

'Rag Chew'

The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club



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Volume 9 Issue 2

June, 2017

Dayton 2017

Another one in the books...for the first time.

Well here we are, "Same Friends, New Home! That was the theme for this year's Dayton Hamvention.



First of all I would like to thank the following folks, for without them we could not have done what we did at the SKCC Booth:
AC2C, WA2JSG, W4KRN, KP4DX, KD8DEU, W8DXU, K4GZB, W4RQ, N9OL, K5ZOL, NW0M, N1DN, K8FAC, KC8RLP, NR3P, KE5AL, W8BFT.

The SKCC CW Club was well represented this year at the new venue at the Greene County Fairgrounds in Xenia, Ohio. We had a total of 191 member check ins over the weekend. We also had lots of conversation with prospective members old and young alike. We had a couple keys to play with, info cards to hand out, and quite a few laughs.

Our booth was located in the largest tent that was on the grounds, and next to us were a few smaller tents. The main part of the Hamvention went east of our location, and was housed in various metal structures. The flea market was out in the infield of the horse track. The unfortunate part of this location is that it turned in to a large muddy area due to the amount of rain we had over the weekend.

The parking was spread out in various remote sites with bus rides to the grounds. There was also parking on site, but on Saturday they were pulling cars out of the mud, so therefore they did not have parking on the grounds on Sunday. Plenty of rides to the gates were available, such as golf carts, and farm tractors pulling seat lined wagons.

I had a couple discussions on some items that needed addressed, and found out where our tent was sitting was to be a new building in it's place by next year. Did I mention traffic jams? Oh boy, on Friday there was a major traffic issue. Some folks did not even get on site until 10 am. However, by Saturday those traffic issues were already fixed.

The food....In my opinion, the food available was excellent. If you enjoy fair food, it was there. A couple places even sold breakfast items like gravy and biscuits, breakfast sandwiches and pastries. There was even homemade ice cream, sandwiches, pizza...and yes a beer pavilion

Anytime a gathering of this size changes locations there are bound to be some issues. I have been told that the issues are being addressed.

So, for those of you that came out and spent some time in the booth, I know you had a real good time doing so. Meeting folks that you work on the air, and having the time to visit, and learn more about them is always fun.

Next year when the Hamvention comes up, we will be there again. So, if you have never taken the time to sit at the booth, please consider to do so, and see just how much fun we are having.

Again, I appreciate all the help to make this happen...

73 for now..de Scott N3JJT 255T

2017 SKCC Dayton Group Photo



Editor...View from the stands of the flea market area





Thanks to Karen, W4KRN #4495s for the pictures on this page and the next for those candid shots in and around the flea market!

Check out the mud in the flea market area. Scott N3JJT #255t mentioned the joke at the airport in Dayton was you could tell who was in the flea market by their muddy shoes!

Is that a hamfest mascot or an escapee from a previous show at the fair?



Here is a shot of the main exhibit halls and what looks like some of the food vendor setups. It must have been a "quick shot" because it isn't raining!



Keys, keys, keys...enough to warm the heart of any SKCCer! Ever try to copy code from a sounder like the ones shown, it isn't that difficult, try it!

I love those T-shirts! Trouble is, I need a 2XL and if I'm not there right away the "ham size" shirts are already gone! Could there be a relationship between our name "ham" and our large size...naw, just coincidence!



That's K4ZGB, Tom #796s and our photographer Karen, W4KRN #4495s



I remember "Betty Boop" but never heard of "Betty Tubes," cousins maybe?

Editor...TNX Karen for the great photos!

The Great DELAWARE DXpedition of 2016

Larry – AH6AX

Hi Gang! For a couple of years, Ron (AC2C) and yours truly (Aloha Larry, AH6AX) had been talking of doing a mini-dxpedition to Delaware, as we had noted that it was one of the more difficult states to work for SKCC WAS awards. Over the ensuing years, medical, family, or other problems would pop up that prevented our plan from moving beyond the discussion stage.

However, this year, with the success of our Field Day operations – conducted on my back deck – we got serious and started hunting for spots to set up and operate. The major obstacle was in locating a spot where we could set up two stations and antennas to enable the maximum operating capacity for a weekend sprint. Several parks and a church parking lot were looked at via Google Maps to determine if they might be an optimum setting.

Well, Ron ‘knew a guy...’ – the ‘guy’ turned out to be a former co-worker of Ron’s (and, distantly mine – since Ron and I worked together for the same company until retirements). Not only was he a friend of Ron’s, but a Ham radio operator who had moved to Southern Delaware several years ago. So... my plan for seeking an okay to operate from a church parking lot just inside the Delaware State line with sleeping bags in the SUV/tent was put on hold. Meanwhile Ron contacted his friend Bill Duveneck, KB3KYH, who graciously offered us the use of his ham shack – complete with a 55-foot tower and Mosely tri-bander, a G5RV antenna, and a flagpole that we could temporarily run a Hy-gain Tape Dipole (this type was used, originally, by special forces communicators in the jungles of Vietnam) that I tuned to 40m CW band. Now, we were going to ham in style! As much as I really, really wanted to work outside and sleep in a tent (at age 70 and going south steadily), I reluctantly said I’d agree to the tough conditions that were offered.

On Saturday, 10 December, our intrepid DExpeditioners made the 2½ hour drive over the Chesapeake Bay bridge and into the beautiful area known as the DelMarVa Peninsula (which includes Delaware, Maryland's Eastern Shore, and a small sliver of Virginia). We arrived at the lovely home of Bill and Sally Duveneck before Noon, where a gracious and welcoming host and hostess invited us into their home and Bill turned his ham shack over to us for the duration. Bill is not a CW guy, but he opened his shack to us to use as we needed and provided space for two stations. We took two rigs, two power supplies, two laptops, some keys, extra coax, various connectors, and other "necessities", but Bill provided power supplies, connectors, and even an extra 5' folding table.

Bill is a ARRL section manager for Delaware and is very active in Delaware State RACES and ARES. He showed us his portable EmComm station –a very nice package for communications in emergency situations.

To continue our story... Ron and I had planned to operate at Bill and Sally's (Sally is Bill's lovely wife who was a fantastic hostess during our stay) and stay in a motel some miles away. Bill and Sally wouldn't hear of it – they put us up in guest rooms in their beautiful home and made us more than welcome.

We arrived around 1100 EST and set up our stations, installed the tape dipole (as an inverted Vee) and connected to the Mosely tri-bander; by noon we were operational and made our first contacts. Ron worked the 20m off the Mosely, I worked 40m via the Inverted Vee and later, via the G5RV, when I moved to the 80m band. The accommodations were really primitive (actually, it was like working from the Waldorf) – Bill's shack is neat and very well laid out (yep, I'm envious). We spent the afternoon on the bands and called a time-out for dinner around 1800L; after a dinner at a local pizzeria where we stuffed ourselves, we went back to work. We worked 40 and 80 for the evening hours and, having a hard time keeping our eyes open, we called it a day at 2200L and hit the rack in the guest rooms that would have made any 5-star Hotel envious! I did say this was a tough assignment, didn't I?

This is a great time to express our gratitude to Ted, K8AQM, for lending us band-pass filters for 80M, 40M, and 20M. It's hard to say what it would have been like without the filters but we were able to operate on different bands with very little, or no, interference. We made a conscious effort to get both of us on the same bands so kept switching antennas - the G5RV, Mosley TA33jr, and 40M Inverted Vee made it easy to get both of us on all bands - just not the same band simultaneously.



Ron, AC2C

Larry, AH6AX

In the photos above, you can see the tough duty we had as we two, intrepid operators, braved the environment to provide contacts from *Lord DeLaWare's* colony (Delaware's motto: THE FIRST State – the first state to ratify the constitution) to our beloved SKCC membership. We two brave souls deserve a medal..... (Okay, maybe a cold brewski will suffice!)

Editor... This multi-multi operating is fast becoming a trend; it's easy, it's fun and it can be cheap! This "mini DXpedition" sure beats the expense and effort of heading-off for "parts unknown" and perhaps enduring physical and mental hardships often encountered on those rare DXpeditions (no real heavy QSL chores either!). Get with a friend, grab a couple transceivers, some wire antennas and make a plan; you'll have fun and the many QSOs you make will make a lot of SKCCers happy! Thanks Ron and Larry for the "new one!"

N9ZXL Chippin' Away

I belong to the QRP ARC I, nr3758. Also belong to SKCC, 7114t... I do the WES every month on QRP. My hobby is making st. keys, paddles and bugs... All of which I have too many !

I have my own design of which I call the "VERDOT" bug.. It has the horizontal movement on the finger paddles, but the DIT contact is of "Vertical" contacting.... I made a cam to change it from horizontal to vertical.

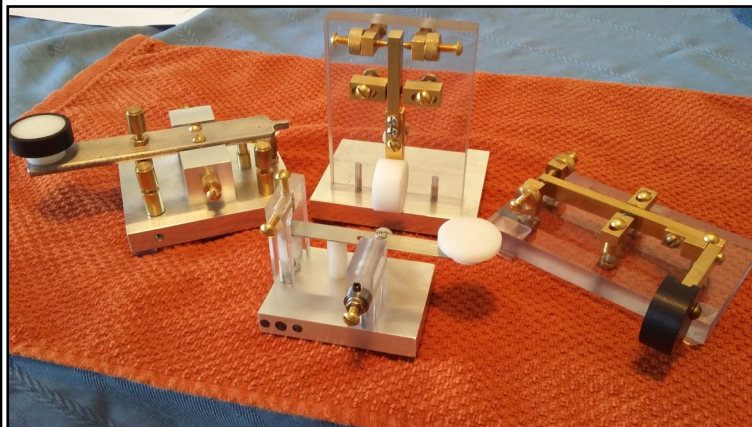
I have a small machine shop in the basement and the xyl always knows where I am at.... ha. So, please check my site, www.dubbugs.com for pictures or QRZ.COM ... I would enjoy any contacts about them..



