ARRL 2020 160 Meter Contest Full Results

By Mark Beckwith, N5OT **(n5ot@arrl.net)**

In the face of challenging band conditions, we may have "The COVID Effect" to thank for bringing out more operators to accept the challenge of the Top Band.

Will things ever go back to normal? The 51st ARRL 160 Meter Contest, held on the first weekend of December, produced more entries than any of the previous 50. As N6TR said in 2018, "It was an orderly unfolding of an annual tradition." Truer words were never spoken.

"My best rate ever. Seems Covid kept folks home and ready to contest." - N4XD

Though some reported propagation was decent, most were overwhelmed by problematic atmospherics and just plain punk conditions. Soapbox after soapbox bemoaned the price 160 meters had paid for 10 meters opening to Europe only one week earlier.

> *"The sun giveth and the sun taketh away.*" - KL7SB
>
> *"Lots of activity, lots of noise."* - VE3SS
>
> *"I will quickly forget this contest … Next one will be better!"* - F6GOX

However, as has been the case with many contests during the Covid lockdown periods, activity was very high. A record 1,695 stations submitted logs, reporting a record 516,356 QSOs. "I became familiar with 160 meters in 1974 at the Ohio State radio club station W8LT – In those days we were led to believe that 160 meters was a wasteland," recalls 2nd place Single Operator Low Power finisher Rick, WB8JUI. Hardly a wasteland, with over a half a million contacts recorded in less than two days. 160 meters is alive and well.

"I gave myself exactly one hour on Saturday night to see how many I could work. I think this is one of my best ever hours." - W1NN

"Just had a few hours to participate and wow, what a blast." - N5EE

It begs the question, given the record turnout and activity, how would the contest have unfolded if the conditions were better? Hopefully we won't be testing pandemic hypotheses going forward, so perhaps we will never know.

WØGJ says "This array is truly a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow - especially for QRP contesting on 160M!" [Glenn Johnson, WØGJ photo]

We can joke about dusting off the knobs that go all the way to the bottom, and radios that glow in the dark, but current technology is obviously allowing more stations to fit into the same amount of radio spectrum. Your author is an old dog, but he admits this digital radio stuff could catch on. The future is now, and we are here to enjoy it on 160 meters.

A Real Tight Race

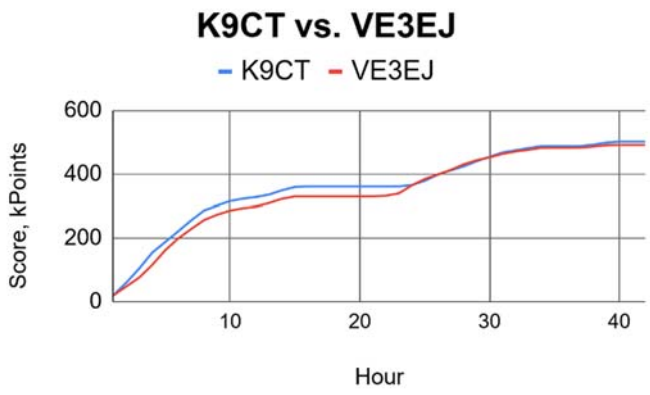
The closest race this year is for the top spot in Single Operator Unlimited High Power where a couple of titans clashed in fantastic form. Long time masters Craig, K9CT, and John, VE3EJ, piloted similar signals to a photo finish. "I knew log checking was going to be key to the outcome. I feared that QSOs might be lost with the quick QSB that we had both evenings," Craig wrote from his QTH in Illinois. "We probably both had the same conditions and had the same concerns."

"There's nothing wrong with a good horserace with Craig, even if he did win," John noted from Ontario. "I don't know what Craig is using but it certainly works well." Both operators are veterans in this annual event. Both stations were using the 5-element array made popular by Tim, K3LR which features a driven tower in

the center, supporting four T-top parasitic elements that can be employed as either directors or reflectors depending on the desired direction. Clearly the choice of champions!

John, VE3EJ, keeps a close watch on potential auroral disturbances as he enters the contest. [John Sluymer, VE3EJ, photo]

When a race is this close it can be interesting to graph score vs. time for a good look at how it unfolded. Bob, N6TV, took a look at the numbers, and produced this great visual:



The race for the top spot in Single-Operator Unlimited High Power got closer as the hours grew late. K9CT prevailed by less than a half of a percent. (Graph courtesy of N6TV)

Records

In a contest with a record number of stations and contacts, one would expect some scoring records to fall. At the Division level, 8 new records were set. At the Call Area level, 4. At the Section level, a whopping 44 old records were broken. A complete list of records for the contest appears at the end of this article.

W/VE Results

Single-Operator

In a remarkable but not unprecedented turn, two brothers took the top two spots in the Single Operator High Power category. Repeat winner Jeff, VY2ZM, ran away with the top score while his brother Peter, K3ZM, earned the #2 spot. Peter suffered an amplifier failure just after sunset on the second night and quit the contest with fully 13 hours of darkness left. Better luck next time, Peter.

Single Operator, High Power	
VY2ZM	693,495
K3ZM	435,543
NA8V	428,520
WB9Z	424,446
VE3DZ	421,632
AA1K	410,522
W9RE	361,008
W5MX	349,044
NP2J (K8RF, op)	347,160
NR4M	329,590

Greg, NA8V, taking the 3rd spot is remarkable in itself, operating from Michigan, far from any salt water. Keep an eye on Bryan, W5MX, who has been tapping away at the top ten from Kentucky since 2006. Read the interview with Bryan later in this write-up.

