

## The Illinois QSO Party - A Historical Perspective.

(From an article by Jim Funk, N9JF, based upon information furnished by Bud, W9DY of RAMS. Originally published in the December, 2005 issue of the WIARC Feedline.)

Back in the 60's, there were numerous chapters of the "Certificate Hunters Club" scattered all over the USA. County hunting may not have been their only focus, but it was certainly a prominent one. Many of the early state QSO parties were sponsored by the local chapters of the CHC and the ILQP was one of these, being launched by Illinois Chapter 17 in 1963. The contest was 30 hours long, beginning at 1600Z on Saturday and running until 2200Z on Sunday on the first weekend of August. The exchange included a QSO number as well as RS(T) and county/state/province. All contacts were worth one point, and IL stations got multipliers for only states/provinces and countries, not for IL counties. Logs were sent to K9EAB. K9MGH/9 was the IL winner with 369 Q's and 50 multipliers. Even with the prevalence of vanity calls today, there was one entrant with a familiar call sign: K4BAI, the Area 4 and overall out-of-state winner! There were about 20 entries from IL and about 40 from outside the state.

Somebody did a great job of promoting ILQP #2 for 1964. There were a dozen "county expeditions". Entries were divided between single and multi-op efforts. AM and SSB were both classified as "phone". Suggested frequencies were still specified in "kilocycles". The results filled two typewritten pages, with K9CSW winning Illinois and W8CYB/2 (NY) winning out of state.

Some more familiar calls showed up on 1965, including K9UIY, W9YH, K4SAV, W9YB, KOJPL, and K0GSV. Also submitting logs were VK2APK, PY2CQ and SM3TW. Eighty-five Illinois counties were active! Three pages were again required to list the results from the 1966 activity, including 11 DX entries.

In 1968, sponsorship shifted to the RAMS group. This change occurred rather unexpectedly, as it seems the CHC chapter folded and the event was left hanging. RAMS, rather than let ILQP die a painful death, took the ball and ran with it. It was too late to put the notifications in the ham magazines; but W9RQF mailed hundreds of contest notices, and the event proceeded, though with a decline in participation. Armed with a new call sign, W9DY (ex-W9GFF) won the Illinois competition in 1969. There was even a category for multi-multi as well as multi-single.

The 8-QSO-per-county rule was instituted in 1970, probably in an attempt to increase the popularity of the participants from "common" counties. County line contacts now counted as multiple points. WA9OMN (now KN9T) won the Illinois competition. There were suggestions about moving the date from the first weekend in August, partly due to QRM from other contests and the fact that there were intense thunderstorms and 100 degree heat during the weekend! In response, the 1971 contest moved to the first weekend of November. (CW SS must

\*not\* have been that weekend???) A QSO number was still part of the required exchange. In 1972, W0BV submitted an entry for his operation using 900 milliwatts from Missouri. This prompted a change in scoring for 1973, which included a multiplier based upon power level (x3 for QRP), along with a reversion to the August weekend and a time period of 2000Z on Saturday to 2400Z on Sunday. For whatever reason, there were only about 60 entries. In 1974, the multiplier for QRP was increased to 5x. There was mention of a “big increase in participation” but there were still only about 60 logs submitted. Maybe postage prices went up?

The 1975 event saw a group of RAMS members operating from the Silversides submarine in Lake Michigan...certainly an attention-getter! The only problem they had was that some apparently thought they had to be a “pirate” rather than a sub in Lake Michigan. They repeated this operation in 1976 as K9CJU/9, and contacts with the sub were worth 5 points. A bonus was instituted for mobile stations: 200 points for any county from which at least 10 contacts were made. The two mobiles sending in logs were WB9NOZ (32 counties) and WA9OBP (now N9JF). This was the year of the terrible flood in the Big Thompson Canyon in Colorado, and I suspect the decline in participation had something to do with the emergency traffic on the phone bands. One twist in 1977 was to give two points for contacts with Novice and Tech stations. DX multipliers were now limited to one for credit (no limit previously) and club participation awards were begun. In 1979, the serial number was dropped from the exchange. In 1980, DX multipliers allowed were increased to five but there were still no multipliers for counties worked by Illinois stations. Somewhere during this period, the power multiplier was dropped.

By 1985, the date was moved to October, the time was reduced to 8 hours, and Illinois stations were allowed to count Illinois counties as multipliers. WB9GOJ (now K9LY) headed up the RAMS committee. The first weekend of October made the ILQP butt heads with the CA QSO party, a source of some consternation. The 1987 contest found KF9D in a now-familiar spot as the top IL mobile, and K9FD as the top fixed station. RAMS was the winning Illinois club, and there were no WIARC entries. By 1989, some WIARC members began to participate, and the club finished fifth with a contest-leading nine entries. WIARC moved up to second in 1992, when a W9AWE operation spear-headed by KC3ZQ operated from the Columbus IL town hall in honor of Columbus Day. K4XU led the charge in 1993, joined by ten other WIARC members, when the club finally topped the Illinois club scores. As late as 1994, the 200 point bonus was still awarded to IL mobiles. The October date conflicted with either the CA or PA parties until ILQP was moved to the \*third\* Sunday in October. Electronic logs were first accepted in 2003. The 8-QSO bonus was eliminated in 2005.