Thank you, 73
Dave Larsen n9zxl/qrp

Editor..... Dave is always active "chippin' away" as he calls it in his machine shop. The lower picture are some of his latest creations.

There are some great pictures of Dave's work on QRZ.com, look up his call. You can check out what Dave calls his "Dub Bug" which is basically two bugs on the same base able to operate at two different speeds. It's really cool and I have been fortunate enough to have his "Number 2" Dub Bug which I have in my shack.



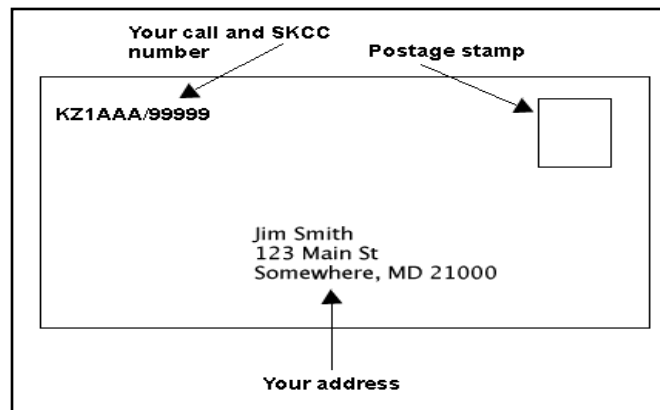
SKCC QSL Bureau

The SKCC QSL Bureau is a free service provided by the club and managed by K9JP, Jeff. To use the bureau is very simple. Basically follow the directions found on the SKCC home page and below. This is a bureau that has incoming and outgoing features that is designed for all. Both state-side members and foreign members can use the bureau, the bureau is NOT usable to send cards to non-members. Make sure you check to see if the SKCC member is participating in the bureau before sending a card to the bureau, this information can be found on the SKCC home page bureau information.

Using the bureau

It is highly suggested to use only #10 business-sized envelopes (4-1/8" x 9-1/2") when sending SASEs to the bureau. This helps with organization; 99.9 percent of all cards fit into them without the need for folding.

For easier sorting, the following format is required for addressing your return envelopes:



When enough cards arrive to fill an envelope, the bureau will send them out. This may be 6 to 10 cards depending on weight.

Members Outside the USA

SKCC members residing outside the USA may purchase QSL Buro postage credits through the SKCC PayPal account.

A USD \$3 purchase will convert to TWO - USPS Global mail stamps. You may send your payment via PayPal.com to PayPal@SKCCgroup.com - PLEASE include your **Callsign** and comment that the **funds are for the QSL Buro** so that we can tell a donation from a QSL Buro Envelope Credit purchase.

Note: The QSL Buro Manager recommends that you maintain no more than 4 Envelope credits at any one time.

Orphan QSLs

The following list are the SKCC members who have QSLs at the SKCC bureau but no envelopes. If you wish your QSL(s) please send an SASE to the bureau ASAP. If you do not want your QSL(S) then please send an email to the bureau and notify them to discard your QSL(s).

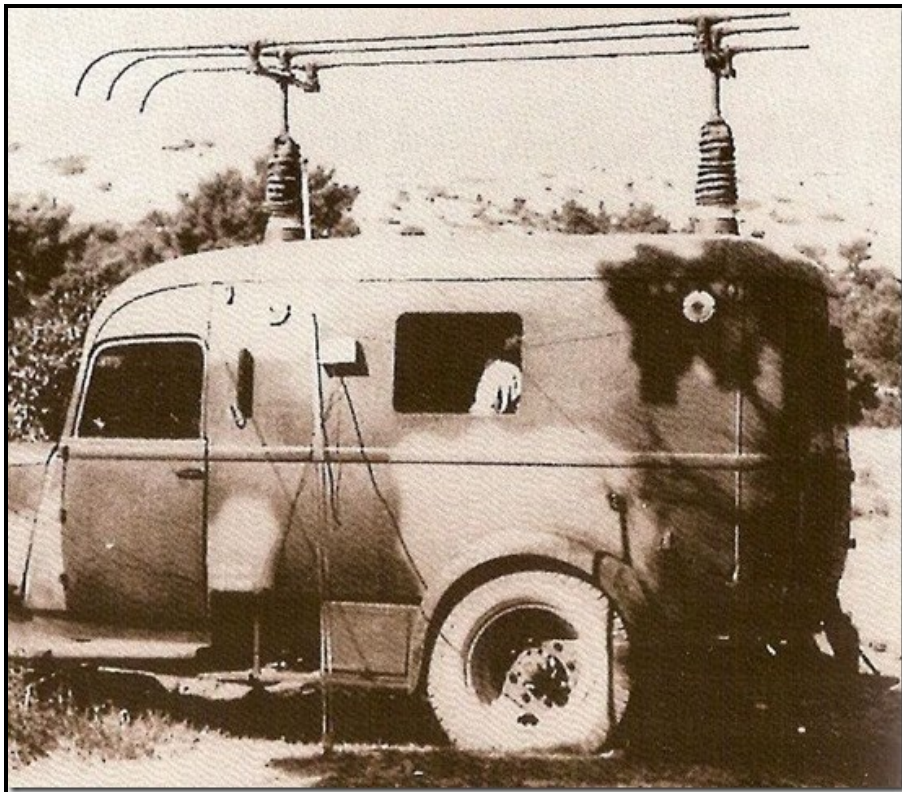
QSLs not claimed by the first of the year will be discarded.

K0CW - 4962	K3SEN - 11463	W5RBBG - 15343
K0FL - 163	K3SEW - 4872	W5GJ - 6282
K0JV - 8406	K3VIG - 6863	W5TS - 9486
K0JVX - 11096	K3WAS - 11599	W5ZR - 2931
K0MSO - 7686	KB3MOW - 4121	WA5JSG - NON
K0RO - 14800	KC3DOF - 13774	WA5PQL - 14230
K0TPP - NON	KP3W - 14267	WA5TCZ - 206
KA0NES - 10199	N3AAZ - 9562	K6BHH - 3646
KF0AF - 7713	N3HEE - 6594	K6ELQ - 10250
KN0WCW - NON	N3PDT - 6861	K6KPH - 15536
N0AIE - 4178	N3QW - 10411	KF6C - 3398
N0EAX - 1111	NR3P - 9987	KH6ZM - 727
N0TA - 2826	W3MWR - 2829	N6EED - 7028
NU0S - 5880	W3NP - 3182	AA7FV - 14313
W0SZE - NON	WY3H - 629	AF7LW - 13371
W0YBS - 11452	AD4XX - 12937	K7EP - 1683
W10S - 2048	AK4JA - 10535	K7ROH - 7070
AA1JD - 11061	K4IBZ - 2291	K7TAN - 13430
AB1FD - 16069	K4KBL - 11722	N7DC - 482
K1DBM - 14555	KB4JR - 6275	NS7E - 5796
K1EEE - 12006	KC4ZA - 4421	W7GB - 2771
K1MRF - 15862	KD4JR - NON	W7IXZ - 15192
K1PUG - 12486	KG4W - 2416	WL7F - 12952
KO1E - 6090	KJ4H - 4848	K8FAC - 2506
KO1U - 7648	KK4SER - 10980	K8KIC - 2938
NF1U - 13077	KP4GC - 11304	K8MXC - 4819
W1RGA - 12518	N4HAY - 14649	K8NS - 10580
W1WQG - 3427	N4OW - 11375	K8PWL - 2809
W1XT - 11665	N4QR - 4095	K8WSN - 4986
WA1Z - NON	N4RE - 942	K8XF - 11120
WD1AL - 14251	NP4IW - 15496	KD8DEU - 10232
WS1K - 12959	W4TY - NON	N8GM - 13754
WU1V - 9293	WA4MXT - 14375	W8ARC - 8734
AB2DJ - NON	WB4DBO - 12183	W8HOG - 8775
AB2N - 14606	WB4JJJ - 9459	W8TBZ - 2363
K2HT - 5087	AC5P - 819	WA8KOQ - 1267
K2PI - 13782	K5DP - 3053	WD8CW - 6458
K2YWE - 2658	K5AWF - 7392	K9DAC - 10148
KB2SEO - 8110	K5EDM - 15077	K9IA - 10206
KC2NYU - 6518	K5MP - 1537	K9VKY - 750
KD2AEF - 9524	K5TRI - 9409	KC9WJK - 9631
N2LK - 9581	KA5PVB - 12640	KC9ZKM - 15423
W2NRA - 11634	KD5GCX - 11199	KD9EHB - 14988
WB2LOS - 2729	KK5J - 6947	N9AKF - 1625
WB2SMK - 14139	N5GW - 7542	N9SWA - 13128
WD2AGQ - 13716	N5KIP - 3755	N9ZXL - 7114
AK3X - 7217	N5WX - 9559	NT9L - 7328
K3ERC - 13750	NE5DL - 5081	W9AEM - 7875
K3MD - 14351	W5BM - 7754	W9DLN - 3635
K3MSB - 5965	W5FKW - 13153	W9LV - NON
K3RNC - 10667	W5LD - 11956	W9RFX - 10448

