

How to be a Good Operator on Field Day!

by R. Dean Straw, N6BV

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(Modified June 30, 2009)

W6CUS, Berkeley Marina,
Field Day 2008



Why This Talk?

- My specialty in ham radio when I worked for the ARRL for 15 years was antennas and propagation. However, my *passion* in ham radio has been, and is, *contesting*.

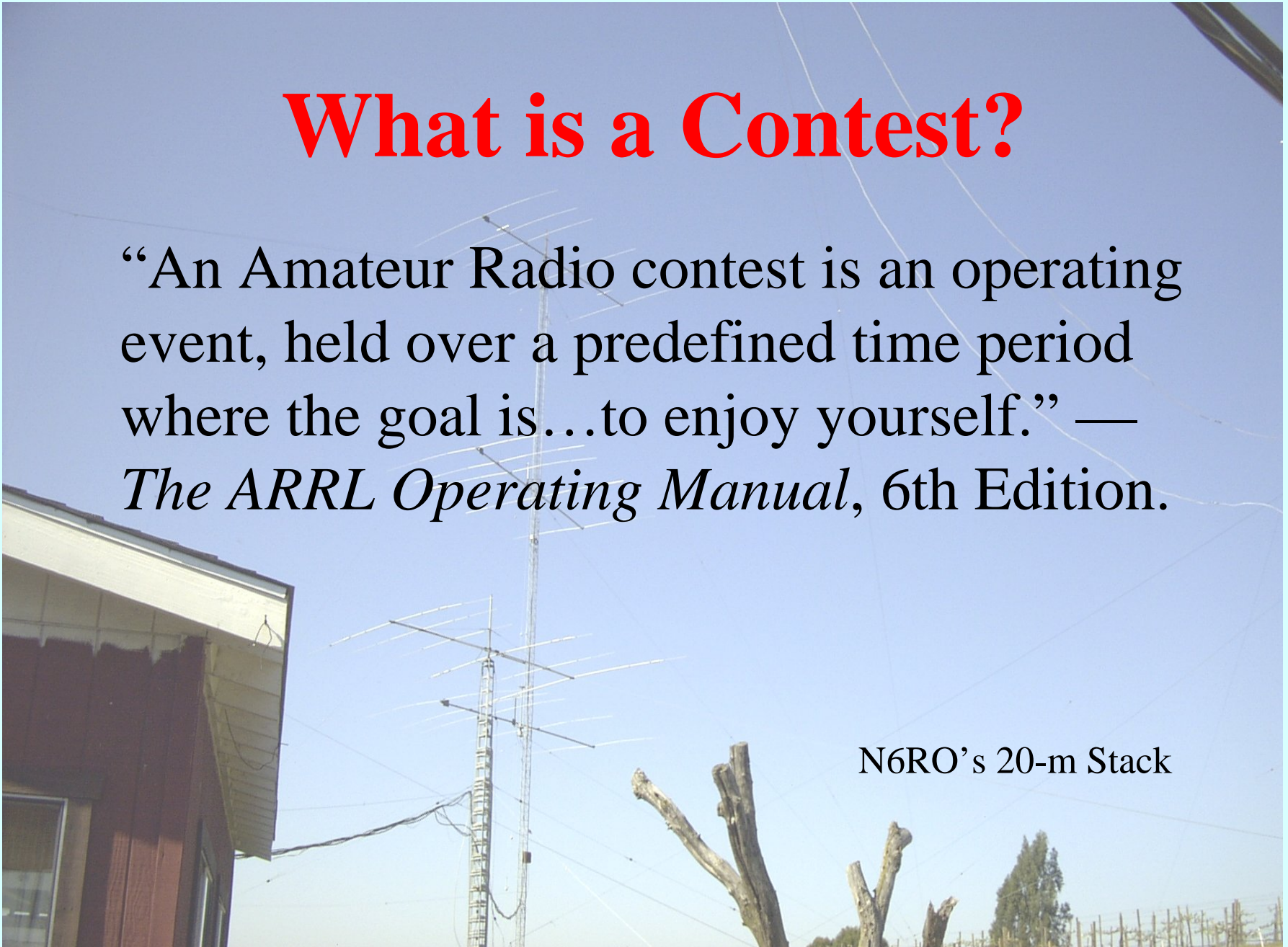
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- This talk is designed to show you how to be a *good* operator for Field Day.

