

'Rag Chew'



The quarterly newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club

Volume 1 Issue 2

December, 2012

K3Y 2013

"K3Y" is a month-long operating event that celebrates the use of hand-formed Morse Code. It starts on January 1st, which is the traditional date of the ARRL Straight Key Night. This also marks the anniversary of the founding of the Straight Key Century Club. SKCC will be seven years old in 2013.

During the course of the celebration tens of thousands of HF radio contacts will be conducted using traditional mechanical keying devices: namely, straight keys, bugs and sideswipers. The distinctive sound of manually crafted code will be found on the CW bands daily throughout the month, keyed by hundreds of SKCC volunteer operators from around the globe.

K3Y is the special event call sign that has been granted by the FCC for use by SKCC members in the US-administered call areas. The K3Y call may be used by only one station in a given area at a time. Frequently during the event several K3Y stations from various areas may be found operating simultaneously, signing as "K3Y/1", K3Y/2", etc. In addition, far flung SKCC stations in Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico may be heard as "K3Y/KH6", "K3Y/KL7" and "K3Y/KP4".

Since the SKCC's first annual celebration in 2007, it has become quite common for members and non-members alike to attempt to work designated K3Y stations in all of the thirteen call areas. For those who can complete the "full sweep" a certificate of achievement will be made available on the K3Y website.

Many participants also try to work the various K3Y areas on as many different bands as possible. Others simply contact the greatest number of individual K3Y operators as they can. The month-long duration of the event makes all of these goals feasible even for stations of modest capability.

Since SKCC has become an increasingly international organization the K3Y Planning Group has also made provision for our non-US members to participate as special event operators. Even though international members cannot use the K3Y call sign they can serve as K3Y DX special stations. This year we expect once again to schedule operators in each DX continental region: AFRICA; ASIA; EUROPE; NORTH AMERICA (outside of USA); OCEANIA; SOUTH AMERICA.

The incorporation of these six DX continental regions into the event means it will be possible for participants to attain a "grand sweep" consisting of contacts with K3Y stations in all the thirteen US call areas PLUS the six DX continental regions. That task should be enough to keep most of us busy throughout the month!

Also on the DX front... New for 2013 is a provision to allow one Canadian K3Y station per each province or territory to be on the air at the same time. Normally, only one station per DX country is scheduled to operate at any given time. However, that rule seemed overly restrictive in light of the great geographical expanse of Canada and the increasing interest among SKCC members in working stations from each Canadian province/territory. We can't promise to field a full complement of Canadian operators from every province and territory this year, but we look forward to that possibility in future events.

Special event K3Y QSL cards will be distributed automatically to all members of the SKCC QSL Bureau who have made contacts with K3Y stations in January. For those who are not bureau members a QSL card may be requested by submitting a SASE. A poll will be held in December to select a graphic design for the 2013 card. SKCC members are invited to submit card designs.

We expect the upcoming event to be as popular as ever and we hope all SKCC members will try to add some K3Y contacts to their logbooks in January. We would also like to encourage every SKCC member to consider joining the team of K3Y Operators who make this event go. For further information and details please see the K3Y website at <http://www.skccgroup.com/k3y/K3Y-index.ph>

de Drew AF2Z K3Y 2013 Event Coordinator

Ivan LZ1PJ (#2069C), Enjoys CW...And Then Some!



Here are a couple of interesting photos sent by John VK4TJ of Ivan LZ1PJ. The first one is from Bielefeld, Germany where Ivan participated in a QLF contest “Butt” was disqualified because he used his “butt” to send “CQ de LZ1PJ” rather than his left leg! I wonder if that would be “QRB”!!!



The second photo is much more serious, it was taken in Poland at “the Europe Cup High Speed Telegraphy Contest 2012” where Ivan finished third among all contestants. It’s most likely a sure thing Ivan didn’t use a straight key for this event. Congratulations Ivan on our victory!

When you work Ivan you’ll have to determine if he is sending “QLF”, “QRB” or just the “regular” way (assuming he’s not sending high speed!).

Thanks to John VK4TJ for the photos and Ivan LZ1PJ for the information.



A Unique Vintage

Steve ZL2KE, SKCC 6941 found this unique vintage in his local store and uses it dealing with the 20m pileups he encounters. According to reviews: “Ripe and velvety, with juicy blackberry and plum flavors, plus a nice hint of roasted meat, on a supple frame”. “Sheez,”(Shiraz) who can resist that! Thanks Steve!