W9XC - 8403	JI3CJP - 7339	VA6FUN - 6073	ZL2BLQ - 4356
WA9FET - 13493	LU4VI - 5803	VE1PVH - 7728	ZS6JBJ - 3808
WI9X - 3204	LW3EX - 3804	VE2FK - 12398	
4Z5BU - NON	M0TRN - 7344	VE2FSK - 3080	As of May 30, 2017
CT1GZB - 8178	MI0VKO - 11913	VE3AAQ - 12520	
DL2HUM - NON	OH7UG - 4852	VE5UO - 6963	206 Callsigns
E50A - 7723	OK1DIG - 13658	VE9DX - 9057	
EA5AIO - 11784	OK2CQR - 4838	VK4WM - 5621	190 - Members
F5UQE - 13468	OK2VWB - 11812	VO1BB - 4529	
F6ACV - NON	OK5JM - NON	VQ9JC - 10817	16 - Non Members
F6EJN - 508	ON5UK - 13764	VY2RB - 6105	
FG8NY - 9423	ON6UU - 8869	XE1GXG - 689	
G0RDO - 2133	P43R - 11173	XE2MWY - 7465	
G3TEV - 9881	PA3JD - 10955	ZL2BLQ - 4356	
G3ZRJ - 3492	PS7HD - 8094	ZS6JBJ - 3808	
IK2DJV - 14598	VY1JA - 7444		
JA3CJO - NON	VA2WT - 7987		
JE1TRU - NON	VA3NQ - 9684		
JH7VHZ - 11483	VA5CW - 4326		

Field Day 2017....

Field Day 2017 is fast approaching! Be sure to take pictures of your operation and include QSOs, "happenings," fun and pictures, send them along to the Rag Chew to be published and enjoyed by all members!



Here is an "early" Field Day operation and comment sent to the Rag Chew from Larry, K8TEZ #8426t:

K8NHR

"Here he is at field day (a very long time ago) ...worked ok but battery died after 2 QSO's Also several dead birds were found lying around after we stood down Sunday. "

K9JP and K8AQM Eyeball QSO

I had the pleasure of meeting Jeff K9JP #3008s and hosting him in my shack for a great eyeball QSO. It was a real pleasure to meet the man who gives numbers to all those new members and runs the SKCC QSL Bureau.

I knew Jeff had an interest in boat-anchor gear and since I had a some items I wished to down-size to and make some room in my ham shack, Jeff was willing to make the 4-5 hour drive from Traverse City, MI to Adrian, MI to come take this gear off my hands. What I didn't know about Jeff are the many and varied interests of amateur radio Jeff has! Jeff is a very accomplished DXer with well over 300 countries worked, enjoys rtty, does QRP work and has a very strong workbench. You may recall his articles on the resonant speaker, the loop antenna and his interest in kit building. Recently retired, Jeff made the usual retiree's comment about how busy he is now...ha, didn't we all find that to be the case!

It was a real pleasure to "hang" with Jeff and good friend Jeremy KD8VSQ #13072t, who took this picture. The three of us enjoyed a fine lunch and several hours of good rag chew-



ing on just about every topic you can imagine. Perhaps one of my greatest pleasures was to have Jeff mention that there is a chance he may be moving "down state" to an area much closer and become part of the "cronies" here in the K8AQM station.

Thanks for the great morning/afternoon visit Jeff!

PS That's "Grace" AQM shack guard-dog...ha!

Contesters' Dream Rig

According to KD8VSQ Jeremy, 13072T, this just might be Kenwood's next contester's transceiver. Perhaps the engineers at Flex might take note of these new added Kenwood features and offer a similar product but more "user friendly" and computer controlled so it will "know" when you need sustenance!

Could it be that next up from Icom or Yaesu, such an advanced transceiver will generate calls and automatically enter them in your log book? What a time to be in amateur radio!



THE NEW KENWOOD TS9990
CONTESTING TRANSCEIVER

1500 WATTS (MICROWAVE)
2.3 CU. FT. REFRIGERATOR
10 CUP COFFEE POT
200 WATT PEP SSB*

*ACTUAL OUTPUT MAY VARY DEPENDING ON NUMBER OF APPLIANCES CONCURRENTLY RUNNING

VE3LYX and the 2017 NRR

When I first heard of the Novice Rig Roundup I was a bit skeptical. After all, up here in Canada we didn't even have Novice licenses although we did have an entry level ticket back then. We were restricted to CW on HF bands for the first year but with a fulllog book you could get 10M phone by permission. However, as time went on, I returned more and more to simpler rigs and I gave CW a second look. Some of the folks involved I had had contact with before. I had certainly enjoyed some of the AWA CW events and have Lou VE3AWA to thank for encouraging me.

This year with a whole week of activity and the N8FQ Sked Board (an idea long overdue in Ham radio) I decided to give NRR a shot. I waded in gently firing up my Bare Essentials one tube Transmitter on 80M and listening with either my 12SL7 regen or my 19R Hallicrafters given to me by Jim VE3DCX. That took care of the first night and I did fairly well. The next night I fired up my breadboard station built from the 1943 ARRL handbook and bagged several contacts with ease. This was fun!

Spurred on by the success of the event and the usefulness of the Sked Board I put the No 19 Wireless Set on 40M and made a couple of QSOs. Things were going well. Eventually, late in the week I was asked about my 1929 211 Hartley so late one evening I put it in service for a short time, bagging a couple more enjoyable QSOs.. No thought was given by me about contesting. I was just in it for the pure fun. When it all came to an end, too soon it seemed, I

have to admit it was the most enjoyable week I have ever spent in Ham radio.

Good folks, willing to try in sometimes trying conditions working each other for the pure fun of it. Often using vintage rigs like they had when first licensed. I had laid off code for many years after I qualified for my Advanced ticket but unfortunately I have never regained the CW ability I once had. Too many birthdays perhaps. Never the less, I managed somehow with more than a fair share of contacts.



I can hardly wait for next year! If you haven't tried the NRR event I would encourage you to do so. It is real hard to beat this fun for a good time and this event was FUN! Thanks to Bry and Gary for making it happen.

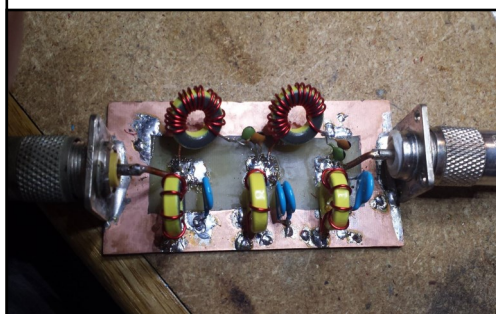
Don VE3LYX 73

De AF4K...We have an ACTIVITY EVENING every Monday on 7100 - 7125 kHz for folks using the older rigs. Most of our ops are also SKCC members and love to swap their SKCC numbers during these contacts too! Some like to rag chew and we have a lot of fun.

15m Bandpass Filter

Working with Multi-Multi stations you learn what bandpass filters do and why you need them. In previous issues of the SKCC Rag Chew newsletter you got to see some of the charts for 80 40 and 20 meter bandpass filters I made. Here is the attempt at 15 meters. Summer is here!

I have been using the QST article written by Lou Gordon K4VX. In trying to keep costs down I switched the silver mica caps to high voltage ceramics as you can see in the picture below I'm still waiting on a few to replace before I can test it with the HF radio.



I made up a test board to solder all the parts so that I could tune the filter before I put it on a final board and then into the Hammond project cases. This will let me make changes faster to the parts when needed.

Although tuning them can be difficult, I found that if you have an MFJ antenna analyzer around you can do a pretty good job of getting them where you need to be according to the SWR reading and the impedance reading. If the filter is off, say in this case, the SWR is good at 18.800 Mhz, to get that to 21.000 Mhz you would need to take some wraps off the L2 toroid in a 3 pole filter, L2 and L4 in a 5 pole filter (schematic is in the last issue of the Rag Chew) to bring the frequency into the 15 meter band. Other than adjusting the toroids that will shift the frequency for the bandpass you are trying to achieve there is really no other adjustments that need to be done. The remaining toroids and caps should be matching what K4VX explained in the article. Also make sure that your windings are evenly wrapped to start with. Some pinching of the wires together or spreading them apart will affect the SWR and possibly make it even better of a match.

If your interested in trying to make these bandpass filters give the article written by Lou Gordon, K4VX a try. The most trouble you will have will be wrapping the toroids!

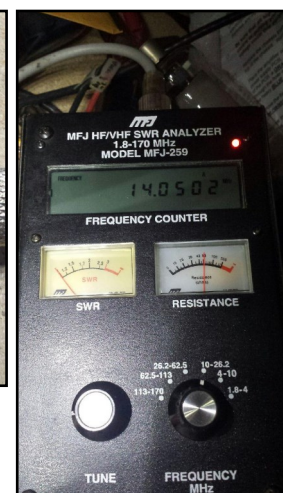
73, Jeremy KD8VSQ 13072T

Editors note: Jeremy has been the resonant station engineer for bandpass filter building. We have no intrastation interference while running four stations at the QRO level using these filters.

