



*The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club*  
*"The Rag Chew"*

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*Editor K8AQM...New coloring on the header...same great newsletter!*

## SKCC and Field Day 2018

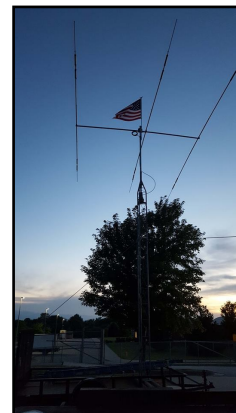
*Field Day can be like a reverse SKN, it is the time when some SKCCers opt to use a paddle and/or their straight keys. But then you can't have your dessert all the time (straight keys); you need to eat that broccoli (paddles) once in a while! So here is a collection of SKCCers and their Field Day operations with friends and clubs; some show paddles but on Field Day that's ok...shame them not!*



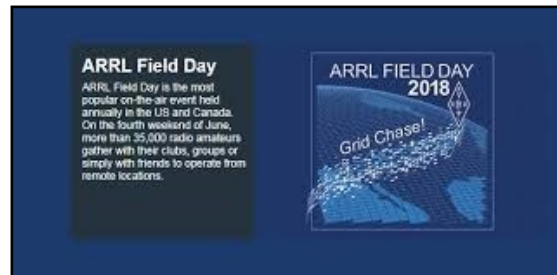
A Field Day smile that only a solid 10 meter QSO can bring – Joe March, KJ9M (SKCC 347T) works ten CW while it was open Saturday using an FT-897 into a rotatable dipole up 25 feet. The 3A operation from the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office compound in Noblesville, IN was manned by operators from R.A.C.E.S. and the Central Indiana Amateur Radio Association (CIARA). The Morse station also featured a straight Navy flameproof key where kids could send their initials and receive a Morse code pocket card. (Photo by Diana Stuckey, KB9NPO)



Johnson County Radio Amateurs Club, W0ERH, Field Day CW station. Old Hutton farmstead, Shawnee Mission Park, Lenexa, KS. L to R Jay KB8TR, George KE0PKR, SKCC 18202, Steve W0STD, SKCC 12233, Jim AD0AB, SKCC 9667S, Charlie N0CVW, SKCC 9074S, Lynn K0IMI, SKCC 7086. Photo by Doug N3PDT, SKCC 6861S.



Platte County ARG is ready to go..we had a great turnout to setup. Will be listening for SKCC friends.. GL to all... Rick k0kex at NR0AD



## 2018 FD Report from Traverse City, MI de Jeff K9JP #3008s

The Cherryland Amateur Radio Club - W8TCM, again this year participated in the ARRL Field Day event. The club operates from a Cherry Orchard at the Kessel Farm high in the hills off of West Bay in Leelanau County between T.C. and Suttons Bay. The site has great views of West Bay and wonderful continuous breezes on hot days through the high hills. We had visiting Hams from the surrounding counties visit and even operate for a few QSOs.



This year the group had HF three stations (1 CW and 2 Phone) plus a GOTA station. They used trailer mounted generators for AC power. Have a wonderful large central tent for food and shade. Tents were used for the operating positions, and wire dipole antennas supported by fiberglass military 4 foot section poles. The antenna wires and rope were used to guy the support masts.

Band conditions here in Michigan started off poorly Saturday afternoon, but by evening were very good and we had good conditions through Sunday.

Fred, KB8IWO visiting from Benzie county and Joe, W8TVT one of the most active CARC club members.



40 Meter phone station on one of the



20 meter station looking east over West Bay



Joe, N8CN and Toby, KC8VSU receiving copy of the ARRL FD bulletin or making an ISS pass contact from the Food tent. Always best to have everything you need to make contacts close at hand! HI



Lunch for everyone Saturday before the start at 2 PM here. There was always something good to eat during the 24 plus hours

Well, that's the short report from Traverse City Ted. Hope, everyone had a great FD and Lots of Fun. I know, I DID!

P.S. You will get a laugh from this! I made the shortest distance HF 100 watt contact in my 50 years licensed. I worked the GOTA station which was located 30 feet away from the 40 phone station. I could hear our exchanges with my ears (no earphones, now that I have hearing aids) and on the radio at the same time. No wonder the S meter on the TS-430 was pegged! HI



## Field Day in Evansville Indiana! The TriState Amateur Radio Society's Field Day Weekend 2018!

De John N9OL SKCC 4014 in Evansville Indiana.

I am a member of the TriState Amateur Radio Society (TARS) and every year our Field Day event is awesome! We operated this year on the grounds of Evansville's Red Cross facility, so our classification was 4F, operating under our club call sign W9OG.

One of our stations was dedicated to CW, and a couple fine gentlemen and myself set up and operated the station all weekend. I don't handle the 3<sup>rd</sup> shift operating as well as I used to, especially considering we were there the preceding 2<sup>nd</sup> shift and the following 1<sup>st</sup> shift, but I and a group of bleary-eyed operators kept the stations busy all night. The bands were in good shape and stayed busy the whole event. Nice openings on 6 and 10 meters added to the fun.

For illuminating the CW station during the night I used a strip of green LEDs powered by a 12V gell cell. It looked pretty neat, provided plenty of soothing light, and didn't attract as many

bugs and critters!

Here is a picture of our night-time operating position, and that's me on Saturday afternoon trying to bust a pile-up or something!

For the CW station we used the following station equipment:

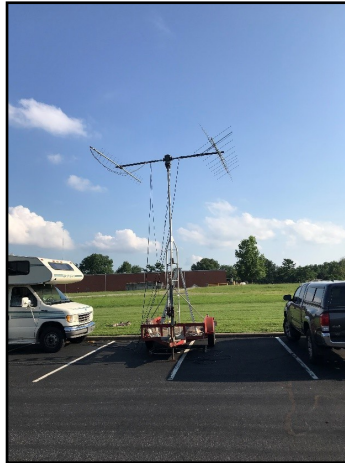
Icom 746Pro transceiver- one of my favorite CW rigs I've ever used. Owned one once and still kick myself for selling it!

Antennas- I tried 2 antennas this year and both worked extremely well. The first was a MyAntennas HWEF antenna for 80-10 meters. The second was a Butternut HF9V vertical mounted 5 feet off the ground with elevated radials at 5 ft.



We used the N3FJP Field Day Logger, and connected the laptop to the transceiver so we can use the computer to do the keying via the F-keys. This works very nice. We had a set of Bencher paddles there for when we needed them, and of course I had a Vibroplex Champion bug hooked up also to break the monotony every now and again.

In addition to CW we had 2 SSB stations set up, a digital station, a GOTA (Get On The Air) station and a satellite station. The satellite station made 9 contacts via the birds this year. The birds were very busy!! Our club trustee Dave WB9YIG has an impressive satellite antenna system and he brings it out each year for Field Day. Below are some pictures of the satellite setup getting prepped! That's Dave WB9YIG on the tower!



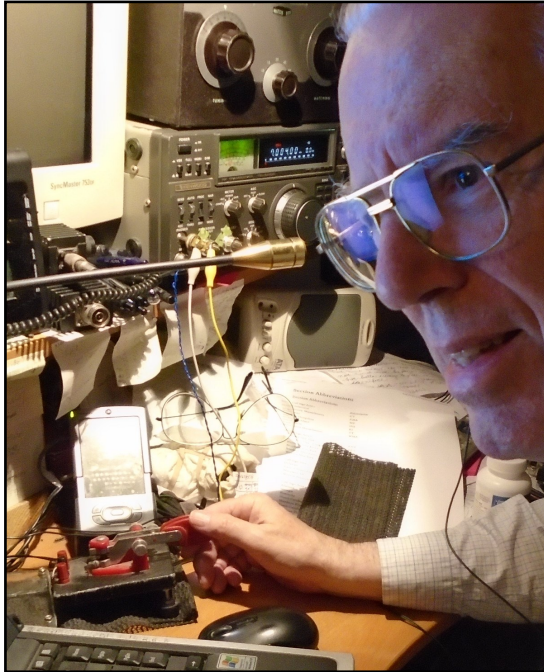
It was a great event, and the American Red Cross facility in Evansville is top notch, with nice grounds surrounding the building, with tall trees for antenna support. While there wasn't much straight key pounding going on, we had a blast making 633 CW contacts, 889 total SSB, 321 digital and 9 satellite contacts! In addition to all that, we enjoyed a fabulous barbecue pot-luck dinner Saturday evening.