Dan, K8RF, seated at the helm of NP2J, shared Caribbean propagation with Stan, ZF5T, and Abel, CO2AN, piloting the station into the USA Top Ten for Single-Operator High Power. [Dan Flaig, K8RF, photo]

In the Single Operator Low Power race, it was KG9X prevailing over seemingly perpetual 2nd place finisher WB8JUI, with WØUO edging out K8NVR for 3rd by only one tenth of one percent – a 2 QSO margin. "This was mostly a NA contest for me," reports Fred, "With a big thanks to EA7X. Jose called me on Friday but I never got the exchange from him. Worked Jose Saturday when doing a sweep of the band." EA7X was Fred's only European QSO. Jose, who worked hard to overcome the lousy conditions, comments, "The DX-Window removal from the rules is a big mistake."

Fred, KG9X at his station in Illinois, where he earned top honors in Single Operator Low Power. [Fred Sanborn, KG9X, photo]

Single Operator, Low Power	
KG9X	228,137
WB8JUI	219,925
WØUO	199,405
K8NVR	199,182
VE3VN	183,489
K4FT	180,780
K8FH	177,480
KØTI	176,349
W8WTS	171,626
K2XA	170,079

Rick, WB8JUI adds, "The low power category in this contest seems to be the domain of the 8s and 9s." Not quite loud enough to run Europe, but close enough to so many other competitors that it is an NA rate-fest.

Mike, W3TS, dispatched the QRP category handily running a Ten-Tec Orion at 5 watts to a 60 foot tall top-loaded vertical.

Single Operator, QRP	
W3TS	79,065
N7IR	47,679
KSØMO	37,157
WB4MSG	33,930
W1WBB	27,232
KØKT	26,523
WC4X	25,194
KH6KG/W5	24,552
KN3A	24,144
AD4TJ	23,912

Single-Operator Unlimited

The winner of Single-Operator Unlimited High Power was decided by less than half of one percent, as Craig K9CT held a slim margin over John VE3EJ, as reported above. It was a tight and spirited competition.

Craig, K9CT, just in off the snowmobile to keep those receive antennas in fighting trim. [Craig Thompson, K9CT, photo]

Single Operator Unlimited, High Power	
K9CT	484,840
VE3EJ	482,706
K1A (KO7SS, op)	472,940
K3WW	435,375
VA2WA	432,375
W1UE	404,334
N1LN	360,927
AB3CX	353,764
KØRF	352,404
W3UA (NU3C, op)	350,779

Long-time 160-meter veteran Brian, VE3MGY won the Single-Operator Unlimited Low-Power division. Looking back, he wonders, "The question is was the increase in the number of QSOs due to increased participation able to overcome the decrease in the number of multipliers from degraded propagation? In my case the answer is yes because not only did I have an all-time personal best (both score and number of QSOs), but I gleaned an overall category record as well." Talk about tapping away, Brian has been doing this a long time and it has paid off. You can read more of Brian's impressions later in this write-up.

Single Operator Unlimited, Low Power	
VE3MGY	265,946
NE9U	230,670
W9XT	183,936
N3HEE	170,715
W9AV	162,870
N9JF	157,644
NJ3K	155,720
K9MMS	150,696
K3MD	141,866
K8BL	141,540

Glenn, WØGJ, winner of Single Operator Unlimited QRP, is the first to question his own sanity. "QRP contesting on 160? Call me crazy. I am blessed with nearly 100 acres for antennas. Two full-size verticals spaced ½-wave apart sure turns 5 watts into a flame-thrower. I can beam broadside (N-S) or endfire (E-W)." Glenn walked away with this category and the record, by a factor of nearly 2x. That's his array pictured at the very top of this article, rainbow and all.

Single Operator Unlimited, QRP	
WØGJ	112,880
KEØL	64,480
KKØU	43,500
WE9R	35,217
N2WK	32,385
K8ZT	27,392
WC7S	17,664
WØYJT	8,854
KØCD	5,456
K2GMY	1,170

Multi-Operator

Describing conditions as "subdued," W2GD, the winning Multi-Operator High Power team nevertheless got off to their best start ever, putting over 600 QSOs in the log in the first three hours of the contest. John, W2GD, described, "This was better than ANY start in ANY 160 meter event over the last 35 years. During the first three hours we had clock rates of 230, 220 and 160 per hour. WOW!"

Multi-Operator, High Power	
W2GD	514,540
NØNI	461,380
KØDI	393,231
K3AJ	346,203
NA7TB	325,500
K3CT	315,666
W4MYA	271,662
K2AX	255,920
WA1Z	244,310
W4RN	234,208

The two-man team of NØUR and KBØR piloted NØUR to victory in the Multi-Operator Low Power group with over a thousand low power contacts and 90 multipliers.

Multi-Operator, Low Power	
NØUR	193,410
N4WW	185,606
NC1CC	105,952
KA9VVQ	49,464
W5WTM	35,632
NJ1F	22,686

DX Results

Participation by stations in other countries really suffered this year because the conditions did not lend themselves to a lot of enthusiasm or enjoyment. Nevertheless, 3 overall category records fell. There were 4 new records for continents, and 17 new country records.