What is a Contest?

“An Amateur Radio contest is an operating event, held over a predefined time period where the goal is...to enjoy yourself.” — *The ARRL Operating Manual*, 6th Edition.

N6RO's 20-m Stack



Why Do We Contest?

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- **But we contest mainly because it is great fun!**

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- ARRL calls Field Day an “Operating Event.”
- But most people do think of it as a genuine “contest” !
- Many contest operators started out by operating Field Day (including me, N6BV)!



Okay, Field Day Isn't “Officially” a Contest



(Here's a useful hint: Notice the boom microphone on the headset. This frees up both your hands to log on the computer, unlike a handheld microphone.)

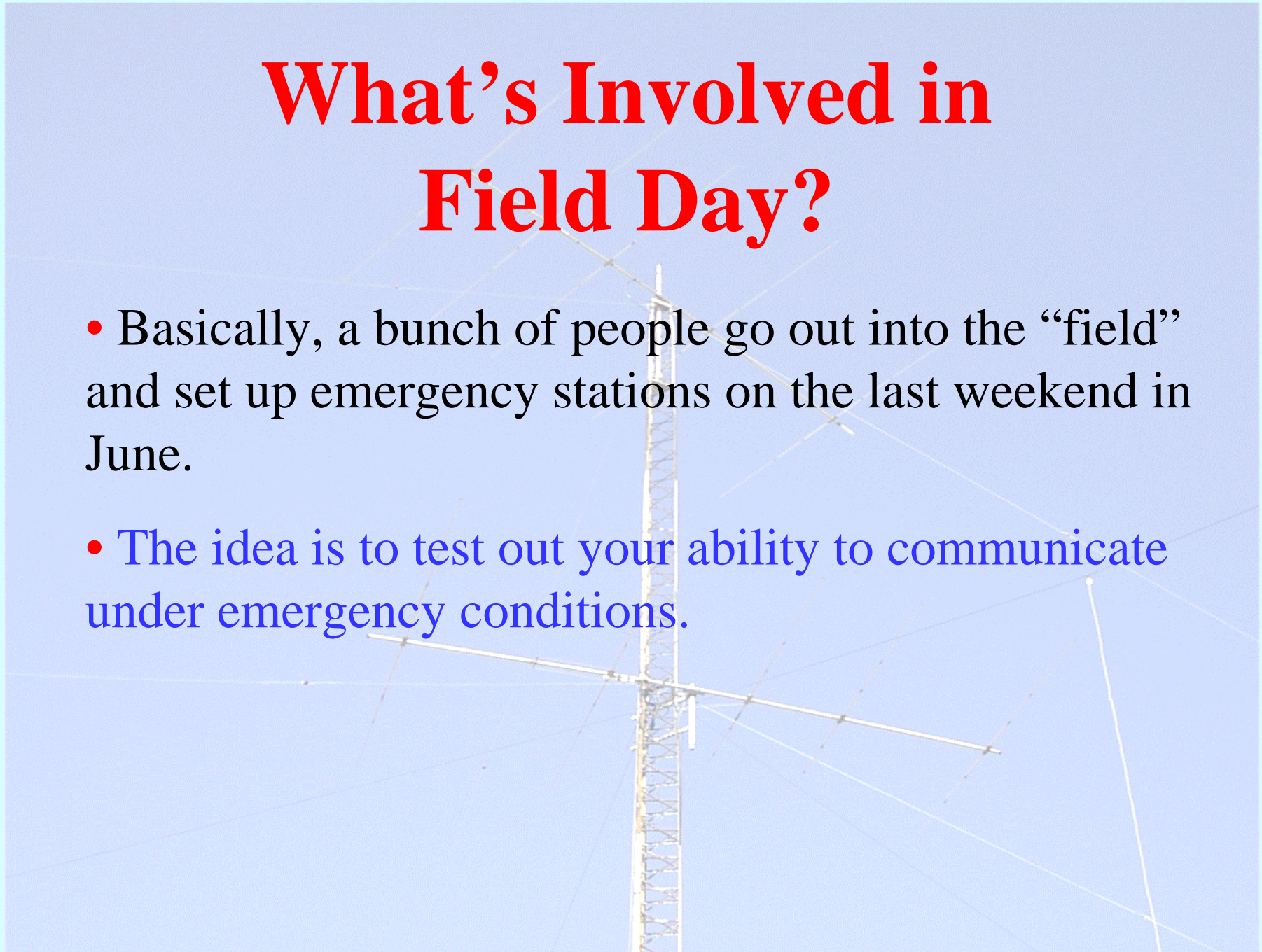
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- The idea is to test out your ability to communicate under emergency conditions.
- CW or digital contacts count twice as much as phone. The group with the most CW QSOs usually wins their category.

