



Radio Active Times, Issue 9, January 2026

The official newsletter of the Handiham Radio Club. Issue 9,
January 2026.

Greetings from the Editor

Welcome to a new year. With this issue, we are jumping right into some exciting ham activities: this month the Radio Active Times is all about contesting. As I write this, our Handiham club teams are finalizing their logs for the North American QSO Party. I hope this is just the first of many contests our members take part in as we strive to grow in confidence and competence as ham radio operators.

Mélanie Carriveau, KN4ZSY, Editor in Chief

Contributions Wanted

If you have something related to ham radio or technology that you want to share with the club, please submit it to our Editor in Chief, Mélanie Carriveau, KN4ZSY. There is no deadline for submissions, and the submission guidelines are quite flexible.

Silent Keys

Jim Shaffer, KE5AL

On December 2, 2025, the Handiham Program lost a great friend and advocate, Jim Shaffer, KE5AL. Jim was an amazing person. He attended the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, and while in high school he

was a foreign exchange student in Argentina. He graduated magna cum laude from Luther College with a double major in physics and math. He moved to Austin in 1980 to work as a software engineer and retired from IBM in 2008 after 30 years of service.

Jim was an avid ham operator and attended many international ham conventions. He also wrote software for blind ham operators, including JJ Radio and the JJ Morse Trainer, which was used extensively in Handiham Morse code training programs over the years.

He also played fiddle, mandolin and guitar, and played fiddle in a number of bluegrass bands, including the Johnny Burnett Trio, Borrowed Time, the Piney Grove Ramblers and Geezer Grass. Jim enjoyed many ocean cruises, including to Scandinavia and the British Isles. He was fun-loving, generous, and had a good sense of humor.

This is the Handiham Radio Club calling KE5AL... Nothing heard. KE5AL, Jim Shaffer, is now a Silent Key.

David Moody, N8XOF

On December 22, 2025, David Moody, N8XOF, father of Handiham Program Coordinator Lucinda, passed away. Among his many life activities, he spent many years volunteering in Togo, West Africa, where he became a highly sought-after DX contact. While David was not an official member of the Handiham family, we have all benefited from his support and encouragement of Lucinda in getting her license.

This is the Handiham Radio Club calling N8XOF... Nothing heard. N8XOF, David Moody, is now a Silent Key.

Learning to Talk Ham: Balun

Balun (pronounced BAL-un) is a contraction of "balanced" and "unbalanced." It is an electrical device that couples a balanced line to an unbalanced line without disturbing the impedance of either line. A

balun can take many forms, and some also transform impedance. Transformer baluns use magnetic coupling. Common-mode chokes are also used as baluns; they work by blocking common-mode currents.

HRC Daily Net Statistics for December 2025

By Jerry Maccoux, W0UH, Handiham Radio Club Net Manager

This month's report recaps participation for December and summarizes net participation for all four quarters of the past year.

During December, 633 stations checked in to the net, an average of about 23 hams a day and roughly 126 operators a week.

HRC daily net check-ins, 2025

Period	Check-ins
First quarter	1,145
Second quarter	1,574
Third quarter	1,734
Fourth quarter	1,774
First half of the year	2,719
Second half of the year	3,508
Total for 2025	6,227 (about 20 a day)

Milestones for 2025

- Forty consecutive weeks with more than 100 checked-in stations.
- A regular volunteer staff of 8 net control stations.
- Three weeks with more than 150 checked-in stations.
- Net control station John Glass, NU6P, logged 40 stations in one net.
- More than 6,000 stations logged for the year.

Be sure to drop in at 11:00 AM Central time, Monday through Friday, for our daily nets:

- EchoLink: HANDIHAM conference server, node 494492
- DMR: talkgroup TGIF, TG 3141
- AllStar: node 473670

Article 1: Amateur Radio Sport, a.k.a. Contesting

Adapted from the Wikipedia article "Contesting," used under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license.

What is radiosport contesting?

Contesting is a competitive activity pursued by amateur radio operators. In a contest, an amateur radio station, operated by an individual or a team, tries to contact as many other amateur stations as possible in a set period of time and exchange information. Each contest's rules define the bands and modes that may be used and the information that must be exchanged. Contacts made during the contest add up to a score by which stations are ranked, and contest sponsors publish the results in magazines and on websites.