I am sad to report that Lou Gordon K4VX who's design we use just recently passed away. For many years Lou's multi-multi contest station was always a beacon on the bands.



Example of tuning the bandpass for swr and resonance with an MFJ meter



Should You Learn or Improve Your Morse Code Proficiency?

By Urb LeJeune W1UL urb@ham-cram.com

The unequivocal answer to that question is an unqualified, “it depends.”

In the interest of full disclosure I must admit that about 95% of my HF activity is on CW. I took my first license exam in 1949; it was for a Class B license which was two years before there was a Novice class and required a code test of 13 words per minute (WPM.) My Elmer, God bless him, wouldn't let me take the test until I could copy 18 WPM. I did five minutes of solid copy and never looked back. At that speed, code was easy and fun. A Bit of Personal History, in 2009 I discovered the Straight Key Century Club (SKCC) and dusted off my J-38 which my Elmer had purchased for me, brand new in a box for 50 cents,, on radio row in New York City. After 60 years I had gone full cycle, making contacts with the same key I used to make my initial first contacts. I'm active in SKCC and currently the Executive Board Vice President of the 17K member organization. I'm also the awards manager for the WAS and DX awards

CW 2 Be or Not to Be

Now that I have the disclaimers out of the way let me say there are two considerations when making the decision to learn or improve your Morse Code abilities. These decisions are both emotional and technical. I have long felt that the more difficult a goal the great the personal satisfaction when you accomplish the task. Make no mistake; acquiring reasonably CW proficiency is not a trivial undertaking. However, if you learn code, at even 5 WPM, you will possess a skill that most hams licensed in the last 10 years have never acquired. Anyone can talk into a microphone but few can copy CW at any speed. Code prowess is a skill that will make you proud of yourself and your accomplishment.

The other side of the equation is the technical superiority of CW as a communication medium. It all comes down to bandwidth. A SSB signal takes up a minimum of 2.8 KHz, this same chunk of frequency spectrum can accommodate up to 10 CW signals if your receiver has a narrow CW filter. The amount of noise and interference you can hear is directly proportional to the width of your pass-band. It gets better. Most relatively modern radios have Digital Signal Processing (DSP) which allows varying your receiver's band width. In addition, DSP can also peak or null a signal in the pass-band, a

S9+ signal in the pass-band can be reduced to nothing and a S3 signal can read with ease. Try that with SSB! CW has a major advantage, especially if you are running low or moderate power. In lousy propagation conditions, a five watt S3 CW signal way produce solid copy while a five watt SSB signal would be unintelligible.

Are You Ready for the Plunge?

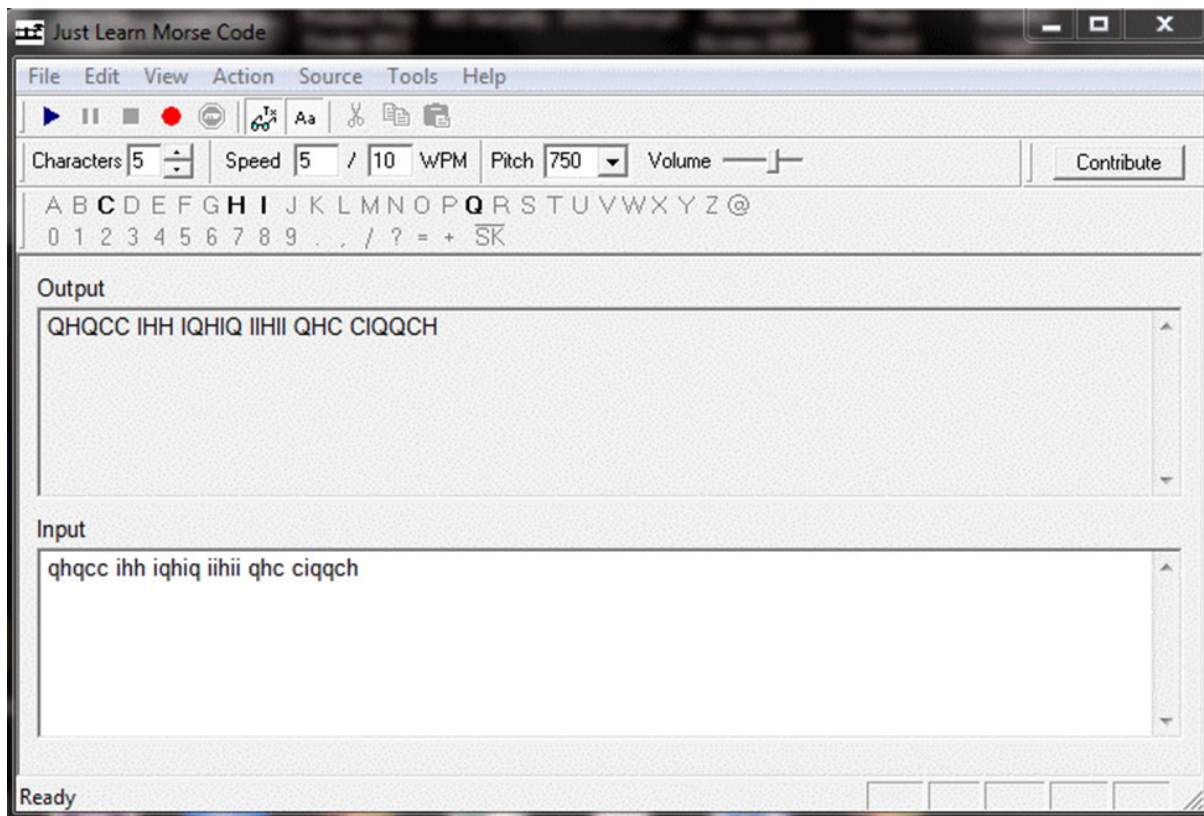
If you are ready to try your hand at CW or ready to increase your proficiency there are two programs I recommend. (1) Just Learn Morse Code which uses the Farnsworth Method which was what the US military employed when they were still teaching Morse code, (2) The G4FON Koch Trainer which is by far my personal preference. Both programs are highly effective and free.

Just Learn Morse Code

The home page for “Just Learn Morse Code” is: <http://www.justlearnmorsecode.com/>

The program can be downloaded at: <http://www.justlearnmorsecode.com/download.html>

As previously mentioned, “Just Learn Morse Code” uses the Farnsworth method which employs two different speeds: a character speed and a text speed. The character speed is how fast each individual letter, number or punctuation is sent, the text speed is how fast the entire message is sent. For example, individual characters may be sent at a 13 WPM rate so that you always hear the intelligent portion of a message at the same speed. However, the gaps between characters and words may be lengthened so the word rate is only 5 words per minute. As you become more proficient you increase the word rate incrementally until you get to your target speed. Figure 1 shows the business page of Just Learn Morse Code. One advantage of this program is that you can learn Morse Code and touch typing simultaneously. What is sent by the program is in the Output window and the operator’s typing appears in the Input window.



Configuration is very easy, just play around with the menu bar. If you have Just Learn Morse Code installed and you want the latest version you must first delete the earlier versions.

The G4FON Koch Trainer

The G4FON Home page:

<http://www.g4fon.net/>

The program can be downloaded at:

<http://downloads.informer.com/g4fon-koch-method-morse-trainer/9.2/>

Some may prefer the Koch method...slower letter...to the Farnsworth method of learning code.

Working QRP during the SKCC Events

Jody - K3JZD 13330s

It was nice to see lots of QRP stations on during April's QRP themed WES. I worked a lot of the usual QRP folks and a whole lot of others who dialed their power down to 5 watts and gave it a try. I really like to work QRP myself. But I elected to use QRO during this WES because I wanted to insure getting enough new numbers to make the leap to the Senator level.

I do a lot of SOTA Chasing, which has given me a lot of practice in fishing weak QRP signals out of the muck. So I managed to work a pretty good number of QRP and QRPp stations during this WES. I was not able to pull in a few of them, but I managed to work most of those who called me.

However, there were a few things that I observed while working the QRP stations during this WES that I thought worth mentioning. These suggestions 'from the other end' might be helpful to the QRPers during our SKCC events:

1. Get on the caller's frequency. When I am running a frequency, I have my filters all set pretty tight to eliminate QRM and noise. Make sure your RIT is OFF or set to Zero Offset whenever you are calling stations. If you call me just a little off of my frequency, I will probably not even hear you calling me, even if you are coming in strongly (this goes for QRO stations also).
2. Just send your call when calling. There is no need to send my call sign. Often when there is QSB, I will hear my call sign clearly and then yours gets lost in the noise. Sometimes the speed and clarity of your sending plays into it. Sometimes your weak signal is easier to pick up whenever your speed is slower.
3. Do not add '/qrp' onto your call sign when calling me during an event. It just uses time that would be better spent by you repeating your call sign to obtain the contact. Save the '/qrp' for where it belongs in the contest exchange. And make sure '/qrp' gets repeated there.
4. Do not send your call sign just once whenever calling. While that usually works when you are QRO, that is not likely to work when you are using QRP. Send your call 2-3 times. It takes a while for me to fiddle with my RIT, Volume and DSP Audio Filter to get you tuned in solidly. It helps a great deal if I do not need to touch my RIT.
5. Sense when I have heard you calling me; if you hear me pause in my CQ calling pattern, then I have heard something in there and I am tuning. Send your call 2-3 times again. Wait a few seconds and repeat if needed. If I have gotten you tuned in, I will be calling you. If I could not tune you in, I will start calling CQ again. Pay attention to the QSB pattern and try to time your retires to whenever my signal is the strongest. If I pause again and still don't get you tuned in then try again a little later. The bands are forever changing.
6. Gage how to send your report to me based on the signal report I gave you. If I sent you a 569 or better, then I will most likely copy your report without the need for you to repeat everything. But, if I sent you something like 339 or worse then you want to be sure to repeat everything that you send to me.