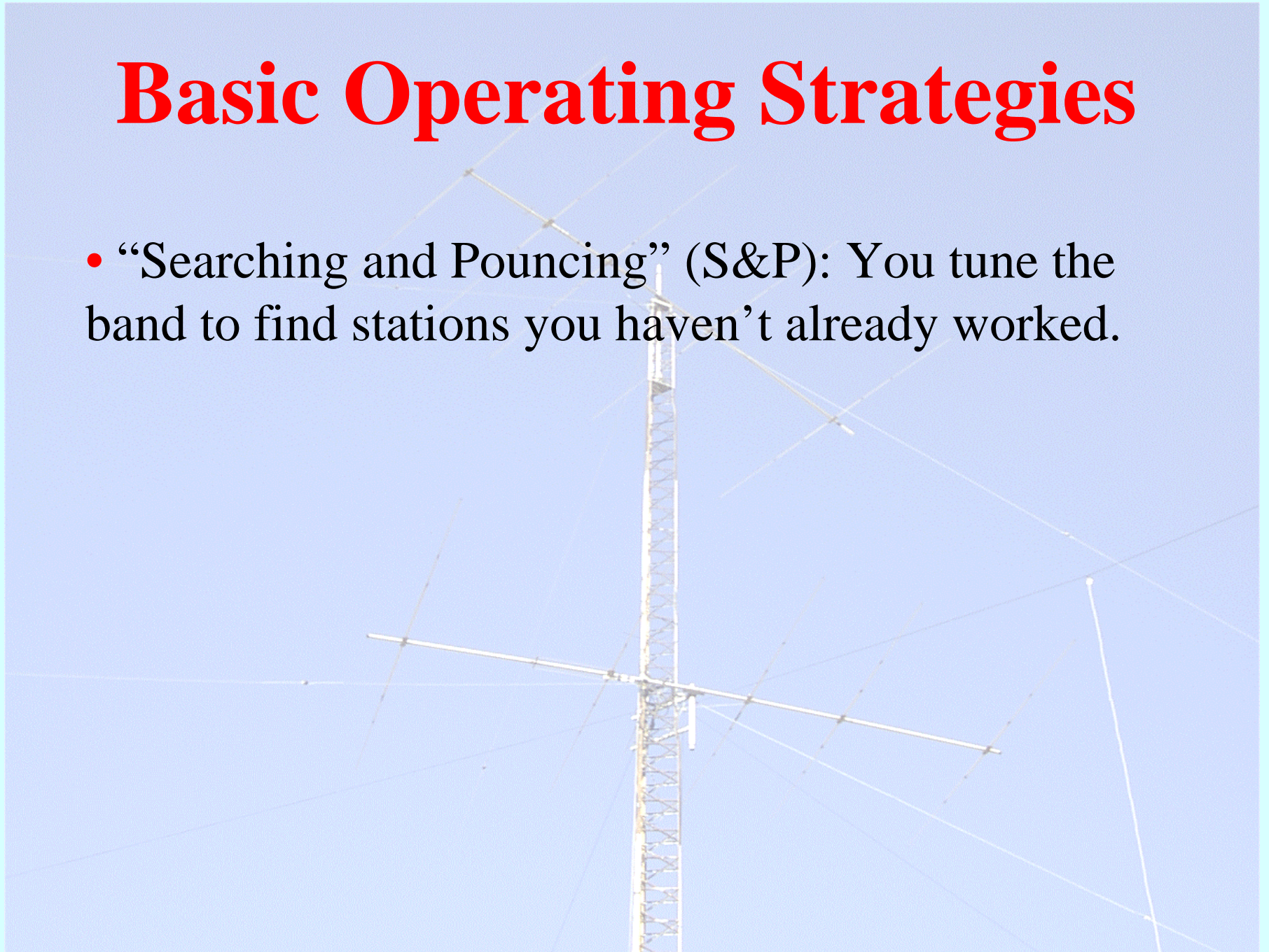
Field Day Categories?

