

Pacific Northwest SOTA Newsletter

July-August 2019

Photo by Darryl-WW7D near Pechugh Peak W7W/KG-051

Upcoming Events – Summer is here! Here are some events to coordinate with your SOTA adventures...

[CQ WW VHF Contest](#) – Easy to participate as it's only on 2m and 6m – the QRP Hilltopper Category is perfect for SOTA – maximum operating time six hours! Note that use of 146.52 is not allowed. 1800z Saturday, July 20 to 2100 UTC Sunday.

[ARRL 222 and Up Contest](#) – You may only be able to work folks on 446.00-fm, but they'll appreciate it and you can see how far 70cm can take you. Starts 1800z Saturday, August 3 to 1759z Sunday. Note that the exchange is **SIX-digit grid!**

[Colorado 14er Event](#) – Also on August 3 and 4, there will be opportunities to work HF Summit-to-Summit with folks on very high summits in the middle of the country.

When Not to Activate a Summit – Pardon the glass half-full topic, but here are some guidelines when NOT to activate:

- When the property is private or restricted and you don't have permission.
- When the trail is closed and you shouldn't be there.
- When you can't get into the Activation Zone of the SOTA summit.
- When you are in a National Park and are attaching anything to a live plant (or animal!).
- In general, when you won't make a positive impression for SOTA or ham radio.

The [SOTA General Rules](#) ask us to operate in the "Spirit of SOTA" – since this isn't a contest or a competition (except perhaps with oneself) spotting an Activator in need, taking turns, handing out points, and respecting nature and fellow hikers is **all** part of our game.

Tag Alongs Welcome! Have you wanted to try Summits on the Air but don't have a HF radio? Did you wonder what 2m antennas those folks used to be heard over 100 miles away? Does your family insist that you not hike alone? Does your vehicle lack the ground clearance for that Forest Road? Do you enjoy having company on your activations? Then watch for **Tag Alongs Welcome** in the comment field of SOTA alerts. AND put **Tag Alongs Welcome** there yourself if you are willing to host someone on your activations.

If you would be glad to have another activator or two along, please consider putting "**Tag Alongs Welcome!**" in your alert comment with "meet at trailhead" or "rsvp by email" or whatever might work for you and the summit you have in mind. With a bit of cooperation three or even four activators can co-exist on a summit and each make four contacts for points.

Private Property Permits – Appreciation Shown! Most of us have encountered private forest land in the Northwest where access is restricted to permit holders. Sometimes this can mean only a few weeks access during hunting season for as much as three figures, or, in the case of Lewis & Clark Timberlands on the Oregon Coast, an annual free permit. In early June Darryl-WW7D, Roland-K7FOP and I headed up Double Peak (W7O/NC-062) for our annual post-SeaPac Convention activation. We carried with us our individual permits, and I placed on the dashboard my vehicle permit. On our return I was pleased to find a business card from Lewis & Clark under the wiper, with “Thank You” written on the back. Getting permission to activate private property helps all SOTA activators and keeps these lands available.



 **Central Oregon Summit-to-Summit Party – Here’s what happened on July 4th for their first S2S event.**

All told, there were seven activators on six summits and it went beyond the “CE” for Central Oregon with Scott-K17EMX on Bachelor Mountain, WV-003 on the west side of the divide (pictured), and Steve-W7GCO on the other Black Butte, NE-079 in Northeast Oregon. We all checked in “net-style” and the calling went ‘round to work all the permutations, starting with Ron-W6PZA and Shelby-N7SHG on CE-274, Peak 5740. Yours truly got up early and went to one of the many Lookout Mountains, this time, CE-039.



This was only the second SOTA activation by Casey-K17UNJ and his first S2S via VHF Simplex. While he was up on Paulina Peak, CE-009 he also worked two satellite passes (AO-91 and AO-92) and got 32 QSO's that way, with two of them being S2S as well (W7/DL6AP and N6DNM).

Wow! There was Mike-KB7KLT on Ochoco Mountains High Point, CE-080, and Jason-KJ7DMI on Gray Butte, CE-180. For the most part, everyone sounded great with most reports being a real 59 with full quieting. Many stations had yagi antennas and several were running more than 5W.

