

'Rag Chew'

The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club



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Volume 2 Issue 4

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Dayton 2013 and SKCC!

In a word Dayton was, "GREAT!" Friday saw fog as you can see but it quickly burned off. Scott N3JJT did an excellent job running the SKCC booth, be sure to read Scott's article beginning on page 7...what a hoot!



If you were looking for "fleas" out in the market Ken N8KR (7559T) was there with plenty of goodies for sale along with several other SKCCers selling goodies. That's Scott N3JJT(255T) and Curt WA2JSG (3018T) manning the booth. Scott arranged for the SKCC group picture and quite a few members were able to make the photo op.



Thanks to Cliff KU4GW for the shot of Curt WA2JSG(3018T), Karen W4KRN(4495T) and himself (652) out at Karen's flea market space where she was selling Czech keys (see article page 8).

Finally, that's me(K8AQM) on the left and Ken N8KR manning the booth; Scott N3JJT says he won't let



us work together again...read his article beginning on page 7 as to why! Darn!

Come join us next year and join the fun!

A Romantic QSO

Some 40 years ago, and not for his favor, Radio Officer Cadet Ehud Levin (Now 4X1EL), was assigned to the ship M/V MANDARINCORE 4XQJ, to pass a practice competency period, under my supervision. In those days, candidates that passed the examinations for Maritime Mobile Radio Officers proficiency, had to attend, at least 6 months or more, of actual experience at sea, under supervision of a competent Radio Officer, until completing a list of tasks, most frequently encountered, to run the communications and Navigational aids, operative needs, of a ship engaged in international voyages. This, up to satisfying the tutor, so to issuing a printed recommendation approving the cadet ability and seaworthiness, to serve as a single Radio Officer on ships engaged in off shore and international voyages.



Ehud joined the M/V Mandarinecore on a period when it was calling numerous South American ports. The Coast Stations related to those ports, where not all yet equipped with SSB or a stable CW frequency, also the published time tables for the different frequencies were not meticulously observed; furthermore the operators had very poor English and naturally, on A.M., Calls in Spanish were preferred. With the help of my mother language Italian, and accumulated, two years experience of visiting Latin America ports, I learned to speak, read and write Spanish. Not only these, I also gained an insight that to establish a contact with those stations operators; you have to apply skills from the psychology and anthropologic fields.

It was almost natural, that on a ship that calls same ports few times, there is an increase in number of employees from its population, and in this case Spanish speaking crewmembers. The quality of their language and the subjects were not necessarily refined. The adjectives PUTA (Prostitute) and MARICON (Gay) were frequently heard, like it were a tool of the art, for a qualitative high level language, to make a fluent dialog and improve atmosphere on board. Cadet Ehud, despite not knowing Spanish, was exposed to those adjectives enough times to perceive, even its literary value, and its contribution to smoothen a dialog.

It so happened that the Mandarincore was leaving the port of Montevideo, and for a reason, that I do not recall now, I was asked to make a radiotelephone call to Montevideo, otherwise I would preferred a CW QSO. The best available coast station for the case was PUNTA CARRETA RADIO using AM on 2.182 mHz. It came to my mind, that it will be a good chance to train the Cadet the artifice of establishing an endemic version of the Maritime Mobile "process verbal". I called Ehud on duty and wrote him the procedure he has to follow till he will get a reply. It went like this:-

*PUNTA CARRETA RADIO (THREE TIMES) AQUÍ MANDARINCORE (THREE TIMES)
AVER SI ME COPIA AL ELANTE CAMBIO....*

Ehud was quite tensed toward the new experience and instead of calling *PUNTA CARRETA*; he openly and loudly called *PUTA CARRETA PUTA CARRETA...*

The operator at the coast station, with the local typical QRN on AM IF, missed the name of the ship and instead of MANDARINCORE was replying MARICON... MARICON... Montevideo born, 2nd Mate of the ship, was coming upstairs crossing the open door of the Radio Room, heard his mother language dialog flourishing from the radio and I saw him frozen in place shocked for few seconds, but after short cognitive procession, of the data collected, he start a wild laughing that went on for hours, and at short intervals each time he met us till the end of the voyage....

