

'Rag Chew'



The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club

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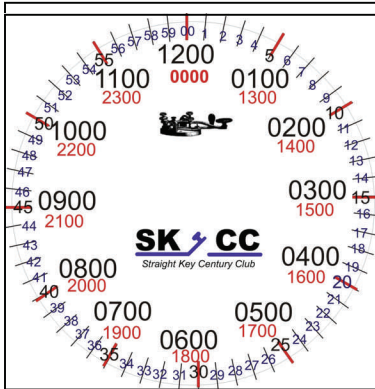
Ur RST...444

By K5ZOL 3945T

Hand sent code was the original form of electrically sent communication (telegraph lines) before it was wireless with spark-gap. Though wireless communication has followed technology, hand sent cw has the longest history as a means to get the message through when signals are weak.

Most of us in SKCC started our ham radio careers using cw. For me, it has been fifty-two years of education in communications. My first rig was a homebrew 6L6, one 40 meter crystal and a not very long wire antenna. The receiver was a Heathkit AR-3. My first RST was 444 ! Fortunately, working conditions have steadily improved since then.

After a brief twenty-five year hiatus to build a business and raise a family, I returned to amateur radio, but it didn't seem to have the thrill and mystique as I remembered, UNTIL I was introduced to SKCC. Since I joined in 2009, ham radio has been what I wanted it to be: lots of friends across the world using the original form of electrical communication, hand generated code.



SKCC Clockface

Here is a jpeg of a clock face that could be mounted on an existing shack clock. How cool would it be to have a n SKCC clock in the shack! Thanks to Joe V31JP 3171T for sending this jpeg along.

Size to fit your clock could be adjusted with a copy machine enlarging or shrinking as needed. Joe can't recall where he got the jpeg but I bet someone can tell us...please.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has used this jpeg and mounted it on an existing clock.

Forever Airmail Stamps

If you mail DX stations for QSLs this may save you some money. Thanks to Rich K8UV 2250T, for sending this along:

The *Global Forever®* stamps are being issued in self-adhesive sheets of 20 at the \$1.10 rate, or \$22.00 per sheet. Goes on sale 1/28/2013 Good for 1 oz. of international mail or 2 oz. to Canada.

Operating Portable With Doug N3PDT 6168T

I am a fairly new amateur operator. My ticket will be three years old in December, 2012, so almost everything in ham radio is new and exciting to me. I've been almost exclusively CW for about two and a half years and have enjoyed QRP for about 2 years. Over the last year or so, I've started operating portable. To this point, I've not gone to any exotic, far flung, or remote locations. For the most part I operate in parks, or the backyard, but I've learned a lot and had an incredible amount of fun doing it. I'd like to relate three of my favorite forays from the last year and a little about what I've learned in the process.



My work sometimes involves travel, and my first favorite location was made possible because of that. I spend about a week of work each spring in St. Pete Beach, Florida. We work, and stay, in the historic Don Cesar Hotel right on the beach of the Gulf of Mexico. It's a beautiful spot, but it *is* work, and I don't get out much during the day to enjoy it. However this last trip I packed my portable kit with me. The entire station fits in a laptop case that I carry on to the plane. So far I've never had a lick of trouble going through security. They always want to give the gel cell a good going over, but other than that, they don't bat so much as an eyelash at all the wires and electronic gadgetry in the case.

The hotel has a couple of nice outdoor rooftop terraces about 7 stories above the beach, and I was lucky enough that they weren't in use while I was there. The view is gorgeous and there are large canopies erected on the terraces for shade. Getting a wire up at any height here is problematic, but with a little ingenuity, I was able to get the feedpoint of the NorCal Doublet up about 10ft. First contact was at 20:35z and it was KW7D Don SKCC 7603 that came back to my CQ on 17m. Next DL4HG answered me on 20m, then I worked a couple more stations before time to head off for dinner.