Single Operator

Long time 160-meter veteran and expert Stan, who many know as K5GO, and now as ZF9CW, steered ZF5T to a victory and a record for DX Single-Operator High

Power. After a real rough start, he held the line to win the category and take the record from PJ2T. "Murphy struck at the beginning of the contest. When the clock turned to 2200Z, I pressed F1 and … nothing. I then sent by hand for the first 2-3 hours while rebooting everything several times. Rate was not good and I was frustrated. My COM ports were having problems. Finally I quit long enough to find a WinKeyer and all the cables, and got that set up.

"I was not looking forward to this contest but Friday the noise was low and I stayed with it. Before the contest, my son Kevin, N5DX, said that I should give a good effort and try to beat the record which has been held by PJ2T for several years. After the first night with over a thousand contacts, it looked like I could do it. Even though the noise was high on Saturday night I stayed on long enough to get what I needed. I slept for four or five hours on Saturday night. When I got up, I needed SJV and VY1. SJV called me but I never heard a VY1 station. It would have been exciting to get a Clean Sweep."

Single Operator, High Power	
ZF5T (ZF9CW, op)	229,744
CT9ABO (OM3GI, op)	83,148
XE2S	66,780
CR6K (CT1ILT, op)	27,560
OM2VL	20,502
G4FAL	9,152
JA5DQH	7,630
UX1UA	2,856
RM2E	2,200
GM4Z (GM4ZUK, op)	2,028

Abel, CO2AN, dominated the Single-Operator Low Power category, finishing with more than three times the score of the nearest competitor. Congratulations on a job well done!

Winning Single-Operator Low Power on the DX side was Abel, CO2AN, shown here at his station in Habana. [Abel Matos, CO2AN, photo]

Single Operator, Low Power	
CO2AN	39,520
XE2RT	13,152
XE2T	12,470
CO8RH	3,024
JE1SPY	720
JA7KPI	572
JI1RXQ	532
OLØA (OK1CZ, op)	504
4A5ØCRH	224
OZ1AAR	60

In QRP, there were four DX stations who dared to even attempt it. Stefano IZ3NVR won the category with four undoubtedly well-earned QSOs!

Single Operator, QRP	
IZ3NVR	32
E71A	18
JH7UJU	12
SP6IHE	1

Single Operator Unlimited

As if to confirm the dire state of the band for long-haul QSOs, the Single-Operator Unlimited High Power title goes to Jorge, XE2X, who is admittedly much closer to the USA than the next station on the list, Jose, EA7X. All the stations in other continents deserve our unending gratitude for their perseverance in sticking with the contest and getting their calls into so many of our logs here in the USA and Canada. Thank you!

Single Operator Unlimited, High Power	
XE2X	165,600
EA7X	34,810
TF3SG	24,024
GW3YDX	15,980
EA6SX	13,254
OK1CF	11,880
SK3W (SM5IMO, op)	11,644
EA1DAV	11,074
DR5X (DL8LAS, op)	10,912
OL1A (OK1CW, op)	10,332

Other notable DX accolades go to Jan, OM2XW who pushed through all of the above to complete 65 QSOs with stations in 35 states or provinces, winning the Single-Operator Unlimited Low Power category on the DX side.

Single Operator Unlimited, Low Power	
OM2XW	4,550
OZØB (OZ1ISY, op)	1,536
SP2EWQ	864
LY4ZZ	540
OK6Y (OK2PTZ, op)	264
IT9ZZO	216
JK1OLT	208
JA1SVP	156
LZ2ZG	128
SC7DX (SM7GIB, op)	112

Multi-Operator

Like XE2X, the winners in DX Multiop category were closer to the U.S. than Europe. The team at C6AGU made a substantial effort to get C6 into the logs of nearly 1300 stations in the USA and Canada to win the High Power class.

Mark, V31MA, and company made a similar effort, giving out just short of 600 QSOs for the top Low Power score.

Multi-Operator				
High Power			Low Power	
C6AGU	205,000		V31MA	87,900
F5UTN	7,760		YT1Z	2
DK4WW	2,968			
OK6O	1,554			
PA5CT	18			
RY6Y	4			

Nestled against the Gulf of Mexico, Mark, V31MA puts out quite a signal with his full-sized vertical. [Mark Missalla, V31MA, photo]

Club Competition

ARRL contests have long offered radio clubs the chance to rally their forces for bragging rights, allowing intermural contests-within-contests. In the ARRL 160 Meter Contest the winner here is frequently one of two large clubs on the east coast. Over the past 5 years, the Potomac Valley Radio Club (PVRC) has won the top ("Unlimited") class 4 out of 5 times, with the Frankford Radio Club (FRC) always too close for comfort. Last year, FRC pulled out the win.

Not wanting to let that precedent get any traction, this year the PVRC amassed its forces, redoubled its effort, and vaulted over the top once more. "It's clear that very high domestic activity worked for the club," says Tim, N3QE of the PVRC. "We didn't win it by racking up DX multipliers, but through the sheer number of QSOs made by PVRC members."

There are no shortcuts to the top. Everyone pulls their weight. This race is always a good one to watch. In the Medium Class, Contest Club Ontario took top honors for the fourth straight year.

