



The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club

Volume 4 Issue 6

December, 2013

The K3Y Planning Group has been gearing up for the 8th Annual SKCC Anniversary celebration, which will take place in January as usual.

To those members who have recently joined the SKCC and who may not be familiar with "K3Y," it is quite a popular non-contest event which typically results in some tens of thousands of straight key contacts.

During the month-long event any SKCC member, without regard to CW expertise, can apply to operate on the air using the special call sign, "K3Y." Only one K3Y operator per call area is permitted on the air at a given time. Operators will be scheduled accordingly by volunteer Coordinators in each call area or DX region.

SKCC members and non-members alike will attempt to log contacts with all of the K3Y call areas, including KH6, KL7 and KP4, plus six DX continental areas. In general, the idea is to work as many different K3Y operators as possible and keep the bands active with straight key CW throughout the month.

NEW THIS YEAR...

The starting date has been moved back a day to January 2nd. The reason for this is to allow more relaxed participation in the traditional rag chew activities of "Straight Key Night" on New Year's Day. January 2nd is also the actual anniversary date of SKCC's founding. So, the hunt for K3Y stations will begin on the 2nd.

BECOMING A K3Y OPERATOR...

Please consider becoming a K3Y operator in January. No particular expertise or experience is required; rank beginners have done so in the past with good results. Now is the time to start thinking about taking the plunge, especially if you have hesitated doing so in prior years. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding. Plus, as a K3Y operator, you can make a lot of contacts toward Centurion, Tribune, etc.

One of our main objectives is to have as many SKCC members as possible take a turn at being K3Y operators. The success of the event is largely dependent on the number of K3Y operators we can field. So please consider lending your hand to the effort, if only for a short spell.

This year, once again, our non-US members can operate as special K3Y stations. Though they are not legally authorized to use the K3Y call sign, they will be scheduled along with US K3Y stations on the SKCC Calendar page so that people can readily identify and work them. There will be operators in six DX continental regions: NA, SA, EU, OC, AS and AF (i.e., N.America outside of USA; South America; Europe; Oceania; Asia; Africa). This will be a good opportunity to achieve SKCC WAC (Worked All Continents).

The Canadian K3Y operations were a great success in 2013. We hope for more of the same this time around. As last year, Canadian operators will be scheduled a maximum of one per province/territory at any given time. So, January should be a good time to work on SKCC Canadian Maple Awards.

An official K3Y 2014 QSL card will be issued, listing one QSO per each K3Y call area and DX continental region worked: 19 QSOs total for the complete sweep. Cards will be sent automatically to all members of the SKCC QSL Bureau who have made any contacts with K3Y stations. Others can request cards by sending a SASE to the Bureau.

You can contact me regarding any of the above or if you'd like to receive a 2014 K3Y Operators Guide. We'll be posting the operating guides and additional info on the K3Y web pages in coming weeks, so stand by for more...

73,

Drew /AF2Z

K3Y 2014 Event Coordinator



KD8SKO's First Straight Key Contest!

Don KD8SKO(SKCC 10953), is fairly new to amateur radio. Don is General class licensed and did not have to learn/pass cw. But Don wanted to learn CW so he taught himself CW, joined the Straight Key Century Club and in September took part in the monthly two hour "Straight Key Sprint" event.

Don came to the K8AQM shack to give this event a try. Using a computer for logging and with K8AQM as a back-up for copying Don completed his first Sprint. He did very well and worked over 30 stations while pounding an SKCC pump key.

Don often joins us on the 10m Thursday night cw gathering and all the regulars agree, "Don has an easy fist to copy." Expect to hear Don rolling out the cw contacts on the bands!



FLASH! Since this first effort Don has become a Centurion(10953C)! Maybe by the time you read this

he'll have received his "T" and will be working toward his "S!"