Field Day is truly our club's premier event of the year, where friendships are made and strengthened, and we come together as a team and enjoy many facets of ham radio together. I hope you had a great Field Day too!

Field Day is truly our club's



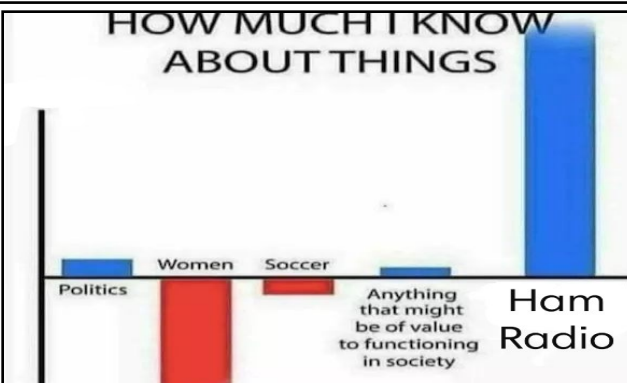




This is the op. at VE7AOV 1E BC until the battery bank gave up in the 39th hour and so the station became VE7AOV 1D BC. . Between doing other things, 63 stations were worked in the c.w. bands of 80, 40 and 20. It was sure good to hear the c.w. bands really occupied again. The grand old TS-930S with her superb receiver and topped off with the 250Hz filter sliced away the QRM. Propagation was not wonderful here but there was less than the usual local noise. Now it's on to the Canada Contest on the first of July!



Over the last few days I've seen several folks sharing pics of their Field Day set up. Here's mine. Not the greatest pic. We purchased a 30 ft telescoping flag pole and made a 10 ft extension out of PVC that the flag pole sits on top of. The pole is guyed with 3 adjustable ropes about 2/3 of the way up. The antenna we are using is a G5RV mounted at the top and coming down as an inverted V. It took the 3 of us only about 30 minutes to have the whole mast/antenna up in the air. The mast set up was made for about \$100 total. Works pretty well! We made many voice and CW contacts for our 1st Field Day! We are up at our Deer Camp in Northern Michigan on battery power....73, James KD8QYX



## An Old Mobile Adds a Spark to One Family's History

Les Volta, NP6LV

*I found this neat story on the ARRL home web page. I have tried to find other articles by "Les Volta" (ha!), I emailed the ARRL, and the email at the suggested address at the bottom of the article...no response...nuts! Anyone have a lead where there might be a source for more stories by "Les Volta?"*

As my youngest daughter drove up to our annual family reunion picnic, the summer breeze blew past where I was standing and a flashback of time hit me. I recalled being at the same family reunion picnic. It was a hot and sunny summer day and we were sitting around a shade tree at the picnic. I looked around and saw my father driving up in his old 1952 Plymouth Cranbrook. He bought it new back in '51.



I heard all the kids say, "Far out, look at that old car!" As my father sat down, I asked him if he still had the old ham radio in it. He looked at the car and said, "Yep and it still works too." My youngest daughter ran over and said, "Wow! Grandpa that is a big radio in the car." I asked my dad to tell us the story about how he



got the radio. It was always a good story. He looked at us and asked us to sit down and he began this story.

### A Story to Tell

When your dad was about 12 years old, I came home one day with a new car; it was a pear green 1952 Plymouth Cranbrook. Your dad stared at the car for hours. He looked at the inside and out of the car with a ruler in his hand. I was perplexed by what he was doing. He walked over to me and said, "If I get my Amateur Radio license can we put a transmitter in the car?" I had my Extra Class license for just about 3 years and had asked your dad if he would like to get his Novice license, but he was not interested at the time. But now, with the new car, he was very interested.



Your dad read all my *QST* magazines and told me all about the Elmac A54H and that it could run on 6 V from the car's battery. I had to think about this. The radio cost \$175 new at the time. With the new car and the Korean War going on cash was going to be tight. I told him if he got a summer job mowing lawns like I had been asking him, then I would help him get his Novice license.

Your dad asked all my ham radio buddies in the area if he could mow their lawns. He told them that if he got his Novice license, he was going to get the Elmac A54H and put it in the Plymouth. All my ham buddies jumped at the chance to get a new ham radio operator on the air.

Your dad started that week mowing the lawns. He picked up more jobs as neighbors saw him mowing. It took him a little over a year to get \$112, he was almost there. He passed his Novice



test and was waiting for his call in the mail. With a Novice call back then he could operate some CW on the 80 and 40 meter bands. The Elmac A54H was an AM phone transmitter and he was going to have to work third party until he upgraded to General.

Well, your dad worked more and saved up \$135. Then I pitched in and we ordered the radio. While we were waiting for the radio to arrive at the store the Armistice was signed and the Korean War was over; that was on July 27, 1953 and my brother, your great uncle, was going to come home. We had not seen him since the US started sending troops to the Korean conflict in 1950.

### **A Clean Installation**

We lived in an apartment and could not set up an Amateur Radio station. We had to use my buddy's station. When the radio arrived, we got right to installing it in the Plymouth. It took most of the afternoon. We took our time wanting to get it right the first time. We mounted the whip antenna on the car first and moved inside to mount the radio. We made a direct power connection to the battery and brought the leads through the firewall right next to the heater hose. The radio was mounted right under the car radio, but it stuck out on the passenger side just a little.

Your grandma came out and asked how it was going? I told her we were done and ready to test it. She opened the back driver's side door and sat down. I called CQ and no one answered back; as I recall the bands were dead. She then got out and closed the door, but the door would not latch and to this day we always have to close the door twice to secure it.

A day or so passed before we got the opportunity to operate the radio again. I came home from work and the bands were hopping. A station was working some phone patches and another was sending messages to and from Korea. We listened for a while and they were calling for any station in our small town. I jumped and gave my call. They came back and asked if we could deliver some messages in our neck of the woods. I sent your dad in to get some paper and pencils. He came back with his school tablet and three pencils.

We must have been on the 10<sup>th</sup> message. It turned out it was for us from your great uncle. It read: "My unit is packing up and coming home, will get in touch with you when back in Seoul to regroup and will have date when we head back to US." We delivered all the messages to the town folks and they gave us more messages to send back to the troops.

It's a good thing we got the radio. Your dad had a great idea. When we were not sending and receiving messages to and from Korea we both worked some DX. Your dad upgraded to Technician that summer. We had so much fun working together, I told him, "There will come a time when I will pass this car to you." With a smile ear to ear, he just gave me a hug. We were working some message handling when the message from my brother came in that he was in Seoul and should be back in town next week. When he arrived, we went to the park and had a picnic, right here in this park. We always have the annual family reunion picnic the third Saturday in August, same tree, same park.

### **Handing Down History**

"What a story Grandpa!" My youngest one shouted out. Every now and then at the picnic the story would be told to the little ones when they saw him drive up in that old Plymouth. I'm now holding the Extra Class license and received my dad's old Extra Class call after he passed away in '91 and true to his word that old Plymouth showed up in my driveway with the radio still working and extra tubes in the trunk. Grandpa will be at the picnic in our hearts. Yes, I did promise the old 1952 Plymouth Cranbrook to my youngest daughter.

It will be up to her to keep the memories and pass them down to the next generation. The door will probably never get fixed, but that's okay, it's just one of those things that adds character to the car. So, if you see an old pear green '52 Plymouth sitting at a park with a whip antenna, stop by and ask to hear the story. It's worth it. 73 and may you always remember how important your family is.

*Photos by Paul Rios, KC6QLS.*

*Equipment supplied by Patrick Bunsold, WA6MHZ.*

*Les Volta, NP6LV, is the pen name for a character who is a little bit of me, a little bit of you and a little bit of everybody who may be heard on the Amateur Radio bands. Les is 96 years old and married. He served in World War II and Korea, and retired as captain from the United States Navy. He was a pilot who flew the PBV-40 aircraft in WWII and flew jet planes in later campaigns. In the stories, from time to time, he reflects on his personal experiences during the wars, growing up, meeting his wife, family ties and shares Amateur Radio related experiences with his readers.*

*The stories that Les Volta tells always have some connection to Amateur Radio be it a character, a contact, an experience, sharing about Amateur Radio equipment or the hams he has met in his life as an Amateur Radio operator. You can contact Les at [lesvolta@cox.net](mailto:lesvolta@cox.net).*



## SKCC Members Honored

W1LIC...At the monthly meeting of QCWA Chapter 121 in Highlands County, Florida this week, two SKCC members were presented with certificates recognizing 50 years as licensed amateur radio operators. On the left is Kyle N4NSS (SKCC#3595) and on the right is Wes W1LIC (SKCC#1142S). Don W4CBS in the middle (not an SKCC member) received his for 60 years!