Affiliated Club Scores		
Club Name	Score	Entries
Unlimited		
Potomac Valley Radio Club	8,213,140	96
Frankford Radio Club	7,788,615	75
Society of Midwest Contesters	6,503,440	74
Minnesota Wireless Assn	4,812,645	76
Yankee Clipper Contest Club	4,615,296	67
Medium		
Contest Club Ontario	3,554,610	40
Central Texas DX and Contest Club	1,669,720	27

North Coast Contesters	1,546,196	16
Mad River Radio Club	1,438,302	12
Tennessee Contest Group	1,334,064	21
Florida Contest Group	1,282,170	22
Kentucky Contest Group	996,226	14
Arizona Outlaws Contest Club	954,302	18
South East Contest Club	789,438	13
Hudson Valley Contesters and DXers	751,030	12
Grand Mesa Contesters of Colorado	683,071	8
DFW Contest Group	677,382	12
Northern California Contest Club	659,924	24
Southern California Contest Club	649,198	15
Kansas City Contest Club	582,122	9
Rochester (NY) DX Assn	580,819	10
Willamette Valley DX Club	533,991	8
Alabama Contest Group	447,791	5
Big Sky Contesters	383,027	4
Carolina DX Association	380,303	6
North Texas Contest Club	350,701	4
Mother Lode DX/Contest Club	347,645	5
Bay Area DXers	338,401	4
Western Washington DX Club	278,756	9
Not Quite Workable Contest Club	253,973	4
Great Places Contest Club	252,348	4
Swamp Fox Contest Group	168,570	6
Northeast Maryland Amateur Radio Contest Society	157,044	6
Orca DX and Contest Club	156,421	8
Driftless Zone Contesters	139,807	4
Order of Boiled Owls of New York	137,574	6
Spokane DX Association	100,887	4
Texas DX Society	96,284	4
Saskatchewan Contest Club	53,174	3
Pacific Northwest VHF Society	31,740	4
New Providence ARC	23,518	3
Local		
Central Virginia Contest Club	673,345	7
Niagara Frontier Radiosport	396,938	9
CTRI Contest Group	289,140	5
Metro DX Club	148,216	4
Hilltop Transmitting Assn	100,378	3
Meriden ARC	9,316	4

Comments and Observations

Several entrants offered their comments and observations, long and short, about the contest.

Antennas

As always, comments after the contest had a lot to say about antennas. Recall that a quarter-wavelength wire for 160 meters starts at about 135 feet long, so figuring out how to get a signal on the air on Top Band brings out the best in amateur radio improvisation!

Paul, K5AF, pointing the way to Europe at K5M. [Robert "Tim" Kresky, ABØS, photo]

It may come as no surprise that verticals are popular on 1.8 MHz. A quick back-of-the-envelope scratch shows that two thirds (67%) of stations described some form of vertical. Most popular was the Inverted L. Nine stations reported using multiple vertical element arrays – some driven, some parasitic. The rest were quite a mix of full-sized quarter-wave verticals, shunt-fed towers, T-top Marconis, linear, helical or top-loaded short verticals, and notably, six different stations were using the ageless Butternut and Hustler verticals – a number of whom added wire to make them resonate on 160. Four stations reported using folded counterpoises (FCPs).

Honorable mention for sky-hooking descriptions go to these operators to whom we are grateful for explaining their antennas, many of which demonstrate creative approaches to 160M antennas:

"I ran a quarter wave wire across the back yard about 15 feet average height counterpoised against the rain gutter/facia system of the house. I tied the rain gutters together to increase loading. It terminated in some

bushes down the gulch to the east of the house. It was a far cry better than trying to load the rain gutters by themselves as I had been doing." - K7BG

"Decrepit voltage-fed Marconi T" - WF7T

"125 ft EFLW at 30 ft" - W6KC

"Double-compromise sorta-1/4-wave 160M/60M trap inverted L" - AF4T

"helical vertical with folded counterpoise" - K6KM

"low (40ft) 160 OCFD" - N4IQ

"a flaky Carolina Windom" - N4CF

"72ft End Fed Sloper" - NØSMX

"Dipole at 40 feet" - KG9Z

"Goofy dipole" - NC3Y

"Crude horizontal loop in the backyard" - W9SAU

"Horizontal Vee at 35 feet" - KØNM

"Inverted Checkmark 90 ft tall" - K7JOE

"Dipole at 60ft" - N4FP

"I soon found out the importance of a good antenna on 160" - KØNM

"80-10 OCF at 18ft" - N5DUW

"Inverted Vee at 50ft" - N7US

"sloping wire doublet, 70ft long and 30ft high" - W1HIS

"Short sloper installed earlier in the day" - WO7T

"partially indoors inverted-L" - K9KJ

"20ft Flagpole" - W1BQ

"Butternut vertical with a 2:1 bandwidth of about 10 kHz" - K3FH

"drooping 160M Lazy Vee" - NG7A

"132ft EFHW" - AI6O

"I say this every year: I need to get an antenna for 160" - W9QL

"NVIS Horizontal Wire" - WD5T

"135ft OCF wire" - N4TOL

"OCFD" - N4CWZ

"haphazardly matched 63 foot shunt fed tower" - WBØTEV

"LOUSY INV-L MADE FOR A GRUELING CONTEST...UGH!!!" - W8WA

"160 Meter horizontal loop up 40-60 feet" - KE3K

"I modified my 6BTV vertical to work on 160m by replacing the 80m whip with a 19ft wire turning it into an Inverted L - what a difference!" - WF4W

"I added a 20ft length of wire to the top of my ground mounted 6BTV vertical and gave it a try. It worked much better than I expected." - W4DAS

Barry, K6RM, stands beside the 15-foot-diameter magnetic loop transmitting antenna he used for the contest. Built out of 7/8" Heliax®, it is 25 feet above ground in his attic. [Barry Pfeil, K6RM, photo]

Was it fun?