QRP can be rewarding—more so when you are successful at it! I'll be listening for you.

Head Copy or Paper/pencil Copy



Much has been written and discussed regarding copying cw on paper vs copying it in your head. This picture was sent by K8TEZ, Larry 8426T. It's obvious to me that this young operator enjoys "head copy." Note the look of total "euphoria" as he listens to those melodious dits and dahs! What is not quite obvious to me is this a picture of Larry learning head copy or some other mysterious SKCCer!

Either way, paper or head copy, it is always enjoyable copying cw! Thanks Larry for the picture and the chance to puzzle who the operator really is. Could it be one of our current board members?

Addition to the March Rag Chew

In the March Rag Chew W2UL Urb, had information regarding Joseph Henry who is responsible for our term for inductance, the "henry." I received the following email from Scott N7NET (who now lives in Texas). Thanks Scott for this update information on Joseph Henry.

FB on the current Rag Chew.

I noticed the article on Joseph Henry. He was a rural school teacher when Morse and Wheatstone visited him. Where he acquired enough knowledge of electromagnetic forces to explain it to someone else has never been explained to me.

I wonder if you might mention that hard in the southeast corner of Utah are the Henry Mountains, so named in honor of our Joseph Henry. Been there and explored them.

73 de Scott, N7NET <http://n7net.me> <http://qncw.me>

"Morsum Magnifocat"

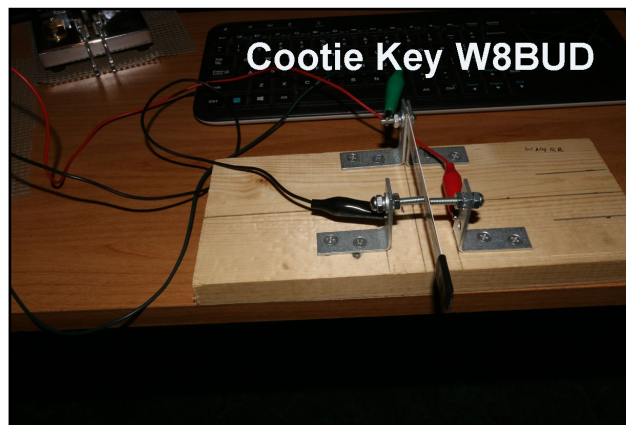
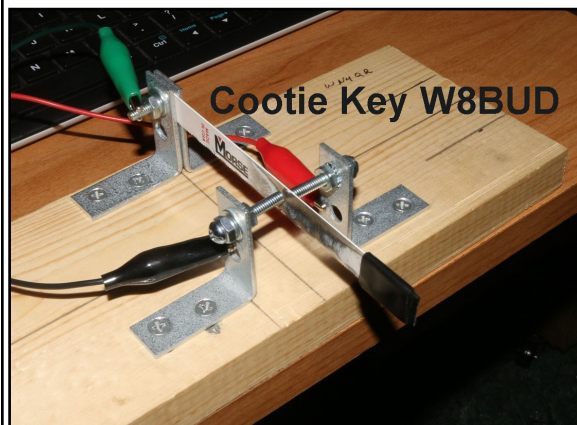
Here is archive of a Morse Code magazine called "Morsum Magnifocat". It was published from 1986 to 2004. Lots of CW related info:

<http://www.n7cfo.com/tgph/Dwnlds/mm/mm.htm>

73,
NU8Z #11237c

My Homemade Cootie By Bud W8BUD #11340T

Hello everyone here is my little project I built in couple hours works quite well I use my old Vibroplex Standard Original most of the time but have fun operating the home brew key.



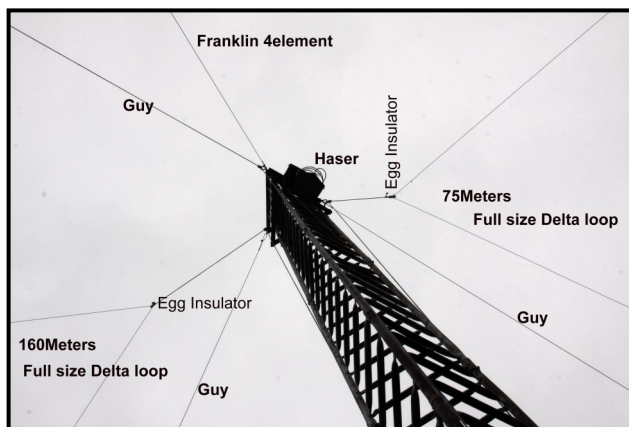
All my antennas are home brewed have full size Delta Loop for 160m and one for 80m have home brew hazer on 67 foot tower with 3 pulleys for pulling up antennas. I also have a Hustler 6BTV with the 17m and 12m add on with 46 ground radials works great have tuned for CW on all bands no need for tuner.

I received my license in 1976 W8JVP gave me my novice test Ken is a SK and now his son has the call now. Ken gave me the plans for a boom less quad which I built using 4 20 foot bamboo fishing poles I set them in a gutter on saw horses and put 4 coats of Raspar varnish on the poles the antenna worked great made many, many contacts with it at 30 feet up with 1 1/2 water pipe would turn it with couple pipe wrenches..

I work the CWT sprints. As a novice I became a net control on the Michigan novice net for four years then moved up to Michigan QMN cw net. My first experience with CW was as a cub scout my Mother was a den Mother there where about 10 of us in the pack she would put us in a dark room and send Morse code using Cub Scout flash light that is how we learned the code for our merit badge we also built AM crystal radio receive.

I really enjoy the SKCC group.

73 Bud W8BUD
cwlives@hughes.net



KE8CEW Multi-multi Operation March SKS

The March SKS saw a multi-multi operation with KE8CEW as the bonus station. Two hours of operation just suites us older guys (“cronies” as W4RQ call us) so the SKS is perfect! KE8CEW Greg, #15805 is a fairly new Extra and is just learning cw at a level where he is comfortable. His son Jeremy, KD8VSQ #13072T operates with the gang here at K8AQM and is a regular on 40m with Ken K8KIC, #2938T. Also part of the multi-multi crew are Don W8MU (formally KD8SKO), #10953T and Mark NU8Z #11237. We enjoy each other’s company and enjoy making QSOs in the multi-multi environment. Our usual “modus operandus” during winter months is to open on 20m, 40m, and 80m and when 20m goes dead we spend the last half hour on 160m. During spring and summer when 80m and 160m are QRNed we will add 15m. We have a K3 and log periodic on 20m, a K2 and high sloper on 80m and a K2 and several dipoles on 40m; each station runs 300-500 watts.

For the March SKS we set a goal of 100 Qs in the two hours. You may think that is really difficult but with three stations running power and no interference we do it regularly. For March we didn’t quite make our goal but did a respectable 91 Qs and 34 SPC. Not quite enough Qs for KE8CEW to advance to “C” but a very good start! Greg will very soon reach his “C” if he hasn’t by the time you read this.

We have the multi-multi thing down very well with little if any, station interference but what really makes it the most fun is the camaraderie of the operators. It’s a group of fun loving guys but also hard competitors. We enjoy seeing who can wrack-up the most contacts and/or the best SPC totals. Even 160m counts and we don’t slack-off there either!

Although “spotting” isn’t allowed, it’s easy to tell those using the reverse beacons when once noticed on 160m there is suddenly a mini run! This is also true when some of the other software (new T and S stations for your totals) come into play. With this software advantage perhaps a rule change is in order?

It’s a great two hours of laughing, joking and grumbling about weak signals we can’t quite pull out, but it’s the high-light of month for us. Thanks to Rich W4RQ who masterfully conducts and monitors this event for SKCC.

See you in the SKS!

Ted K8AQM 1629S



L-R W8MU, NU8Z, KE8CEW KD8VSQ K8KIC



L-R K8KIC, KD8VSQ, KE8CEW, NU8Z, W8MU

THE MYSTERY BUG

John Dicker, VE3CSJ SKCC 17103 and Gary Johnson, NA6O SKCC 8335

So many bugs were made by so many makers over the past hundred years that we sometimes come across one with no maker's marks and that nobody can identify with absolute certainty. Such was the case when John, VE3CSJ, attended an estate sale in southwestern Ontario. The bug that he purchased was a long sought-after Wilson SA-100 that was manufactured by the Wilson Manufacturing Company in Toronto for the RCAF during WW2. The Mystery Bug, as he called it, was considered to be a "junker" by the individual running the estate sale and was thrown in as a "freebie" along with the purchase of the Wilson bug.

Who Made it?