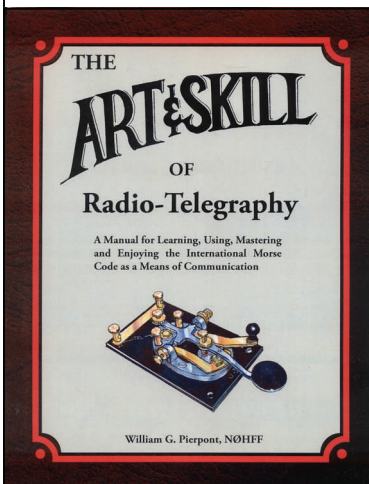
...de 4X1FC Fabio Giarri



FCC Monitors SKCC CW!

Here's a picture of the FCC monitoring station reportedly listening in on SKCC's favored frequencies. It is believed they are checking for proper dits and dahs as sent with manually operated sending devices.

Lets hope none of the membership should receive a visit from "this" FCC official regarding the quality of their cw sending! Keep those spaces and length of characters correct!



An Excellent Reference Book

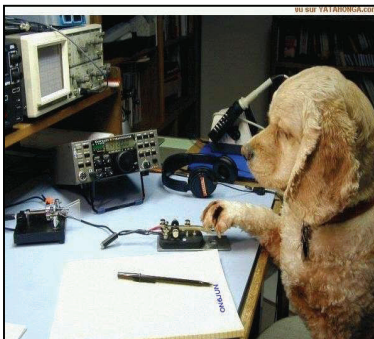
Here is a book worth reading. Offered by the *K9YA Telegraph* staff and Published by the Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club, K9YA, it can be purchased at; <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/K9YA> . Authored by William Pierpont, N0HFF (SK).

"The Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy guides readers through all facets, technical and psychological, of first learning the International Morse code and then using time-proven techniques to improve operator speed and accuracy.

Pierpont discusses the Koch, Candler and Farnsworth techniques for acquiring the code. He also offers an overview of many of the mechanical learning devices used through the years to achieve proficiency. Telegraph keys and their proper use are described in detail.

Other chapters cover amateur licensing and military training, banana boat and other "swings," speed contests, abbreviations, the Phillips code and Marshall Ensor's, W9BSP, on-the-air code and theory course.

To avoid pitfalls on the path to code a chapter on methods not recommended is included. For those wishing to broaden their code knowledge, one chapter is devoted to jump-start learning the American Morse (landline) code using what they already know."



Dog-gone Hard to Copy!

Rich K8UV, sent along this picture and never made it clear if this was a picture of his favorite pet stealing time at Rich's shack and "bogarting" his call (maybe using his own...K9DOG?) as well. Could it be Rich's cw has gone to the dogs or maybe he's just plain dog-gone hard to copy? Rich, you have to enlighten us! Are you saying cw has gone to the dogs and you're switching to SSB....say it ain't so Rich!

Field Day, N6WBL Style!



"Took the wife with me for a picnic dinner and a couple hours of operating from one of my favorite spots in the Sierra on Saturday, Big Hill Lookout at 6100 feet. My Hi-mound straight key was down by the stick shift. Made 35 contacts including the states, Hawaii, and a few Canadians before take down and heading back down into the warm Sacramento Valley. Temps were in the 70's when we arrived and fell with the sun for perfect operating conditions. Heard one ham in Nebraska say it got to 104F with over 90% humidity which made me feel a little guilty for my pleasant spot, :)."

73, Jason - N6WBL



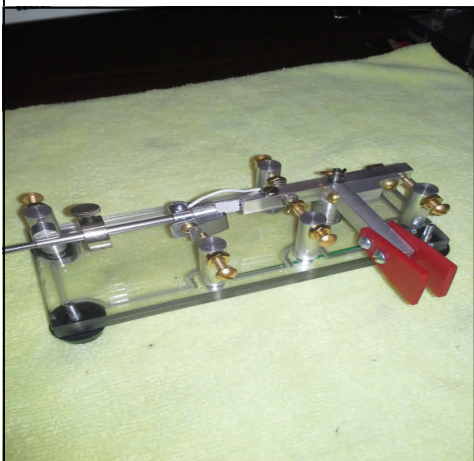
"For any of us operating from the mid-west during Field Day, Jason should feel guilty over his pleasant spot! Here in Michigan it was hard to tell which was higher, the humidity or the temperature! What a beautiful operating site!"

....Editor

Dave N9ZXL Is Still At It!