October WES and SKS

The multiop team of K8XXX (8577) operated in the October WES and SKS. The operators were N8AMM, N8KR, K8AQM and K8UV. In the WES 296 QSOs were logged and the SKS totals were 126 QSOs. In addition to “fun” the goal was to obtain a “C” for K8XXX and that was easily done.

Multiop operations are a great way to enjoy these events and to have “fun” with your friends. Three stations were in operation during these events.

K8XXX is the club call for the Eastern Michigan Contest Club, a VERY laid-back group!



The SKCC QSL Bureau

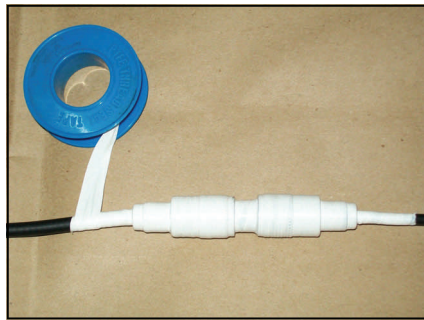
The SKCC QSL Bureau is alive and well under new management with K9AAA. All old QSL cards have been cleaned out of the SASE files. If you wish to use the bureau, please keep several #10 envelopes on hand at the bureau. Lots of cards have been coming into the bureau. Please be sure to use the “bureau search” on the SKCC web page to see if the member is “good” in the bureau. If the member doesn’t have an SASE on hand your card cannot be delivered.

I will do a bureau cleanout sometime in March 2013. That is, I will send out all SASEs on hand that have QSLs to be delivered. That will keep the bureau current. This will be done in March, so you will be able to include any K3Y QSO cards you wish to send through the bureau. Request for K3Y event cards can be sent through the bureau if you have an SASE on hand.

...de K9AAA

Protecting Coax connections By N8AMM 3198T

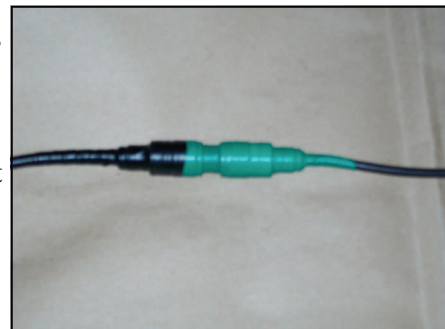
We all know RF connections need to be sealed up from the elements when outside. Coax seal covered by electrical tape, is about the best method of keeping moisture out of connections, however it is tough to remove. Trust me on this! One can spend quite a bit of precious time on the tower just removing old sealant.



Looking for an easier way to remove the sealant from connections, I came up with an idea of wrapping thread sealer “teflon tape” around the connection first. This gives a base layer for the coax seal to stick to rather than the components.

Now I measure out the required amount of coax seal and cut it off. Begin molding the coax seal around the connection and down over the coax. I mold the coax seal one inch beyond the Teflon tape onto the coax.

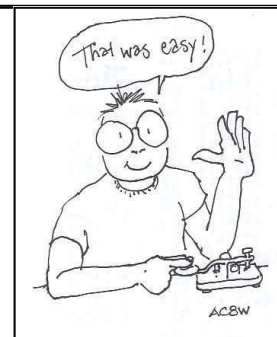
The last step is to tape the whole thing with a “good” electrical tape. The two good electrical tapes, which seem to hold up to the elements best are Super 33 and 88 made by 3M. Using the same process as with the Teflon tape, end with two layers of electrical tape and you have a water/weather proof connection. ...Don N8AMM



Working the WES, SKSE and the SKS

If you haven’t tried the monthly SKCC events yet, you have missed a lot of fun! These events are enjoyable and unlike major contests the pace is much more relaxed and enjoyable. Most QSOs have a “friendly” feel with an added “GL, TNX, 73 and a CUL”. You might even be asked to QSY from 20m to 40m or 80m because your QSO, state, country or province is needed there...nice to feel “wanted”. Give these events a try next month, you’ll be pleasantly surprised!

Thanks to Stan AC8W (2813) for the cartoon!



A Thrill that Never Ceases

Every time when firing up my Kenwood TS-870S, my eyes pay a special attention to my nearly thirty year old Swedish Rex Telegraph hand-key, built by Lennart Pettersson in Hoverberg, Sweden. This jewel brings me a thrilling memory that never ceases...