The jury is in. A good time was had by all. A few specific soapbox comments…

"Fun!" - KØPK

"Really enjoyed this event." - N4IQ

"Good rate. Good fun. Band was packed. Only second time to enter a 160M contest. Addicting !!!" - K7JOE

"Don't those CW tones sound fine on the Top Band!" - W9YK

"First time working the ARRL 160m contest - a lot more fun than I anticipated!" - WF4W

"Lots of room on the band and lots of stations running. Most were polite and kept space." - K9CT

The SDR display at ADØK indicates that there was plenty of activity in the contest! [Donald Inbody, ADØK, photo]

"The band was sure packed so we had to have lots of patience finding clear frequencies." - K3UA

"Low Power + Low Antenna = Low Score + Lots of Fun!" - W8KNO

"Limited time to operate, but always fun." - KW8N

"Lots of fun for a part-time effort." - K1DW

"Thanks for all the very good ears, y'all. See you in the next one!!" - WC7S

"Never before have I had 500+ QSOs on a single band." - W3TB

"My rates were higher than ever for this affair." - K3ZM

"AWESOME contest!" - NGØC

"This may be my favorite contest of the year." - KE4S

"Just the right amount of contesting for me" - N1QY

"Just had a few hours to participate and wow, what a blast." - N5EE

"This is the 51st ARRL 160M Contest. I have made a QSO in at least 46…" - K5NA

"Thanks for the Qs and … hours of fun." - N1LN

"I just wanted to mix it up and have some fun in the contest. That I did!" - N7TY

"Thank you to everyone who copied my 5 watts this weekend." - KN3A

"Operated from a shed on a remote hilltop with no utilities. Used a generator for power and a wood stove for heat." - K3CT

"The Beverage switch got a real work out." - VE3FAS

"Thanks to many great ops with patience and/or good receive antennas to help us QRP folks!" - WC4X

"Rates the first night were fantastic, maybe the best I've ever experienced." - K7RL

"Great contest! Thanks ARRL!" - WO2Y

"This year's ARRL 160m contest was awesome with great conditions and lots of stations to work." - AC9EZ

"I had never made a contact on 160M before this weekend." - W4DAS

"First time on 160. Ran QRP - was a challenge, but enjoyed working the top band." - K2EKM

"Fun rates." - N4ZZ

"Didn't have a lot of time to play, but had a lot of fun." - WE6Z

"As always, even this modest effort was a lot of fun!" - K3SW

"Wow, that was really fun!" - NC3Y

"You gotta love this hobby!" - K7BG

"I used up all my hall passes. Off to earn some more." - K5ZD

OK...one op did *not* have as much fun…

"HV board blew, spark, smoke, smell." - WA4PGM

Online Scoreboards

Over the past few years, many operators have found it enjoyable and even motivating to see their scores displayed on a real-time scoreboard. Some comments…

"Really fun to follow the online scoreboard … Definitely a score booster, at least for me." - AB2E

"Boy what fun watching online scoreboard. It sure motivates you to keep going." - WA1FCN

"The scoreboards are great!! Thank you to VA2WA." - KO7SS

"Enjoyed chasing my friends up the real-time standings." - N5OT

"Had fun watching the online scoreboard to keep me going when I wanted to go to bed." - N3HEE

"After that, it was just trying to stay awake and keep my spot on the online scoreboard." - W9AV

INTERVIEWS WITH SELECTED ENTRANTS

Rick, WB8JUI

As I looked over the final scores, I realized that Rick, WB8JUI, had finished #2 in Single Operator Low Power for the past three contests. That's got to be frustrating! I thought it would be interesting to get his perspective. We talked. It turns out he and I were both licensed the same year. We joked about our youths – how Avis, the perennial #2 was famous for its slogan, *We Try Harder*. Heh.

Always a bridesmaid, Rick, WB8JUI has placed in the #2 spot for three consecutive years as Single-Operator Low Power. Just wait. It's only a matter of time. [Rick Carrier, WB8JUI, photo]

Rick first learned about 160 meters in 1974 at the Ohio State radio club station W8LT, "In those days we were led to believe that 160 meters was a wasteland." Then, for a few years, Rick and his wife lived in an apartment. "I had a decent rig so I strung up an indoor antenna to see what I could do on 160. I lit up the local hams, but also every touch lamp in the complex." That's one case where low power is definitely better than high power!

Every year it became a challenge to improve things. Ultimately Rick landed on a rural half-acre where he could put down some radials and continue working toward that elusive #1 spot. He mused about how the Low Power category in this contest is the domain of 8s and 9s. "One year I surprised myself, getting into the Top Ten. Then, after making the top ten regularly, I decided to aim for the top 5. "I remember getting a certificate once for coming in #5. The telling part was I was #3 in *Ohio*."