New SKCC QSL Bureau Information

We currently have 500+ members listed in the bureau. To find out which SKCC Members are using the QSL bureau, just go to: http://www.skccgroup.com/member_services/qs1_buro/index.php Then, fill in the call sign or SKCC number on the Bureau Search feature, and click on "Submit" or press your "Enter" key. The results of your search, will be displayed below the "Submit" button. You can also check there to see how many envelopes you have on file in the bureau. If you would like to join the bureau please send two or three standard #10 envelopes pre addressed per the instructions also found on the SKCC QSL Bureau webpage. When sending your QSL cards to the bureau please make sure the you have enough sending to the bureau have enough postage. Most envelopes received do not have enough postage for first class mail to the bureau. If not the bureau has to pay the mail person.

My plan is to send all bureau cards out once a year after the current year K3Y cards are printed and are ready to be mailed. If you would like your QSL cards sent sooner, I would be happy to send them per your request. Should you have any questions or suggestions, please send them to k9jp@skccgroup.com
Thank you and 73,

SKCC QSL Bureau
C/O Jeff Peters, K9JP
5562 Heritage Way
Traverse City, MI 49685

Hamfests and SKCC

With as many members there are in SKCC you can count on several being at hamfests. That was the case at the Findlay, OH hamfest in September as seen in the picture



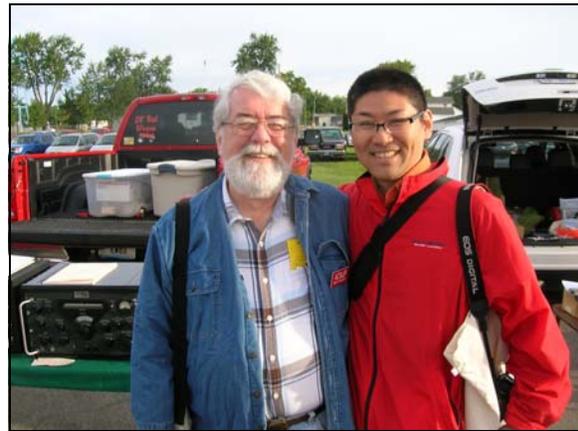
below:

Here are left to right: K8TEZ Larry (SKCC 8426T), Ken N8KR (SKCC 7559T), Ted K8AQM (SKCC 1629T), Brian KG8CO (SKCC 6362), Jeff N8CC (SKCC 7541) and Don N8AMM (SKCC 3198T). Findlay is quite a large hamfest and there were several other SKCC members there known to this group. Not available for this picture but also at the fest were Rich K8UV (SKCC 2250T), Ken K8KIC (SKCC 2938) and Denny WE8Z (SKCC 3172). I am sure there were others

there not known to this group.

At the Adrian, MI hamfest Wes AC8JF (SKCC 10511) Nozomi AD7TN (SKCC 10763) were seen looking for those great “fleas” and “keys” found in the trunk sales.

How about other hamfests around? Take some pictures of friends and members and pass them along to the paper here so we can all see members and put a face to those call signs and SKCC numbers. Great purchases at these fests should also be shared!

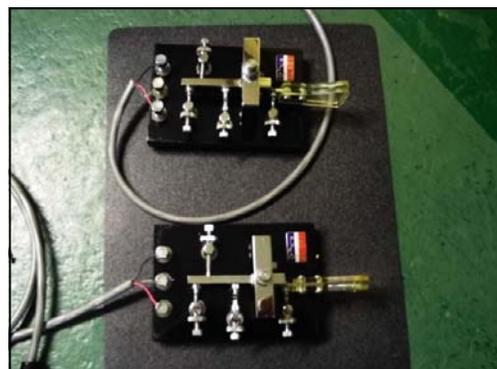
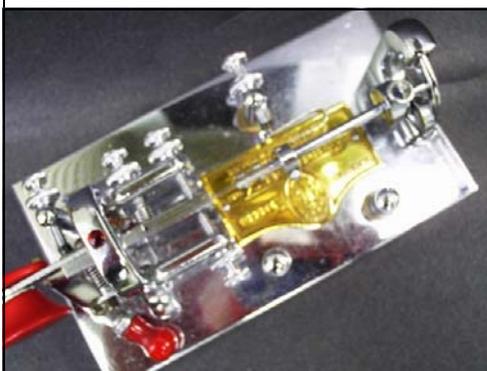


The Bug and the Paddles

Larry K8TEZ(8426T) purchased this excellent Vibroplex bug at the Findlay hamfest (de K8DD estate).