***Congratulations guys, quite an accomplishment but just wondering what significance we might drawn regarding the picture in the background and three of you, hmmm! Ha!***



## Homemade Keys

by P. J. N7PH, #12391

I have been a lifelong hobby machinist even before finding Amateur Radio in 1960 or so. I am fascinated by 'mechanisms' of all sorts. A couple years ago I became interested in various key variations regarding the way return force was applied, particularly magnetism. There were few keys using that method at the time ... at least according to Google. I came up with two key designs for my personal use that have turned out well. Before you ask; no, I will not machine one for you but you are free to make one yourself or have one made. Just give me credit for the design. I made four of the double lever keys and presented them to 'mentors' but only one of the straight keys.

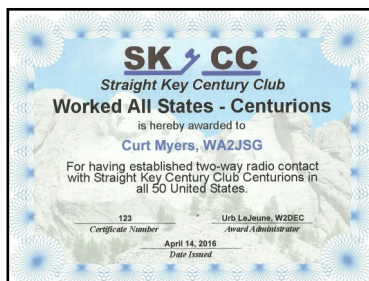
The bases of the keys were fabricated from bronze salvaged from the worn out steering gear bearings of a ship I was the Chief Engineer of during shipyard overhaul.



## Updating Your Membership Info

Having your correct membership information on the club website is easy. With many members searching for awards, the correct information on the web site can make things easier for everyone. When you move or change your call it is really quite easy to update this information. **Simply go to the home page for SKCC** and look on the left side; you'll see **"Update your member info,"** just click on that and you'll be asked to put in your call and SKCC number. Click the **"Retrieve My Info"** button and from there it is an easy matter to just follow the information on what and how to change your information...."on air name," "call change," "QTH address and city;" it's all very simple and easy to do.

Having the correct membership data is important and helps others in their quest for awards. No need to contact the board, it's a very easy and simple process.



## Poetry for CW

Mark G0NMY SKCC 15845

The click click clack  
from pounded brass  
the words develop extensive  
The heat of the tubes  
warms up the room  
when temperatures are receded

Deep into the night  
Morse code makes it's flight  
to detector diodes rectificated  
creates a mellow sound  
which is most profound  
like musical tunes lamented.

The crackle and pop all seem to stop  
our ears filter out most impressive  
The heterodyne rings, our speaker sings  
Our filter gets tuned and re-centred

Our wrists work the key most efficiently  
Messages and reports are replenished  
Greetings are passed  
with our pounded brass  
New friendships and contacts extended.

This simple tool needs no slide-rule  
two metal contacts stroke each other  
such a gentle touch produces so much  
than one would feel from the touch of your  
lover

This glorious Morse Code  
will never get old  
it just seems it keeps being re-invented  
Military once lost now renewed at no cost  
Security back up is the incentive.

This code that we know we set it to flow  
at speeds some find preventive.  
But QRS we know to start sending slow  
New contacts we'll give them incentive

For newcomers who yearn and then finally  
learn  
their first transmission so alluded  
their hand shakes with fright  
their sending is ripe  
but a contact is finally concluded.

The buzz that they feel can make their head  
reel with excitement and self satisfaction  
When finally they stand a Morse code old  
hand another Morse code addict Invented.

## Multi-multi "Seminar"

Randy N8KQ 8934s, Jeremy KD8VSQ 13072t and Ted K8AQM 1629s got together to discuss their favorite mode of operation; multi-multi which means multiple stations running at the same time with multiple operators...sorta like a "Field Day" but not in the "field!" At K8AQM (aka KS8KCC, K8XXX, also "guesting" as KD8VSQ, KE8CEW, W8KBW and NU8Z) there are five operating positions all running QRO (greater than 100 watts). At N8KQ (aka K8CGE) there are two stations running QRO. We discussed various antennas, rigs, amps and especially how to prevent interstation (intermod) interference. Interstation interference at Field Day is a major problem with many clubs but it can be eliminated even at running QRO...we know, we do it!

We all agreed the best part of operating multi-multi is the fun of operating with friends. So how do we get more SKC-Cers to operate this multi-multi mode...just ask, we'll help!





*Editor...The following is a story that appeared on Facebook and written by Steve N8CPA. I'd venture a very solid guess that this experience of "phantom cw" has happened to the majority of SKCCers who have been around the block a bit! It has happened and still often does to me...and no, it's not due to my age! I think you'll enjoy this.*

***Field Day's over and you're still hearing code. The following true story was rejected by the League. I hope you enjoy it.....N8CPA***

## **EI EI 0: A TRUE TALE OF AN ACTUAL FIELD DAY PHANTOM**

By Steve Stirling [Steve Stirling](#), N8CPA

Field Day was kind of ham radio Christmas for me and how I celebrated, when I was able. I loved the smell of generator exhaust in the morning, because it smelled like Field Day—as did the s'mores over the campfire after Saturday night dinner, amid the background noise of pileups in the radio tents. With age compounding the long-term effects of a childhood injury, Class A operation for me is a memory. You can consider the following recollection a kind of Field Day carol borne of my love for the event. It happened on the "Boxing Day" of such a celebration.

Field Day was over. There's no doubt about that, whatsoever. The trees were cleared of wires, the portable towers were down, the tents unpitched, all radio gear packed away and stowed, the pop-up camper folded down and hitched to the car. The port-a-potty was waiting for the vendor to truck it off on the following day.

I had been the site's chief brass-pounder. As we drove away from the cleared site, my head was still soaking in the brass zone, the mental artifacts of a weekend of intensive immersion in continuous waves.

I and others call it, Phantom Morse Syndrome. Just about any dedicated participant in CW contests knows what I'm talking about, maybe even some casual participants. If you spend a weekend swimming in such a brass feeding frenzy, you get so used to actively listening for a particular signal amid a dense sea of similar signals, your mind continues to passively listen for signal intelligence in ambient sounds for days afterward. Cardinals will sing, "Daaaah daaaah didididididididit!" Turn on a ceiling fan, your head will try to read the sound it makes. If you offer your dog a morsel, you'll try to read the wag of his tail as it bumps against a chair. To this day, I call certain doves X-ray doves because of their calls, "Coooo coocoo coooo." To all those sounds, you might respond with a mental, "AGN PSE." Maybe you'll pause and listen to whatever's making it, as if mesmerized until your wife looks at you strangely and asks what's wrong. For many, of whom I am one, it takes conscious effort to overcome.

As we drove away from the Field Day site that day, echoes of the sounds of pileups and contacts danced in my head, now joined by the suffused sound of the road surface singing a single, continuous note under the tires for the first mile or so, a pavement tuner-upper. Then after we entered the freeway, reached traffic speed and settled into our lane, I began to hear the beat frequency of the 2-axle car followed by the single-axle camper over the pavement expansion joints. To untrained ears, it's just bump bu-bump. But to my yet brass-soaked brain it was a repeated dit didit: EI EI EI EI. In the passenger seat next to me, my wife Chris, aka KC8DJO, heard only the rhythmic bump bu-bump, not the EI EI EI EI. She was lulled by the rhythm

of the sound into a well-earned post-Field Day nap. She folded back the seat and closed her eyes.

Poor Chris had done her lioness' share as part of the support crew, and I was going to owe her big time. I knew that all too well. After all, I had taken her away from the comfort of our airconditioned home for a hot weekend sleeping in our un-airconditioned camper. How she had missed her air conditioning! As she justly snoozed, I wondered how many newly released rom-com movie dates would I have to pay? Lest random sounds disrupt her slumber in the comfort of the Explorer's air-conditioning, I made sure all radios in the car were turned off. Amid such radio and marital silence, I drove on as my ear-conditioning listened to the sound of EI EI EI EI.

We were passing through semi-bucolic scenery on the fringes of the town, past some scattered farm fields, some horse and cattle pastures. I even saw a sheep or two. And I could swear it was just after I noticed a sign for a McDonalds at an upcoming exit that I heard an interruption to the pattern: EI EI 0—except the 0 was not a pattern of bumps. It was a cleanly keyed though rough tone, dah dah dah dah dah. Because I'm a brassist, not a musicologist, I can only estimate that it was about 850 Hz, somewhat raspy, but perfectly spaced for about 15 WPM. I'd give it RST 595.