There is no international authority or governing body for the sport. Each contest is sponsored separately and has its own rules. Contest rules do not necessarily require entrants to follow voluntary international band plans, but participants must obey the amateur radio regulations of their own country. Because contests use amateur radio, national regulations generally forbid competitors from being paid for taking part, so there are no professional contests or testers.

History of contesting

Contesting can be traced to the Trans-Atlantic Tests of the early 1920s, when amateurs first tried to establish long-distance communication

across the Atlantic on the shortwave amateur frequencies. Even after the first two-way contacts between North America and Europe were made in 1923, the tests continued as annual events, with more and more stations making two-way contacts over greater and greater distances. In 1927 the American Radio Relay League, which had led the organizing and publicizing of these tests, proposed a new format encouraging stations to make as many two-way contacts as possible with stations in other countries. The 1928 International Relay Party, as the event was renamed, was the first organized amateur radio contest. It was an immediate success and was sponsored annually by the ARRL from 1927 through 1935. In 1936 it was renamed the ARRL International DX Contest, the name it still has today.

To complement the burst of interest in DX generated by the International Relay Parties, the ARRL adopted a competitive format for events focused on domestic contacts. The first ARRL All-Sections Sweepstakes was held in 1930. The Sweepstakes required a more complicated exchange for each contact, adapted from the message header used by the National Traffic System. It was immediately popular, both with NTS operators who used it to gauge their stations and skills, and with those drawn mainly by the competition. Sponsored annually by the ARRL, it became known as the ARRL November Sweepstakes in 1962.

Another important early innovation was Field Day. The earliest known organized field day was held in Great Britain in 1930 and was soon copied by small events across Europe and North America. The first ARRL Field Day was held in 1933 and publicized in the ARRL's journal, QST. Field Day was promoted as a chance for amateurs to operate from portable locations in conditions like those they might face in an emergency or disaster. Field Day events have traditionally used the same general operating and scoring structure as other contests, but the emphasis on emergency readiness has historically outweighed the competition.

Modern contests draw on the heritage of DX communication, traffic handling and communications readiness, and the number and variety of contests have grown since 1928. In 1934, contests were sponsored by radio societies in Australia, Canada, Poland and Spain, and the ARRL sponsored a new contest just for 10 meters. By the end of 1937, contests were also sponsored in Brazil, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland and New Zealand. The first VHF contest was the ARRL VHF Sweepstakes in 1948, and the first RTTY contest was sponsored by the RTTY Society of Southern California in 1957. The first publication devoted to the sport, the National Contest Journal, began in the United States in 1973. The IARU HF World Championship, a worldwide contest sponsored by the International Amateur Radio Union, was known as the IARU Radiosport Championship from its start in 1977 until 1986. Recognizing the sport's maturity, CQ Amateur Radio magazine established the Contest Hall of Fame in 1986.

By the turn of the century, contesting had become an established worldwide sport with tens of thousands of active competitors, connected not just on the air but through specialist websites, journals and conventions. With no single worldwide governing body, there has never been a world ranking system. The huge differences in where testers operate, and how location affects both propagation and nearness to large ham populations, also make it hard to compare top performers.

The first face-to-face World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC) was held in July 1990 in Seattle, Washington, to overcome some of these issues by inviting top testers from around the world to operate one contest from similar stations in one small area. Twenty-two two-operator teams represented fifteen countries. Later WRTC events were held in 1996 in San Francisco, 2000 in Bled, Slovenia, 2002 in Helsinki, Finland, 2006 in Florianópolis, Brazil, 2010 in Moscow, Russia, and 2014 in New England, with a later event in Italy.

There have been controversies among amateurs over the impact of dense contest traffic on popular HF bands, the use of packet cluster systems, log editing, asking rare stations to change frequency, and other techniques.

Article 2: Types of Contests

Adapted from the Wikipedia article "Contesting," used under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license.

A wide variety of amateur radio contests are sponsored every year, crafted to promote different interests and appeal to different audiences. Contests usually take place on weekends or weekday evenings and can last from a few hours to forty-eight hours. Each contest's rules specify which stations may take part, which bands and modes they may use, which other stations they may contact, and the time period for contest contacts.