Larry just finished restoring these two Vintage EL-Keys by Poucel Electronics (1959-1963) . Black base, Lucite paddles & beautiful chrome . About 400 were made from 1959-1963. This single-lever design was the first commercially mfg

paddle offered to ham radio operators. It is heavy at 3.25 lbs. Completely adjustable stops, contacts, spring tensions. Machined yoke, arms and posts. Pourcel was Bob Poucel (W2AYJ) and Sid Shore (K2FC).



The Art of Making Bugs

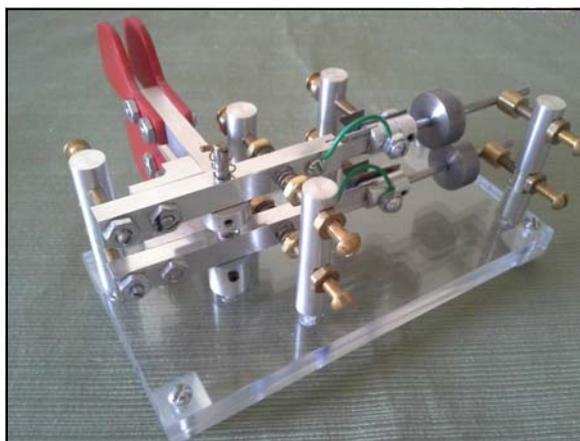
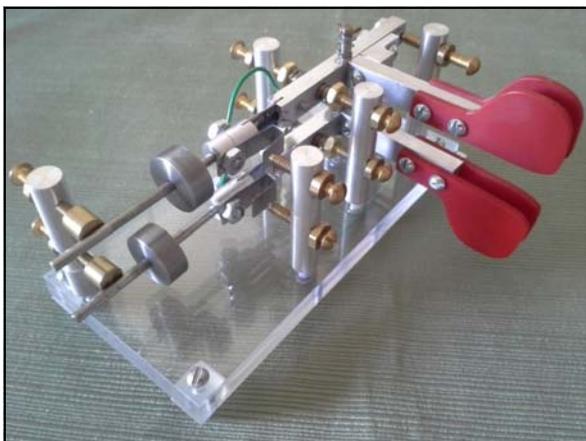
Several issues back there was an article here showing several different home brew keys. Since then I have been talking to Dave N9ZXL(SKCC 7411T), who enjoys designing and making “bugs” in addition to straight keys. The key below is one of Dave’s “right angle” bugs.



It’s a beauty and has very smooth action. But like most of us, Dave found moving the weight and adjusting spacing for different speeds was a hassle. A few hours in the shop and Dave had a solution figured out, “why not design two bugs on one base?” You can see Dave’s plan and parts freshly milled for his “two bugs on one base” dubbed, “The Dub Bug.” One lever set up for a slower

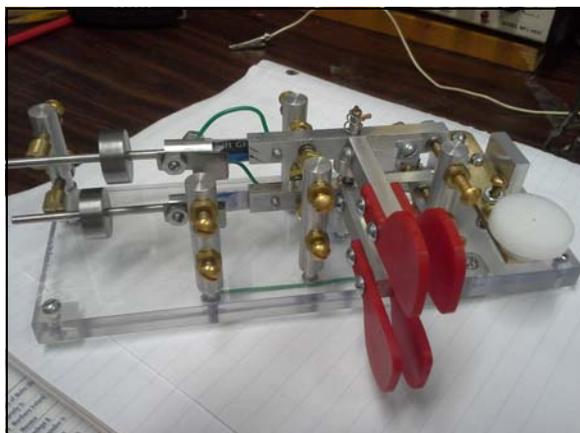


speed and one lever set up for a higher speed. Dave claims he made the “Dub Bug” base from scraps of Lexan and “just glued them together”; they sure look nice to me! Here are a couple of views of the finished Dub Bug (Double Bug). But that wasn’t good enough; Dave decided to add a straight key to the Dub Bug (Dub Bug Plus?). Check out the photo to the right of an added straight key to his creation. Really cool!