I thought, huh? And I quickly answered myself, nah. I dismissed it as just a Field Day phantom, not real time aural input, because my head was still swimming in the brass sea. I drove on as my wife slept and the wheels continued to send EI EI EI EI. A mile later, I heard it again. ...EI EI 0.

This time, I was less certain of its spectral origins. It sounded so real, I almost asked Chris if she heard it. Then I considered how much interest I would stack on what I already owed her for the support she had provided over the weekend, if I interrupted her nap. I let her sleep as I drove and focused my ears to listen for the intermittent 0 amid the ...EI EI EI EI. Another mile later, I heard it again. ...EI EI 0.

This time, I ceased doubting that I had heard it. Keeping my main focus on the road, I looked at Chris out of the corner of my eye. I saw her eyes flutter open and look back at me suspiciously. She had heard it too, and it had awakened her. Uh-oh, I was in trouble, I thought. I was surprised when she only casually asked me, "Was that Morse code?"

"Yes, it was."

"Where's it coming from?"

"I don't know yet."

"Did you turn off the keyer before you put it away?"

"It can't be the keyer. It needs external power and a key to make Morse."

She asked, "What did it say?"

She was somewhat used to me reading movie Morse aloud. When we saw Hunt for Red October, I told her it was really a WLO beacon, not an order to sink a Soviet sub. And she remembered when I told her that her Epson printer signaled an empty paper tray with a Z. So she knew too well what a nerd she was living with.

I told her, "Zero. Nothing else. Just zero. Then it sends another zero maybe a minute later."

"If it's not the keyer, what could it be?"

"I don't know. I'll have to hear it a few more times to locate it, and it might take a while, because they're so far apart."

So we drove on and listened together for the 0 amid the ...EI EI EI EI.



Three miles and three 0's later, I thought I had located it. I told her,

"It sounds like it's in your footwell."

"There aren't any radios there, just my purse."

It wasn't just her purse, though. It was her travel purse, which I teasingly call, the Black Hole. All I know about it is that she uses it to carry a variety of boredom reliefs for when she supports my interests that don't really interest her. I neither know nor want to know what's in there, except that it was the apparent source of the 0 amid the EI EI EI EI sent by the wheels. "I don't think it's coming from there, but I'll check." She set her seat back in upright position and reached into the footwell. Just as she set the purse on her lap, we heard EI EI 0 again.

Now there was no doubt. It was definitely a signal from the Black Hole. As she set about unpacking it, I was reminded of the Paul Petersen novelty song, "She Can't Find Her Keys." I hyper-focused my eyes on the road and my ears on EI EI EI EI, trying not to see her portable treasures, because I really don't want to know what's in there.

She found the source of 0 at the very bottom of the Black Hole. As the wheels bumping over the expansion joints sent EI EI EI EI, they also had settled all the matter in that self-contained universe onto a single button of her handheld memory game.

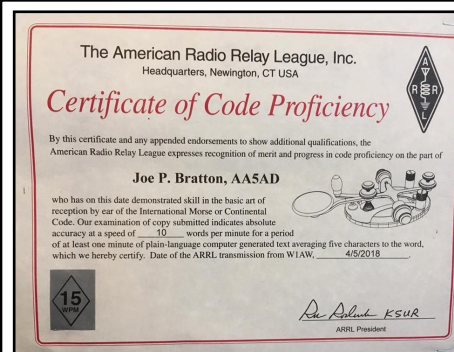
When she bought the game on close-out at Radio Shack she explained what an irresistible bargain it was. In fact, she explained that she bought it for the same reason she married me. I was, and remain, 50% off.

I don't know how many times she and I challenged each other with that game. But I had never heard that raspy game-over signal as 0 until that day. With no further input than the continuous press of that button, it sent intermittent "game over" signals that only Morse-trained ears would hear as 0, maybe only when wheels over expansion joints are sending EI EI EI EI. Or, maybe, that's just me.

She repacked the Black Hole, except for the game. She held that in her hand as she folded back the seat to resume her well-earned mobile nap.

Mystery solved, game over, I drove home amid radio, marital and game silence, the wheels sending a now uninterrupted EI EI EI EI.

***De ...[Steve Stirling](#) That incident happened fairly soon after I had rediscovered CW and was becoming a fledgling contest participant. I still experience the phenomenon, not so much after Field Day anymore, but still just as strong after Sweepstakes. I think the reason it's still strong after CWSS is the goal directed nature of the event. Working all sections can require deeper concentration to extract the fairly rare ones. The deeper the concentration, the more persistent the phantoms.***



## Congratulations!

Joe AA5AD #15454t posted this:

*My 15 WPM endorsement arrived this weekend!*

Well done Joe and now on for those endorsement stickers!

## The Good Old Days ...

...Must Have Been A Little Too Much Like WORK...

(Being the Epic Story of How I Made a Couple of Contacts in the Vintage Rig Weekend Sprint)

Ahh, a taste of the past ... I looked at the strange straight key setting atop the glowing, humming, and surprisingly warm Heathkit SB-100 in the early morning light of my broom-closet shack, and thought ... what's not to like (Photo #1). Well, I was soon to find out how "different" operating with a half-century-old radio was in comparison to the modern solid-state-press-a-button-and-it-does-almost-everything-for-you rig!



Photo #1

Lets step back just a day or two. I had visited the SKCC web site and noted that the upcoming Weekend Sprint, just two days away, placed an emphasis on operation with vacuum-tube gear. Well, that's one I hadn't tried for, oh, fifteen years. My mind immediately went to a (fairly impressive) stack of Heathkits sitting back in my radio room—the "green wall" I called it—and I wondered after all these years if something on that "wall" might actually still work. (The "wall" had grown a bit since that day in the mid-1970s when, as a kid, I took out my first bank loan for \$400 to buy a Heath SB-303 receiver kit. Now I had two sets of Heath transmitter/receiver PAIRS sitting there... but my eye went immediately to the SB-100 transceiver, figuring that after all these years, it might be easier to figure out how to operate ONE rig as opposed to TWO at the same time.)

So the SB-100 it was! Now just a word about this rig. This transceiver, patterned after the Collins KWM-2, goes back to the Christmas of 1965 when it was introduced; it remained in production until 1967. It is almost impossible to overstate Collins' influence on the history of ham radio. As Chuck Penson so eloquently put in in his Heathkit—A Guide to the Amateur Radio Products, when Heath saw a QST ad for the then-new Collins 75S-1, small and weighing in at only 20 pounds, it knew "it had seen the future ... and understood as clearly as a 40 over nine signal that the days of the big heavy radio were over." Their SB series was the result. The Heath SB-100 was subsequently upgraded to the SB-101 which was made until 1970, when it was replaced with Heath's last and best classic vacuum tube rig, the SB-102. These "sugar baker" rigs were a grand slam for Heath—some of the most popular devices in the history of amateur radio--and when the 102 was pulled from the market in 1975, to be replaced by solid state equipment, an era in ham radio operating with classic "valve" gear was pretty much at an end. Meanwhile, back at the shack...

My quest to fire up the SB-100 was stymied by the lack of a few "minor" items, namely a power supply, every single required cable, and an instruction manual! But ... aha! ... the "green wall" contained a Heath SB-600 speaker with an HP-23 series power supply inside of it—just the ticket for this rig, and ... my lucky day ... both appeared to actually work. Another two hours of searching in two different closets disgorged a huge tangle of cables – including the 11-pin 8-conductor octal power supply cable that I just couldn't live without-- and the original assembly manual. The Big Man upstairs was definitely with me!



So I plugged 'er all in and with trembling hand and bated breath turned the function switch to PTT, and ... miracle of miracles ... twenty vacuum tubes began to glow! After the usual half-hour warm-up for one of these things, I was reminded after all these years just HOW MUCH HEAT they emanated. Due to limited space, my Heathkits are stacked one atop the other, and there's no mistaking that I ought to consider better ventilation. So another time-out was

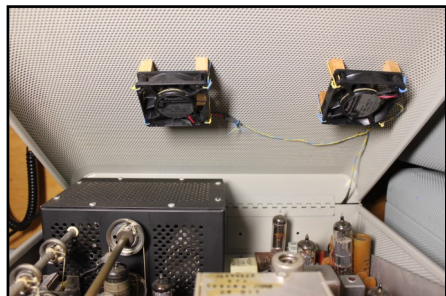


Photo #2

called, while I implemented a simple and very effective fix: I put two 12-volt computer fans inside the hinged top lid of the unit; see Photo #2. The shell of the transceiver is perforated throughout with little holes, so it was a simple matter to mount these fans with little pieces of wire through the holes, put an Anderson powerplug on the end, and plug it into my adjacent 12-v distribution panel. In a half-hour the transceiver had two internal fans which GREATLY enhanced ventilation.