 **BC *Summer* Summit-to-Summit Party – Mike-VE7KPM describes their bit of fun on June 30th.**

It was all sunshine across British Columbia the end of June for the second VE7 Summit-to-Summit Party. Organized by the members of the VE7 SOTA group on Facebook, activators set out for summits across the southern part of the province, from Greater Vancouver to The Okanagan, and up and down Vancouver Island. Vancouver Island saw the greatest concentration of activations with four of the six VE7 stations activating from Nanaimo in the North, to Victoria in the South.

The farthest station out was Gabor-VE7JH, who activated Baldy Mountain, VE7/OS-001, outside Oliver; he braved patches of snow atop the 2308m peak and managed six S2S across VHF and HF. Qi-VE7QIN, who activated Saint Marks Summit, VE7/GV-017, a 1371m summit North of Vancouver, managed three S2S on VHF. Kosta-VE7KCY, set out with his family, including a toddler on his back (pictured), and activated Nanoose Hill, VE7/NO-020, a rural summit North of Nanaimo, and had success working HF CW.

Ken-VA7KCM, set up Mount Newton, VE7/CL-018, which is an Urban summit on the Saanich Peninsula; while suffering from receive blockage issues from the summit RF site, through sheer determination and tenacity, he managed the activation, including a few S2Ss. Larry-VE7EA, headed for Mount Wood, VE7/CV-026, which is a summit 30 minutes north of Victoria, requiring a 5km hike in through a maze of logging roads. He managed several S2S on 2m FM and 17m CW, after MacGyvering a connector he had left at home.



As for myself, Mike-VE7KPM, I dragged my father and son along for a harrowing drive up Mount Brenton, VE7/CV-010 – my setup is pictured below. It was nice to have three generations of the family along, as my Dad could watch my son who wanted to explore while I used the radios. And distract him, as my son was more concerned about fishing the lake that was in sight than he was with allowing me to operate. I managed 11 S2S, across four bands, three in VE7, and the rest with W7W stations.

On that last note, I would like to extend our deep appreciation to all the non-VE7 SOTA folks who went out to support our event. It felt more like a PacNW S2S Party than a strictly VE7 affair. Not only did this help our numbers, but it certainly extended our time on the hills and maximized enjoyment. A thank you also goes out, as always, to all the chasers; some of whom are becoming like family to some of us more "seasoned" activators.

All-in-all, for a hastily planned event, with short notice, and on a Sunday, we not only managed to increase our participation from the last time, but we also had almost all different stations. It's great to see a diverse set of activators across our association. It's also nice to see so many folks making SOTA a family activity.

It is amazing to see how our association has grown, specifically over the last year or so, and how activators, especially through our Facebook page, are working together to share information on access and experiences on summits. Most of our summits are in the backcountry, and ones that are closer are usually difficult to access, so being able to talk to someone who has done it before is invaluable.

There are no plans set in stone yet for another VE7 S2S Party, but what is for sure is that it won't be so long between them the next time around, and we will be better organized and have far more notice for the next one! And, we were careful to call this a "Summer" S2S Party for a reason. Discussions have been had about another PacNW or Puget Sound S2S party in the fall, which would be nice to see... *hint, hint*...



DX, S2S, and SOTA Milestones Achieved on a Big Activation. Adam-K6ARK has this amazing tale of DX and S2s at the bottom of the sunspot cycle...

I packed up the truck and headed for a local Southern California drive-up 6-point summit - Thomas Mountain (W6/CT-016). It was Friday evening, and I had no plans until Saturday afternoon other than working lots of HF. Packed in the truck was my home station, an Icom IC-7300, a relatively new antenna, and battery power to for hours even at 100W.

I had never brought the IC-7300 out for SOTA before, normally using a FT-857 when I want to run 100W portable. The IC-7300 is just too much to carry. But for a drive-up summit...(no radio gear in the vicinity of a motor vehicle, of course).

The primary goal of the activation was to work DX, specifically S2S DX if possible. I brought a laptop to operate on FT8, but planned to operate primarily CW and SSB. Aki, JI3BAP had posted on the SOTA reflector that he would be on a summit in Japan at the same time, and would try to make contact on FT8 or CW.



I arrived at the summit around 7PM local time (0200z) and found a beautiful campsite right at the summit. At the edge of the site, the terrain drops away steeply to the West which will be helpful for propagation across the Pacific. I set up my newly built antenna, a half-square built for 20m. A half-square antenna is basically a set of inverted ground plane phased $\frac{1}{4}$ -wave verticals. It requires two antenna supports, but provides a bit of gain and nice low-angle radiation broadside to the antenna.