That evening I operated a couple hours and first call got a a very strong station near Chicago, AA9KH Jay SKCC 219C, and we chewed the rag for a good 30 minutes or more. After that I had a



nice chat with KB5JRC Tony SKCC 7906, in AR, and another one in CO. These were all 20m contacts. I've made some plans to get that feedpoint up another 10ft for next year, and I expect even better results.

In mid September of this year, a local hambuddy, Don W0DEW, SKCC 2446, convinced me to try a new to me location, the Ensor Park and Museum grounds near Olathe, Kansas. This is about 25 minutes from me and a peaceful old farmstead with lots of mature trees to hang wire in – and that was the plan until I met W0HXS, Larry Woodworth, the curator of the museum and

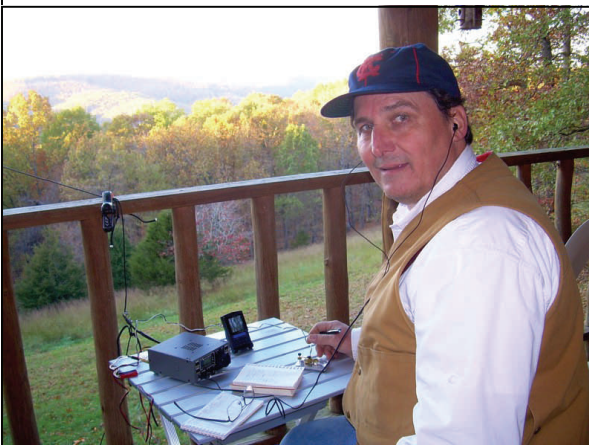
another CW and QRP aficionado. The Ensor museum was the farm home of Marshall Ensor and his sister Loretta, early radio pioneers in our area. Their calls were 9BSP and 9UA respectively, later W9BSP and W9UA, and even later W0BSP and W0UA. They operated here from the 'teens into the 1970s. Mr. Ensor taught code and theory “over the air” for a little over 10 years leading up to WWII. His lessons were responsible for thousands of amateurs getting their licenses. The farm site has been restored and preserved, including Mr. Ensor's shack off the kitchen of the farm house. His 1KW home brew rig has been lovingly restored back to operating condition and is fired up semi-regularly. His twin 80ft modified windmill towers still stand, and one still supports antennas. Mr Ensor originally had a 160m end-fed cage zep strung between them. It must have been a magnificent sight. Today the south tower supports the feedpoint of a 160m 600 ohm ladder line fed dipole at about 70' and one corner of a 570ft loop. Well, after taking the tour and talking to Larry a bit, I was invited to hook my QRP rig to the big dipole rather than string a wire up in the trees. Wow! Talk about fun. Here I was sitting on the front porch of a place laden with amateur radio history, hooked into the biggest antenna I've ever used and having a ball. You can see the silly grin, which never left my face, in the photo. I've been back a few times since, and each operating session has been an unmitigated success. Working QRP DX on 17m with just halfway decent propagation is almost like shooting fish in a barrel on that wire. I learned to be careful about telling DX stations I was QRP. I'm not that fast. I top out about 18wpm for a real conversation, and once I mentioned I was QRP, many DX stations would start asking questions about my station at 28wpm. Fun, but a little hard to keep up.



One of the nice things about operating portable for is the “getting back to the basics” aspect – no computer, no QRZ.com, no spotting, and no logging software. If I blow a call, I blow it – no way to figure it out on site. Another very neat facet of this minimalist operation, is the little surprises I get once I'm home and copy the log book into my computer. Last time I was at the Ensor, I worked a number of interesting DX stations, had a nice chat with a guy in Scotland, and logged what I was pretty sure was a Russian, or maybe Ukranian station. Turns out the “Russian”, RI1FJ, was actually Franz Josef Land, one of the furthest north pieces of land on the globe, and the nice guy in Scotland was GM4KKG, Isle of Lewis, the largest island of the Outer Hebrides! Two pretty neat grabs for QRP, if I do say so myself.