Now all I had to do was plug in an antenna, a key, and a set of earphones, and I was set to go (keep in mind the contest was half-over by this time!!). I grabbed the coax cable, reached behind the rig ... and discovered that the original SB-100s did not have a standard SO-239 connector, rather an RF phono plug! So out came the parts box and the soldering iron, while another hour trickled by as I built an adapter for this. With an antenna now connected, I grabbed my usual headphones and plugged-in, anxiously awaiting my first signal. How did that work out?, you might ask. Not so well; apparently these old things used a high impedance headphone which terminated in a 1/4" mono plug, or something like that ... and I do remember, I had something like that once upon a time as a kid. So back to cobbling up a speaker cable.

Finally, I could see the light at the end of the tunnel ... I plugged in my straight key, hit the paddle just to see if things were alive, and ... YIKES. The guy who built this thing 50 years ago must have had a hearing problem; the sidetone could be heard five city blocks off, and would have put the average air raid siren to shame. Good grief, there must be an adjustment for this somewhere, and another hour plodding through the assembly manual confirmed that indeed there was ... referenced on page 80, a little trimmer capacitor inside the back of the rig on the audio circuit board! Geesh ... power it down, open it up again...

Finally, I was on the air. Just hit the ATU and work a few Q's ... oh, wait ... this thing doesn't HAVE an ATU, and my antenna was a non-resonant OCF dipole! So out came the MFJ antenna tuner, analyzer, and another handful of cables, while I worked out a solution for the frequency I wanted to operate on, and routed the ol' Heathkit through that! Then down through the checklist like learning to pilot a 737 for the first time: band switch set, check; main tuning dial set, check; meter switch to plate position, check; CW lever, counter-clockwise, check; mode switch to tune, check; milliamps to 50, check; meter to relative power, check; final loading to 50, check; final tuning below saturation point, check; CW level brought to an up-scale indication, check; driver pre-selector for maximum indication, check; final tuning to maximum indication, check; final loading to maximum indication, check; plate current at 250 ma with CW level set for maximum output, check; mode switch to CW, check; adjust CW level to half-scale grid current reading; check, ... you get the idea!

Now I had finally chuffed up to cruising speed, and was ready to actually make a contact. Let's just switch in that crystal filter ... oh wait, there isn't one. I'm stuck with 2.1 khz selectivity (at -6 db) and the filtering-out of the half-dozen signals I could hear at one time appar-

ently had to take place between the ears (the subsequent SB-101 allowed for front-panel selection of a 400 hz filter). Still, when I had completed my first contact, I felt like I had achieved something “not unbecoming men that strove with gods” (as Tennyson would have put it)!

Now lets have a quick look at the odd looking straight key (Photo #3) that I was



Photo #3

“testing.” This is one I’d be a-working on ... and if you don’t recognize an oil tank spark key, you’re probably not alone these days! Have a look at this screenshot (Photo #4) which shows the cover of *Morsum Magnificat* magazine from way back in the summer of 1990, and tell me that you can live without having one of those things! [Note: this incomparable magazine for the Morse enthusiast ceased publication in 2004 after 89 issues.] The caption says pretty much what there is to know about this key: it is an early French spark key, maker unknown, in which “the contacts were immersed in oil to suppress the spark and to provide better cooling.” Naturally we don’t need this sort of cooling capability for modern-day CW, but I found the design appealing, and was compelled to spend more-than-a-few hours at the lathe to build something similar (see Photo #5 for a closer view). It

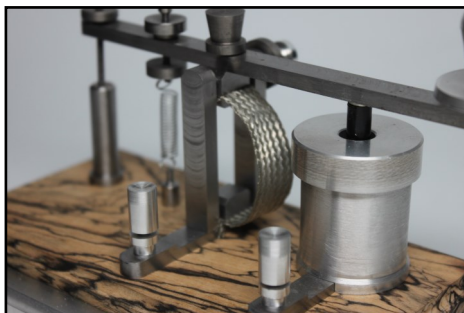


Photo #5

worked quite nicely, if you don’t mind that British wrist-up-in-the-air

style of keying. Now if I can just get my hands on some castor oil to add to the tank ... that would really make my QSOs official!! Of course I still have to actually FINISH the key ... polish the metal, and put a coat of something on that beautiful piece of King-and-Queen ebony.

So there you have it ... I actually managed to make a dozen or so contacts after all of that effort. After too much water under the bridge, going back to tube gear seemed like, well, learning to drive for the first time. My first car was a 69-Beetle, and running a classic rig seemed like grabbing the steering wheel in the days before power steering, and with a stick-shift to boot!

But when the next vintage-rig WES rolls around, I’m going to try to do a little better. Lemme see ... if I can succeed in getting my Heath SB-300 receiver (10 tubes, I think) on the air with its SB-400 transmitter (13 tubes), run that through the SB-610 monitor scope (5 tubes), AND use the SB-630 station console (2 tubes), I’ve got, like, 30 tubes, and if I can figure out how to run that “rock bound” ... oh, baby, we’re getting into some serious multipliers now...

And one little thing for a final: the smell of a vintage rig in operation ... hot tubes, warm capacitors and wax and phenolic with a hint of dry hot dust, boy, if I could just bottle an after-shave that smells like that.....**73, Ted WB3AVD #392**

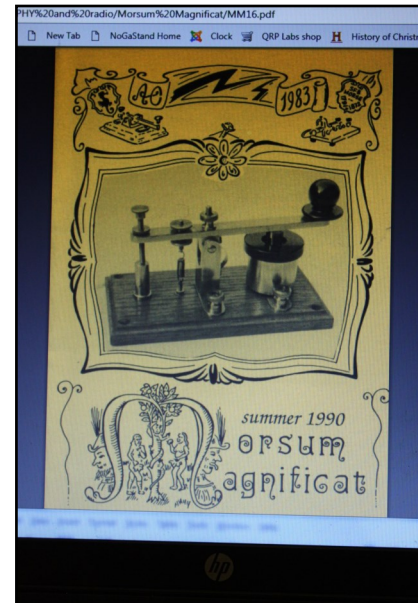


Photo #4

## A Beautiful and Unique Key



Here is key that will make “sweet music” when used. Checkout the pictures showing the construction of this unique key belonging to Mark KM4APH.

*Here is a special treat. As I've mentioned before, I like a single lever paddle and I really like using it as a cootie or sideswiper. I reached out to Kelly Klaas (K7SU) and asked him if he would mind making me a cootie that looked like a Violin. He thought it sounded like a fun project so he said yes. Normally I wait until I have it in hand before I share a photo but this was too beautiful to wait so I'm going to share a couple of pictures that he sent me. This key will probably be available to purchase on his web-site soon. He even hollowed out the base so he could fill it with lead to give it some weight. It even has musical notes on both sides of the lever arm. I can't wait to receive it and make beautiful music with it...73, Mark KM4APH*



Be sure to checkout Mark's key collection on later pages here in The Rag Chew. Mark has a wonderful collection of keys of all sorts and is an excellent photographer. It is also very obvious that Kelly Klass K7SU is a master craftsman in making keys. Several of Kelly's keys are presented on the following page.





## K7SU Keys

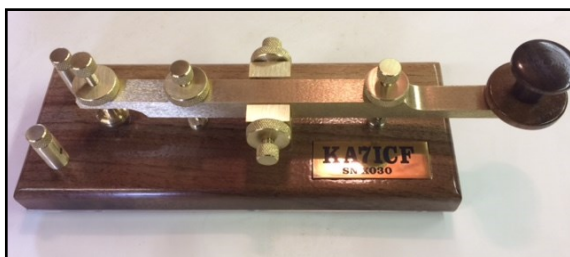
It's always fun to see what keys are available; we all know about the big commercial enterprises making keys but it's also important to "see" and hear about the smaller enterprises making very fine keys. No endorsement is made here just a presentation of beautiful keys being made and offered to the CW ops of the hobby. Here are just a few of the keys made by K7SU and some of the features of these keys. For more information just "Google" K7SU as I did and follow the links.



