

2017 KC9UR Pontoon Portable “APE” Tall Tales

It’s hard to believe, but this was our fifth consecutive APE, and it was just as much fun, if not more, than the other four. As in past years, Stan (W9SMR/9) and I (Bob – KC9UR) set up two stations at Stan’s cottage on Round Lake in northeast Indiana. Unlike past years, however, we decided to operate over a weekend, starting Friday afternoon (8/25) and ending Sunday around noon (8/27). This turned out to be a good decision, since the total number of QSOs (207) nearly matched last year’s (209), in spite of the declining propagation. As in past years, we offered a custom QSL card plus a custom certificate to everyone who worked us on 3 or more bands. This year there were 13 certificate winners (a.k.a. certified “APE Hunters”), down slightly from last year’s 14 winners. Once again, we were amazed by the persistence of this year’s hunters, with eight hunters working us on 3 bands, four working us on 4 bands, and one working us on 5 bands – great job everyone!

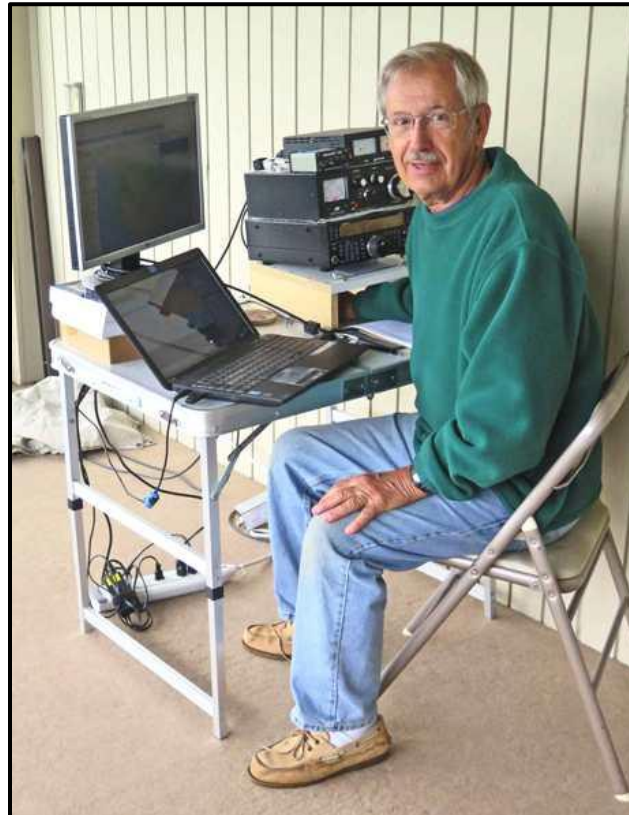


Bob (KC9UR) working the APE Hunters

Unlike some past years, weather wasn’t an issue – it was sunny and warm all weekend – Saturday afternoon we even took a break for a leisurely pontoon boat ride around Round and Clear lakes – really nice. In order to reduce the total amount of work required for set-up and tear-down (a slight concession to our advancing years), we decided to set up the rigs on Stan’s screened-in porch (eliminated the effort to wrap the pontoon boat in plastic for sun screening and weather protection) and to use only ground-mounted antennas (in past years we used one or more floating antennas, a fun exercise, but lots of work to set up and tear down). So if you want to split hairs, technically we weren’t “Pontoon Portable” this year, but we were within sight of the pontoon boat at all times, as you can see from the picture above.

The only glitch this year was what I call “the muskrat caper”. Last year we mounted two “inverted L” vertical antennas to Stan’s swim raft, which was positioned in the water about 100 feet off-shore. We used a remote RF switch on the raft to select between the antennas, depending on which band we were

working. We ran a coax, with an attached Cat5 cable for the remote switch control, under water out to the raft. Apparently at some point late in last year's APE, a muskrat, or other underwater critter, ate through the Cat5 cable, severing a number of the solid copper wires inside (whatever critter it was had big, strong jaws and teeth). When we attempted to use the same coax/cable combination this year, the remote antenna switch wouldn't function. Once the chewed part of the cable was found, it was a simple task to splice the wires, and we were back in business.



Stan (W9SMR/9) taking a break for a photo-op

Kudos **go** to all 13 certificate winners. Working us on three (3) bands were K1CGI, KJODY, N4KP, N5SLY, N9AVY, W5MMW/VE3, WA4MIT, and WB9AYD. Working us on four (4) bands were NU4C, VA3TPS, W3WMU and W1IPS. Working us on five (5) bands was WA5TRL, **a first time APE Hunter. Other first time APE Hunter awards went to VA3TPS, KJODY, N9AVY, W5MMW/VE3, W1IPS and WA9AYD.** Special recognition goes to W5MMW/VE3, our first **3 band APE-to-APE certificate winner. Special kudos also to Jeff, W3WMU, our only Bwana-5 Year winner. Close behind are NU4C and WA4MIT as Bwana-4 Year winners.** Great job all!

Honorable mention goes to thirteen (13) who worked us on two (2) bands: CF3MBT, KC2XX, KC3EOV, KC8WSM, KD5UZZ, N0PHU, N2FYE, N2MLP, N4GBK, N8SJS, VB7150, W3DET and KI4VMK. In all, there were 207 QSOs with contacts in 39 states and 3 DX countries (see contact map). All contacts were on 80m – 15m – no contacts on 12, 10 or 6m due to propagation. Our log can be viewed on the PODXS070 contest scorer at: http://hamclubs.info/scorer/?contest_id=070-APE&year=2017



Map of 2017 KC9UR Pontoon Portable APE Contacts (map by K2DSL web application at www.levinecentral.com/adif2map/)



View of Stan's pier showing the 6m antenna and the pontoon boat.

For those interested in a bit of the technical details, here's the info:

Rigs: One Kenwood TS-590s (Stan), and one Icom IC-7300 (Bob)

Software: Fldigi

Antennas (all portable/temporary):

- 1) Homebrew Off-Center-Fed dipole **on flag pole** at 25 ft (80/40/30/20/17/15/12/10M).
- 2) A PAR SM-50 6M 2 element Moxon antenna on a painter's pole at 12 ft. – mounted to the pier.
- 3) A homebrew 20m end-fed half-square that was resonant and used on 40m, 20m, and 15m.
- 4) A homebrew 30m/17m end-fed sloper

Stan and I would like to thank everyone who took time from their busy schedules to work us! We thoroughly enjoyed the "APE" experience and would encourage anyone who is considering an "APE" for next year to go for it!