Upon examination of the "junker" bug, John was struck by the quality of workmanship that had obviously gone into its making, but was disappointed by the fact that there were absolutely no markings of any sort on it to indicate who might have made it. Neither was there any indication that any identifying marks had been removed, like a nameplate. So right off the bat he became curious as to its origin and age. Several pictures of the bug were sent to a few well-known Morse key experts with whom he had been in contact over the years, including Tom, W1TP, and Lynn, N7CFO, in addition to some other well-known names in the *Morse-code@mailman.qth.net* group and the *CW_Bugs* Yahoo group[1]. Chris, F9WT, made the only viable guess, saying that it looks like a clone of a Canadian Xograph made by Rolf H. Brown in Toronto in the 1920s (Chris has one in his collection). It's a good match, but with some differences including the main frame and circuit closing arm. Not having a full history of various Xograph models, it's hard to say for sure if this is in fact one of them. So at this point, it remains somewhat of a... Mystery Bug. If anyone else can help identify it, please contact John. Even before the suggestion that it might be a Xograph, John concluded that the bug was quite old, based on the design of many of the components and also that it was commercially made judging from the high quality of workmanship on most if not all the components. Plus, the base was cast brass as opposed to machined and all components were nickel plated. The dash contact, dot contact, terminal posts, and pivot screw all have nicely rounded and polished tops. The design of the various posts, specifically the two terminal posts, indicate an older design.

Unusual Features

This bug has several unusual features (Figure 1). First, the main pivot frame is attached to the base from above, with two nickel-plated screws (as opposed to from underneath the base). Second, the bottom pivot is fixed to the base and is not adjustable. To set the pendulum height, the entire assembly slides vertically on the main pivot shaft and is fixed in place with a setscrew. Third, the pendulum protrudes over the end of the 6 in. long base by about 1/2 in. (most bases we have experienced are about 6-1/2 in. long). Finally, the moving dash contact is unique in that it is a separate screw with a slotted head and associated jam nut that protrudes through the arm from the right hand side, and is adjustable. The dash gap can therefore be adjusted two ways, the other being with the conventional dash contact screw in the adjacent post.

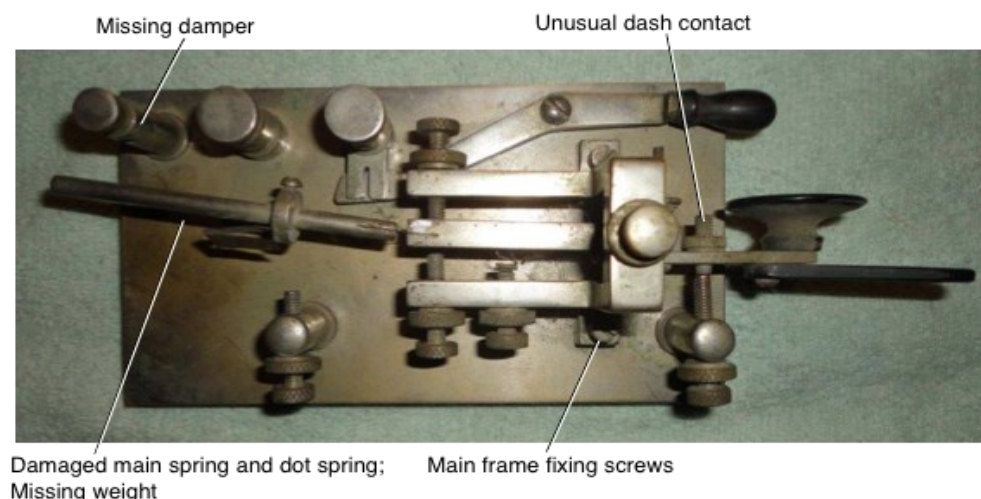


Figure 1. Overview of the mystery bug, as received.

Some Repairs Needed

The bug was missing its damper and weight(s), and it was obvious that the main spring and the dot contact spring had seen better days and needed replacement or repair if the bug was ever to operate properly again. It was also very dusty, dirty and adorned with a few cobwebs on the parts under the main frame. But there was apparently no rust or significant corrosion of any sort on any of the parts. Based on John's initial examination, he decided that the bug could be restored to working condition once again and decided to seek advice on how need parts could be replaced or repaired. In the interim he decided to strip the bug completely and clean the grunge off all the parts using a solution of warm water and Mr. Clean, thoroughly drying all parts once they were cleansed. Then he re-assembled the bug and wondered about the missing and damaged parts.

John posted a comment on QRZ.com Swapmeet asking how he might obtain a new main spring, not really understanding the complexity of repairing an existing one, installing a new commercially manufactured one or manufacturing one out of stock spring steel material. By luck, Gary, NA6O, happened upon John's post and suggested the use of spring steel from a set of feeler gauges. After several back and forth emails on the bug in general and the main spring in particular, we agreed that John would send the pendulum assembly to Gary for an assessment.

Gary Does a Restoration

On receipt of the parts, Gary looked over the "remains," decided it was do-able, then volunteered to refurbish the whole assembly. This would include a new main spring, new dot contact spring and, from scratch, a damper from a design we mutually agreed best suited the bug in question, as well as a weight that would produce an operating range of approximately 17-30 WPM, which was John's preference. Gary has a complete machine shop and experience in Morse key repair and scratch-building. An excellent guide to bug technology and the methods used for restoration are available in a book by W4PAL (SK) [2].



Figure 2. Pendulum assembly, as received.

Unlike many bugs where the main spring is riveted or bolted in place, this one is soldered. As received (Figure 2), it was clear that a repair had been attempted and the spring was soft-soldered in a sloppy fashion. The wreckage was easily disassembled and cleaned for restoration. Based on the mass of the weight rod and the geometry, the spring dimensions of a Vibroplex Original were chosen for the new parts. Both the main spring and dot spring were cut from 12-mil feeler gauge stock and then silver soldered in place (Figure 3). An experiment was performed beforehand to verify that the mechanical properties of the steel were not altered at the soldering temperature (750 C).



Figure 3. Silver soldering the main spring in a simple fixture.

The dot spring sub-assembly was merely a remnant of its former self and was easily desoldered and prepared to accept the new spring. Gary made a new dot contact from Sterling silver, which was then staked in place. After silver soldering, the spring was easily formed into the desired arc (Figure 4). One of the tricky parts of this project was determining dimensions. Since Gary didn't have the complete bug on hand, he went back and forth via emails with John, sharing photos and notes to verify all the important spatial relations. For instance, exactly where should that bend be in the dot spring?

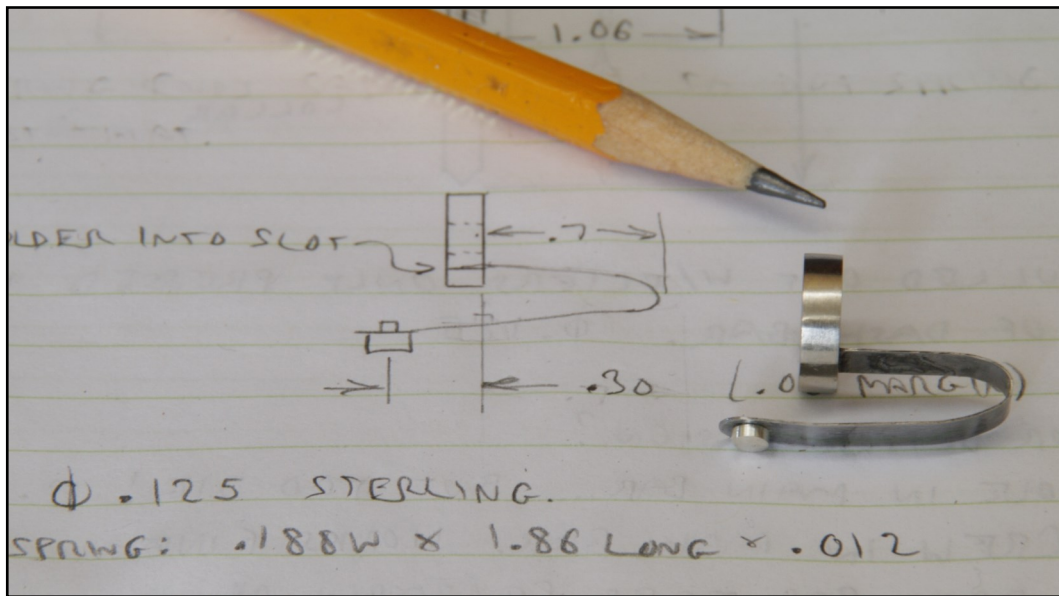


Figure 4. Dot spring sub-assembly.

A design for the damper was needed. After looking at photos of a number of older bugs, we decided that the Vibroplex Model X looked like the right design. It consists of the familiar round metal weight installed on a horizontal rod. Gary fabricated the parts from brass in short order.

Lastly, a weight was designed to meet John's desired speed range. Gary took the weight from his Vibroplex and placed it on the newly-assembled pendulum which was held in a vise. A small springy wire was placed near the weight rod and this was used to cyclically complete a circuit as the pendulum was set in motion. By measuring the frequency of oscillation, speed in WPM can be calculated ($WPM = 2.4 * F$), and in turn, the required mass of the weight is determined. Weights are super-easy to make on a lathe, using brass bar stock. A knurled thumbscrew was also machined.

All brass parts were polished and then nickel plated. Original parts of the assembly were not stripped first nor were they re-surfaced, in order to maintain most of the original manufacturing features and flaws. The steel pivot shaft was cleaned and then blued with Brownell's Oxpho Blue. The steps Gary uses for nickel plating are as follows:

1. Final sand with P1200 silicon carbide paper.
2. Power buff as required.
3. Clean and degrease with chlorinated solvent (Brakleen 05089)
4. Activate the surface in 2M sodium hydroxide, about 1 min.
5. De-smut in 5% hydrochloric acid, about 30 sec.
6. Rinse with distilled water.
7. Electroplate in Krohn Bright Nickel solution (2.0 VDC, stirred), about 10 min.
8. Final buff with white rouge.