Brushed Brass Camelback



Polished Brass



Brushed Brass with walnut base and knob



Polished Brass



Bottom with plastic plate

### ***KEY'Features of these keys...***

- \* Completely hand made by a CW OP, K7SU.*
- \* ALL brass parts are C360 brass.*
- \*Base and knob of African Padauk hardwood and worked to a smooth finish.*
- \*NO SPRING! Adjustable tension with NEODYMIUM MAGNETS!*
- \*Silver plated contacts.*
- \*No Bearings...Adjustable trunions like the classic J-38 style vintage keys.*
- \*Grooved underbase with clear plastic plate.*
- \*Soft plastic feet to avoid slipping.*
- \*Customized, laser-engraved brass plate with your call sign and serial number.*

## Ode to K3ACF

You have probably heard me say: "CW is the most fun and the most rewarding mode of Ham Radio." It is true. I have tried every mode there is except JT9 and I always come back to CW.

I first learned Morse code from a railroad man who lived across the road. He was Arthur McCray better known as "Mac". Of course he knew the American code which was used on the railroads with the old sounders clicking away. I still have the J47 Key that Mac had in the MS Pennsylvania railroad tower on Maple Avenue in Corry, Pennsylvania..

After I got out of the service I found I had a neighbor who was a Ham Radio operator. His name was Al. He was a novice at the time, with the call letters "KN3ACF", and he used to operate CW almost every evening. Al's Radio setup consisted of an ARC5-T19 Military Surplus transmitter with a Crystal Control oscillator plugged into it. and a BC221 receiver covering 80 meters. This equipment sat on the top shelf of an old roll top desk. The operating position sported a surplus J-38 key and a pad of paper. Al's antenna was an 80 meter folded dipole stretched between two home made 50 foot towers Al welded up from old well casings. The antenna was fed with 300 ohm twin lead and a Barker and Williamson balun coil mounted on the ham shack wall.

Each Evening when I finished eating supper I would look over at Al's house. If the lights were on in the North West second floor bedroom I knew Al was operating. I would go on over and sit on a stool and listen to Al talk to the world on CW. Of course this was a different code than I had learned from old Mac. Al explained that Ham radio used the international Morse Code which was the same all over the world. I bought an Armature Radio Handbook and started studying for my Novice license. I also built a one tube code practice oscillator and started to learn the code. Most evenings Al would take a coffee break about 9:00 pm and we would adjourn to the kitchen. Ann, Al's wife would always have some goodies to go with the coffee. When Coffee was done we would set up the code practice operator. We would pick an old magazine like Saturday Evening Post and I would send text to Al for a while then we would switch and it was my turn to copy. When coffee break was over it was back to the ham shack for more fun. After a few weeks I found I was beginning to copy some of what Al was receiving from other stations.

By October I found my code speed good enough to take the Novice test. This was administered by another Ham, Gene W3JIO. To my surprise I passed the test and on November 27<sup>th</sup> I got my first license as KN3CKO. I was on the air within a week with a cobbled up Milen Exciter and a SX99 receiver. Al was at work when I went on the air so I had everything ready and warmed up so when Al's upstairs light came on that evening I called my old friend for the first time.

Al and I studied together for the general test and by the following summer we both passed the test the same day. Soon we were both involved in upgrading our stations so we could work other bands. Al built converters for his surplus equipment and I purchased a World Radio Labs Globe scout. Al got a pair of used 304TH tubes from WBEN television station and we each built 1000 watt linier amplifiers together.

K3ACF was what was known in Telegraph circles as a "Good Fist", one who sent code with good spacing between words and always at a smooth pace, also known as "Arm Chair Copy." Every Ham Operator waits for the day that someone says to him:

“Ur a good Fist.” Al’s speed when I first met him was about 9 words per minute. When we took the General test together we were both doing over 13 WPM. Al and I both used J-38 keys which you have to really push it to make 13 WPM. The average speed of day to day rag chewing was around 10 WPM and it still is today. DX chasers And Contesters use high rates of speed but Old timers like me stick to 9 or 10 WPM. Al was the greatest CW man I ever knew. He was also a man’s man and a family man. AL became a silent key in his ‘60s from Parkinson’s disease. He was greatly missed by all who knew him. K3ACF was the best man I ever knew, and the best CW man I ever worked.

When I get to heaven I’m sure God will have a CW station for me all warmed up and waiting. Some evening when I am sitting there in my cozy operating chair sending a CQ. I hope I hear the answer “K3CKO DE K3ACF K.”

Bob K3CKO #13811s



Picture of the house from the top of the new tower...73, Randy N8KQ  
.....so.....*When you work up a sweat from there can you “swan dive” to the pool?...editor*



Speed-X, what can I say. The straight key on the left is the key I used as a novice back in '69. It was given to me by my first Elmer and has tons of QSO's on it. Just wondering what everyone used as their first key?...73, Bill WD5IAH

I am guessing I am not the first person to think of this, but old USB cables make a handy wedge adaptor  
....73, Luke K6LO





## Photos From May Brag



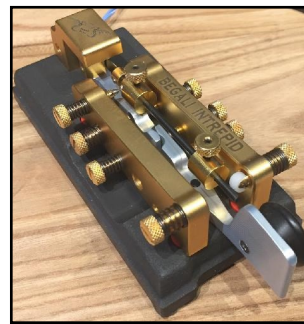
Struggled again with poor propagation and fine weather tempting me outside. Brag count of 3 consisted of N5IR/Bill, KA3LOC/Ric and K0RO/Ralph. Didn't realise that Ric was the bonus station till just now !  
73 John / G0RDO / SKCC



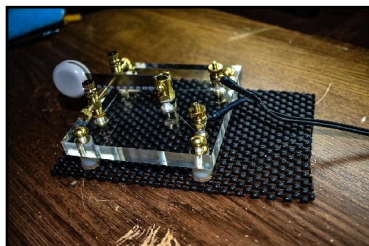
Good Month..... Tnx everyone for helping with my S Quest. Only about 30 to go...  
73, Greg wa3gm



A visit to Dayton and the SKCC booth reduced my brag numbers. I CAN brag about meeting the "BRAG MASTER" WA2JSG, in person at Dayton. What a super guy he is. The time I spent at the SKCC booth was the highlight of my Dayton experience! Here is Curt logging in SKCC members who stopped by the booth. 73, Al N4OW



I picked up a new bug at Xenia this year. Piero Begali personally guaranteed that it will increase my monthly brag count by 85 percent. ...no not really, but it is a nice key :-). Marty N9SE



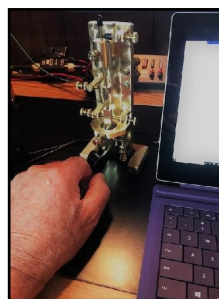
I had no idea I accumulated this Brag count; sure seemed like the bands were dead or all but useless for most of the month. Spent lots of time jockeying keys on and off the desk..Feeling guilty now with some I won't use (Begali Sculpture Swing and GHD GF-501A....both now for sale). Trying to make room for a new HB cootie or three, but even some of these may be surplus, such as this el-primo Acrylic job pictured below. Mike K5MP



Band conditions seem to be improving at 23:00 in AZ. Many new stations being heard.73, WB9CAC



This is my first brag report. It has been a pleasure getting to know some of you. I look forward to working many more SKCC members in the coming years. The photo shows my CW study partner and 13 year old son, Tyler (KI7FUO). The noise at our home is often S7-S9. We like to take the KX3 and a simple wire to a nearby park where we can find more favorable local RF conditions. He can only work 40M CW right now until he gets his general (this summer?) 73 de N2OW



Usually have brags, but seldom submit. Will do better. Thanks for the qos. 73, Jim K5TSK

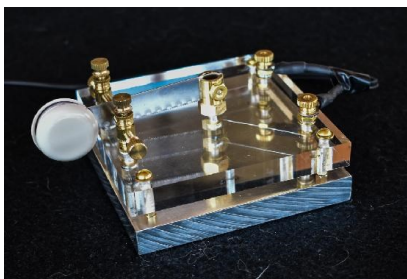


Thanks to all who participated in the May Brag program. Band conditions may not have been the best but there were a few nice openings. I really enjoyed being the Bonas Station. I was able to work a lot of new members and explain the Brag program. Even picked up a few new T's & S's for Sx4. More importantly, I was able to help others achieve their goals. Everyone have a great summer. 73 & God Bless. Ric, KA3LOC



Thanks a bunch. My temporary station in Rockport MA. 73, Dave KB1WOD

## Pics and Chat From June Brag



I read a report from the NASA Solar Cycle research team in which they said we may be experiencing a premature minimum in Solar Cycle 24..that normally would suggest propagation could soon be on the rise. I sure hope so. In between useless gaps in the propagation in June I idled my time creating new home brew cooties. I still have my Begali Sculpture for sale, and now I might have more home brew models than I have room for. Here's one of them. Also I posted one last month, take a peek...Mike K5MP

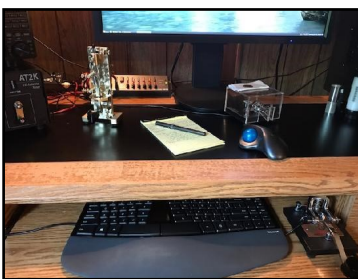


Lotsa work around the ole home-stead kept me away from the shack.