- Class A (-battery): Club/non-club portable
- Class B (-battery): 1 or 2 person portable
- Class C: Mobile
- Class D: Home station, commercial power
- Class E: Home station, emergency power
- Class F: Emergency Operations Center

Most common class? 2A

Basic Operating Strategies

- “Searching and Pouncing” (S&P): You tune the band to find stations you haven’t already worked.



Basic Operating Strategies

A tall, slender metal tower with several horizontal cross-arms extending from its central shaft. The tower is positioned vertically in the center of the frame. The background is a clear, light blue sky. The tower's structure is composed of a lattice of metal beams, and the cross-arms are also made of metal, with some having small components or sensors attached. The overall appearance is that of a radio or communication tower.

- “Searching and Pouncing” (S&P): You tune the band to find stations you haven’t already worked.
- “Running” (also called “*Running Rate*”): You sit on a frequency and call CQ, and stations come back to you. Running gives more points, but you must be loud!

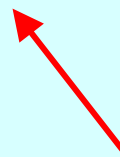
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- “Running” (also called “*Running Rate*”): You sit on a frequency and call CQ, and stations come back to you. Running gives more points, but you must be loud!
- Again, the group with the most QSOs wins their category.

Running “Rate” is Great Fun in Any Contest

- This example audio snippet is from the 2001 ARRL November Sweepstakes Contest, where the goal is to work as many people as possible in the US and Canada in 24 hours.
- The information exchanged is very long. For ex.:

“Nr 211 Bravo N6BV 59 East Bay”



Serial no.

“Precedence
(power)”

My call

“Check” (year 1st
licensed)

ARRL section

Work ‘em fast! 1st hour: 174 QSOs.

By Contrast, the Field Day Exchange is Very Simple

- **Your category and ARRL Section:**
 - For ex: “Three Alpha San Francisco”
 - On CW: “3A SF”

No serial numbers; no signal report even.

How to Be a *Good* Operator on Field Day!

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- Being a fast and efficient operator is the goal.
- In a real emergency, fast and efficient could save lives.
- You want to set a good example so others can become fast and efficient too.

[The audience should close their eyes and listen carefully.]

[Close eyes and listen. Case #1 Demonstration]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

PAPA WHISKEY, PAPA WHISKEY

WHO'S THE "PAPA WHISKEY" ?

WHISKEY SIX, WHISKEY SIX

I WANT ONLY THE "PAPA WHISKEY" STATION

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

OH, THERE YOU ARE. WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

THREE ALPHA EAST BAY

**ROGER, ROGER. I QSL. MY NUMBER TO YOU IS FOUR
ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO. AND THANKS FOR THE QSO,
OLD MAN, AND GOOD LUCK IN THE CONTEST. WE'LL
SEE YOU DOWN THE OLD LOG AND VERY 73 W6PW.**

[So, what's wrong here? Open eyes.]

[Case #1 Analysis—OK, so this is an exaggeration.]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

PAPA WHISKEY, PAPA WHISKEY [giving only last two letters]

WHO'S THE "PAPA WHISKEY" ?

WHISKEY SIX, WHISKEY SIX [now only the first two letters!]

I WANT ONLY THE "PAPA WHISKEY" STATION

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY [finally, the full call]

OH, THERE YOU ARE. WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

THREE ALPHA EAST BAY [Sometimes, the op doesn't get "East Bay" so you might have to say "Echo Bravo" for the log abbreviation.]

**ROGER, ROGER. I QSL. MY NUMBER TO YOU IS FOUR
ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO. AND THANKS FOR THE QSO,
OLD MAN, AND GOOD LUCK IN THE CONTEST. WE'LL
SEE YOU DOWN THE OLD LOG AND VERY 73 W6PW.**

[Way, way too many words! So how should you make a fast QSO? Close your eyes and listen.]

[Case #2 Demonstration]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

[Note that just giving the call sign is like calling “CQ” again, only shorter
and more efficient.]

[Now, open your eyes.]

[Case #2 Analysis]

Here's how to keep it short and sweet!

