

You might have asked yourself: “What does it take to be a WRTCer?” There are plenty of obvious answers that immediately spring to mind. These include “great operator, wins contests, likes both modes, doesn’t cheat and knows a lot of stuff.” Every one of the operators selected to represent US teams in Slovenia possesses these basic traits. But what about the “other” stuff? Are these guys truly “demigods” who rule Earth, or are they actually real human beings who may be more like you and me than most of us would guess?

I wondered about that, so I surveyed our 26 illustrious representatives, and 14 responded (54 percent). Obviously you will not want to read too much into these results as they are truly intended for fun only, however there are a couple of categories that are relevant, can be averaged, and do have meaningful content. The results follow.

Winning

My first question requested a summary of contests won by each participant. So much of what we do in contesting revolves around winning and/or “making the (top ten) box.” As you might have guessed, our WRTCers have won their share of contests. Among the 14 respondents: The CQ WW CW Contest—there were two first places from DX locations and three wins from Stateside. In the CQ WW SSB Contest there were two from DX locations and one from the US. The ARRL Sweepstakes CW Contest has been won eight times by respondents, the ARRL DX CW ‘test has been won five times from the DX side, and once from the US. The ARRL DX SSB Contest was won once each from the DX side and from the US. The CW Sprint has been won a minimum of ten times, and the IARU HF Championship four times. There are many, many top-ten finishes in all contests and obviously placing high in regional competition is common. But, just so we all feel better, there are at least five WRTCers who have NEVER won a contest! This fact reveals that you don’t have to win to get a WRTC slot, and it also shows that you can be recognized as a great operator without winning major titles.

Age

I didn’t need a survey to determine the ages of the competitors. The average age of the 26 men is 46.8 years. The range is from 34 to 58, a span of nearly a quarter of a century—a whole generation. I did not ask for the year first licensed, but it is obvious from my Sweepstakes memories and personal

knowledge that the WRTCers have each been licensed a minimum of 20 years. The lesson to learn from this topic is that if you are young or middle-aged, just getting started, or have been going at it for 20 years, there is still plenty of opportunity for you to make the grade as a WRTCer for future events. I personally know of several contesters in their 60s, and some young contesters, who would make formidable WRTC contestants.

Personal

Are these guys married? Do their spouses put up with this stuff? For our average respondent, the answer is yes. Only three are not presently married while four have been divorced. This divorce rate, 29 percent, is nearly half that of the national average. Interestingly, lots of comments were received along with this question’s answers indicating that those divorces were really miserable! And, those presently married commented that they were married to absolute “saints”—all around great ladies with lots of patience. Following this thread further, I wondered how many spouses were licensed—further research indicated three. I didn’t ask if the single guys felt that they had an advantage or disadvantage—and they didn’t volunteer any further information.

Profession

Driven, successful contesters are often equally successful in the real world. Competition and drive are natural attributes across the board. Being hams also often equates to technical professions and this holds true with our WRTCers—at least five are engineers. Other professions listed include computer analyst, teacher/coach, retail consultant, telecommunications sales, management consultant, small business owner, investment adviser and marketing director.

Music

I have found that contesters—especially CW aficionados, really like music. I asked for musical preferences and six preferred some variety of Rock, two went for Oldies, one guy is into Country and Western, one is a fan of Electronica and two didn’t have any particular preference (although one said anything BUT Country!).

The Ride

What do these guys drive? My personal observations on contesters’ wheels runs the gamut. There is a definite correlation between hams and vehicles, and some guys really like to tinker with

cars and some like to own and drive fast cars. Others, on the other hand, choose a cheap, reliable car that allows them to spend more money on other things—including ham radio. Most WRTCers have shown a clear allegiance to no-nonsense reliability in that four of them drive Honda Accords as their primary vehicles. Other reported makes and models reveal an economical approach to car ownership: Plymouth Horizon, Toyota Corolla, Toyota Pick-up, Honda Civic, Mitsubishi Galant, Subaru Outback and Mercury Villager. While not exactly moving into the “Sultan of Brunei” category of car ownership, three guys listed cars just a step above the previous class: Mercury’s Grand Marquis, and BMW’s M3 and 533i.