By 7:30PM (0230z) I was set up and ready to operate. I posted a spot and began calling on CW. As usual, the contacts began rolling in quickly. Contact #4 was the first DX of the evening, regular chaser extraordinaire, ZL1BYZ. John gave me a 579 signal report. A few contacts later, the first of the VK stations, VK4TJ, came back to my call. We exchanged 339 reports and continued on. And then a couple of contacts later, the first Japanese station returned my call, JA1VRY, again with a relatively weak but readable signal.

For kicks, I switched over to SSB around 0310z and the flood gates of VK and ZL opened up. Most VK stations were strong and easily readable. The longest DX of the activation, VK7JON, 9420.7mi away in Perth provided a 56 signal report to me in response to the solid 58 I gave him.

The word was out in VK land that I was copyable there, and many contacts ensued. As the SSB responses slowed, I switched back to CW and found another slew of VK and ZL stations returning my calls with numerous 579 signal reports.

Then, in the mix was JI3BAP/3 for the Summit-to-Summit contact! I had listened for him earlier on 20m CW but couldn't hear him. The conditions had improved, and he was now a solid 559 into Southern California with his 50W station. This was my first DX S2S and one of my primary SOTA goals for the year.



My other SOTA goal for the year is to make 100+ contacts on an activation. I knew this one would have a chance at topping that due to the extended amount of time I planned to activate, but I wasn't counting. Around 0500z, the responses to my calls slowed, and I decided to call it a night. I set my alarm for 6AM local time (1300z) with hopes of EU DX in the morning.

The morning light was gorgeous with marine layer down in the valleys, and a hazy glow on the local summits. I resumed operating on 20m with the Half Square antenna initially on SSB.

First contact of the morning was K3S, a special event station for Marconi Day. I then put out a spot and picked up a bunch of US contacts over the next hour or so. In the mix was a S2S chase of NA6MG on a nearby summit.

I switched to CW hoping for some EU DX, and about a dozen contacts in, I heard SA4...I called back, and picked up SA4BLM in Sweden. He reported a 339, and I sent back 539.

A few calls later, way down in the noise, I heard what I thought was ON3... I called back and received multiple repeats in return but the signal was just too weak to copy clearly. Danny in Belgium has mountains of patience as he repeated his call 30 or 40 times as I worked through ON3... ON3UT... ON3VT... and finally ON4VT. I sent him a 229, and he was equally patient in repeatedly sending my 339 until I was able to copy. Danny emailed a QSL card that evening.



Around 8AM, (1500z) I decided to swap out antennas in preparation for some S2S efforts. I brought down the Half Square and sent up the linked dipole. Many more contacts ensued on 20, 30, and 40m with many US S2S contacts. One of those contacts, with N1OIE, pushed me over 1000 chaser points into Shack Slothdom.

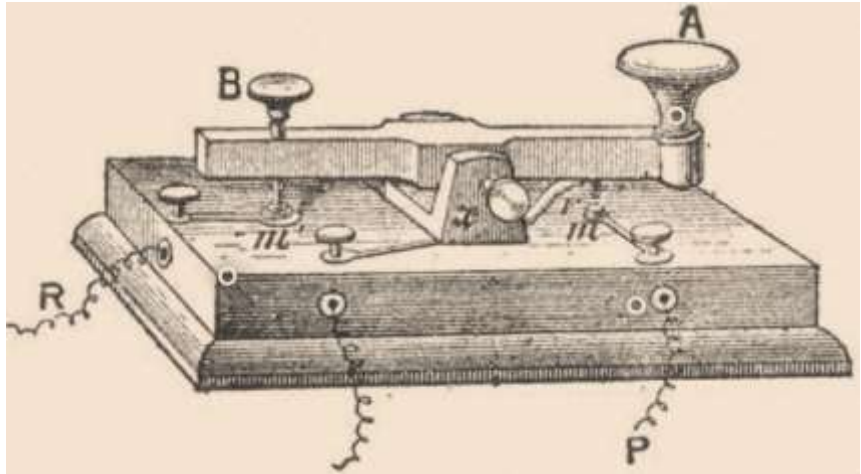
I wrapped up the day just before noon with my last contact at 1800z. In the end, I probably had the radio on for about 8 hours. In that time, I made 136 contacts, 33 of which were DX, and 19 of which were S2S. Of the DX, there were 19 VK, 7 ZL, 4 JA, 1 SA, 1 ON, and 1 VE. I managed to reach both of my SOTA goals for the year - over 100 contacts, and S2S DX.