I know there are others in the club who also design and create great keys. I’d like to print your story and see your creations. Send your photos and something about your project. Share your efforts with the rest of us who only wish we had your talents.

Well done Dave, and we look forward to hearing you pound brass on the air with your Dub Bug!



I May Be A "LOWFER;" Maybe You Can Be One Too!

For many Hams the territory below the AM BC band is a total unknown. Some of us started as SWLs or Scanner monitors and know about other radio services besides ours and the Audio and Television Broadcast service. Many owners of rigs that include general coverage reception may have never listened below 540 KHZ, thinking it was unused. If you are one , read on...

I first explored this mysterious Low Frequency band in 1959 when I got my first Short Wave radio kit project, an Allied Radio Ocean Hopper. It had plug in coils for AM BC, short wave frequencies, and one strange, fat coil, for 150-520 Kilocycles.

When I tuned this long wave" band I could hear carriers with repeating tone modulated, short, Morse code messages . Since I was trying to learn Morse to pass my novice exam I copied the messages, only two or three letters over and over, it was easy to do. I guessed they were codes for locations, like YIP had to be Ypsilanti, MI. I asked around and ran into one man who maintained aircraft and knew I was listening to DF beacons at airports.

So time went by; I left home for school and then the Army and Viet Nam, then married life, jobs, kids, and finally got a good amateur radio rig that had general coverage and re-discovered the Long Wave World about 45 years later..

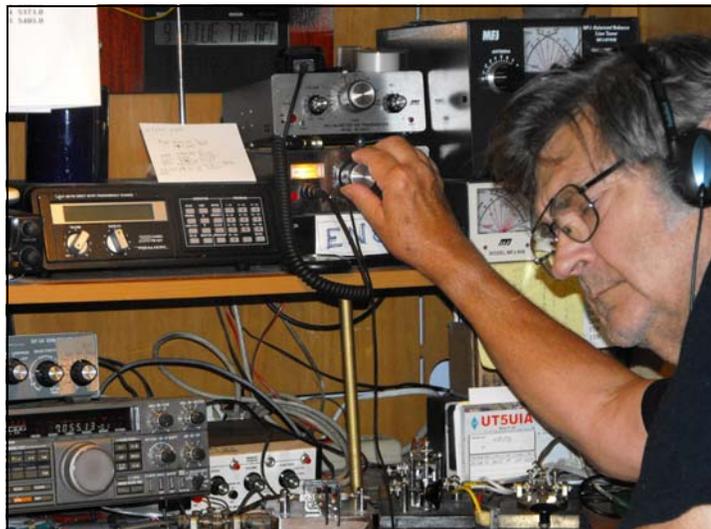
Now I have been keeping a log of what I hear and have four pages, close spaced, listing of beacon stations I have heard. I can verify by cross ref frequency to call signs since there are multiple locations that use the same letters. Good, accurate lists of Beacon stations' Call, Freq, and Locations info can be found on several sites on the WEB. Conditions for reception are good in the daylight hours and have heard signals up to 400 miles. At night the signals really can go far, thousands of miles is common for the hundred watt beacons. Last night it was extremely good and I heard , clearly, for the first time, several of the high power (some run a megawatt to cover all Europe with clear reception) broadcasts from Europe where Long Wave Broadcasting is common. I also added several more beacons to my list, a few in Manitoba and one in the newest Canadian province of Nunuvut (formerly the Northwest Territory).

Some of my good catches include; 208, YSK, Sanikil, NU...218, Red Lk.ON...241, HF Hearst, ON...250, FO Flin Flon, MB...279, RS Wooster, MA...360, Port Menier, QC...365, AA Fargo, ND...371, GW Great Whale River, QC (on Hudson Bay)...390, JT Stevensville, NS...417, IY Charles City, IA...432, IZN, Lincolnton, NC..ETC.....