"It's not a sprint, it's a marathon." Given how much slower it is on the second night, Rick comments, "I wonder how it would be if I actually could get 8 hours of sleep." I think he means after the first night and before the second night!

There is still a lot of room for improvement at WB8JUI. "I started reading everything I could – W8JI, ON4UN K9YC – Each year I have tried to improve my station a little bit. I think my next priority is receiving antennas, but I'm a little bit limited by space."

So I asked WB8JUI, a guy who can pin the callsign recognition meter, if he would consider getting a shorter call. "Are you kidding? I've had this call for almost 50 years. My call is so great everyone knows it's me when I'm the last one left sending in the pileup." I cannot argue. It's an easy call to pull out for that exact reason. "It's just FUN. 160 is a fun band!" Maybe next year will be your year, OM.

Brian, VE3MGY

The ARRL 160 Meter Contest has long been a focus for Brian, VE3MGY, up in Ontario Canada. I asked him before the contest what his plans were.

"The previous weekend in the CQ Worldwide CW Contest, the solar flux was above 100 all weekend. The difference on 160 was very pronounced here. Stations in Europe were weak with QSB and the openings were shorter and less dependable than normal. I was not expecting anything close to last year's DX count in this year's ARRL 160. As a result, I initially had no goals other than to just enjoy the band over the weekend." Brian kept a close watch on the solar flux all week, and on Friday at contest time it was still above 100.

"104 to be exact. Unfortunately, I was correct with my prediction. All the European signals were down here. Because of that, it took the whole weekend in some cases to work stations I would normally get with one call."

Long-time 160 meter specialist Brian, VE3MGY, set a new record for Single-Operator Unlimited in the Low Power class. [Brian Campbell, VE3MGY, photo]

"On the flip side, we have all seen a marked increase in contest participation since last spring, which has been dubbed the 'covid effect,' so I was hoping for the same effect for the ARRL 160. In this case thankfully I was correct with that prediction so while my DX multipliers are down compared to last year, my QSO total is up."

Last year – 1111/80/29 = 249,826

This year – 1263/83/20 = 265,946

"So, the question is, *was the increase in the number of QSOs due to increased participation able to overcome the decrease in the number of multipliers from degraded propagation?* In my case the answer is YES. Not only did I hit an all-time personal best in this contest (both score and number of QSOs) but I was able to set a new record for the Single Operator Unlimited Low Power category as well."

Congratulations Brian! I am always amazed by how much attention some ops pay to propagation and conditions. "Friday night the west coast was really loud here as well as the Caribbean but the path to Europe was very weak and exhibited a lot of QSB. There was no QRN here Friday so the band was relatively quiet with only band noise to contend with. Saturday was a different story! A large storm system formed off the east coast in the Atlantic basin and the noise level increased dramatically for most of the night from the almost constant lightning strikes. This did not help when copying weak signals and only added to the already increased fatigue level after being QRV all night Friday."

Bryan, W5MX

It's worthy of note that W5MX has been making the Top Ten in this contest (Single-Operator High Power) since 2006, from Kentucky. A look at his profile on QRZ.COM makes one wonder if his name is Bryan or Tom, so I asked him and learned that he goes by both. Something about the two names that made the short list when he was born. In a cheerful but competitive spirit he says that although people really call him Bryan, "*Tom* comes in handy in the NAQP!"

"I grew up in Washington State. My contest Elmer, Wayne ("Hud") Hudson, K5ZG taught me about 160. When I was a kid doing Broadcast band DXing, we put up a rudimentary inverted L and Hud said it sounded really good and we were surprised at some of the stations we were hearing." A 160 Meter convert was born.

Hud tells the story of being new to the Pacific Northwest, and one day tuning across a crack local op going a mile a minute on CW. He was amazed when it turned out to be a teenager. "So, I invited him over for a contest." The rest is history.


Bryan, W5MX, is happy at making the top ten in this contest yet again (Single-Operator High Power). [Bryan Bydal, W5MX, photo]

After getting married and moving to Kentucky Bryan went on the search for the ideal contest QTH. They would drive around the countryside with the AM radio turned all the way up on a channel that didn't have any signal. His wife would ask him, "What the heck are you doing?" Then after he explained he was checking to see how much noise was on 160 meters, she replied "You are a HUGE NERD."

When they found the perfect plot, they finished out the radio shack with a big sign reading "Nerd Lodge" over the front door. Some acres (24), some towers (4), and some Beverages (6) later, Bryan gets into 160 contests on his own, and hosts multiops for the bigger contest

weekends as a training ground for the next generation of operators. "When I operate from II9G in Sicily for the DX contests, I am always amazed at how many great young operators they are bringing up in Europe. We've got our work cut out for us here!"

W5MX is dedicated to bringing up the next generation of contest operators. "We'll never win it from here, but we're here to have fun, and to have a good time, and to learn about radio contests."

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

We live in interesting times. As Brian VE3MGY said, there is really no way of knowing for sure how much a global pandemic might have affected participation in this contest. All we know for sure is that more stations enjoyed more contacts than ever before, and those totals would undoubtedly have been even higher if the radio gods had cooperated by giving us better conditions.