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY** [emphasize pronunciation or say **THREE ALPHA ECHO BRAVO**]

FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

- **See how fast and efficient this exchange is? You can easily keep up a 120+ hour rate like this. Keep it smooth, in a rhythm.**

[Now, close eyes and listen.]

[Case #3 Demonstration]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

**I QSL, PLEASE ACCEPT MY NUMBER FOUR ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO. I REPEAT, FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO.
THANKS, FROM WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY.**

[What's wrong here? Open eyes.]

[Case #3 Analysis]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

**I QSL, [“I QSL” is not necessary and is redundant] PLEASE
ACCEPT MY NUMBER FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO.
[“Please accept my number” is a waste of time—just say “Four Alpha San
Francisco.”] I REPEAT, [Why repeat?] FOUR ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO. THANKS, FROM WHISKEY SIX PAPA
WHISKEY.**

[Close eyes and listen to another good example, in Case #4.]

[Case #4 Demonstration: How to do it right, with a twist...]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

NOVEMBER SIX BRAVO VICTOR

**NOVEMBER SIX BRAVO VICTOR, THREE ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO**

ONE DELTA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

[Now, open your eyes.]

[Case #4 Analysis]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

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**NOVEMBER SIX BRAVO VICTOR, THREE ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO**

ONE DELTA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

[Smooth and fast! Three QSOs in less than a minute! Now, close your eyes and listen.]

[Case #5 Demonstration]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT

THE SIX SOMETHING, THREE ALPHA EAST BAY

**THIS IS WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT, FOUR A
SAN FRANCISCO**

AGAIN, AGAIN.

**THIS IS WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT, YOU'RE
FOUR A SAN FRANCISCO**

**UHHH... IS THAT WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY? AND
DID YOU GIVE ME FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO?**

**YES, WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, FOUR ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO.**

[Open eyes.]

[Case #5 Analysis]

This is a good example of how to kill a run...

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT [Say what?]

THE SIX SOMETHING, THREE ALPHA EAST BAY

**THIS IS WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT, FOUR A
SAN FRANCISCO** [Should use phonetics for Four A — “Four Alpha”]

AGAIN, AGAIN.

**THIS IS WHOOPEY SIX PREGNANT WOMBAT, YOU’RE
FOUR A SAN FRANCISCO**

**UHHH... IS THAT WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY? AND
DID YOU GIVE ME FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO?**

**YES, WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, FOUR ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO.**

[Skip the cute phonetics! Say “Alpha,” not just the letter “A.”

Open eyes.]

Again... the *right* way:

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, THREE ALPHA EAST
BAY**

FOUR ALPHA SAN FRANCISCO

THANKS. WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

- **Remember: Fast and efficient. But keep it smooth, with a measured sense of urgency in your voice. Think like an air-traffic controller: Gotta keep ‘em movin’, movin’, movin’...**
- **Don’t scream into the microphone. It’s not good for your voice. Screaming also doesn’t help intelligibility on-the-air. Neither does too much speech processing. Turn it down.**

[Now, close eyes and listen again.]

[Case #6 Demonstration of pileup techniques]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

**WHISKEY {pileup} PAPA {whistle, thump} THREE DELTA
THE WHISKEY SOMETHING PAPA STATION, THREE
ALPHA EAST BAY**

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, FOUR ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO**

**WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY. NOW, THE THREE
DELTA STATION, YOU'RE THREE ALPHA SAN
FRANCISCO**

**KILO THREE DELTA GOLF, TWO ALPHA MARYLAND
KILO THREE DELTA GOLF, THANKS. WHISKEY SIX
CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA**

[Open your eyes.]

[Case #6 Analysis — Picking partial calls from pileup]

**CQ FIELD DAY, WHISKEY SIX CHARLIE UNIFORM
SIERRA**

WHISKEY {pileup} PAPA {whistle, thump} THREE DELTA

THE WHISKEY SOMETHING PAPA STATION, THREE

ALPHA EAST BAY [Why didn't I pick the **THREE DELTA** first?

Because I don't want to encourage long and then longer calls...]

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY, FOUR ALPHA SAN

FRANCISCO

WHISKEY SIX PAPA WHISKEY. NOW — THE THREE

DELTA STATION, YOU'RE THREE ALPHA SAN

FRANCISCO [We picked off a second station with only one CQ!]