A couple issues back I introduced you to the work of Dave N9ZXL, and his home brew keys. Dave "says" he just putters around the shop making chips with his mill and other machines..."Dave it just ain't so!" Below is a picture of one of his recent creation, a right angle bug, and if this is the result of "just puttering around" I wonder what "serious" work would look like!

Here is what Dave says about his latest creation:



"This pix is of my newest one. The dits movement is normal but the dashes are on the opposite end.. It works and can send, fast and slow with that small weight."

If you were at Dayton and checked in to the SKCC booth you saw one of Dave's other fine creation, an SKCC call badge for display at your station. Dave's final words in his email were:

"So... now what.....ha ha!"

Dave, I can hardly wait to see what's next!

AC2C & Field Day @ K3PZN

Here's another great Field Day operation. Ron AC2C (2748T) operated with the Carroll County Maryland (K3PZN 8A) gang for Field Day. Ron says he ran 40m cw and it sure looks to me that Ron had a very "plush" operating position! I'm betting that RV is air conditioned and Ron's chair sure looks comfortable. Hmm, do you think that big smile is because Ron knows now humidity issues nor mosquito issues for him!

The antenna setup looks like Ron may have run an inverted vee on 40m with possibly a Yaesu 897D for a rig and of course a computer for logging. I like the touch of an awning and lawn chairs just outside the "shack" for those all-important breaks from the pileups.

The long view photo of the operating site appears to have a large Force 12 antenna(?) covering 20, 15 and 10m.



New SKCC Awards?

Incase you missed them on the reflector, much talk has appeared regarding members' ideas for new awards. Here are just a few of the suggestions:

1. The Senator Award
2. Unassisted working C/T/S ops without the use of sked the page.
3. 50-100 members who have not yet achieved C or T.
4. Vintage Radio Awards: WAS, DX of Vintage to Vintage
5. The Rag Chew Award
6. Awards based on key types: straight key, bugs and cooties

Remember, those who want these awards need to step-up and offer to organize and administer them!

K5ZOL/KP2
St. Croix, USVI
July 10-17, 2013

Having been A25BI in Botswana in 2010, I got a taste of being on the other side of a dx exchange - a different experience, to say the least. At my tender young age of 69, I didn't want anymore 30+ hours of non-stop travel experience hauling equipment and going through multiple customs and airport security checks. I took the easy way out.

Radio Reef on St. Croix (KP2M) fit my criteria for a new dx operating location - close (only 5 hours air time) and comfortable. In Botswana we stayed in un-airconditioned grass roof huts and fought off strange insects while operating. Here, all the equipment and antennas needed were already in place. All I had to take was my trusty J-38 and my favorite earphones. Gene, K5HOW (a ham friend since Jr. High days) and I departed on July 8th for San Juan, Puerto Rico. Our XYL's didn't think a week of radio was their cup of rum. When the guys go dxpeditioning—the gals go shopping!!

Having worked Pablo, KP4SJ (8843T) many times, I told him we'd be passing through and visiting the Aricebo Radio Telescope Observatory on the 8th. Pablo graciously offered to accompany us and serve as local guide and navigator. After an hour and thirty minute drive from San Juan along narrow, tree-lined, winding roads we were there. We were delightfully surprised to find that Pablo had arranged with his friend, Angel – WP3R, who is the Director of Telescope Operations, for an in-depth tour that tourists do not get. Instead of going to the visitor's center, he took us directly to the control room.

We were given a very fascinating and informative description of what was taking place, what the equipment did, etc. We met a scientist, Dr. Yun Gong, from the University of Miami (Ohio) and watched him measuring the density of the E-layer in real time. He was quite cordial and answered all of our questions. Of course we saw the big dish and antennas up close and personal, and the QRO transmitters. The 430 MHz antenna has 70 db gain. The planetary research transmitter has an ERP of 20×10^{12} watts. Be sure and check out the article

on the EME Angel and several other ham's published.

It is on the front page of August 2010, *QST*.

We would have liked to stay all day, but Angel and his staff had real work to do rather than baby-sit visiting QRPers, relatively speaking -HI HI. So we went to the visitors center gather more information. It was nice, but no where near as fascinating as the Ops Center.





L to R: Israel, KP4LPL; Bob, K5ZOL; Gene, K5HOW, Pablo, KP4SJ; Angel WP3R.