My interest in radio actually dates back to the middle of the 1940's when my father, who during the 1920's was employed at the National Post & Telecom Agency, gave me a Phillip radio. During many years I was fascinated by broadcast dx-ing, but not until some 40 years later (in 1983) I was bitten by the telegraph bug! Thanks to my first Elmer SM5BFC, Kjell, who was a military officer, I was able to study telegraphy from some 40 cassette tapes. My second Elmer SM5CPD, Uno, who directed an amateur radio division of the Swedish electronic company ELFA, was very generous by keeping a Kenwood radio in reserve till I had earned the appropriate telegraph license.

After some very intensive studies I sent a letter in 1984 to the National Post & Telecom Agency and asked for an examination date. I was informed the examination should take place July 12th and my examiner was SM0BYG Lars-Anders, a well known professional maritime telegrapher.

On the very morning I started my car I was not aware of the problem that should arise when reaching the southern parts of Stockholm. Never before had I seen such an immense number of cars on the streets! In a state of complete confusion I soon realized I had chosen an incorrect motorway meant for traffic destined to Gothenberg...just the opposite direction! How goes the proverb: "time and tide wait for no man". Looking at my watch I noticed the time for the examination was in danger. Luckily a kind police officer was very instrumental by giving me precise information as how to arrive to the Post & Telecom office in rather due time.

Thirty minutes later I met my examiner who immediately made me comfortable by the kind words: "Visitors with traffic problems are always welcome! Take a nice cup of coffee and then, if you brought with you a telegraph hand-key of your own, you can just warm up with this text. In the meantime I will devote my time to some current office issues." He went back to his room located some 10 meters apart from where I was sitting. Although he had his door open, I had a desire he should not be able to hear my very first tentative preparation for the exertion.

Following his advice to use my own key, I installed the Rex Telegraph hand-key kindly asking the nice little jewel to support me when embarking on my warm-up session. To my great relief I noticed that all the nervousness has disappeared and my warm-up exercise went very smoothly. What a thrill!

After completing the text I found my examiner standing just a few meters in front of me. "You do not have to make any more sending. You see, I cheated you. The text I handed over to you actually was the very sending examination." Hereafter the reception exercise followed and needless to say, his CW transmission was truly outstanding and there were no problems for me receiving his text. After the examination dealing with electronic theory I was told the license should be posted as soon as possible by the telegraph authorities.

On my return home I placed the Rex Telegraph hand-key in the car's seat beside me thinking of the thrilling impact it had made on its owner. The thrill never ceases...

SM0PMJ Goran
SKCC #3509



Dits and Dats...

...There are some strange "eaters" in the SKCC, "crawdads, mudpuppies, rattlesnake, bugs!" Eck! Dana, AD5VC, Joe, V31JP, Pete, W1PNS, Doug, W7FDF, Drew, AF2Z and Cliff, W4ZFL/5, you guys just ain't right! Greasy keys and all..yuck!

...Getting an "807" (the 807 is a tube and "old timers refer to a "beer" as an 807, it's bottle shaped) during a "head copying" QSO allows Wayne, KF7QGA a great advantage!

...Pulled this off the reflector so anyone needing to see the construction of any type of wire antenna should check out this site:

[http://www.qsl.net/va3iul/Antenna/Wire%20Antennas%20for%20Ham%20Radio/Wire antennas for ham radio.htm](http://www.qsl.net/va3iul/Antenna/Wire%20Antennas%20for%20Ham%20Radio/Wire%20antennas%20for%20ham%20radio.htm)

...Andy, KB1OIQ found a great video on learning cw from the Navy and he described it as "US Navy meets the Twilight Zone". Check it out at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-petiNdCIY>

...Steve, K2DEP had his J-38 fall apart right in the middle of a QSO...hate it when that happens!

...Ken N8KR has discovered a source of "cheap" bugs on the local "Craig's List".

...Steve ZL2KE fights the 20m pileups with a glass of wine? Good idea Steve!

...Use the SKCC QSL bureau, it's very cost effective!

The CW Fun Event

de Drew AF2Z

The fourth edition of the CW Fun Event was held this past July, run by Dick K2RFP. This is an unusual event compared to typical CW sprints and contests. Not only due to its straight key requirement, but also because it does not conform to the usual contest formula of contacting as many different stations in as many different locations as possible.