If you want to try something different, just tune your general coverage receiver down below 540 KHz and listen for those 2 or 3 letter CW callsigns between 300 and 530 kHz. If you want to hear some LWDX start with a long wire antenna and maybe you will soon be winding large loops and hanging them in a tree outside if you want to hear the far ones.

There has been talk about pressing the FCC to open a little segment of the Long Wave band to Amateur Radio operation and there have been a few experimental stations authorized and I have heard a few of them. So now, fans of this operation have been termed "lowfers" and interest is growing.

73...K8JD SKCC 1345T



The “Original” Vibroplex Bug

Joel Black W4JBB SKCC 9512T

I enjoy CW. I never thought I would say that, but I truly do. I am no speed demon, but at the power levels I prefer, that is okay. It is more about getting the correct information through than the speed at which you can send.

To send CW, you need a key or a paddle. I do not have an extensive collection of keys; four straight keys and two paddles (one of which is currently disassembled). I also have what I have heard a lot of folks scoff about...a bug. Some of you may have never heard of a bug so let's step back a little over 100 years.

When Morse code was first used over the air, it required a straight key. A straight key is nothing more than a single-pole, single-throw switch...it just makes and breaks a contact (like a light switch). Straight keys can cause what was known at the time as a “glass wrist.”

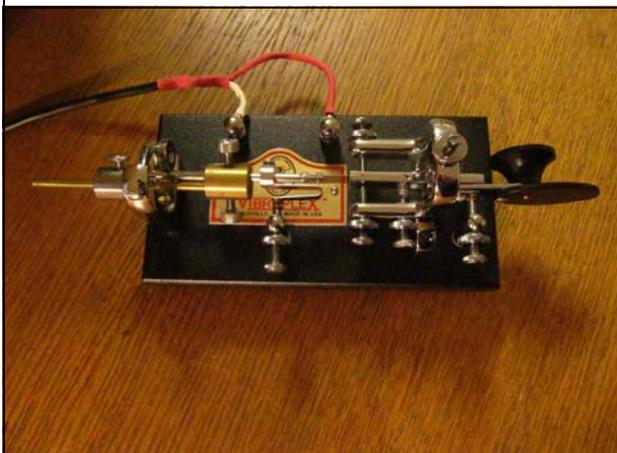
In 1905, Horace G. Martin, along with others, developed the semi-automatic key or “bug.” Instead of an up and down motion to make and break the contact, the bug uses a side-to-side motion. It makes contact on both sides but while one side makes a continuous contact, the other side bounces against the contact using a spring and weighted arm.

Jump forward 108 years to when I bought a bug at the Huntsville Hamfest in August. Vibroplex had a display and I kept going back and playing with the bugs. Although there were many models, I liked the “Original Bug” with its black crinkle finish...it's simple. I found a vendor and purchased one.

When I got back home, I hooked it up to my radio and, after a time, got it adjusted. After playing around with it, I decided it was way too fast. I asked around to see if anyone could recommend a way to slow it down. Everyone said to add a little weight. I tried a wooden clothespin. It worked, but I still needed more weight. I added a couple of the large black binding clips. That got it slow enough that I could send, but it was quite cumbersome. Another person recommended adding some weight and yet another recommended a bug tamer. He even had one he would send me!

Well, I put the bug tamer on and it worked like a champ! The bug tamer uses a two hole weight and brass rod on which you add back the weight that came with the bug. By doing this, the weight is moved further out and it slows down the keying. You can see the brass rod and two weights in the picture.

So my favorite amateur radio mode is CW and my favorite key is a bug. Who'da thunk it!



Switchable Switch-Blade Cootie K8NS 10580T

Editor's note: Here is a cootie made by Mike K8NS. I wonder if Mike uses this to "knife" through the pileups? Could the different "blades" act as speed controls? Mike has some interesting antennas that perhaps several other restricted antenna users might find of interest.