What's That Sound? – ([click to play video](#)). This is mostly to suggest that you pay attention when you hear this “bird call” or “squirrel chirp” when out in the woods. It was recorded in Colorado.

Who is Our 175-Year Old Friend? – It's ol' Charlie Whiskey! Below are two articles celebrating our ageless friend, Morse Code, the original digital mode. It's good to see positive attention for ham radio in these articles, and for all those that get questions on a summit about, “Morse Code, is that still a thing?”... you can point out the recent anniversary.



- <https://www.newsweek.com/morse-code-175-years-old-useful-1432418>
- http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/civil/jb_civil_telegrap_3_e.html

SOTA with Snow(mobile) — Part Deux - Darryl-WW7D wraps up his snowmobile adventure with Josh-WU7H...

[In Part One of this story](#), Josh-WU7H and I abandoned one of our snowmobiles near Sawmill Ridge (W7W/KG-074) outside of Greenwater, stuck in the snow on an ungroomed, remote forest service road. All the things that could go wrong, did.

The evening after our Sunday adventure, Josh and I were on the phone with John, K7JRO, updating him on our SOTA (mis)adventure. John was driving back from Cle Elum, located just over the I-90 pass that separates Central from Western Washington. “It is snowing pretty intensely”, John informed us as he approached Snoqualmie Pass. It was raining hard in the Puget Sound area and it was pretty cold. I looked at the NOAA weather forecast for the mountains north of Greenwater, and they were expecting about a foot of snow over three days. That was the bad news for recovering the snowmobile.

The good news was that it was warm during the day, so some of that snow would melt. Josh and I were not able to sneak away from civilization until Friday. We left extra early and arrived at the Sno-Park with only a couple of vehicles already there. What a difference from the previous weekend!

At lower elevations there were some bald patches in the snow where rain fell over the previous week. The first part of our route was nicely groomed, but as we turned north for the five-mile trip to Big Intersection, the snow was a couple of inches deeper, and there were fewer snowmobile tracks. Still, the sled easily carried both of us to Big Intersection.

From this spot, we were about a mile from where we left machine #1. We looked at the trail. The snow was deep, although, unlike the previous weekend, a sled had recently passed through the new snow. We contemplated riding right to our stranded machine, but decided that hiking was the best thing to do. I mean, we are SOTA folks! Snowshoeing a mile on a snow-covered road (even if we have a perfectly functional vehicle) is what we're all about, right?

We donned our snowshoes and headed up the road, complete with our riding gear for the return trip. Perhaps I didn't have a sufficient breakfast or something, but I was feeling low-energy and grumbling a bit as the trekked the modest incline. After 1/3 of a mile we approached the first corner. I was laboring with my head down, and Josh said, "There's our snowmobile!" I didn't know what to make of this; I assumed Josh was playing head games with me, helping me visualize just how happy I'll be in another 2/3 mile. Then he said it again, "That's our machine!" I looked up and spotted the unnatural blue-green paint job of a snowmobile just like #1! I almost tripped over my dropped jaw.



Sure enough, #1 was parked off to the side of wide turn, cleared of snow and ready to go. There was no note, no explanation, no nothing. Short of divine intervention, we figured that within the past several days, whoever laid the fresh tracks had come across #1, dug or pulled the machine out, turned it around, hot-wired the ignition, and drove it back to a convenient parking spot close to Big Intersection. Then, they apparently walked (or got a ride) 2/3rds of a mile back to their machine. The whole thing seemed highly improbable. But there it was.

This snowmobile doesn't easily seat two people, so Josh used the feeble excuse that he was "in training" to "force" me to drive the snowmobile back to Big Intersection. I did that without incident or difficulty, and had a bit of fun doing doughnuts in the deep powder at the intersection while awaiting Josh.

The quick recovery gave us plenty of time to activate nearby Colquhoun Peak (W7W/KG-147). We took to snowmobiles up to an ungroomed road that led to the ridge. From there we snowshoed the mile and a half to the summit. Our steep ascent through the woods brought us to the north side of the summit along a narrow ridge with a large cornice. We opted to do this as a VHF only activation, and about 30 minutes later, we each had the needed QSOs. The return trip was a piece of cake, with a stop for a beer and dinner to toast an excellent outcome for a day that began with some uncertainty.