The CW Fun Event instead focuses upon the exchange of information. One's score is based upon the amount of information that is correctly exchanged with other stations. The locations stations contacted is irrelevant, as are the bands they may be operating on.

In this case the information consists of five-letter random groups, or "words", which are sent, copied, logged, and submitted for scoring at the end of the event. A single new word is sent with every contact and no two words are alike. A correctly reported word earns points for both the sending and receiving stations.

Since the focus is on accuracy of sending and receiving, and every QSO involves new and unique information, participants are free to contact the same stations repeatedly on the same bands (with slight restriction). The result is that stations of limited capability who can only snag a handful of other stations may compete equally with others having a much wider reach. Differences in power output, propagation conditions and geographic favorability are all greatly equalized. All that counts is accurate copying and sending of the "code" words.

For a little extra fun, CW Fun Event Nr. 4 included a crypto puzzle on the results page. See K2RFP's comments at <http://www.cwfun.org/results/201207.html> which contain all the info you need to solve the puzzle (aided perhaps by your favorite internet search engine).

Programs for decoding the "polyalphabetic cipher" referred to are freely available on the internet. I used the "Polyprog.zip" package. The instructions tell you how to "drag" a key (or in this case, the received code groups) through a cipher text to obtain plain text. I also assumed that all the plain text characters would be in capital letters, along with no punctuation as Dick mentioned.

Using this procedure I managed to find the plaintext fragment "HEXANDXHISXBROTHERXJOE". At this point I merely cheated a little and did a Google search for this phrase plus some of the crib words Dick listed to find the likely source text. Hey, one has to use all the tools at one's disposal when it comes to cracking the secret code!

Cheap Project Boxes!

Hey, don't throw away those old phone patches, swr bridges that don't work nor any other old box! Save those boxes for other shack projects! Below are an old mic-footswitch box, phone patch box, an old plastic multi resistor box and a "dead" tnc box all re-used and made into multi-telegraph key boxes used in my shack. I pulled all the old parts out and just inserted jacks wired in parallel with one lead running to the transceiver. Usually existing holes were used thus reducing the



need to drill any. On the phone patch box I just gutted everything and painted the front to match the rest of the box. The tnc front panel is just a thin piece of tin drilled with jacks mounted and wired. I used both 1/8 plugs and a 1/4 inch plug for ops who visit and come with their keys wired either way.

Other projects could use these boxes such as RTTY interfaces and their needed isolation xformers, multiple mics, multiple headphones, the possibilities are unlimited! So don't throw away those old boxes, recycle them into useful shack projects!