My latest portable operation held no DX surprises, but was still one of my most enjoyable to date, if only because I'm getting this down a little better each trip out. Unbeknownst to me, my wife timed me setting up. It took less than 20 minutes to get a wire 50ft up a tree and my station on the air from the porch of a vacation cabin in the Arkansas Ozarks. A little side note about my method for getting wire in trees; After fooling around with slingshots, fishing reels, monofilament, fishing weights, etc., I took a page out of the tree climbing pros' book, and picked up some arborist's 2.2mm throwline and a quality 10oz sandbag weight with a D-ring on one end. I can get a 50' to 60' foot throw and the line just slithers through the tree branches like it's nothing. No tangles, no snags, and no trees decorated with fishing line and little lead weights when I'm finished. Very satisfying. I had three relaxed afternoons and evenings working both coasts, a little European DX, and logging 10

Three relaxed afternoons and evenings working both coasts, a little European DX, and logging 10 SKCC members in the process. I filled three pages in the log book, while Mrs. N3DPT relaxed on the porch swing next to me (and snapped the photo). The view was gorgeous, the weather pleasant,



and the conditions favorable. Mixed in with some sight seeing, a little nice little hike in the woods, and some good down-home cooking from the cafe in town, we both had a great vacation.

So, what have I learned? First off, with a little work and thought beforehand, and a little ingenuity on site, portable QRP is not much of a disadvantage. QSOs will be made. Flexibility is important. If the first tree didn't work out quite like I thought, I was ready to try another one, try a different length of wire, or or maybe change the direction and number of counterpoise. Fairly minor, and easy to make, changes resulted in significant improvements in ability to work other stations

from my Arkansas position. A good antenna makes a world of difference (pun intended). My Ensor Museum experiences really drove that point home. But, even a less than ideal antenna is better than no antenna at all, as illustrated by the hotel-top operation. Most of all, I've learned that it's just plain fun to get outside and operate!

73/72 Doug N3PDT SKCC #6861T

Amazing! de K8TEZ 8426T



Larry K8TEZ, not only enjoys cw and a good rag chew, he enjoys antiques and restoration of antiques. Check out the Atwater Kent radio Larry has restored in the lower photo. The object on the right is the speaker for this radio, what a beauty! The radio requires a B+ supply and you can see the Burgess batteries behind the unit.

Another of Larry's acquisitions is the telegraph sounder unit pictured to the left. After some searching on the internet it was discovered this is a lineman's pocket test unit. One would climb the pole and "tap" into the lines to test and send messages. It was also mentioned these units were used during the American Civil War by spies and such to send false information. The lower picture is of the unit found on the internet with the history information about these units.



I'm sure with a bit of "rewiring" Larry could use this key for SKCC QSOs! What neat unit!



WB5JWI Les 5013T on Keys

Gary,

Well, you start with one and you have that a while Then you get a second and then learn that they are like rabbits, they just seem to keep multiplying when you're not looking! I am reorganizing the shack and I've just counted 17 keys: who knew? Of the 17, one is a bug I got back when I got my Conditional in Germany, one is a bug I got to use on the Battleship Texas for Museum ship day (J-36 by Lionel) one is a Blue racer because I always wanted one, one is an Anniversary, two are non-iambic keys for keyers, one is an iambic keyer and the rest are straight keys. One of those is a KOB (Key On Board I got to get involved with landline Morse (which I haven't done yet); another is the SKCC key (I love a pump), one is a Kent straight key (similar to what was used on the Titanic) and various flavors of J-38, J-37, Nye key, etc. Oh I do have a Junker that is extremely pleasant to use. I've sold/given away a Navy Flameproof, Nye, and two bugs to folks who would use them more than I.

