

Sometimes a mini-DXpedition can combine two hobbies. Here WA3CUC combines his hobby of hunting with putting Route County on the air.

Hunting The Rare One

BY HENRY HILL*, WA3CUC

Spinning the dial on one of my favorite HF rigs and listening for that rare DX station or an old friend is one of my favorite ways to enjoy life here on earth.

Like most amateurs, I do have other hobbies. Hunting is a biggie for me. Camping under the stars with a fire going always brings back warm memories of times gone by, and my hunting partners are also my hamming buddies.

Just about the time my back started aching from all the heavy tube gear I was carrying out of the hamfest fleamarket, one of my two hobby buddies, Rick, KC0HH, came up with a great idea. Why not mix both hobbies this year and take our HF gear hunting with us! That was the start of one of our most rewarding hunts yet. Little did I know then that my checking account would be depleted to rock bottom, with my XYL (WB3DZI) tapping CQ in code on top of my head with a box full of old Heathkit parts!

First of all, I needed a portable rig—then a portable antenna, power source, and a good week's supply of 807s. The rig was an easy choice—a brand spanking new ICOM 735. The ICOM was small and had all the features I wanted in a portable rig, although there are a lot of other great portable rigs out there that would have done the job, too.

The next decision, an antenna, wasn't as easy. It caused me a lot of mental SWR, feedback and off-frequency thoughts. I did a lot of research and talked to the antenna experts (self-proclaimed) on various HF bands. I was finally able to make a decision after many a sleepless night, and I bought an Isotron.

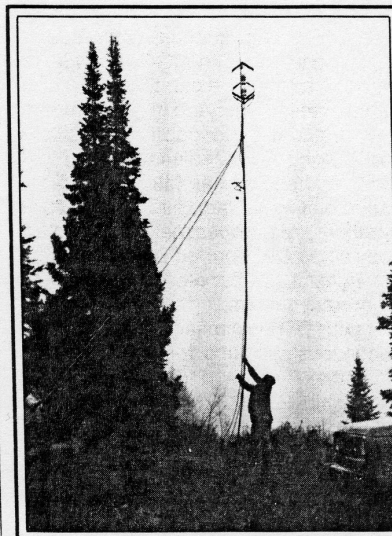
The Isotron was the ticket. It's a great little portable antenna. The size is small, and the weight is light. I purchased three different Isotrons for 20, 40 and 75 meters. All three fit on my 30 foot mast very neatly.

The elk season here in Colorado finally came. After four hours of hard work we finally got all three trucks loaded with all of our gear! After an additional five hours of driving through some of the most beautiful mountains in the country, we arrived at our new home for the next two weeks.

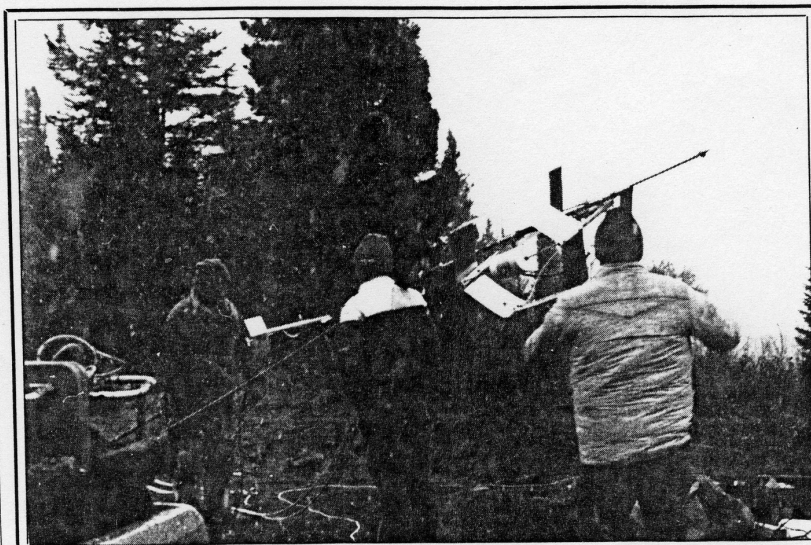
As we were putting up the tent snow started falling, letting us know that winter had slipped up on us again. The tent went up easily, as did the mast with three Isotrons sitting at 30 feet overlooking one of the prettiest valleys in the state of Colorado.

The first day was a killer. Everyone came back to camp dead tired. The stove was putting out plenty of heat, and I was ready to go on the air. My first CQ was a winner. A W1 came back and we had a nice QSO. From that point on the rig and antennas were working like a dream.

We found the Isotron to be the perfect portable antenna. It put out a good signal and had a nice low SWR when tuned properly. The 40 and 75 models worked to-

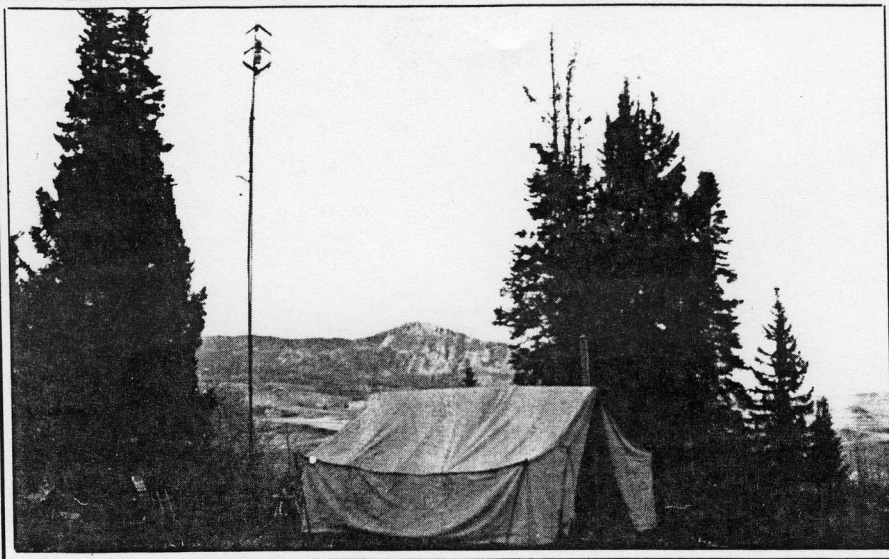


The author is straightening out the feed cables just after the antennas were raised.



Working in cold weather, the crew assembles the Isotron antennas.

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The operating tent/living quarters for the group. The antennas are about 30 feet up.

gether on the same feedline. We had to feed the 20 meter model with a separate feedline. We worked 30 states in the first few hours on the air. A lot of contacts were made by Larry, KAØRXF, on the County Hunters Net. We were in a rare county (Route) and contacts came easily. The ICOM was fed by two large, deep-cycle car batteries. The batteries lasted the whole trip. We also put a ground plane

on the mast above the Isotrons for 2 meters.

This trip will always be a bright spot in my memory. It was lots of fun. The pictures were taken by Larry Harwood, KØRXF. Combining both hobbies was a great idea. I can't wait until next elk season. Maybe next year all of us at our hunting camp will have the pleasure of working you!