Some contests limit participation to stations in a particular area, such as a continent or country; the European HF Championship, for example, fosters competition among stations in Europe. In others, any station worldwide may take part and contact any other station for credit: the CQ World Wide DX Contest lets stations contact anyone anywhere on the planet and attracts tens of thousands of stations each year. Some regional contests invite everyone to take part but restrict whom each competitor may contact; for example, in the Japan International DX Contest (sponsored by Five Nine magazine), Japanese stations may only contact stations outside Japan, and vice versa. Still other contests limit participation to stations in one continent or country, though those stations may work anyone for points.

HF contests use one or more of the 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meter bands; VHF contests use the bands above 50 MHz. Some contests allow activity on all HF or all VHF bands and give points and multipliers on each band. Others allow all bands but only one contact with each

station regardless of band, or count multipliers only once per contest rather than once per band. Most North American VHF contests are like the ARRL June VHF Contest, allowing contacts on all bands from 50 MHz up, while most UK VHF contests are limited to one band at a time. An HF contest with worldwide participation limited to a single band is the ARRL 10 Meter Contest.

There are contests for fans of every mode. Some are CW only, some are voice only, and some use digital modes such as RTTY or PSK31. Many popular contests are held on two separate weekends, one for CW and one for voice, with the same rules. The CQ World Wide WPX Contest, for example, has a RTTY weekend in February, a phone weekend in March and a CW weekend in May. Some contests, especially single-band ones, allow several modes, and VHF contests typically allow any mode, including specialty digital modes designed for those bands. Some stations and operators specialize in contests on certain modes and don't compete seriously in others.

Large worldwide HF contests can last up to forty-eight hours, typically running from 0000 UTC Saturday until 2359 UTC Sunday. Regional and smaller contests are often shorter, with twenty-four, twelve and four hours being common.

Many contests use "off time," letting a station operate only part of the contest period. For example, the ARRL November Sweepstakes is thirty hours long, but each station may be on the air no more than twenty-four. Off time forces competitors to decide when to operate and when to rest, adding a significant element of strategy. Although common in the 1930s, only a few contests today run over multiple weekends; these "cumulative" contests are mostly on the microwave bands. Short "sprint" contests lasting only a few hours are popular with contesters who like a fast pace or can't give up a whole weekend. A unique feature of the North American Sprint is that operators must change frequency after every other contact, adding another operating challenge.

Whatever the contest's length, the top operators are often those who best keep their focus throughout.

Some contests, such as the Maine 2 Meter FM Simplex Challenge sponsored by the Wireless Society of Southern Maine, give newly licensed hams a first taste of contesting by limiting contacts to one VHF band and offering entry categories for everything from a handheld radio to a fully equipped contest station.

The wide variety of contests attracts a wide variety of contesters and stations. A contest's rules and structure shape the strategies competitors use to maximize contacts and multipliers. As in other sports, contest rules evolve over time, and rule changes are one of the main sources of controversy in the sport.

Monthly Contest Spotlight

By Tom Behler, KB8TYJ

Welcome to a new Radio Active Times monthly feature, the Monthly Contest Spotlight. I hope it sparks interest among our members in the contesting side of amateur radio. Below is a list of contests over the next month that I thought might interest you, but it is only a sampling of the many contests scheduled. I encourage you to visit the [WA7BNM Contest Calendar](#) for the complete listing, since there may be contests of special interest to you. If you do take part in a contest, please share your experience with the club by reaching out to our Editor in Chief, Mélanie Carriveau, KN4ZSY.

- **[ARRL January VHF Contest](#)**: January 17, 1900 UTC, to January 19, 0359 UTC.
- **[CQ 160-Meter Contest, CW](#)**: January 23, 2200 UTC, to January 25, 2200 UTC. A great contest for CW operators with 160-meter capability. The exchange is very simple: call sign, name, and state or province. DX stations give RST plus CQ zone.