The right key is a connection to our past. I got the same key I had as a Novice to go with my 'new' Novice station (HT-40/SX-140). I got the Navy version of the J-38 and the Lionel J-36 to go with a grand old lady of the battle fleet. The Junker and the Mark III are also WW2 keys and what history there may be is only in the imagination. The Kent is a replica of the key that sent the very first radio distress call; how cool is that? The SKCC is simply the finest key I think I've ever used.

The bugs are there because as a boy scout back in the 50's EVERY photo of EVERY ham shack I EVER saw had a bug on the table. More so than the radio and microphone, the bug was emblematic of ham radio. If your a western history buff like I am, that leaves the entire telegraph story from which to choose keys. They're all around and used in some type of rotation but these things are a disease. It is probably already too late for you, you're infected now! If anyone comes up with a cure, make sure we get him before he tells anyone! It's nuts but then it is a wonderful insanity. It is an incurable affliction, thank God.

(The above is the best explanation I ever heard on why we collect so many keys, great job Les!..ed)

SKCC on a New Band

Since April 5, 2012 the 60M band has been open to CW mode operation. 100W ERP (half-wave dipole equivalent). CW carrier must be on the specified center of channel frequency. I have been active since the first day on 60M CW. I noted many of the first QSOs I had there were with SKCC members, so I started exchanging SKCC numbers with them. I have kept track and now (November 2012) have logged over 60 SKCC members worked on 60M. Many of my QSOs resulted from my posting on the K3UK sked pages.

It was fairly easy to convert my Kenwood TS440 by removing one SM jumper "zero ohm resistor" but required a lot of screws being removed to get at the front panel and replacing them, about 45 minutes work. I used a coax fed 160M dipole and the internal tuner of my TS440 at first but when the WX warmed up I put up a dedicated dipole for 60M and had much better results.. 60M suffers from lightning QRN in the summer months but not as badly as 160 and 80, many QSOs were conducted with the static crashes going on but worth the effort. Night time propagation is as good or better than 80M and recently I was able to work Hawaii. Daytime is like 40M and I have often worked over 400 miles at mid day..

I invite all SKCC members to give 60M a try. If your rig does not have the capability, check with the manufacturer. I understand many newer rigs have factory upgrades involving free software available to add 60M..

See you on 60M CW ! **73...John K8JD 1395T**

Pneumatic Line Thrower for Raising Wire Antennas at NW2K



Most of my trees are 60-100 feet tall and I wanted to be able to easily throw lines over limbs and treetops. My line thrower (LT) is a simple pneumatic device, which consists of an air storage tank, a ball valve, a delivery tube and a tethered weight. To charge and ready the LT, the tank is filled with air at a suitable pressure and the weight (with line attached) is placed down the delivery tube. To launch the weight with its lightweight line over a limb, the tube is aimed and the valve is opened quickly. The weight travels up and over in a mostly predictable manner. The lightweight throw line is untied from the weight and is then used to haul a heavier line up and over the tree.

I decided on a volume of 100 cu. in. for the air storage tank and 40 cu. in. of delivery tube volume. At pressures below 40 PSI, I figured I should be able to launch a five-ounce weight, with a light rope, over my trees. A portable handpowered bicycle tire pump with pressure gauge can provide for the air.

My LT was constructed using a handful of PVC fittings, a PVC ball valve, three lengths of PVC pipe, a tire valve and a metal screw eye. Although components I used were rated for use under pressure in excess of 40 PSI, the manufacturer states that these components are not approved for use with compressed gases. I used a length of 2" pipe for the tank and a length of 1.5" pipe for the delivery tube. My weight is constructed from a short piece of 1" pipe, two 1" end caps, with a metal screw eye secured in one end to receive the lightweight line. I used a lathe to machine the weight so that it fit into the delivery tube with some clearance. I guess I could have used sandpaper or a Dremel tool instead, but the lathe was faster.