...de K8AQM

The Paddle Used as a Sideswiper

By Alex - PA1FOX

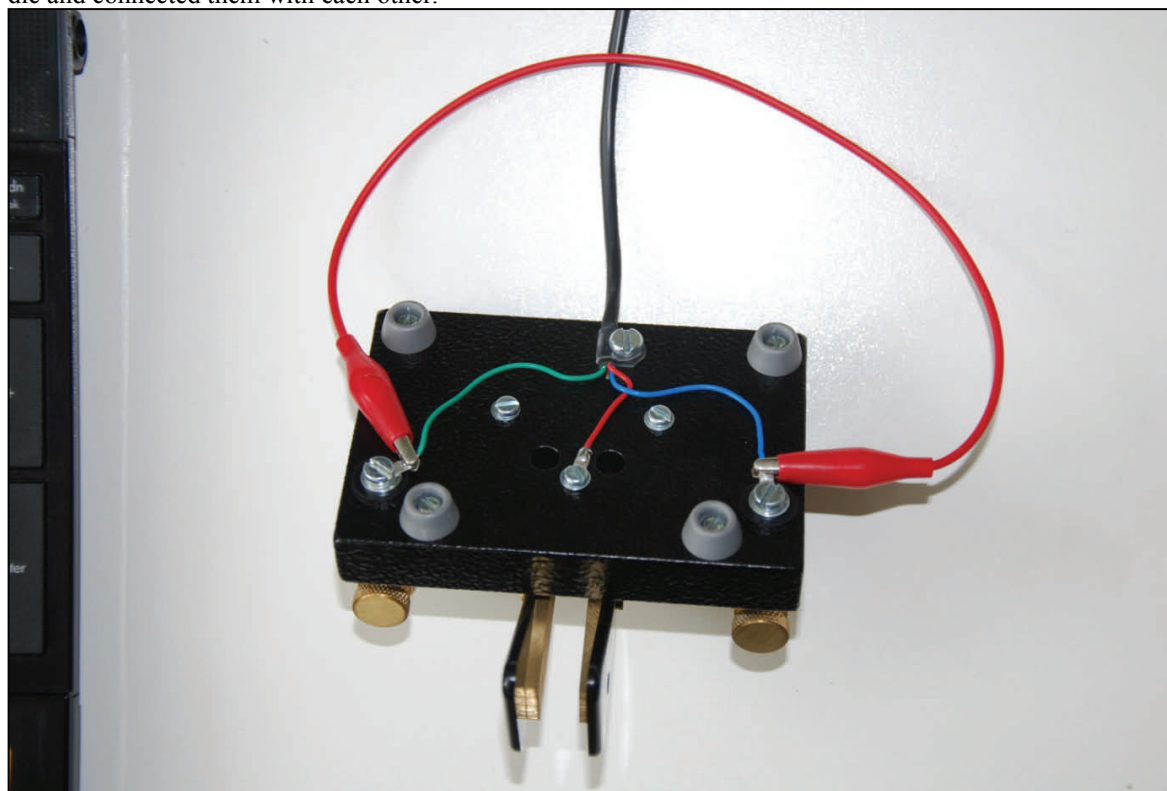
In the last issue of The Rag Chew Alex PA1FOX, mentioned he used his iambic paddle as a sideswiper. What a great way to get your hands on a sideswiper to try! Alex agreed to send an article detailing how he rigged his paddle as a sideswiper. Here is Alex's technique following the pictures of Alex. While camping Alex takes along a rig and enjoys a few QSOs. It could be that Alex is using his paddle in this picture as a sideswiper. Note the great casual shoes wears while engaged in a QSO.



Using a Twin paddle as a Sideswiper

One of the themes of last summer's SKS-E was 'Keys Keys Keys'. Extra points could be achieved by using separate straight keys for QSO's. In April I got a Kent Twin paddle for my birthday from my wife and I wondered if it could be used as a straight key. One could lay the paddle on its side and use one paddle as a pump key, but I thought it was better to wire the paddle in order to use it as a sideswiper (cootie key). My main key is a sideswiper and I like the ease of wrist it gives.

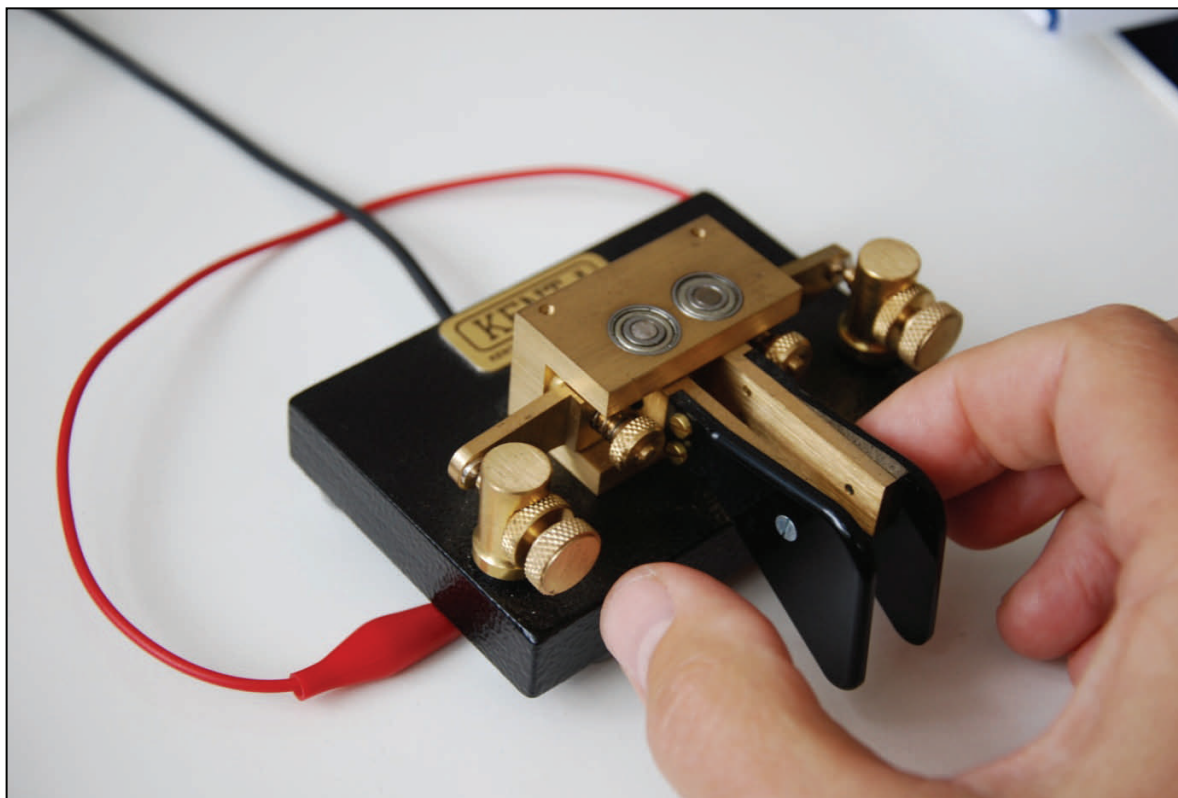
In order to function as a sideswiper you need to wire both contacts of the left and right paddle together. This way it does not matter if you hit the left or right paddle: it makes contact and keys the rig. During my summer holiday in August I necessarily needed to use the paddle since my main sideswiper broke down while in QSO with Bert, F6HKA. Fortunately I always have some repair tools with me, including one of these 'crocodile clamp cables'. I used both crocs to clamp the wire connections under the base of the twin paddle and connected them with each other.



