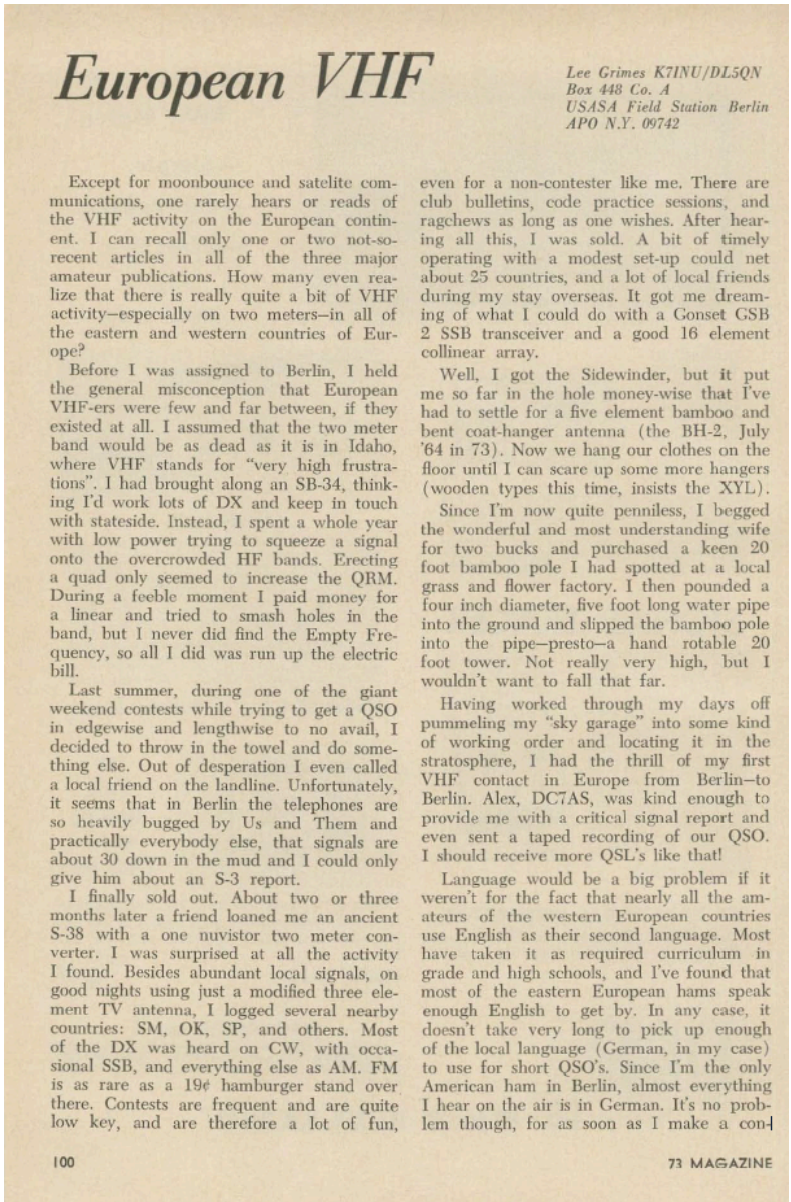
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European VHF

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Except for moonbounce and satelite communications, one rarely hears or reads of the VHF activity on the European continent. I can recall only one or two not-so-recent articles in all of the three major amateur publications. How many even realize that there is really quite a bit of VHF activity—especially on two meters—in all of the eastern and western countries of Europe?

Before I was assigned to Berlin, I held the general misconception that European VHF-ers were few and far between, if they existed at all. I assumed that the two meter band would be as dead as it is in Idaho, where VHF stands for "very high frustrations". I had brought along an SB-34, thinking I'd work lots of DX and keep in touch with stateside. Instead, I spent a whole year with low power trying to squeeze a signal onto the overcrowded HF bands. Erecting a quad only seemed to increase the QRM. During a feeble moment I paid money for a linear and tried to smash holes in the band, but I never did find the Empty Frequency, so all I did was run up the electric bill.

Last summer, during one of the giant weekend contests while trying to get a QSO in edgewise and lengthwise to no avail, I decided to throw in the towel and do something else. Out of desperation I even called a local friend on the landline. Unfortunately, it seems that in Berlin the telephones are so heavily bugged by Us and Them and practically everybody else, that signals are about 30 down in the mud and I could only give him about an S-3 report.

I finally sold out. About two or three months later a friend loaned me an ancient S-38 with a one nuvistor two meter converter. I was surprised at all the activity I found. Besides abundant local signals, on good nights using just a modified three element TV antenna, I logged several nearby countries: SM, OK, SP, and others. Most of the DX was heard on CW, with occasional SSB, and everything else as AM. FM is as rare as a 19¢ hamburger stand over there. Contests are frequent and are quite low key, and are therefore a lot of fun, even for a non-contester like me. There are club bulletins, code practice sessions, and ragchews as long as one wishes. After hearing all this, I was sold. A bit of timely operating with a modest set-up could net about 25 countries, and a lot of local friends during my stay overseas. It got me dreaming of what I could do with a Gonset GSB 2 SSB transceiver and a good 16 element collinear array.

Well, I got the Sidewinder, but it put me so far in the hole money-wise that I've had to settle for a five element bamboo and bent coat-hanger antenna (the BH-2, July '64 in 73). Now we hang our clothes on the floor until I can scare up some more hangers (wooden types this time, insists the XYL).

Since I'm now quite penniless, I begged the wonderful and most understanding wife for two bucks and purchased a keen 20 foot bamboo pole I had spotted at a local grass and flower factory. I then pounded a four inch diameter, five foot long water pipe into the ground and slipped the bamboo pole into the pipe—presto—a hand rotable 20 foot tower. Not really very high, but I wouldn't want to fall that far.

Having worked through my days off pummeling my "sky garage" into some kind of working order and locating it in the stratosphere, I had the thrill of my first VHF contact in Europe from Berlin—to Berlin. Alex, DC7AS, was kind enough to provide me with a critical signal report and even sent a taped recording of our QSO. I should receive more QSL's like that!

Language would be a big problem if it weren't for the fact that nearly all the amateurs of the western European countries use English as their second language. Most have taken it as required curriculum in grade and high schools, and I've found that most of the eastern European hams speak enough English to get by. In any case, it doesn't take very long to pick up enough of the local language (German, in my case) to use for short QSO's. Since I'm the only American ham in Berlin, almost everything I hear on the air is in German. It's no problem though, for as soon as I make a con-

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Originaldatei (605 × 924 Pixel, Dateigröße: 922 KB, MIME-Typ: image/png)

Dateiversionen

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