The tank is terminated on one end with a 2" slip cap. The tank has a 2" slip-to-1.5" threaded (male) reducer on the end that receives the 1.5" PVC ball valve (female threads, on both sides). A hole for the tire valve stem is drilled and the valve stem is installed into the tank. The delivery tube has a 1.5" slip-to-1.5" threaded coupler to mate with the ball valve. I used teflon tape on the threads on the tank side to help keep it air tight. The slip fittings and pipe were assembled with fresh PVC primer and cement.

After letting the LT sit for a day to cure, I put on safety gear and tested it at 10 PSI for leaks and none were found. It was time to collect a few data points. For the lightweight rope, I chose nylon mason's line, although heavy monofilament fishing line might also be a good choice. For the tests, I aimed the tube at about ten degrees from vertical. Charging to 20 PSI, the weight reached a height of about 50 feet. At 25 PSI, 75 feet was achieved and at 30 PSI, a height of 100 feet was obtained. The mason's line was spread out on the ground on a tarp to help minimize the chance for a tangle with the antenna launcher.

The LT ended up costing \$30. While potentially dangerous and not approved by the PVC manufacturers, I find my LT to have many uses here around the farm....*de Dean NW2K*

Tracking SKCC Members

Here is a web application using the reverse beacons that finds club members (SKCC and others) that are on the air. Select the club you want and it finds the members and their numbers!

[Http://ham.jit.su/](http://ham.jit.su/)

LW3EX, Walt's Sideswiper!

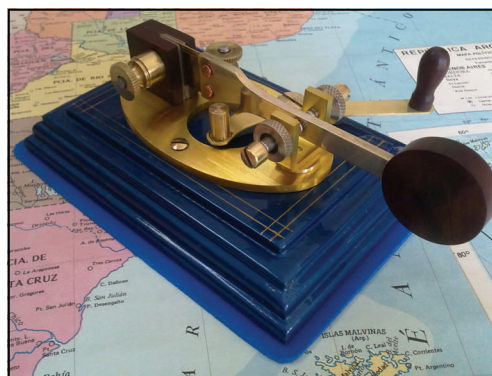
As I could never find a real Bunnell sideswiper to buy I focus on making a replica of the scarce Model G, so basing on the original patent drawings and sizes of the base and lever of an original Model W key I made it (TU to my friends F5LAW & PA3CLQ for helping me with this info) as a personal touch I added the "base hole style" which I only saw in old Bunnell advertisements.

All parts were handcrafted with hand tools (even some screws) they are mainly bronze or brass, for the main spring I used Brass sheet and two Copper-Phosphor alloy springs (in order to prevent or reduce lever rebound), and Silver for the contacts. For the rear insulating block, knob and paddle, Quebracho a very hard wood was used. The



trim base is made with a piece of steel sheet with several coats of PUR coating applied.

After all, it was not too bad and it works pretty well, although a bit more noisy than a "blade style" DSK.



QST: For all who are interested in DSK (aka Sideswipers or Cooties) PSE visit SideSwiperNet.org website.

BCNU Walt.- LW3EX SKCC 3804T

QRP DXCC de N4EES

No doubt QRP is a very popular mode for many. Working WAS can be accomplished fairly quickly during many of the major contests but QRP DXCC is another matter! N4EES Jim, SKCC 1434T has just finished his QRP DXCC. Oman A45XR was his last needed country for number 100. From Jim's Tennessee QTH and shack shown in the photo, it took Jim eight months to achieve QRP DXCC (*took me 5 years!...ed*). Jim says, "QRP has taught me a great deal about working pileups, especially patience and perseverance; and sometimes, when to cut your losses and move on."