Now both paddles will send the same key signal to your transceiver. Using the paddle this way does not require an electronic keyer device. But if you do have such a device, you might be able to set it to a 'straight key mode'. If so, there will be no need to use the crocs cable since the software inside the keyer will do the same for you. My Picokeyer is able of doing this.

Now, when you are used to working with paddles you will likely touch them very smoothly while sending with a keyer. Any more effort of the fingers is usually unnecessary. But for sideswiper using this can ruin your dot-dash spacing. In order to have a good spacing and send clear sounding code you will need good timing between they keyed elements. Since the keyed elements are made by alternating left and right paddle, it is the alternation time which needs to be set correctly. One can do this by setting large gaps in the paddle but it is more easy to use the fingers to accomplish this. If you don't change the spacing and spring setting of the paddles to use it as a sideswiper you don't need to change it back again and find the original settings for normal mode.

Set your thumb and forefinger to create an arc shape. Now touch the paddle alternating but keep the arc in shape. If the time between dits/dahs is too short and the sending sounds blurred, open up the arc spacing. If it sounds choppy, reduce the arc spacing.



Thumb and forefinger create an arc. Move the arc from left to right.

Now send a series of dots and play with the arc spacing between thumb and forefinger. For a specific speed you will find an arc shape where dits and spacings have equal length. Try to keep this arc shape while sending normal texts

For different paddles different arc shapes are necessary. Single lever paddles can also be used this way. I managed to work quite some stations during my summer holiday and even got used to keying the paddle this way. After some days it felt quite natural.

So whenever your sideswiper breaks down, or you would like to try a different way of sending using your paddle key, try it and have fun. There is a bunch of sideswiper hams which weekly check in a the sideswiper net and any station checking in will find a warm welcome. More information on swiping techniques, video samples and net times and frequencies can be found at:

<http://www.sideswipernet.org>

73,

Alex - PA1FOX SKCC #8265T



DXpedition Key(s)

One of the major hassles about traveling on DXpeditions is packing (and paying for) all the gear needed on trips. Now that I do a lot of straight key work I find the straight key is another item I have to pack. Recently I had the chance to pick up a very fine key/paddle combination made by JA7GHD. Not only is the unit both a straight key and paddle but is just about the same size as the Bencher paddle I normally take. The actions of both the straight key and the paddle are excellent and a pleasure to use. www.mtechnologies/ghd/ for details of GHD...*de K8AQM*

K3Y/8 Multi-multi 2012

For the past three years the Adrian Amateur Radio Club has operated K3Y/8 multi-multi. We are a club in southeastern Michigan and have about 100 members with all the varying interest amateurs have. Several of us are DXers, contesters and cw enthusiasts with lots of experience in Field Day, Special Event operations and setting up multi-multi contesting operations. Multi-multi simply means “multiple transmitters with multiple operators”; it is the same as a Field Day operations where you have several stations all operating at the same time, using the same call and from the same place. The operation used our club call W8TQE and our club SKCC number 2944. We used the name “AARC,” MI and SKCC 2944 for our exchange as K3Y/8.