Pablo then navigated us to the Bacardi Rum factory where we took a tour and sampled wares. Then, on to Pablo's QTH where we met his lovely XYL, Letty, WP4KV. Julio, NP3CW, joined us and Letty served a wonderful turkey dinner with all the trimmings. It was a great day and a wonderful evening, and it would be hard to beat Puerto Rican Ham Radio hospitality.

Julio NP3CW, Pablo KP4SJ, Letty WP4KV

The next morning we took a twin engine Cessna to St. Croix, (another reason not to haul a lot of equipment), and checked in at Radio Reef. Brian, KP2HC, was waiting for us and acquainted us with the rigs, amps and antennas. K5HOW is an SSBer and I am a brass pounder, so we were able to operate simultaneously as long as we were not on the same band.

The HF bands were decidedly poor during our week there as most of you will remember. However, we made enough QSOs. On the 13th and 14th, the IARU contest made the SKCC WES more difficult, but I managed to give KP2 to many of you and accumulated my own personal best WES score. The score was mainly accrued because I worked Bert, F6HKA (6069T) and John, G0RDO (2133T) for the France/UK sweep multiplier.

Having a 3 element beam on 40 meters and 6 elements on 20 meters also helped. We never turned on an amplifier. It was a joy to work a number of QRP stations. Most notable was Jim, ND9M running 600mw. On Tuesday, our last day of operating, the bands started out poor, but I heard a Netherlands station on 15M and worked him, so I PM'ed Zdravko, YU7DX and we connected nicely on 15M with 549 and 559 + QSB.

Wx was FB. Didn't even need to turn on the A/C. The flight back to the home QTH was FB and now I have lots of QSL's to send. I'll use the SKCC Buro as much as possible, the ARRL Buro and the rest direct. It will take a little time to get the QSO's on LoTW and Eqsl. I had to log the old fashioned way by hand because the logging program I took would not save on the station computer. Tnx for the QSO's and CU on the SKCC frequencies.



Silent Key Century Club! Really?

Well we are all back home from Dayton, unpacked the car, put away the new toys we purchased, and back to reality! Wheew! What a weekend at Dayton! For those of you who did not make it to Dayton, you missed out on some fun times. The nicest thing about going to Dayton is being able to put an eyeball with the folks you work on the air.

As a member of the SKCC group it means we had even a nicer time at Dayton. Of course you already know we had an informational type booth set up at space 254 inside the North Hall. We had members take one hour blocks to provide the “inside” experience of being a member of SKCC, and passing along the fun activities that we do, and how we do them. Curt, WA2JSG brought along some printed awards for display, and Ted, K8AQM brought an oscillator and 2 keys to be used by anyone that wanted to throw out a tone. We were well noticed by our big SKCC Banner that hung behind us, along with plenty of information flyers on the table for those interested parties to stick in their packs.

The difference was made! I just read on the group page some intro comments from some new members. Yes, we did get some new members join that visited our table, and listened to us recruit them into our cw world. They made comments that they talked with the folks at the SKCC booth, and that they were more than helpful....boy, that is nice to hear!

Now..back to the **Silent** Key Century Club! You say, what? That’s correct, the **Silent** Key Century Club! While sitting at the booth on Friday, I was approached by a passing ham. He stepped up to the table and asked: “Do I need to show my death certificate to be a member of the **Silent** Key Century Club?” We laughed, and I then replied: “If you were dead, I am not quite sure you could bring me your certificate!” We laughed some more about the whole thing, and he went on his way. The funny thing is..he was not the last one to say that to us over the weekend. About another handful or so passed along the same comments. So, I started thinking. If there was such a club, what kind of awards could you get? Maybe after working the first 50 dead guys you would place a letter “D” behind your number.

The Dead Award. After working your first 100 dead guys, you would change the “D” to “RD”, for “Really Dead”, and attain the “Flatline Award”! At the end of your QSO it would be ended instead with a plain “SK”, it would go like this: dit dit dit dah dit daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! (Flatline)

Another funny thing that took place at our booth: Friday afternoon, Mitch, WD0ECO, and myself, N3JJT were sitting and sharing stories. All of a sudden, Mitch says...”Watch this..” Mitch turned the pump key around to him, and started sending call signs he was seeing on hats and badges as the crowd was wandering through the area. Mitch was trying to find out who knew code, and who did not! This was by far the funniest thing we did! Mitch would send a call, and if the person heard it, they would turn and smile, wave or laugh at us as they walked. Mitch would send 73, and dit dit to say goodbye! Then it was on to another victim of,”Send that Call”! Mitch continued this game, and then I jumped in, and we took turns back and forth. It was a good time! Surprisingly, most of the folks knew they heard their call, and appreciated the humor. Those that did not just meandered along their way. The other teams provided some of same action during their time at the table. Mitch, thanks for the good time!