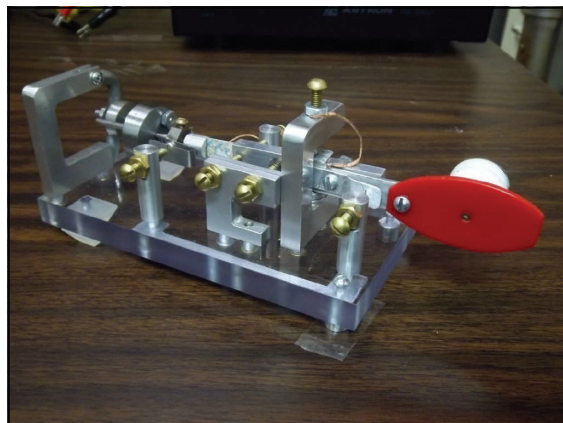
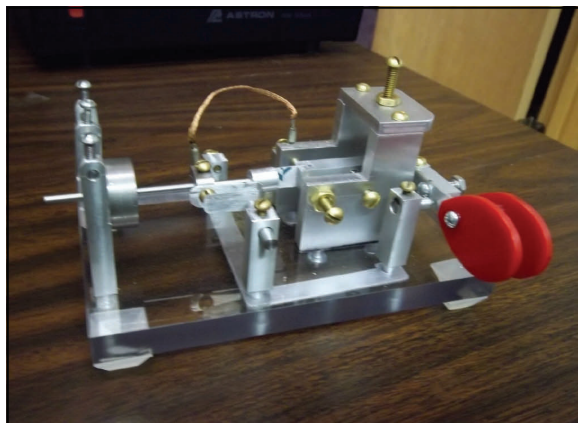


You can see Jim's station is very well equipped with the most important elements for working DX...good receivers! The theory is if you can't hear them, you can't work them and that goes for QRO or QRP stations. Good job Jim, now on to Five Band WAC and Five Band DXCC! Well done Jim!

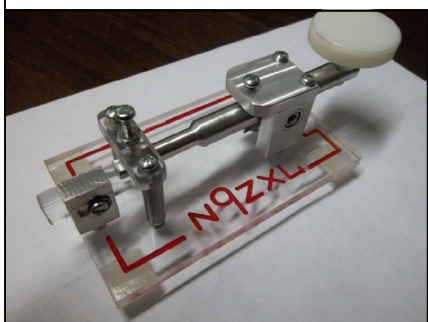
“Amateur” Key Builders? Ha! I Don’t Think So!

As you know there are many builders of keys in our club, from “Erector Set” and junk parts to very sophisticated machined jewels. I received a note and photos from Dave N9ZXL, who was describing his work to AC2C Ron, during an on the air QSO.

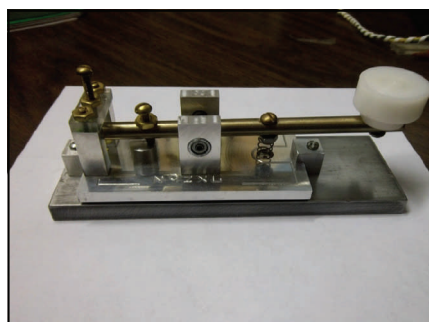
Dave claims this to be just a hobby and something he does for fun when the bands are “bad”. He has three lathes, two mills and one CNC machine (*and this is just a hobby?...ed*). He does claim to make a lot of chips but from the wonderful pictures shown here of his work, his finished projects are great! He has made four bugs so far and one of them is a vertical bug which according to Dave, “needs some ‘good lookingness’ to it”. He has also made two mini paddles; one single lever and one two lever.



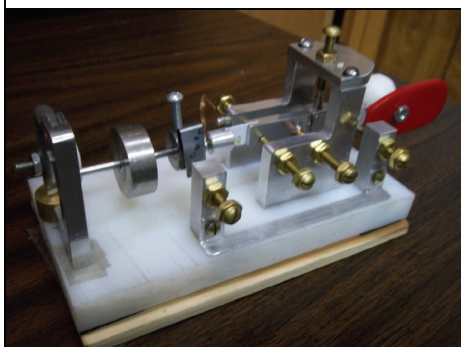
Dave says, “I get the idea in my head and go from there...design as I go. They always seem to work...ha!” Dave also makes parts:



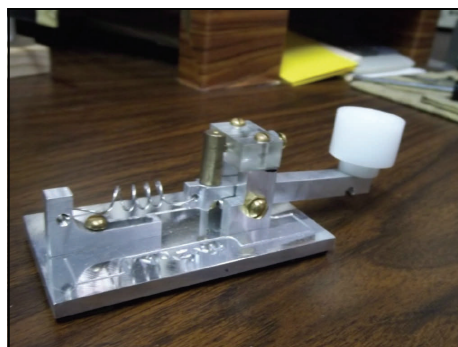
“FOR MY BUGS AND MY VIBROPLEX BUG, I MADE SLIDING WEIGHTS THAT YOU DO NOT HAVE TO LOCK IN PLACE WITH A SCREW. IT STAYS WHERE YOU PUT IT ON THE SHAFT AND YOU CAN SLIDE IT QUICKLY BACK AND FORTH TO WHAT EVER SPEED YOU WANT TO USE... I MADE ONE FOR



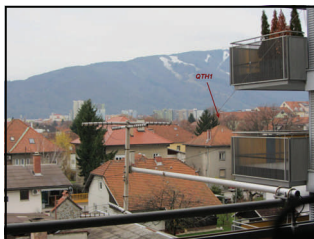
MY FRIEND W5NCN IN OKLA AND HE LOVES IT AND WANTS ONE FOR HIS VIBROPLEX. “



Dave is just one of the many craftsmen we have in SKCCC, well done Dave!



Meet S52CC, Vince 5011T



That's Vince S52CC on the right with S57WJ, Gabor 7979T. Vince's neat station is shown in the picture and his most interesting antenna and operating environment is shown in the remaining pictures. Vince lives in an apartment complex in the city of Maribor and you can see from the pictures a truly urban environment. No antennas were allowed on the roof so Vince had to do some serious thing. The solution; to order a TAK antenna from Steve WA2TAK after reading the Hamuniverse review (found on the web).

According to Vince, "I simply followed the instructions, played a little with the cable length and tuning points on the spirals (*This antenna is shown mounted out and away from Vince's balcony...ed*). After a while I decided to leave it in vertical position as most of the time the results with DX stations were better."

The antenna must work very well as Vince has worked 158 countries and confirmed 138! A great lesson on using low profile and stealth antennas can be learned from Vince's operation. For all of the SKCC members living in antenna restricted situation Vince's solution may work for you too. Steve Nichols', G0KYA has published a very good book on stealth antennas well worth the read. The ARRL also has information on stealth antennas that may be of value for restricted antenna locations.

Adding more to Vince's glory, he has worked 188 members of SKCC in 35 states and 45 countries on all continents (*again with his TAK antenna!*).

Modestly Vince attributes much of his success to conditions but it takes a very good operator to make these achievements. Vince says his favorite key is the Navy Flameproof and is shown here at the bottom of the page.

I had to include Vince's note on his first TAK-to TAK QSO across the Atlantic with none other than Randy KB8QQJ! Check out the photo below Quite a unique contact, Randy at 5 watts and Vince with 100 watts. Thanks to Randy for inviting Vince to join SKCC and thanks to Vince for this great article.

One final note, Vince is also an author and writes about his travels in the merchant marine service.

First Transatlantic TAK-tenna to TAK-tenna QSO

S52CC LOG EXCERPT

Date	Time	Station worked	Band MHz	Mode	Report Sent	Report Rcvd	Remarks
10.10.2008	04:57	N3A/N	7	CW	569	559	Randy, NC (special FISTS call)
	04:58	KB4QQJ	7	CW	569	559	Randy (5 W TAK-tenna 40)

Address: Vencna M. Grgic
Kotljarska ul. 21
2000 Maribor
Slovenia

Equipment: Yaesu FT-450
100 Watts output

Antenna: TAK-tenna 40 vertical
balcony mounted at 11 m (36 ft)

KB4QQJ LOG EXCERPT

Date	Time	Station worked	Band MHz	Mode	Report Sent	Report Rcvd	Remarks
10.10.2008	04:58	S52CC	7.060	CW	559	569	Vince in Slovenia (TAK-tenna 40 Vertical)

Address: Randy Drake
1308 Greenwood Dr.
Burlington, N.C.
U.S.A.