After a final portrait (Figure 5), all the parts were mailed to John. But would it all fit? Would it work well enough?



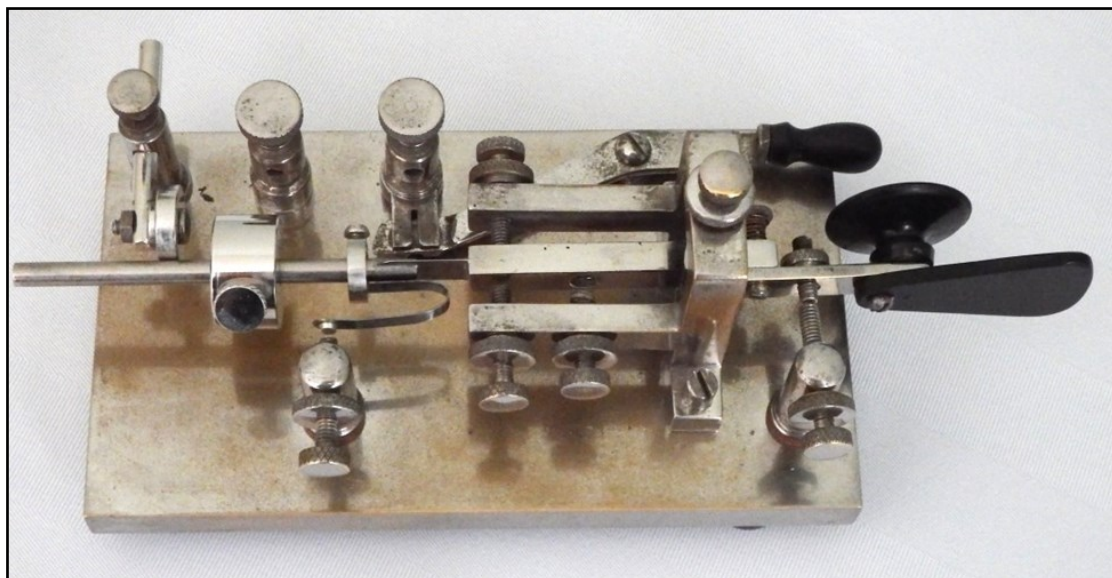
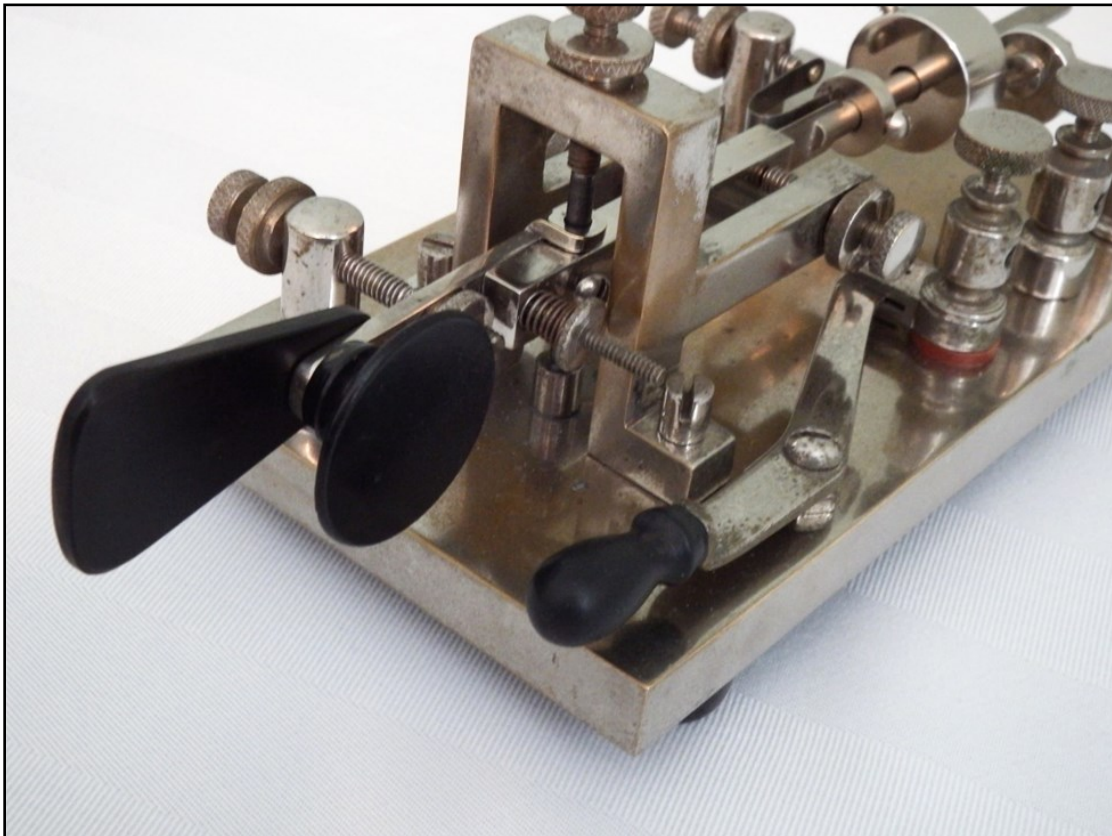
Figure 5. All the parts, ready to ship.

Back Together Again at John's QTH

The bug was reassembled and set up very quickly as all pieces fit like a glove. The bug was now operational once again and had its first contact with Bill VE3CSK near London Ontario on Wed 1 Mar 17 on 40 meters. John says it felt like his old 1921 Vibroplex Original. Unlike most of the other bugs in his modest collection, the Mystery Bug with its new main spring, dot contact spring and weight, when operating at approximately 20 WPM, was able to send a steady string of solid, crisp dots for 12 seconds before petering-out. Bill, being a very senior ham and seasoned CW operator, commented most favorably on how good the bug sounded: "Like music to my ears," he said. That is what we needed to hear to bring this restoration project to a most satisfying and successful conclusion. This was a fun and interesting project for both of us and shows what happens when a couple of old hams get together over a piece of classic equipment. What remains now is to positively identifying the old bug's manufacturer, model and age—things that will likely never be known.

References

1. *CW Bugs* Yahoo group. https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/cw_bugs/info
2. *How to Restore Telegraph Keys*, 2nd Ed., 2006. William. R. Smith, W4PAL (SK). Formerly available from the author's website but now only on the used book market.



The completed Mystery Bug

More Possible Challenges for SKCC?

Editor...I received a wonderful letter from KD9VT Dave #15315s. Dave has some very good ideas worth thinking about. As with all awards administration is a big issue and requires a lot of time and dedication.

The SKCC is my favorite CW club and most of my on air time is working SKCC members. I have helped introduce a few people to SKCC and they love it too. Why do I love the SKCC? Several reasons...1) You can almost always find someone to work. 2) You are rewarded for participation. Not every member dreams of becoming a Senator but a very large percentage do which is the reason we see all of the awards. Once you reach the Senator level, you want to reach higher. I am Sx2 and working to get Sx3. I love challenges. Most CW ops do I think. Hence, more challenges.... Yes, there are already challenges but let's have some variety.

Idea #1 – SKCC QSO Party

Yes, the WES is similar to a QSO party but not the same. A QSO Party attracts a large amount of participants from outside the entity that hosts or sponsors it. Everyone knows that a QSO party is open to the world. Not so with the SKCC monthly events. Everyone that hears a SKCC member calling CQ WES or CQ SKN or CQ SKS or whatever, also hears the exchanges. They hear a number being exchanged so some hesitate to call or just turn the dial because they do not know that they are welcome to participate in a SKCC event. I worked as K3Y/9 and K3Y/0 and had a few nonmembers ask, "what is SKCC" (hard to believe they hadn't heard of SKCC)? They had not looked at the QRZ page or the SKCC site so, I sent them there. Helping the nonmembers from around the world to learn about SKCC will help build membership and hopefully, activity. QSO Parties will help attract those nonmembers without trepidation. Once they work some SKCC members and see how friendly they are and easy to work, they may become interested in becoming a member.

Idea #2 - How about a Newbie Night (or Novice Night or New Member Night, etc.) every month or quarter (I think monthly is better)?

Speed limit 13WPM to prevent key fright and speed intimidation. Scoring could be based on member's number and they have to have been members for less than 3 months to be considered a Newbie. Now, I know there are lots of new members that are experienced CW Operators but based on the comments in the new members emails that go out, most are just learning or wanting to learn. An event geared toward welcoming them will help them get their feet wet and introduce them to the SKCC. Once they have made a few contacts, they will be more likely to be active. I know what you are going to ask. If scoring is based on the new member's number, how will they have a chance to do well? Here it is...if they have been a member less than 3 months, they get a multiplier for every member they work, including other new members. For example, if they work 5 members with a combined score of say 25000 (based on member numbers) their score would be 125000.

Idea #3 - A referral challenge.

Add a "Referred By SKCC Member" checkbox to the membership application. If checked, it will enable a text box to enter the referring member's call or member number. The person with the most referrals gets referral challenge points. Points could be computed based on the amount of referral credits you get x the total sum of the new members numbers.