Now looking back at our experience at Dayton we saw allot of things. A few lessons learned on a couple minor set up approaches. First: Was to keep K8AQM and N8KR out of the booth at set up on Thursday. You have thought they were married by the way they treat each other! Geez, all I needed was a sandwich, and I could have had dinner and a show! Talk about a great couple friends, these guys are a lot of fun to be around! Just like everyone else that came to the booth and helped pass along our mission. There was tremendous energy from Luis, and Jon, KP4DX, and W8SA. They did everything but stand on the table, but I am thinking, Luis might have! Curt, WA2JSG was

available to fill in, take extra slots, and be the front man for the Czech key we had on display. He also went and relieved Karen, W4KRN at her flea market space so her and her husband Jim could go walk around! (Actually, I think they went to the pub!) NV9X, Jim, he was there early each day to check in, and was there at the end on Sunday to put things away! AB8KT, Ken, and Joe, W8DYF, came down together from NE Ohio and worked, I use that term loosely, but as always made me laugh like they have before. We actually live fairly close to each other and just might bump into each other later in the year. Urb, and Mike, W1UL, and WA2ACV...2 more fine ops to add to the supporting cast! And my friend Ned, W8VFM. We had a great time visiting at the booth, and sharing stories about our rigs. (I have his old K2). Ned is very excited about our club, and loves to operate CW! And to Mitch, WD0ECO, for hanging out for some extra time, and making me laugh with, "Send that Call"! As before, we ended up with sometimes as many as 4 people at the table hanging out! This was allot of fun! Thanks again for the guys who came to sit at the booth, rag chew awhile, and just have fun! Thanks to all the members that stopped by and checked in to see us! Also, thanks to those who listened, and joined! Thanks to Ron, AC2C for getting the banner and flyers to me, and posting the pictures to the website as I sent them.

You say..." will there be a next year"? You bet, and that is the plan! Hope you can make it to Dayton and share our experiences! Be proud to be exchanging those SKCC numbers, I know I am! See you on the air, and see you in Dayton, 2014!

Scott N3JJT 255T

Czech Telegraph Key

At Dayton this year Karen W4KRN(4495T), was selling Czech military keys out in the flea market. These keys are "new old stock" and came via EU of course with the fall of the Soviet Bloc.

W4KRN is a member of the SKCC gang and offered these keys at the very good price of \$30 and \$40. Thirty dollars if the key had any imperfections (slightly rusty) and \$40.00 for "mint condition" keys.

The keys are very sturdy and easy to adjust. The adjustments are under the flip top as shown in the picture. The connecting cord is cloth-covered with a two-jack plug on the end. Two chassis mounting jacks are included with the purchase of the key.

The key in the picture here belongs to K8AQM, N8KR also bought a key and used it in a past Straight Key Sprint. Ken was very pleased with how well the key "played."

The keys are still available but postage from Georgia would now be charged. If you are interested contact W4KRN for information on ordering.





Field Day, AB7HP/W7VOI Style de N0BOE

Aaron N0BOE, sent along these great photos of his Field Day operation with the Hewlett Packard Radio Club in Boise, ID. AB7HP/W7VOI was 11A, that's quite a crew! The pictures here tell the story; first you need a lot of room to set up 11 stations and from the looks of their staging area they had the necessary room. What a beautiful open field for antennas! You need lots of gear and a nice place to actually set up stations. Looks like a great pavilion for stations and by the piles of boxes, rolls of cabling and hanks of rope, there was no shortage of gear. Antennas for eleven stations require a lot of work and many helping hands; looks like a Mosely TA-33 is getting ready to be hoisted on the tower. It's always handy to have experienced hands installing antennas and these two look extremely confident in assembling the antenna. The antenna made it up and the American flag is fluttering in the breeze...but where is the great ARRL flag guys? You forgot our national symbol representing American amateurs!