KILO THREE DELTA GOLF, TWO ALPHA MARYLAND

KILO THREE DELTA GOLF, THANKS. WHISKEY SIX

CHARLIE UNIFORM SIERRA

[Sometimes, however, you can get only a single letter in a massive pileup.]

Review

- Give your complete call — no “last two.”

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- A thought: there will always be QRM — but don’t lose your frequency.

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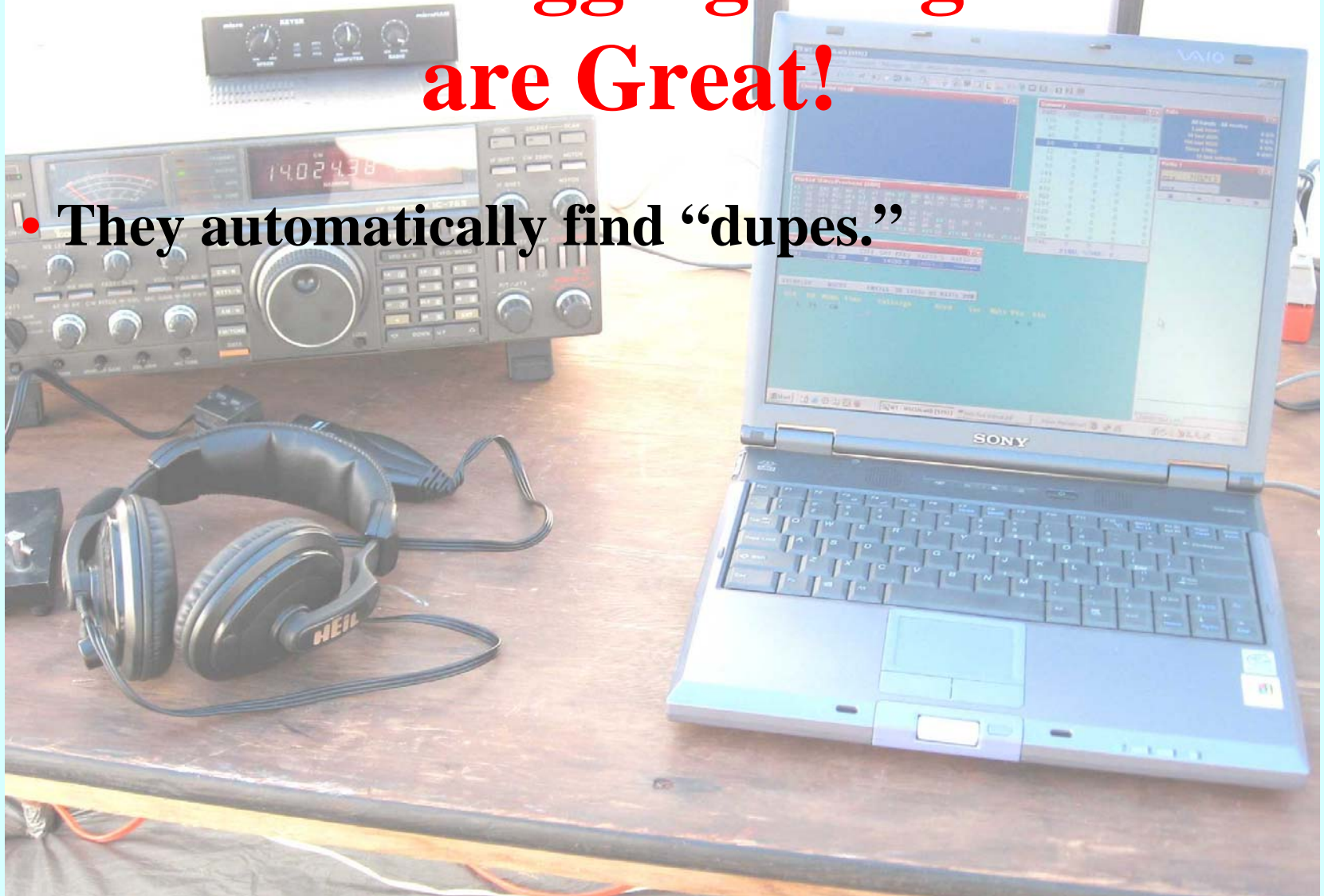
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- He/she with the “iron pants” is the winner.