Mark your calendar now…

2021 160 Meter Contest: December 3-5, 2021

Your author feels fairly sure the upward trend in activity will continue as more and more operators succumb to the wiles of the Top Band. Who would have thought so much fun could exist just to the right of your car radio's AM dial? As Art, K3KU, summed it up:

"What fun! Let's do it again next year." - K3KU

Overall Records

USA/Canada

Callsign	Score	Category	Section	Year
VY2ZM (K1ZM, op)	864,753	SOHP	MAR	2010
VY2PX (K1PX, op)	309,514	SOLP	MAR	2004
VY2ZM (K1ZM, op)	199,662	SOQRP	MAR	2006
K1A (KO7SS, op)	649,700	SOUHP	ME	2019
K1EP	265,995	SOULP	WMA	2019
WØGJ	152,910	SOUQRP	IA	2016
K1LZ	655,914	MSHP	EMA	2010
W2FU	258,944	MSLP	WNY	2018

DX

Callsign	Score	Category	DXCC Entity	Year
ZF5T (ZF9CW, op)	**229,744**	**SOHP**	**ZF**	**2020**
C6AKQ (N4BP, op)	187,356	SOLP	C6	2009
CM6RCR	67,758	SOQRP	CM	2007
XE2X	**165,600**	**SOUHP**	**XE**	**2020**
C6AUM (K4RUM, op)	105,300	SOULP	C6	2015
DL2SAX	260	SOUQRP	DL	2018
C6AGU	227,918	MSHP	C6	2019
V31MA	**87,900**	**MSLP**	**V3**	**2020**

Category Key: SO=Single Operator; SOU=Single Operator Unlimited; MS=Multioperator; HP = High Power; LP=Low Power

Division Records set in 2020				
Division	**Callsign**	**Score**	**Category**	**Section**
Atlantic	K3WW	435,375	SOUHP	EPA
Atlantic	K3WW	435,375	SOUHP	EPA
Canada	VE3MGY	265,946	SOULP	ONS
Central	NE9U	230,670	SOULP	WI
Dakota	NØUR	193,410	MSLP	MN
Delta	KEØL	64,480	SOUQRP	TN
Hudson	K2XA	170,079	SOLP	ENY
Pacific	WE6Z	32,054	SOULP	SV
West Gulf	WØUO	199,405	SOLP	NTX

Continental Records set in 2020				
Continent	**Callsign**	**Score**	**Category**	**DXCC Entity**
Africa	CT9ABO (OM3GI, op)	83,148	SOHP	CT3
North America	ZF5T (ZF9CW, op)	229,744	SOHP	ZF
North America	XE2X	165,600	SOUHP	XE
North America	V31MA	87,900	MSLP	V3

USA/Canada Section Records set in 2020				
Area	Section	Callsign	Score	Category
0	KS	WØYJT	8,854	SOUQRP
0	MN	NØUR	193,410	MSLP
0	MO	KKØU	43,500	SOUQRP
0	SD	KØKX	61,336	SOULP
1	CT	K1ZZ	181,252	SOUHP
1	EMA	W1UE	404,334	SOUHP
1	RI	NC1CC	105,952	MSLP
1	RI	W1WBB	27,232	SOQRP
2	ENY	K2XA	170,079	SOLP
2	NLI	N2GA	25,200	SOULP
2	WNY	AB3CX	353,764	SOUHP
3	EPA	K3WW	435,375	SOUHP
3	EPA	K3MD	141,866	SOULP
3	WPA	NJ3K	155,720	SOULP
4	KY	KG4KGY	210	SOUQRP
4	SC	AA4V	108,224	SOUHP
4	TN	K4TCG	210,078	MSHP
4	TN	KEØL	64,480	SOUQRP
4	VI	NP2KW	1,386	SOULP
4	WCF	K5KG	147,568	SOUHP
5	NTX	WØUO	199,405	SOLP
5	WTX	K5M	195,868	MSHP
6	SB	W6AYC	99,535	SOLP
6	SV	WE6Z	32,054	SOULP
7	OR	AK6A	36,144	SOULP
7	WY	K9DR	97,005	SOUHP
8	MI	N8LJ	151,973	SOLP
8	MI	KE3K	98,318	SOULP
8	WV	WA8KAN	91,907	SOUHP
9	IL	KG9X	228,137	SOLP
9	IN	W9RE	361,008	SOHP
9	IN	K9WX	96,064	SOULP
9	WI	NE9U	230,670	SOULP
Canada	GTA	VE3DZ	421,632	SOHP
Canada	GTA	VE3EJ	482,706	SOUHP
Canada	MAR	VE9ML	73,920	SOULP
Canada	MB	VE4GV	79,500	SOHP
Canada	NL	VO1HP	192,855	SOUHP
Canada	ONE	VE3VN	183,489	SOLP
Canada	ONE	VE3KI	76,440	SOULP
Canada	ONN	VA3JL	37,590	MSHP
Canada	ONS	VE3MGY	265,946	SOULP
Canada	PE	VY2ZM	693,495	SOHP
Canada	SK	VE5MX	229,600	SOUHP