Those I had a chance to work this last month, Thanks!!

73, Rick N8XI

SKCC, the KEY to Amateur Radio



I've been thinking about all the times when I changed keys, or decided to try leftie bug sending. It was always you guys who I felt okay about trying it on. Thanks to all for being there. 73, Jim K5TSK



First time monthly BRAG entry....so much fun!! 73, Pete KD2OMV



Had a great month. 185 CW contacts, 178 with SKCC members, 88 brags. Got my "S" 6/15. Thanks to all.  
Mike KK7H 12301S



SKCC is the best. Shown here is my partner in CW crime, KI7FUO. He had a nice QSO with a couple SKCCers on 40M. Tyler gets the most out of that tech license...73, Ryan N2OW



Glad to have most of my contacts on 10 and 6 meters. I spend my time on 10 when it's open. Gotta enjoy it while we have it!...73, Wes W1LIC



Busy month so not may Q's... I did however get my S this month!!!  
73, Greg WA3GM



## Angola, IN Swap 2018

de Ken N8KR

It may be small but wherever hams gather, SKCC is usually present. This year was no exception at the Angola swap but we were missing our good friend, Mark – KK9U – SKCC 3818T who became a silent key in July. Mark had such a presence at the Angola Hamfest that many in attendance were asking where he was! Yet, we move forward without Mark and continue to enjoy our hobby and SKCC, and maybe even appreciate and value more our friendship of fellow SKCC members. 10 total SKCC members were in attendance and, at this small swap, if there was a group of people chatting together, it was the SKCCers!



The Angola swap always occurs during the August WES. Not only was it a good opportunity to remind each other to get on the air for the event, it also afforded the opportunity to operate WES mobile on the 45 minute drive to and from Angola. Josh, W9HT, has a Reese bumper hitch mount for his hamsticks on his truck. So I let him drive so I could try out 40 meters on his recent purchase of an

Ed – WA9BBN (17763T), Rose – KA9GKE (17764), Carl – K9LA (14663), Ken – N8KR (7559S), Marv – K9VPL (13419), Josh – W9HT (7474T), Bert – K8HLQ (17569), Mark – AA9MU (15519), and Larry – K8EJU (44).

Not pictured: Robert – KB9IVA (3612)

Icom 706. So, if you worked me that morning you'll understand why there might have been a few extra dits with my sending! (I like to blame Josh's driving while he likes to blame my sloppy fist!).



Mark – KK9U #3818T SK



## JJRadio

### Rig Control and Monitoring Program

By Jim Shaffer KE5AL #12776S



I don't know how often I've heard blind amateur operators say something like, "The rig is somewhat accessible. It will speak the frequency and mode." Now how many of you would buy a radio that would give you only the frequency and mode? Not to mention that you must get this information using speech, while you're trying to listen to what's going on on the band!

There is a program that seeks to solve these problems, at least for a few radios. This program is JJRadio. It runs on Microsoft Windows 7 and above. In addition, JJRadio was developed to be used by blind hams using screen reading software, and works especially well with a Braille display. For example, using JJRadio with my Kenwood TS-590SG, I can get immediate information about the frequency, VOX on/off, which VFO is in use, and the RIT and XIT offsets right when the program comes up. Much information is also available with a few keystrokes. I can turn

the tuning knob and watch the frequency change on the Braille display.

At present, JJRadio supports the Kenwood TS-590S and SG, the Kenwood TS-2000, the Elecraft K3, the Icom IC9100 and the Flex 6300. I've also successfully used it with an Elecraft KX2, so it will likely work with other Elecraft radios as well. It has also been used with other Kenwood transceivers, although it won't use as many features of those other rigs. You can read the current JJRadio documentation at <http://www.jjshaffer.net/JJRadioReadme.htm>. You can download and use the program for free from my web page at <http://www.jjshaffer.net>.

Getting back to my TS-590SG, if I hit the tab key from the meter and frequency display, I can read and change the operating mode. For the rest of this discussion, I'll set the frequency to 7050 KHz, and the mode to CW. Another tab gets me to the autotuner fields. I see that the tuner is off, which is what I want, since I'm using an external tuner. A couple more tabs and I see my speed is set to 20 wpm, and the carrier level is 50. There are many other fields available.

However, rather than having to access every field by tabbing around the screen, JJRadio contains a "Fields" menu which lists the available fields alphabetically, so the blind operator doesn't need to know just where they are on the screen, or how many tabs to hit. I'm sure many of you reading this article are probably saying to yourself, well why not just click on the field you want? With most screen reading programs that is possible, but not very convenient for a blind user. We generally prefer using keystrokes to get where we want.

So what's this "Fields" menu? If I bring up the menu, easily done with Alt-F, I see the screen fields listed alphabetically, "agc", "agc level", "ant", ..., "n.b.", "notch", .... If I want to know the power level setting, I can go to the "Fields" menu, type a "p", and see that I'm at "power", so I hit enter, and there is the power, 100. If, after hitting the "p" from the "Fields" menu, I arrow down, I see "preamp", and I can go to that field to see if the pre-amp is on or off, and change it if needed.

It sure would be nice though to be able to access the memories, and give them names the way most operators do. That's very possible with JJRadio. You can read all about using memories in the documentation, but at least for the supported radios, it is possible to create and use memories by name without having to memorize which memory number is which. So what's this about memorizing memory numbers? The speech guidance for my TS-590SG will tell me the memory number and frequency, but not that it represents the 20 meter PSK frequency, for example.

I often hear blind hams say that you don't really need the menus, since the one's your interested in can be set up once by a person with sight, and then left alone. But gee, I just paid \$1300 or so for this radio, and it would be nice if I could use it's features. JJRadio makes it simple for the blind ham to use the menus on the supported radios. The menus are shown with their descriptive text, and the possible values likewise.

So how were the supported radios chosen? The supported Kenwood rigs are probably the most popular radios owned by blind people, at least for the HF bands. Kenwood has done a good job of integrating speech into their radios across the board, and thus are the most popular among blind hams. The other radios were chosen mainly because I had access to them to develop software on. Since I try to support as many features of a radio as I think blind folks will use, I need access to the radio for testing.

I do want to say a word here about the Flex 6300 radio support. That support includes a very usable Braille pan adapter. This has made my Flex my go to radio. Flex makes a software library available for use by other software programs, and it includes pan adapter and waterfall data. The Braille pan adapter I've implemented doesn't give you the resolution of a visual pan adapter, but I am able to use it quite well with my 40 cell Braille display.

JJRadio also contains a logging feature, which I use, although most of the blind hams I know use the more popular N3FJP or N1MM loggers, if they're logging with a computer. The JJRadio logging facility let's you access most fields of the default log format by a single key-stroke, so it's handy to use once you memorize the keystrokes. It will also export contacts to an ADIF format file.

I hope this has given you an overview of JJRadio, what it is, and how it can make amateur radio more enjoyable for the blind operator.