I have held this call since 1977. Previous call was K8TLX. I retired to Florida in 2005 from the Grand Rapids, MI area. I operate primarily CW on 10 thru 160 meters from this QTH. I am a life member of QCWA #18713, member of TEN-TEN #3043 and SKCC#10580T. I live in a restricted HOA community so I can not have a tower/yagi but I like constructing wire and vertical antennas. Currently I am using palm tree phased verticals on 40 and 30 meters, a 40/20 meter horz. sky loop roof mounted at 18 ft , a Hy-gain AV-620 vertical for 10 thru 20 meters, and various other wires and verticals that go up and come down. The rig is an

old ICOM IC 725 that I purchased at the Dayton HamFest in 1992. I have recently added an IC -835 that I rescued from a sailboat that has been sitting unused for 17 yrs. The tranceiver had been modified for marine band use and does work on 60m. I have also installed a (stealth) inverted T for 80m and 160m in an oak tree at the end of the coldesac I live on. That's "Hoover" and I working 30 meter cw!



The Answer is Blowing in the Wind!

So how is this for a pretty cool backyard CW display? Richard WB9SFG (10297) came across the plans for this unique "wind vane" and passed them on to Dave N9ZXL (7114T) who "had" to put one of these together. Dave says the wind turns the prop and it is attached to the hand and it hammers on the key.

I'm wondering who the QSO would be with as the key hammers away. Bet it would be really easy for this brass pounder to achieve an SKCC Rag Chew award!

If you're interested in one of these maybe Richard can direct you to a set of the plans?



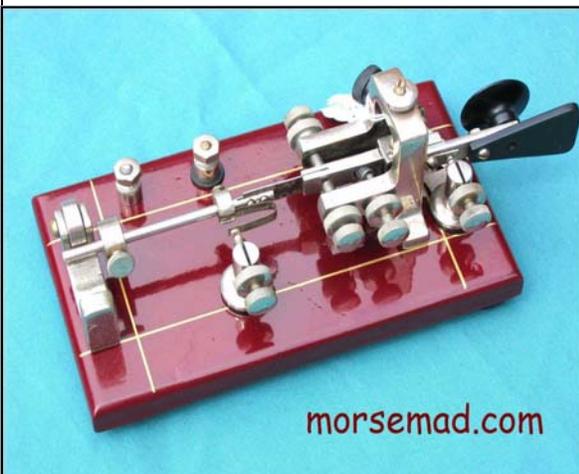
The Standard Radio Co. Bug Key. c1940's

Editor's note: I subscribe to "CW Bugs" and ran across this great article on a relatively unknown bug. The photos speak for themselves and the article gives the history. All credit goes to the "CW Bug" reflector. Perhaps the greatest statement appeared on the reflector in comments and especially the one below from "David the Liar."

What a gem! Here is a quite scarce world war II vintage Standard Radio Company bug circa 1943. They were made to special order for the U. S. Army Air Corps for use on planes, mainly operating in the Pacific. Not many were made, and few survive, only occasionally seen. They were made in black, nickel, green, and most rarely maroon bases. The base finish has been professionally restored with 24 coats of lacquer. Other than restored base finish this bug is original.

Below can be seen the damper mechanism. It is of the U shaped design that can be found on the early Vibroplex Blue Racer bugs, but this damper is BIG ! The beautiful maroon finish base with its gold pinstriping is testimony to the excellent restoration skills of Fred Maas / KT5X.

There are only 16 of these keys recorded from collections. Eleven have no label, these were military issue, and five with a label and serial number, possibly made for friends after the war. The lowest serial number recorded is 1517 and the highest 1599. If in reading this, you have a Standard Radio Company bug which you would like to add to the record, contact KT5X at his website.



Statement below appeared on the reflector after viewing the bug:

"Ugly key. Trade you a buck for it."

"David the Liar"

Book of Dot Dash 1:3 "Thou shalt not covet thine naybor's bugs lest thee become a pestilence to thine own."