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- He/she with the “iron pants” is the winner.
- Fast and efficient — and *accurate*.

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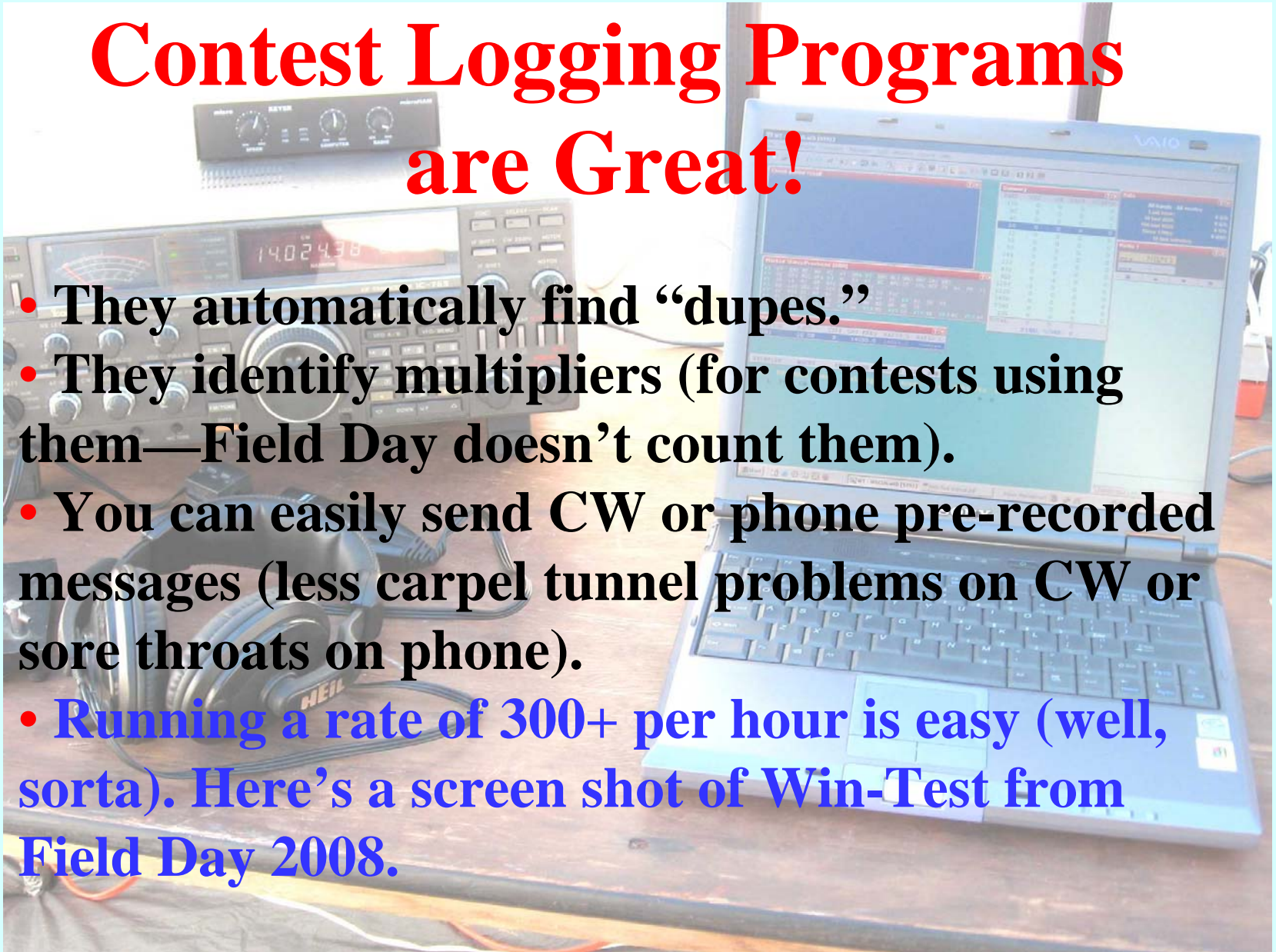
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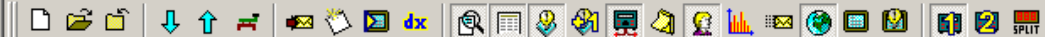
An example of some CW QSOs from the
4M7X DXPedition



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- You can easily send CW or phone pre-recorded messages (less carpal tunnel problems on CW or sore throats on phone).
- Running a rate of 300+ per hour is easy (well, sorta). Here’s a screen shot of Win-Test from Field Day 2008.