Cereal

Can you be a contestator and not eat breakfast cereal? It didn’t seem possible to me, and true to my guess, only one guy did not like the stuff. Just like the Frosted Flakes TV commercials, a couple of the replies I received were along the lines of “don’t tell anybody, but I REALLY like...” Oatmeal was mentioned three times as a favorite, while Frosted Mini Wheats captured two spots, as did granola. Also mentioned were Raisin Bran, Special K, Life, “many cereals,” and “anything loaded with sugar.” The exception? One individual responded that he ate a bean burrito every morning. Gotta try that!

Dog and Cat

Do they have them in the house? Yes—seven WRTCers have dogs, and four have cats. Two respondents have both. A couple of guys said they had one of the two, and made it quite clear that they would never even consider having the other. One guy wanted me to take his dog. Five guys had NEITHER a cat nor a dog. One guy lost custody of his pet in his divorce! Read into these answers what you will.

Eyes

I have noticed that most contesters seem to need glasses. Eight of the 14 respondents are nearsighted, and four are farsighted. Three lucky guys do not need vision correction. What does this prove? Probably nothing.

Accident Prone?

How many WRTCers have ever broken an arm or a leg? Those were the two specific body parts about which I asked. Three of the 14 respondents had indeed broken an arm or a leg. Several others

reported breaking other parts of their bodies. Contesters, being a competitive breed, must try to win at everything, so just simply breaking an arm or a leg isn't good enough. Others, obviously disappointed at having nothing broken to report, shared tales of nasty sprains, profuse nosebleeds, infected hangnails, painful paper cuts, etc.

Tower Work

Although not *necessarily* related to the previous topic, I wondered how many of our WRTCers did tower work. Twelve of the 14 responded YES (some with multiple exclamation points). Not that it makes a whole lot of difference in operator quality, but there seems to be a strong trend towards the best operators in the country doing their own tower work. There have always been debates about the value of guest operating from stations where the guest operator doesn't have to do the tower and antenna work. That probably doesn't happen as often as we are all led to believe. Every WRTCer has guest operated someplace—yet nearly all of them do tower work. Alternatively, the WRTCers who do not do tower work may have the right idea! That hasn't stopped them from making the grade.

CW Speed

It's hard to achieve the level of a WRTCer without being skilled in both modes. I asked "how fast can you comfortably and accurately operate CW during a contest?" The answers ranged from 35 to 60 WPM, with an average of 44.6 WPM. I also wondered about "rag chew speed?" These ranged from 25 to 55 WPM with an average of 38.8 WPM—often the reported limiting factor was sending ability! The key bit of information to come from this topic is "yes, you really have to know the code to be a WRTCer."

DXing

This one was interesting to me. I wondered how many of our guys hold an actual 5BDXCC. Four of the 14 do. The other ten emphatically said that they did not, most adding a comment such as "DXCC—*what's that?*" to their answer. It seems that if you like DXing, you *really* like it. The other guys just don't care about their country count—they are strictly very serious contesters. Interestingly, being as competitive as they are, the guys without 5BDXCC also often added comments like: "No, I don't have the award, but I've worked everything anyway!"

The Other Side

Have these guys *been* DX then? Have they traveled to the other side and run the masses? Of course they have. Every one of them has been DX—and been DX in contests I might add. As competitive as they are, the WRTCers also provided unsolicited reports of the places from

which they have operated and when, just to drive the point home.