- **[Winter Field Day](#)**: January 24, 1600 UTC, to January 25, 2159 UTC. Just like summer Field Day, with a very simple exchange: call sign, operating category, and ARRL section or DX.
- **[Vermont QSO Party](#)**: February 7, 0000 UTC, to February 8, 2359 UTC.
- **[10-10 International Winter Contest, SSB](#)**: February 7, 0001 UTC, to February 8, 2359 UTC. The exchange depends on whether you are a 10-10 member, but non-members are welcome. Members send name, 10-10 number, and state, province or country; non-members send name, 0, and state, province or country.
- **[Minnesota QSO Party](#)**: February 7, 1400–2359 UTC.
- **[ARRL School Club Roundup](#)**: February 9, 1300 UTC, to February 13, 2359 UTC. A great way to give younger hams lots of contacts. The exchange is fairly simple once you determine your contest operating class.

[Article 3: Some Notes on Contest Best Practices](#)

Our Vice President, Tom Behler, KB8TYJ, is the club's contest guru. Below are some of his suggestions for taking part in contests, drawn from his years of radiosport experience.

Where to find contests

There is an incredible variety of contests to enjoy. In my view, the best and most screen-reader-accessible source of information about them is the [WA7BNM Contest Calendar](#); its 8-day calendar gives the quickest access to current contest information.

Why take part

Contests offer many benefits, including honing your operating skills, testing your equipment and antennas, and using our frequencies.

When answering contest CQs

- Listen, listen, listen, to get a feel for the contest and how contacts are supposed to work.
- Learn the expected contest exchange, and prepare your side of it before making contact.
- Give your complete call sign, using standard phonetics if needed.
- Be persistent and patient, but only to a point. Repeatedly answering someone who clearly isn't hearing you wastes your time and possibly others'.
- Yelling into the microphone will get you nowhere and wastes your voice, which you may want to save for the whole event.
- If a DX station is working split, don't call on their transmit frequency. This creates confusion and aggravation for the station calling CQ and for others trying to tell whether they are being heard.
- Always be polite and considerate. For example, don't knowingly transmit your call sign before the station calling CQ has finished their last contact.
- Know how to use your receiver to minimize overload and noise: turn off preamps and noise blankers, use the available filters, and back off the RF gain.
- When answering DX calls, do your best to follow the [DX Code of Conduct](#).

When calling CQ in a contest

- Give your call sign using standard phonetics at least once during each CQ.
- Always be patient with those answering your CQ, since they may have trouble copying you.
- Give your call sign frequently. Constantly saying "QRZ" with no call sign is very annoying to those trying to call you, and to testers

who want to know whether they need you or have already worked you.

- Know how to use your receiver to minimize overload and noise: turn off preamps and noise blankers, use the available filters, and back off the RF gain.

Working both sides of a pileup

Working pileups is a skill that develops over time, so don't give up.

Getting through the pileup when answering CQs:

- Persist, but only for so long. If you can't break through, go elsewhere for a while and give others a chance.
- Keep your cool. In 99.9% of cases the station calling CQ is not ignoring you; they simply can't hear you in the chaos.

Working the pileup when you are calling CQ:

- Try to pick out the loudest station, even if you only get part of the call sign.
- Consider waiting for the pileup to settle a bit so you can catch a call during a quieter moment.
- Be courteous and patient. Let others know if you are having trouble pulling out calls, and that you will continue to the best of your ability.

Logging

Log your contacts in a format the contest sponsor accepts, typically the text-based Cabrillo format. As I have often said, the N3FJP software package has many contest loggers and is very screen-reader friendly. Visit www.n3fjp.com for details.

Special Notice

Please note that our April meeting will be held on the second Sunday of the month, April 12, because Easter falls on the first Sunday. Our bylaws automatically move our meeting to the second Sunday when the first Sunday falls on a holiday.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 2026

- **January 24**, 1330–2100 UTC: First wireless-coordinated high seas rescue, 1909. K3S, Nuclear Ship Savannah ARC, Port of Baltimore, Maryland. Bands: 40, 20, 17, 15 and 10 meters.
- **January 25–27**, 1700–0100 UTC: Discovery of Gold in California, 177th anniversary special event. AG6AU, El Dorado County ARC, Placerville, California. Frequencies: 7.248, 14.248, 21.348, 28.348 MHz.