Check partial result

Area reserved for partial results, currently empty.

Worked States/Provinces [72/80]

K1 CT EMA ME NH RI VT WMA K2 ENY NLI NNJ NNY SNJ WNY
 K3 DE EPA MDC WPA K4 AL GA KY NC NFL SC SFL WCF TN VA PR VI
 K5 AR LA MS NM NTX OK STX WTX
 K6 EB LAX ORG SB SCV SDG SF SJV SV PAC
 K7 AZ EWA ID MT NV OR UT WWA WY AK K8 MI OH WV
 K9 IL IN WI K0 CO IA KS MN MO NE ND SD
 VE1 MAR VO1 NL VE2 QC VE3 ON VE4 MB VE5 SK VE6 AB VE7 BC VE8 NT

Status

STATION	BAND	TYPE	QSY	FREQ	RADIO 1	RADIO 2
STN1	20 CW	R		14105.0	14037.3	-----



23:03:48 W6CUS SR 1256z SS 0321z RUN

Bd	Mode	Time	Callsign	Rcvd	Sec	Mu
20	CW	17:53	KV2X	1B	NNY	
20	CW	17:53	W8FU	1D	OH	
20	CW	17:55	K7WQ	1E	WWA	
20	CW	17:55	W7AVM	5A	WWA	
20	CW	17:57	K7CSW	2A	UT	
20	CW	17:58	VA7MM	1B	BC	DUPI
20	CW	17:58	K9NY	1D	WI	
20	CW	17:59	W7DPW	1D	WWA	
20	CW	17:59	AE6ZF	1D	SF	
20	CW					

* WT version 3.22.0 © F5MZN & F6FVY *

Summary

BAND	SSB	CW	DIGI	POINTS
160	0	0	0	0
80	0	64	0	256
40	0	383	0	1532
20	0	526	0	2104
15	0	73	0	292
10	0	0	0	0
50	0	0	0	0
144	0	0	0	0
222	0	0	0	0
432	0	0	0	0
902	0	0	0	0
1296	0	0	0	0
2320	0	0	0	0
3400	0	0	0	0
5700	0	0	0	0
10G	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	1046	0	

FINAL SCORE: 4 184

Rate

All bands - All modes
 Last hour: 30 Q/h
 10 last QSO: 75 Q/h
 100 last QSO: 29 Q/h
 Since 2300z: 0 QSO
 - 15 last minutes -

Radio 1

VFO A 4037.3
 VFO B -----

Map



Check multipliers

	SSB	CW	DIGI
160			
80			
40			
20		1D/SF	
15			
10			
50			
144			
432			

K: United States 18001
 Az: Ip: SR: 1019z SS: 0116z

Bandmap List

Let's Have a Mini-Field Day Contest, Right Now!

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- "Run" — sit in a chair & call CQ, or "S&P" — rove around the room for QSOs. (You can change from Run to S&P anytime you want.) Bonus for CW!
- Log on your log sheet. For example: W6AAA calls W6BBB and logs "W6BBB 4A SF" — while W6BBB logs: "W6AAA 3A EB" [I'm going to "help"...]

Lessons from our Mini Field Day

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- **Don’t call long CQs — short and crisp operating is always best.**
- **Politeness counts — Don’t do anything your mama would disapprove of...**

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- They stayed in line even when I reminded them that they too could sit down and call CQ.
- I suspect this same thing happens in a real contest. Those stations calling CQ with authority in their voice (and a big signal) attract obedient lines of answerers.

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- I was surprised to see long lines of people lining up in front of the three “CQing” stations. These people lining up were mainly contest newcomers, a bit unsure of themselves.
- They stayed in line even when I reminded them that they too could sit down and call CQ.
- I suspect this same thing happens in a real contest. Those stations calling CQ with authority in their voice (and a big signal) attract obedient lines of answerers.
- Bless them for their patience, and for their willingness to give points to the real competitors!

Just remember: Contests are supposed to be FUN, as well as being an excellent training ground for operators. Jump in and give Field Day a try!



W4SO at 4M7X