The operation was from the K8AQM shack where through the years many multi-multi events have taken place (see QRZ.com for station view K8AQM). We had three running station and a fourth just fixed on 6m. Here are some views of the station “before” the fun starts:



Along with making a lot of QSOs, we sure eat well! This year we even had a “deep fried” turkey to go with the chili, pretzels, trailmix, venison sticks, cookies and coffee cake! It’s definitely a “five pound” weekend! That’s N8AMM enjoying the view and W8TTH scarfing down some chili.

So who comes and “plays radio” for the weekend? Lots of SKCC members and others too. Check out the list of SKCC members who came for the two day operation:

K8AQM 1629T K8KIC 2938 N8AMM 3198T KG8CO 6362 K8KS 4444T AC8W 2813
N5ASU 6050 K8TI 6315 KC8ITC 4312 KT8X 7556 N8KR 7559T K8GX 2952

N8KR flew up from Fort Wayne, IN in his private plane...now that is serious! AC8W and N5ASU came from up in the thumb of Michigan to operate. KC8LTL drove from Jackson, MI and KT8X and K8KS from Ann Arbor, MI. Non-SKCC ops who came by to operate and help eat were: KC8I, W8TTH, KB8ECG, KD8KQR, K8LAR and non ham Roger (who helps with antenna work).

When the “game is afoot” here’s what the action looks like; we try to have an operator and a logger at each station. Logging with Dick’s (K2RFP) Sprint Logger makes it easy.

KD8KQR standing, K8KIC
and K8TI operating . K8AQM
and N5ASU in the background

K8KIC and KC8LTL operating,
K8GX “up” with K8LAR and
KC8ITC and N8AMM

KG8CO standing, K8KIC,
N5ASU and AC8W opera-
ting but looking “puzzled”!





K8KS, K8GX as ops with AC8W, KT8X and non-ham friend Roger "scarfing" food!



N8KR pounding brass
Ken flew up from Ft. Wayne



KC8ITC and K8LAR op
KC8LTL, K8GX

It was a great weekend and we made 353 K3Y/8 QSOs with eight 6m cw Qs! It's the gathering of good friends that make this so much fun and making QSOs comes second to the friendships, laughs and good times. We make it an annual event and look forward to "next year".



Here are some additional photos of the operation: always more calories than QSOs!

<u>Station #1</u>	<u>Station #2</u>	<u>Station #3</u>	<u>Station #4</u>
FT-1000MP	K2/100	K2/100	TS-570
Alpha 374A amp	Alpha 374A amp	Alpha 374 amp	100 watts
Log Periodic @100 ft	2L 5 band Quad @70 ft	TH-6DX @70ft	6m 3L
160m inverted L	40/30m dipole@30 ft	80m dipole @65 ft	J-38
80m shunt fed tower	80m dipole	2L 40 yagi @55ft	
J-38 es TAC Hole-in-the-wall	J-38 es TAC Hole-in-the-wall	J-38 es TAC Hole-in-the-wall	

By using ICE bandpass filters we have no "intermod" between stations. Each station has a "boat-anchor" station that can be switched inline rather than the more modern equipment but these were not used during this event.

The idea behind the multi-multi operation is to have fun. Why not get together with a few friends somewhere and give multi-multi a try? The logging is easy, we just merge the adif files from each computer and it's no problem for the area coordinator to submit the log. Two stations, three stations or more, it doesn't matter. The SKCC goal is to promote cw with "non-electronic manipulators" (love that phrase from Bernard, F5DE) but the purpose of amateur radio beyond emergency communications is to have fun and enjoy one's self. The idea of a multi-multi is just another way of having fun while improving skills with cw and station building. We at W8TQE hope to hear more multi-multi stations on the air and to hear about station setups and ideas that we can use to improve our operations. Lets hear more stations (especially club stations) operating during the K3Y celebration this year. Be sure to send your story and pictures to "The Rag Chew" for publication.

73,

The W8TQE gang SKCC #2944.....

"Amateur radio is a contact sport. Get on the air and make a contact!.....de K0LFV"