February 2026

- **February 1**, 3:00 PM Central time: Handiham Radio Club monthly Zoom meeting.
- **February 6–9**, 0000–0700 UTC: 2026 AM Rally operating event. WA1QIX, AM Rally (national). Frequencies: 1.885, 3.880, 7.290, 14.286 MHz.
- **February 14–22**, 0000–2359 UTC: 6th Annual Pluto Discovery Anniversary special event. W7P, Northern Arizona DX Association, Flagstaff, Arizona. Frequencies: 14.266, 21.366, 28.366, 7.266 MHz.
- **February 14–15**, 1000–0300 UTC: George Washington's Birthday at Mount Vernon. K4US, Mount Vernon Amateur Radio Club, Alexandria, Virginia. Frequencies: 7.042, 7.242, 14.042, 14.242 MHz.

- **February 14–16**, 1600–2300 UTC: Ice Station W0JH, Frozen Minnesota Lake Portable. W0JH, Stillwater Amateur Radio Association, Stillwater, Minnesota. Frequencies: 21.360, 14.260, 7.260, 3.860 MHz.
- **February 14**, 1700–2359 UTC: Iwo Jima flag raising. NI6IW, USS Midway Museum Ship, San Diego, California. Frequencies: 14.320, 7.250, 14.070 MHz; PSK31; D-STAR on Papa System repeaters.
- **February 14**, 1700–2300 UTC: Valentine's Day special event. AB5ER, North Central Arkansas Amateur Radio Service, Romance, Arkansas. Frequency: 14.260 MHz.
- **February 14**, 1330–2100 UTC: War Shipping Administration created, 1942. K3S, Nuclear Ship Savannah ARC, Port of Baltimore, Maryland. Bands: 40, 20, 17, 15 and 10 meters.
- **February 16–22**, 0000–2359 UTC: Antarctic Activity Week. K4C, World Antarctic Program, McDonough, Georgia. Frequency: 14.270 MHz.
- **February 21**, 1600–2000 UTC: Calvert High School STEM Expo. K3CAL, Calvert Amateur Radio Association, Prince Frederick, Maryland. Frequencies: 14.250, 14.275, 14.300, 14.325 MHz.
- **February 21**, 1200–2359 UTC: SWR Magazine Waves Weekend. KP3SWR, SWR Magazine, Camuy, Puerto Rico. Frequencies: 14.245, 21.245, 28.445 MHz.
- **February 21**, 1300–2100 UTC: War Shipping Administration created, 1942. K3S, Nuclear Ship Savannah ARC, Odenton, Maryland. Bands: 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters.
- **February 23 – April 21**, 0000–2359 UTC: Republic of Texas special event. WA5DTK, Texas History Operators Club, Montgomery, Texas. Frequencies: 7.030, 7.230, 14.040, 14.260 MHz.
- **February 25**, 1500–2359 UTC: Annual Snowbird Field Day. W7ASL, Sunlife Amateur Radio Club, Mesa, Arizona. Frequencies: 50.329, 28.329, 21.329, 14.329 MHz.

- **February 28**, 0000–2359 UTC: 2026 Rare Disease Day special event. N4R, KR4EE, Sparta, Tennessee. Frequencies: 14.070, 14.080, 28.074, 21.074 MHz.
- **February 28**, 1400–2200 UTC: Freeze Your Keys, 22nd winter operating event. W0EBB, Kickapoo QRP ARC, Leavenworth, Kansas. CW 7.035 and 14.058 MHz; SSB 7.240 and 14.325 MHz.

Handiham Radio Club Board, January 2026

- President: Jerry Maccoux, W0UH
- Vice President: Tom Behler, KB8TYJ
- Secretary: Mélanie Carriveau, KN4ZSY
- Treasurer and Handiham Program representative: Lucinda Moody, AB8WF
- Immediate Past President: Linda Reeder, N7HVF
- Technology Committee Chair: John Glass, NU6P
- Outreach Committee Chair: Peter Atkinson, KD9VTU
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To reach the club or any board member, please contact the Handiham Radio Club through the Handiham Program.

Published by the Handiham Radio Club. Read this and other issues online at <https://handiham.net/radio-active-times/>