SKCC AT MASSILLON AMATEUR RADIO CLUB HAMFEST

SKCC made its presence known Nov 3rd at the Massillon Amateur Radio Club Hamfest in Massillon, OH. Scott, N3JJT, 255T, and good friend Tony, KD8BBK, 2443 manned the table. We checked in about 18 local members, and handed out many flyers about our club. I know we got one new member that day. Greg, NQ8L from Akron, Oh, # 11322.



Welcome Greg. In fact I heard him on the air exchanging numbers the next day on 40 meters. Way to go! Tony and I had a great time at the SKCC table, and talking up the SKCC group! Until next time.....

73,

de Scott N3JJT 255T & Tony,
KD8BBK 2443.



N8KR/4

Poor Ken N8KR, “had” to leave Ohio this month and “has” to stay in Florida for two months! Poor guy, he had to pack-up a portable station, drive through rain and then set-up a station in the “hot” Florida sun! You can clearly see from the picture of his temporary shack the need for a fan to keep him cool while operating in the sweltering Florida sunshine in December and January! I’m sure he misses his warm and fan-less Ohio home during these two months!

You can see from the picture Ken has his station all geared up for CW with straight key computer and paddle. Ken is working toward that “S” and is well on his way!

Hang in there Ken, don’t let the heat get you down, you’ll be home soon to your snug OH home!

Web Sites Worth A Look

Here are some web sites that are worth checking out:

1. USA Straight Key sending by N1EA www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mkXTxnaiaM
2. Bug setup and sending by N1EA www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mkXTxnaiaM
3. Sideswiper sending by N1EA www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0EDFjCEoDI
4. UK and Swedish style sending by N1EA www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HPsZ6VLvLE
5. “Bug” pendulum damper adjustment by N1EA www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpAuWL7vnMI

These are not the only sites for key adjustment but they are worth checking out.



A Visit With Ed, W1EJ

Many of us have worked Ed W1EJ (SKCC 1594T), in various SKCC events; I happened to notice on the reflector Ed was coming to visit Michigan (from California). I quickly fired off an email to Ed and inquired where he might be in Michigan in hopes we might get together for an eyeball QSO. As it turned out Ed was staying little more than an hour away! We met at my shack (K8AQM, me on the right) and had a great eye ball QSO discussing CW, antennas and radio. Ed enjoys QRP while I'm at the other end of the

scale. We both admit SKCC is a great club with lots of opportunities for everyone. Ed also enjoys bicycling and doing public service operations with amateur radio.

You never know who might come around from SKCC and spend a great couple of hours discussing the greatest hobby with you. I feel extremely lucky to have met Ed and have had an "eyeball QSO."



High Bands vs Low Bands

So it is winter now and that means plenty of time for radio as yard chores and antenna work wait until spring. We know the high bands will be open, but the low bands too are perfect for wintery QSOs, no QRN! The "dog" has the right idea, you need no real attention for those high bands but, careful monitoring of the 160, 80 and 60m bands can yield many great contacts. Be like the dog with the scope, scope out those low bands and grab those Qs on those wonderful wintery bands!

Thanks to Larry K8TEZ (SKCC 8426T) for the photo and the thoughts on High vs Low bands. (Could that be Larry and his dog "Packet?")

What A Hat!



Oh man! What a hat! Brian KG8CO (SKCC 6362) was at a church rummage sale and ran across this QLF hat! As a cw person we know that "QLF" means "Are you sending with your left foot." It is not a flattering statement to be asked "QLF?" in a cw QSO! Of course this QLF as you can see, stands for "Quality Liquid Feeds." Hmm, guess that's farm lingo and not ham radio lingo!



It is amazing what one can do with Photo Shop and Publisher! This was fun and too good an opportunity to pass up! I decided Brian's hat should be personalized! The lower pictures is the personalized KG8CO QLF hat! There is a joke behind Brian and the QLF, but I'll leave the telling to Brian.

At \$0.25 the QLF hat was a real bargain and a lot of mileage can be had with the QLF hat. Just as a "heads-up," the QLF joke does not pertain to Brian's paddle and cw copying...the straight key however, is a totally different story!