmitter) operations under various call-signs (frequently N2AA) during the 1960s, '70s and '80s. He was the first inductee into the CQ Contest Hall of Fame in 1986 and, in 2006, was inducted into the CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame for his professional accomplishments (which we didn't know at the time included manufacturing crystals for military radios during World War II!).

Not only was Buzz's station perennially among the top scorers in most major contests, but perhaps more importantly, it served as a training ground for the next generation of contesters. Some of the biggest names / calls in contesting today can be found in the operator lists of Buzz's multi-multis. Many of those calls also appear in the SSB results of the 2020 CQ World Wide DX Contest, which start on page 14 of this issue.

Multi-multis were a rarity in last year's CQWW due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see our cover photo for an example of COVID-safe contesting at W3LPL), but more hams than ever before took advantage of being stuck at home to operate and submit logs. The SSB weekend saw a spike in logs of nearly 20% over 2019's record number. However, the number of active countries was down due to canceled contest DXpeditions, so competitors needed to adjust their oper-

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ating strategies accordingly. The balance between numbers of contacts and numbers of multipliers is the focus of this month's Contesting column (p. 84).

So, through a combination of (minimal) scheduling and (much more) serendipity, we have synergy between four different articles in this issue, each on seemingly unrelated subjects. More than anything else, though, this is an illustration of an essential element of ham radio — no portion of our hobby exists in a vacuum, whether it's contesting, kit-building, QRP, or even crystal-grinding. Everything overlaps, even if we don't realize it, and that's one of the many things that makes amateur radio — and amateur radio operators — so special. We each bring to the "party" different interests, abilities and experiences, and then bring them all together to accomplish nearly anything we set our minds to do in our shared passion for radio.

Also in this issue is a guide to good operating practices on FT8, as well as Professor Heisseluff's annual April visit (we didn't have space for it in the issue, but a "CQ Classic" look-back to the professor's 1994 article about possible ionospheric propagation on Mars — now confirmed to exist — is posted on our website under the "CQ Overtime" tab). And speaking of propagation, NW7US reports that the international Solar Cycle 24 Prediction Panel has determined that Cycle 24 officially ended in December of 2019 and that we are now more than a year into Cycle 25.

We also have a national survey of Section Emergency Coordinators in "Emergency Communications" on the state of amateur radio EmComm today (p. 37), a guide to severe weather nets (p. 44) and several antenna-related articles. Plus, we say hello to Trent Fleming, N4DTF, our new VHF-Plus Editor, and 73 to MF/LF Editor John Langridge, KB5NJD, whose final column appears in this issue. Thank you, John, for your contributions to keeping CQ at the leading edge of new developments and activities in amateur radio.

Finally, our thoughts are with any of our readers whose homes and/or stations suffered damage from severe weather in late winter or early spring, and to those dealing with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go grind some crystals...