That wasn't the end of our SOTA-by-snowmobile adventures, which I'll touch on briefly. A week later, Josh and I headed to Blewett Pass along highway 97, this time with our buddy K7JRO. John doesn't have a snowmobile, but he does have a dog sled and is accomplished at dog sledding. We activated Mt. Lillian (W7W/CW-036) and Lion Rock (W7W/CW-030). John's dog sled was lashed to my snowmobile, and Josh rode behind John to let me know (via an intercom) if anything went wrong. Nothing did, and we had a blast!



←Josh, Darryl and John on the summit of Lion Rock (W7WCW-030)

A few days later, on March 26, Josh and I headed back to the Greenwater Sno-Park to activate a couple of peaks. The first was Pyramid Peak (W7W/CW-050). We rode the snowmobiles to an intersection at the PCT deep in national forest, and then made a short, steep snowshoe ascent to the summit. The second summit was 4907 Counterpoise Peak (W7W/CW-068), a never activated 4-point summit on the east side of the Cascade divide. During the summer, the summit is deep behind a gated road that becomes an open and groomed Sno-Park trail in the winter.

Five days later, on March 31—the last day of bonus season and the last day of Sno-Park season—we were at it again doing Red Top Mountain (W7W/CW-61) at one Sno-Park and then Hicks Butte (W7W/CW-056) at another Sno-Park. The latter summit normally requires a mile or so of a road hike past a gate. During the winter, the trail groomer grooms right over the top of the gate. We were able to motor up to within about 300 vertical feet of the summit.

Our final snowmobile adventure of the season was a week later. Even though the Sno-Parks were technically done, the roads remain snow-covered in parts of the state, and can be used by snowmobiles. We headed to the Manastash Sno-Park to attempt an activation of Quartz Mountain (W7W/CW-033). The 17-mile snowmobile trek involved going through some bare patches of gravel for the first few miles. The activation was spectacular, but on our return trip a substantial amount of snow had melted in the afternoon sun. We gritted our teeth traversing at least a mile of bare gravel road going back to the truck.

On that final trip back home, one of the trailer hubs seized on the interstate, destroying the tire in the process. We got safely pulled over and jacked up the trailer. Fortunately, we were carrying a spare hub and a spare tire, and just enough tools to do the repair. Murphy must have sensed our smug self-satisfaction 30 minutes later as we pulled back onto the freeway with a repaired trailer, because we got about 500 feet down the highway before the spare tire decided to implode. Lacking a second spare trailer tire, we jacked up the axle, pulled the wheel, disconnected the trailer and headed to nearby Cle Elum. We were quite pessimistic about finding a tire vendor at 6:30pm on a Sunday night in Cle Elum. We drove slowly from one end of town to the other. At the east end of town, we saw a service station with open bay doors and lots of tires on racks. We purchased two new tires and had them installed on the rims. In total, the axle episode cost us an extra 1.5 hours, but, man, the beers at the Issaquah Brewhouse were extra tasty that night. We had already procured a beefier axle for the trailer to install as a summer project. You can bet your life we'll carry a spare hub for that one, too!

Darryl and Josh try to get a suborn snowmobile started; the engine was flooded from a clogged fuel tank vent →

Our snowmobile experience was a great success. We learned a lot! We got a late start, so we had only a month from March 10th to April 6th. In that time, we activated ten summits for 58 points and 24 bonus points. The adventure gave us new glimpses into beautiful wintery mountainscapes and added new respect for Mother Nature's harsh winter conditions. As SOTA enthusiasts, the snowmobiles opened up fantastic new activation opportunities. We'll be back with our snowmobiles next season.



There's Another W7O Mountain Goat! Congratulations to Ron-W6PZA!

Ron-W6PZA passed the 1,000 activating point last month in his new home state of Oregon. Even if a significant portion of the heavy lifting was done in his previous Association of W6-California, we embrace him as one of our own. He continues to serve as W6-SOTA Regional Manager for the Northeast (W6/NE), Northwest (W6/NW), and Northern Ranges (W6/CN).

Ron uses the call of his late father, Ronald E. Adams, who was the original W6PZA. Ron started his SOTA adventure in May 2014 and began crossing the border into W7O a year later, and now he lives in Central Oregon. He wrapped up 1000 points in June 2019 with 232 summits –

but he's not stopping. The photo of Ron is on his MG summit of Drake Butte, W7O/CE-081. He's now doing many first activations of Central Oregon peaks, and documenting them for us to follow on www.pnwsota.org.



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