Favorite Contests

Can there really be a favorite single contest listed? Of course not—so I asked our guys to list the two contests that they would operate each year if that was all they were allowed. Naturally, some of the guys couldn't accept that qualification and listed many more—being competitive and all. But the responses did lead to some strong conclusions: CW contests are the most preferred—along with international competitions. The CQ WW CW Contest was listed eight times followed by the CQ WPX CW and ARRL Sweepstakes CW Contest four times each. Listed twice each: the North American Sprint CW, the IARU HF Championship, the Sweepstakes SSB, and the CQ WW SSB. Contests receiving one vote were Field Day, the Florida QSO Party, the NAQP, and the ARRL CW DX Contest.

QSO Machines

Ever wonder why the QSL Bureaus are so loaded-up? WRTCers make a LOT of QSOs. I asked the guys for rough estimates of how many QSOs they have made in contests in their radio careers. My gut feeling is that their estimates are probably a bit low! The range reported was from 25000 to 700000 QSOs with an average of 265000. Figuring out how many QSOs you made as an operator at a multi-operator event is challenging. Obviously, what we can take from this exercise is that practice is good—and lots of practice is better!

Call Signs

I like call signs. For fun I asked the competitors what they thought was the best call sign in the world, and if that one was not a US call sign, then also include what they thought was the best US call sign. Listed twice as the best call sign in the world was K1AR. That is hard to dispute. Other calls listed as best in the world were: 9K9K, W7RM, JY1, N2AA, I3LID, F6BEE, EA2IA, 8P9Z, MØO, K6LA and ZD8Z. The best calls in the US included: K9K, W8IZ, WØDY, N2AA, K3WW, WØOF and K1ZZ.

Linguistics

Nearly all of the other competitors in Slovenia are multi-lingual. How do our US WRTCers stack-up in the foreign language department? Not well. Two of the fourteen respondents reported being conversational in another language besides English and CW (German and French). Not a huge disadvantage by any means—especially at WRTC2000—but we all know the advantage of being able to speak Japanese or Spanish nowadays!

The Best

Finally, I asked the competitors to list

who they believed were the top ten operators within the US and outside of the US. I qualified this question with the added requirement that they not do any research to determine their answers. I wanted it to come from ingrained experience. Some of the reports were not complete, so the numbers of votes will not necessarily add up.

The US WRTCers listed these US operators as among the ten best (call and number of votes):

N5TJ	13
K1AR	13
N6TR	11
K1TO	11
W4AN	10
K5ZD	9
N2IC	9
KQ2M	7
NT1N	7
N5KO	7
W2GD	6
N2NT	5
K6LL	4
WØUA	4
N9RV	4
KW8N	4
K1DG	3
K3ZO	2
W9RE	2
AG9A	2
N6KT	2
K1ZZ	2
K1KI	2
N6RT	2

Receiving one vote each: WE9V, K9PG, K7SS, K7JA, W4ZV, N5RZ, K3LR, N6AA, K3WW, N6MJ, K5GN, K4BAI, N6IG, W9WI, K8NZ, N2NC, N6TJ, W3LPL, W6OAT, N6TV and K6NA.

DX Stations

CT1BOH	12
VE3EJ	8
OH2MM	8
G3SXW	5
G4BUO	5
DL6FBL	4
OH2BH	3
9A3A	3
ZS6EZ	3
SP7GIQ	2
JA8RWU	2
S5ØA	2
JH4NMT	2
OK1RI	2
LY1DS	2
DL1IAO	2
9V1YC	2

Receiving one vote each: RA3AUA, I2UIY, JA5DQH, NP4Z, YT1AD, G1ØKOW, GW4BLE, HAØDU, RW1AC, VA7RR, UA9BA, G1ØNWG, OH1JT, OH2IW, VR2BG, G3TXF, S53R, OH1NOA, 9H1EL, OH1XX, G3SWH, JH7PKU, OH2KI, VE3UZ, DL2CC, F6BEE, VK6HD and KL7RA.

I hope you all enjoyed reading this. The WRTCers from the US will definitely have their work cut out for them in Slovenia. Competition will be fierce and the beer—I mean *the blood* will flow. 73 and GL to all! ■