Regional Winners											
West Coast Region		**Midwest Region**		**Central Region**		**Southeast Region**		**Northeast Region**	
(Pacific, Northwestern and Southwestern Divisions; Alberta, British Columbia and NT Sections)		(Dakota, Midwest, Rocky Mountain and West Gulf Divisions; Manitoba and Saskatchewan Sections)		(Central and Great Lakes Divisions; Ontario East, Ontario North, Ontario South, and Greater Toronto Area Sections)		(Delta, Roanoke and Southeastern Divisions)		(New England, Hudson and Atlantic Divisions; Maritime and Quebec Sections)	
Single Operator High Power									
VE6BBP	236,532	WØSD (WØDB, op)	310,896	NA8V	428,520	K3ZM	435,543	VY2ZM	693,495
K7RAT (N6TR, op)	216,690	NØTT	293,055	WB9Z	424,446	NP2J (K8RF, op)	347,160	AA1K	410,522
N9RV	179,543	KØTT	265,800	VE3DZ	421,632	NR4M	329,590	W3BGN	319,656
KG7CW	174,885	N5OT	259,766	W9RE	361,008	W5ZN	312,104	K1DG	307,165
W8KA	167,349	WD5COV	231,182	W5MX	349,044	N4XD	301,620	K3UA	291,856
Single Operator Low Power									
W6AYC	99,535	WØUO	199,405	KG9X	228,137	WA1FCN	109,275	K2XA	170,079
W7TMT	58,765	KØTI	176,349	WB8JUI	219,925	N3AC	99,134	K1EP	109,125
VE6TN	53,775	NØHJZ	152,830	K8NVR	199,182	W4DAN	93,528	W1QK	98,850
AC7A	44,603	KTØK	133,547	VE3VN	183,489	WS6X	89,224	N2EM	96,933
VE6EX	23,940	ACØW	102,320	K4FT	180,780	AA4LR	84,840	KW2J	88,184
Single Operator QRP									
N7IR	47,679	KSØMO	37,157	W9QL	11,234	WB4MSG	33,930	W3TS	79,065
K6EI	13,760	KØKT	26,523	AA8OY	10,148	WC4X	25,194	W1WBB	27,232
VE7KW	8,228	WBØCFF	17,400	WS9V	8,280	KH6KG/W5	24,552	KN3A	24,144
VE7VV	6,468	WØMB	7,200	W9CC	7,000	AD4TJ	23,912	KN1H	18,540
K6MI	5,110	KEØTT	5,696	KM4CH	4,800	K4PQC	5,310	K2MIJ	15,444
Single Operator Unlimited High Power									
VE6WZ	250,176	KØRF	352,404	K9CT	484,840	N1LN	360,927	K1A (KO7SS, op)	472,940
KA6BIM	142,133	K5NA	333,384	VE3EJ	482,706	K2AV	333,915	K3WW	435,375
W7SX	125,044	K5PI	301,770	N4BAA	280,326	W4NF	317,285	VA2WA	432,375
N6WIN	104,832	VE5MX	229,600	W8MJ	266,526	K4XL	300,610	W1UE	404,334
W6DR	93,183	KØMD	175,914	VE3CX	255,528	NO9E	236,363	AB3CX	353,764

Single Operator Unlimited Low Power												
AK6A	36,144		KØRC	104,016		VE3MGY	265,946		N3HEE	170,715		NJ3K	155,720
WE6Z	32,054		NGØC	94,792		NE9U	230,670		WF7T	132,430		K3MD	141,866
N7YY	24,416		KØPC	76,692		W9XT	183,936		WU4G	48,106		VE9ML	73,920
N7UVH	23,994		WØSEI	67,232		W9AV	162,870		W4PJW	45,738		KA2K	57,352
W7RH	22,336		KØKX	61,336		N9JF	157,644		K4FTO	39,412		K3LU	55,180
Single Operator Unlimited QRP													
K2GMY	1,170		WØGJ	112,880		WE9R	35,217		KEØL	64,480		N2WK	32,385
			KKØU	43,500		K8ZT	27,392						
			WC7S	17,664		KØCD	5,456						
			WØYJT	8,854		KG4KGY	210						
Multi-operator High Power													
NA7TB	325,500		NØNI	461,380		VE3FAS	49,500		KØDI	393,231		W2GD	514,540
NT6V	206,513		K5M	195,868		VA3JL	37,590		W4MYA	271,662		K3AJ	346,203
K7RL	107,695		NJ8M	179,740					W4RN	234,208		K3CT	315,666
W7XT	97,774		ADØLI	94,874					K4TCG	210,078		K2AX	255,920
NX6T	95,592		KØHB	48,048					W4SO	159,142		WA1Z	244,310
Multi-operator Low Power													
			NØUR	193,410		KA9VVQ	49,464		N4WW	185,606		NC1CC	105,952
			W5WTM	35,632								NJ1F	22,686

Continental Winners						
	Africa	**Asia**	**Europe**	**North America**	**Oceania**	**South America**
Single Operator, HP	CT9ABO (OM3GI, op)	JA5DQH	CR6K (CT1ILT, op)	ZF5T (ZF9CW, op)		PY2OP
Single Operator, LP		JE1SPY	OLØA (OK1CZ, op)	CO2AN	VK3IO	
Single Operator, QRP		JH7UJU	IZ3NVR			
Single Operator Unlimited, HP		JF2MBF	EA7X	XE2X		YV4ABR
Single Operator Unlimited, LP		JK1OLT	OM2XW			
Multioperator, High Power			F5UTN	C6AGU		
Multioperator, Low Power			YT1Z	V31MA		