Equipment: Icom IC-703
5 Watts output
50' Wire

Antenna: TAK-tenna 40 horizontal
at 25 ft (7.6 m)



AFTER THIS QSO Randy INVITED ME TO JOIN SKCC.

Finding Antique Radio Tranceivers and PlayING With Them! By Ken, N8KR 7559T

Now that I have your attention, perhaps I can keep it for a while! Over the course of the past 6 months, I have owned 14 different HF radios (12 of them were transceivers) in my quest to find and repurpose radio gear currently collecting dust. Now that I'm retired and have nothing better to do, I can write about my adventures. In this issue I want to feature my very first ham radio: the Tempo One.

When I was first licensed back in 1978, transceivers were the rage in ham radio. One radio that could send and receive without fixed crystals and separate units. I remember finding a silver faced Tempo One for \$350. I was ready to hit the novice bands!

The Tempo One was marketed by Henry Radio. (Remember their big amps?) Actually, the Tempo One was manufactured by Yaesu and sold in Europe as the FT-200. There were no transistors in the Tempo so tubes ruled. Actually, there are 17 tubes in the Tempo and I recall using the radio case as a coffee warmer for those long cw ragchews I had as a novice. There was a separate power supply/speaker that provided the 600 volts to the 6JS6C's and other voltages to the other components. Naturally, you had to tune these radios for each band and learning the art of "dipping the plate" soon became second nature. Of course you dare not forget to calibrate the tuning dial after changing bands. (I wonder how many newbies can read an old analog dial?) Shortly after moving to Adrian in 1981, I sold my Tempo and welcomed the new digital Yaesu FT-101ZD.

Early in October I found a black-faced Tempo One in a storage barn in Indianapolis. The owner lost interest in the radio in the late 70's and let it sit and collect dirt and dust for nearly 35 years. It looked terrible and I remember the look my wife gave me when I was about to put it in our car. It was a retirement project. Perhaps I could make a few bucks on this old radio and bring it back to life? Working on a Tempo One is pretty easy. You have tubes and you have a chassis where every component and value is labeled. Check this out:



To top it off, the manual has a simple to understand schematic and block diagram. I remember working on my old Tempo. Everything made sense and alignments and final neutralizations and setting biases had simple directions. It was hard to mess up!

Removing the radio from its case and the power supply from its case, I took the cases, ran them in the dishwasher and got the paint brush and the vacuum out and began removing the dust and dirt from the components. Washing tubes and a little tuner spray and I was ready to plug it in . . . but not yet. Time to slowly bring those filter caps in the power supply back to life. Over the course of the next three days I had the power supply plugged in (along with the radio) to a variac and starting with 50 volts I worked my way to 110. By the time I got to the third day, the radio had life. I added an antenna and it received. . . and the audio: so wonderful and rich. It was a familiar sound. The SSB audio was rich and full. It was much better than any of my fancy solid state rigs. It wasn't long and the band switch had visited all of the ham bands. Time to tune it up. . . and it did, just as easy as I had remembered, and putting out a cool 175 watts!

Well, the case is back on the radio. It looks new. (Did I mention that under all of the dirt was the original plastic film covering the front face of the radio - it was still in place!) I've made many ssb q's with it and today, I ran SKCC WES cw with the J-38. The Tempo has NO cw filter so your ears become the filtering agent. There isn't much demand for the old Tempo One. I had it on my flea market table at Fort Wayne. I think I had a couple of "chuckles" as people remembered this old, drifting, cw-filterless rig. But I've decided it's going to have a permanent home at N8KR. Here she is:

73,
Ken N8KR SKCC 7559T