Oh well, on to what makes Field Day fun. Aaron says that's the GOTA station there and it looks like they're heavy into the pileups. Operating eleven stations can create quite a din and clatter of noise, even with headphones on it can be difficult to hear stations.

And what would Field Day be without a bit of rain! What a great photo op to catch a rainbow around the tower!

TNX Aaron for the pictures, to see more check out the link below.

fd.n0boe.us/stats



SKCC QSL Bureau

"Tnx for the QSO OM es pse QSL via buro" in the SKCC world that would me via the SKCC bureau managed by Dave K9AAA(270T). The picture is of Dave K9AAA at the sorting desk of the SKCC QSL bureau. Envelopes for all 10 call areas and DX. One file is for the working QSL cards received from members. The file contains all most 200 envelopes with at least 1 card or not quite cards to send out yet.

"The bureau could always more participants to keep the envelopes flowing. I try to get all SASE's posted the same day I receive them. I also sort and stuff the QSL cards in the envelopes each day I receive them. I will mail out any envelopes that day that have enough cards.

Give the bureau a try and you will save time and money on postage. Just send me a couple SASE's and you're out going QSL cards that are to members that use the bureau. Members that are good in the bureau can be found on the on the SKCC look up page of the SKCC web page. Please try not to send me cards for members that are not good in the bureau."

...de Dave K9AAA

I asked Dave some questions

about the bureau's workings and here are his comments:

1. How many members have envelopes on file with the bureau?
"Without counting, 40 to 50 envelopes for each call area and DX, total 400-500. I have nearly 200 envelopes in the working file that have at least 1 card in them."
2. How many cards come into the bureau each month?
"about 75 to 150 cards"
3. What about cards coming in to the bureau for members that have no envelopes on file?
"too many! Probably 150-200 since I took over last August"
4. How many hours of your time are required each week?
"2-3 hours except for clear-out after K3Y cards are stuffed in SASE's in February and March."
5. Are K3Y cards an issue for you?
"K3Y cards are no problem, Drew AF2Z, has the logs prints the labels and I just stuff envelopes."

So this is our bureau, lets use it and keep Dave busy! Bob K5ZOL will use it for his K5ZOL/KP2 QSOs and I use it for my ZF2TA QSOs. Keep an envelope on file!



Tips for Improving Your SKS and WES Scores de Joe KB3KJS 6594T

I've been having a lot of fun with the WES and SKS contests. I'm not a serious tester by any means but I do set personal goals to achieve higher scores each time. I also try to figure out ways to be more efficient. Over the past several WES and SKS contests I've observed some operating habits that tend to slow me, and others, down. I think that these simple tips could increase EVERYONES scores and have a more enjoyable experience.

1. Repeating Info - BIG time waster. Only need to repeat RST. No need to repeat QTH, NAME, SKCC #. I think most of us are using some sort of logging program that fills in info automatically from a database. We don't need to copy info manually. However, we DO need CALL and RST to be correct.

2. Running OP's - Efficiency Matters! No need to send call signs over and over again. Simply identify at the end of the exchange using your call. See example exchange.

3. S&P OP's - No need to send the running stations call. Just send yours twice. DE YOURCALL YOURCALL Be sure you are operating on the running stations frequency. Being off frequency causes the running station to reach for the RIT control and the OP loses focus and may even miss your call. NEVER try to work someone that the running station has just worked on HIS running frequency!!

4. Multipliers - The KEY to success! You can sometimes rank higher with fewer contacts if you can get the multiplier count up. Take the time to switch bands for those additional multipliers. Also, don't forget about trying to work the BONUS points.

Example exchange.....

CQ CQ CQ WES DE KB3KJS KB3KJS K
DE W3ABC W3ABC
W3ABC 5nn 5nn MD JOE 6594T BK
QSL Joe 5nn 5nn PA Jim 1234T BK
QSL Jim 73 DE KB3KJS
73 Joe DE W3ABC
CQ WES DE KB3KJS K

Thanks es 73,
Joe
KB3KJS

editor.....some might disagree with Joe that these are "operating events" and not "contests." Whatever your feelings, Joe's ideas are "spot on" for becoming efficient in making contacts as well as improving your scores in these events. Those of you who chase DX and work in the big international contests know "time" is important to those who "want" to make a big score.