Idea #4 - An anonymous survey.

Simple to do and will get lots of input. You can ask anything like questions pertaining to activity, activities, suggestions, concerns, etc. A lot of useful information can be garnered

from well written anonymous surveys. We use them in our club and the results can be enlightening.

Idea #5 - A monthly brag sprint.

A lot of people enjoy the sprints but you don't get brag points during sprints. Why not? The amount of members that participate in the monthly brag challenge is a very small percentage of the members but if the members that compete in the sprints could get brag points for those QSOs, they may be more likely to participate in the monthly brag (and it may entice more to participate in the sprints themselves)

Idea #5 - I got this idea from the NAQCC. SKCC Chapters.

I belong to the Illowa Chapter of the NAQCC. We have a monthly meeting and plan operating events. They seem to be very popular as we always have fun when we have an event. Since the chapters build comradery, they increase enthusiasm which in turn, increases activity. Anything you can do to get members on the air is a good thing. There are 17000+ members in the SKCC so there could be a lot of chapters. There could be all kinds of publicity created by the chapters as well as a lot of increased activity. Recruiting new members on a local level is very effective too. If there were local meetings around the world in different chapters, the possibilities of new ideas and new events becomes huge.

Idea #6 - Most of us will never get to meet many of the people we work or the prominent SKCC members.

What about a yearly convention or regional gatherings. I would love to meet the board members and the people I have worked. I bet a lot of members would enjoy that too. Sure, it would cost some money but few attendees would have a problem with paying a little to attend. The fun of eyeball QSOs would be very enticing and it could be a very successful fund raising event.

Idea #7- What about an "Old Timers Night" to honor members.

SKCC Old Timer Recognition Day

00:00-23:59 (24 hrs will give everyone a chance to play)

Object: To work SKCC members with member numbers below 4000

Scoring: 2 points for every member with a number UNDER 4000. 1 point for all members with numbers of 4000 or higher.

Multipliers: 5 points for every QSO with members with numbers UNDER 1000, 4 points for every QSO with members with numbers from 1000 to 1999, 3 points for every QSO with members with numbers from 2000 to 2999 and 2 points for every QSO with members with numbers from 3000-3999. Total sum of all multiplier points times points scored X QSO points (ie: 50 members at 2 points plus 50 members at 1 point = 150 points X the sum of multiplier points)

Exchange would be the standard SKCC exchange for QSOs with members. Nonmembers would use NA for member number. (Nonmembers are 1 point regardless of year licensed)

Bonus: 10 extra points for each SPC you work an old timer in.

Using the guidelines above, if I worked 10 members with numbers under 4000 and 10 members with numbers over 4000, my score would be 30. If 5 of them had member numbers under 1000, I would get 25 multiplier points. If another 5 of them had numbers from 2000-2999, I would get 3 points each or 15 points. I would add up the multiplier points (25+15) for a total multiplier of 40. So, if I had a total of 30 QSO points I would multiply 30 QSO points X 40 multiplier points for a score of 1200. Bonus points for SPCs would be the number of SPCs X 10. If I worked 15 SPCs, I would get an additional 150 points. My total score would be $1200 + 150 = 1,350$ points

73 de Dave KD9VT

SKCC 15315S

Editor...If you like some of these ideas and you think you would enjoy administering an award write to the SKCC board for a discussion of your plan. I am sure Dave would like to hear any of your ideas also as would he editor here.

Another Thought Presented for an Award The “Legate”

Editor...Here is an idea received from Jay, W8AIM 9104s. It is just a “thought” and not a “happening” but well worth the read and discussion.

SKCC Legate

Summary: This is a proposal for the addition of a new level of SKCC operator, termed “Legate,” (Leg’-it) which when obtained, would be identified, as the existing C,T and S designators, by the letter “L” following the operator’s SKCC membership number. Legate would be the new ultimate level of SKCC operators.

Background: As time goes by, working the WES and SKS sprints, it seems if there are more Senators than Tribunes or Centurions. I’ve watched several SKCC members climb to the level of Senator, and then seemingly disappear. A notable instance was pre-teen Will, W3WKV from Pennsylvania. An obviously sharp kid, he started at ground zero and improved his fist immensely over the short time he was active. He made Centurion in June 2015. Toward the end, I heard him operating around 20-22 WPM with an almost perfect fist. Each evening, he was found on the SKCC Sked page chasing numbers. He obtained Senator in October 2015, and I don’t believe I heard him after that. There have been many other Senators disappear from active SKCC operation.

Discussion: The existing award levels within SKCC are obviously well thought out and prove to be enticing and practical. Not give-aways, but not impossibly difficult. The Centurion level is great! It provides just enough requirements to maintain interest in a goal and allow a “Newbie” CW operator to gain experience with code, a brief QSO format, use of some Q-Signals, prosigns and abbreviations, and solid familiarity with SKCC operations.

Tribune level gets serious. It takes a bit of dedication to work 400 contacts with an ever-decreasing base of operators available. Obtainment of Tx8 is a real achievement and to me personally, was a definite relief of pressure and feeling of pride of accomplishment.

Then there's Senator. I'm, certain that Senator was a difficult goal when it was first devised, when "Ts" were still rare and before the SKCC Sked page. Currently, it's nearly not as demanding as Tribune x8. At Tx8 in the SKCC career path, the operator may enjoy coasting along toward Senator status, as I more or less did, or continue a driven "quest" to completion. In either case, with not an exceedingly large amount of time, the active operator can obtain the 200 needed contacts without too many obstacles and be ultimately rewarded Senator status. I found that operating just two WESs and one SKS, I was able to log 140 stations toward my S via Search & Pounce only.

Once Senator, then what?

Some history: In the changing Roman Empire under large reforms introduced by Augustus, I read that many provinces were governed by senators. This promised high office and military command to those of the senatorial class.

After having been an able and reliable senator, a good man might be appointed to a more important province containing as many as four legions. The length of service in such an elevated office would generally be for three years, but it could vary considerably.

The province of Egypt, so important for its grain supply, remained under the emperor's personal command; however, all the provinces with legions within them were commanded by personally appointed **Legates**, who acted both as army commanders as well as civil governors.

Source: <http://www.roman-empire.net/army/career.html>

Proposal: To provide a long-term objective to SKCC operators who have obtained Senator level, I propose a new level, termed "Legate" which, when obtained, would be identified by the letter "L" following the operator's SKCC membership number as C, T and S is used. Obtainment should be difficult enough as to take major time and commitment to accomplish. Previous contacts from the award establishment date would not apply.

I would expect the SKCC Board to ultimately determine the specific requirements for this award, however, as suggestions only, I submit that the Legate level would be achieved when a Senator accomplishes:

- 1) various stated goals, perhaps a list of goals where 6 or 8 of 10 must be accomplished...
- 2) contact and exchange of SKCC numbers and names with some percentage – perhaps 50 or 60% – of the total number of SKCC Senators and Legates. (Perhaps only one Senator or Legate could be entertained in a given UTC day...)

Last check (5-25-17), there were 249 Senators listed and, of course, zero Legates. So, contact with 125 or 149 unique Senators (depending on the percentage) would be required, plus meeting any other stated requirements, to become a Legate.

Possible problems: One problem may be that those operators pursuing Legate may find it necessary to contact other Senators via email, phone, etc., to arrange QSOs. This could be annoying to some operators as I'm certain many of those members have truly moved on and would not welcome the attention.

Another considerable, but not disqualifying, problem I see with this is that the number of silent keys and those who simply do not want to operate with SKCC any longer, are not known and would continue to skew the available contact percentage as time progresses, however, I still think a percentage count could be useful, with or without some particular static number. To illustrate, if it was established that only a set 100 contacts were required for Legate, you may find in the future, when there may be 500 Senators and 100 Legates, it would not be impossible at all to obtain Legate in the course of one WES. Then, the same situation I'm addressing here would exist where our most experienced operators may lack interest to continue because no appealing goals are left to tackle.

On the other hand, I'm certain that through the Board's extreme experience and superior thoughtfulness, a long and difficult, but entertaining, quest from Senator to Legate could be devised while minimizing the preceding and any other foreseeable problems. For one, the number of active Senator & Legate operators would need to be found or estimated, maintained by date, and periodically published, if a percentage equation was to be used. Legate, as the ultimate award, should be a demanding, long term endeavor, perhaps even requiring a written exam about the Roman Legions and/or a straight key code test!

If this project is rejected, I would still request the Board consider long-term goals to maintain interest for those Senators who went through the hoops but now find their excitement waning. Thank you for your consideration,

73,

Jay W8AIM

SKCC #9104S

May 25, 2017

Editor...It's always good to hear new ideas from the membership. No matter whether plans get adopted or not is not the issue. Often discussions lead to new ideas and in our club's case, more fun for all. Please continue to express your ideas and suggestions.

Coming Soon!

Ever want to set-up at a hamfest and in addition to your flea market "goodies" want to promote SKCC? Coming soon to your geographic area will be a chance to "borrow" a set of banners like we have at Dayton for your use (free) at your local hamfest. You will only need to mail the banners back to your geographic coordinator. Details will be coming soon on how you can get these great banners for promoting SKCC.

...FYI...

SKCC is now listed on "Amazon Smiles" so if you use Amazon and want to help the club, please check into Amazon Smiles and indicate you wish to make SKCC your selection.