

Alabama QSO Party

June 1, 2013 was the date of the Alabama QSO Party. The purpose being to get on the air and make as many contacts as you can. If you live in Alabama, you want to make contacts with other Alabama Counties, which count as multiplier points and also with as many other states as you can because each new state is another multiplier point on the total number of contacts you have made.

I made a total of about 31 contacts, but some may not count. I was in the car a long time Saturday, but I did have a lot of fun. Had a camera and a tiny tripod and with timer, I could take the photos you see with ME in the photos. I was a single driver and single operator.

Leaving my home in Madison County with my White Ford Explorer decked out with several antennas and coils for all bands on the Hustler vertical mounted in the trailer hitch on the rear. The radio inside is a Yaesu 857D remote head with body under the seat, and a 2-meter rig on the passenger side. Plus the signal meter and a SWR bridge to tell me when I have tuned too far away from frequency for a good low SWR level.



I was only in Madison County for a short while before making it into Jackson County in just 40 minutes. Stopped for gas & snacks in Scottsboro, and changed from my 40 meter coil to the 20 meter coil to see if I could hear more stations and I knew I'd be heading up on Sand Mountain top just outside Scottsboro heading toward Mentone. I did make some good contacts in Virginia with a club on the USS Wisconsin, and other stations in Connecticut, Ohio, Florida, Maine and Kentucky on the 20 meter band. By now at Henagar, I had entered Dekalb County before crossing I-59 that runs from Birmingham to Chattanooga.

I got to the top of Lookout Mountain (runs a long way from Chattanooga) to Valley Head & Mentone. Stopped to snap a couple of photos of me and my Ham Radio car with my trusty little camera and flexible mini-tripod and the timer on the camera set at 10 seconds to give me time to run back into each photo.



Now that I have some altitude, I am moving on down the Old Valley Head Road toward Desoto Falls and the Desoto State park. Had not gone far when the Desoto Falls came up and it's a favorite spot of our family over the years, so I took a couple of self timer photos of the area and include a small stock photo of the falls themselves, but I didn't have time to hike down to get this falls shot.



It was a long ride down the Old Valley Head road that turned to gravel and dirt for several miles. I thought I was lost, but the GPS kept telling me I was on the right road. Too much turning, dust, and uncertainty to try to make any contacts here. Between my stops above and this long and winding road, I didn't make any ham contacts.



Along this road, there was one other place I passed, just before the road turned to dirt, and it was a great place to eat, called the Cragmere Manor. Judy and I have eaten there quite a few times over the years, but while it looked great and I took my photo with the sign, as I was leaving, an owner told me it had not been open to serve food or two years. Only for people to book picnics (it overlooks the edge of the mountain) and have events there on the land. It sure had some great food.

After quite a long dusty and uncertain drive, I came to blacktop again, and finally intersecting highway 35 that drops down in to Ft. Payne, AL.

Once downtown, I passed the old railroad train depot that is a museum these days, but freight trains still come rumbling by as one did when I was taking this next shot of me with the caboose in the background.

I stopped here for about 20 minutes taking a break, getting a drink and deciding about changing coils again now that I was not going to be on a mountain anymore. So I did go back to the 40 meter coil and promptly talked to Bill, N4GUV who was also in the QSP party and he was glad to make my contact, his first in Dekalb county. I talked to him a bit later in Marshall County so he got 2 points out of me.



Then the rain started. It went from a few sprinkles as I headed down US 11 towards Collinsville, where I planned to turn, cross the interstate and take 68 then 75 into Albertville, and became a full blown thunderstorm. I didn't make any contacts for a while, but soon I was out and save for static crashes, I was back on calling "CQ Alabama QSO party."

By this time of day, I had about all the stopping and visiting I cared to do, and I continued without stopping through Albertville, Guntersville and on home into Madison County and the bottom on Monte Sano Mountain where I live.

My last three contacts were in Madison County and two in South Carolina

For a first timer, it was a memorable experience. Talking, working the radio and writing on my knee pad saved from my flying days where it held approach plates and paper was a chore. Can't talk so good today, but I guess that's to be expected.