### What Is it?

While I'm sick of commercial air travel, one little escape from the madness is the exhibits they have in San Francisco airport. I just returned from my latest trip there. The current exhibit is old-time radio. Love it! One piece struck me as particularly interesting for this crowd. This old straight key is unlike any I'd seen before. The inscription identifying it simply says:

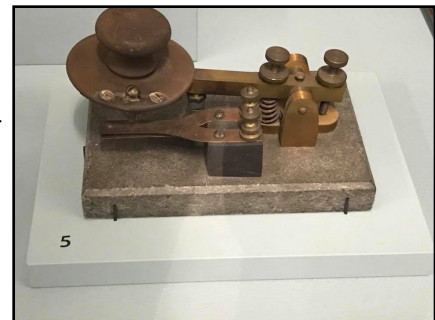
Telegraph key c. 1900

maker unidentified

possibly United States

brass, copper, phenolic plastic

Persham Collection of Early Electronics

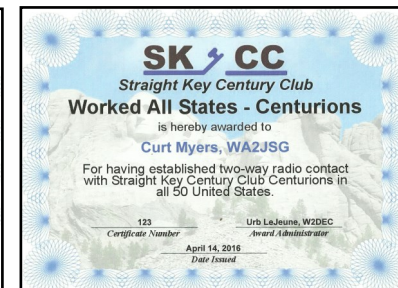
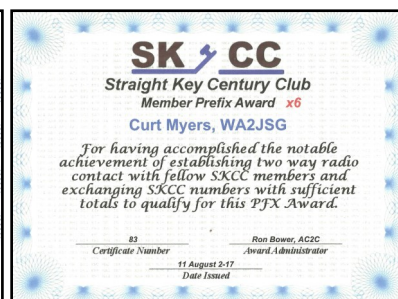


It appears the lever itself is unwired, instead pressing the strips on the right of the fist together. It appears to be a homebrew unit, perhaps cannibalized from a commercial key.

VY 73 de Glenn K3PP SKCC #17168

## SKCC Awards Programs

There are at least 18 different SKCC awards you can work toward and many have additional markers of achievements to add to the available awards. The awards are quite attractive and are downloaded to your computer for printing as pdf files at no cost to you. Thanks to Curt WA2JSG #3018s, you can see some of the awards Curt has collected as an SKCC member. The SKCC Logger program from Ron AC2C #2748s, makes tracking your progress for some of these awards very easy and there are other logging programs on our web page to help



Here are just a few of Curt's awards

track awards too. Each award can also have addition endorsements; note those on Curt's K3Y and his prefix awards. You can meet the requirements for the awards through your SKCC QSOs and use the same QSO for different awards as you're enjoying the rag chew or operating event. We all like shack wallpaper and these fit right in with your SKCC operating, come join the fun! Grab an award!



## Freeware

5 Useful programs are available as Freeware\* to the Amateur Radio community courtesy of K2RFP Dick. (SKCC # 2099T NAQCC # 2049 GORC # 428) <http://www.qrz.com/db/k2rfp>. Check these out as they are useful for chasing those many SKCC awards.



## VK5PF's Keys and Thoughts on CW

*Editor...ran across this on Face Book and on John's web site (VK5BJE.com)...Nice keys and great thoughts on cw.*

"Here are my two morse keys. The key immediately below is the Begali Blade. This is now my shack key, replacing my **K4VIZ** Camel Back. I purchased my key from *RF Solutions* in VK4. Initially, I needed to consciously have a maximum speed in my head as the key encouraged me to race. It is smooth and very quiet. It is a work of art and beautifully made and is great to use"...vk5pf #18570

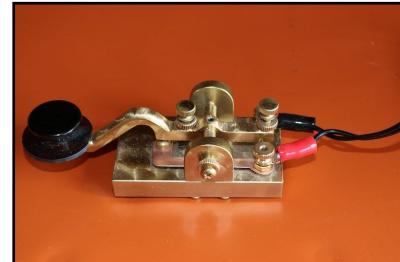
### Thoughts on CW

#### Why Morse Code using a hand key?

When I obtained my advanced call in 1977, sending and receiving morse code in plain language, at ten words a minute, was part of the licence requirements. Like many new amateurs I learned the code, but did not learn any of the techniques for establishing a contact. And voice over the air was magic! I did have a few contacts from time to time but was never really serious. Morse code became more attractive in the late seventies when novice stations came on the air following examination in sending and receiving plain language morse code at five words per minute. Since learning the code the old-fashioned way in the 1970s, my understanding of teaching and learning has progressed. It is instructive to look at two publications and examine the content of each. Remember there were no computers in the 1970s, or at least not in the average home. The latest technology for a learner of morse code was a cassette recorder and morse code tapes from the *Wireless Institute of Australia* (WIA), or listening to morse code practice sessions on the amateur bands or real contacts, or commercial morse code traffic, also on air. I listened to the tapes so many times I could almost remember them by heart, or in learning language 'journalise' them.

My aim was not to learn the code. I already know the code. But I wanted to change my approach to improving my skills and do not want to write anything down (letter by letter) at the time of copying a message. I want to use my head! In other words I want to be able to write down in my log, at minimum, the other operator's call-sign and signal report and provide my name, signal report and call-sign to her/him. I wanted to up-skill in the same way as one might approach learning music or a new language. To assist me meet this goal I chose a program by IZ2UUF, Davide, which provides plenty of resources to assist me meet my goals. I use the Koch method of copying in my head letters, numbers and punctuation, at 20 words per minute. The program runs on Android devices and I have a small tablet. The first two letters are K and M. When you know these at at least 95% accuracy you add in another letter. In learning theory terms I am aiming for *deep* learning rather than *surface* learning. Surface learning is most commonly understood to be similar to cramming for an exam. When you walk out of the exam room most of the learning goes. I have heard so many amateurs say that or something similar to me when discussing morse code and their trauma at trying to master it!

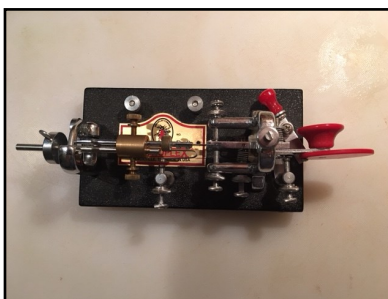
Deep learning changes the person. *Deep* learning is often *over-learning*. What you learn becomes second nature to you, for example, riding a bicycle or driving a car. I was always impressed by morse code operators who could converse with a key and speak to someone at the same time. I recommend ten minutes a day for IZ2UUF's program increasing to about half an hour when you are advancing. I set each learning practice run to five minutes, so for half an hour there are six repeats or variations, making up the session. The new letters and punctuation are introduced to the learner based on the apparent difficulty of the letter.



## Taming the Wild “Bug”

The most common complaint from would-be bug users is, “it’s too fast, how can I slow it down?” There are many ways and suggestions and here are a few.

Note it is small brass tube with two holes drilled the size of the existing rod and one for a same size piece of rod.



There are two holes drilled for set screws allowing the extension rod to move and be used to control the speed of the dits. This bug damper will slow the dits to 5 wpm.

Here is a quick and easy tamer from Pete WB2QLL

*“Neat topic, indeed I have been using bug tamers I designed many years ago. The picture shows it attached to the end of a TAC Co. bug, which is known as a speedy bug. Unfortunately I am not known as a speedy telegraphist. All this is*

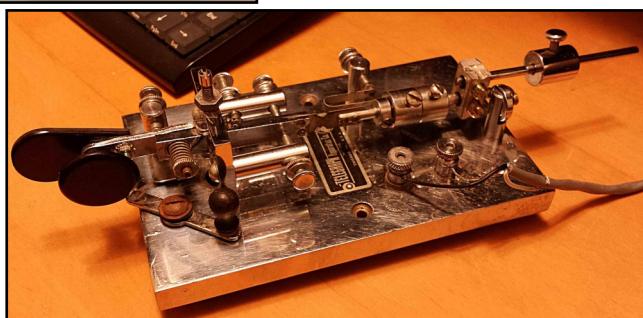
*– and you can blow up the end to see it more clearly – is a section of grounding bus bar and a chrome rod from the handle of some kitchen utensil bought at Dollar Tree.*

*A conventional Vibroplex type weight is placed on the new rod. It takes less than five minutes to build. I just use a cutoff saw to make a section of bus bar and section of chrome rod and fit them together. The bus bar is part of the junk box of anyone who does electrical work, and can be bought at any U.S. home center or hardware store. Looks presentable, too, especially if you polish the edges better than I did.*

*Of course one could just drill and thread a few holes in a piece of bar stock but this is easier and faster. A knitting needle can be used in place of the chrome rod. If you use a right angle rod (like an allen wrench) you can have the weight vertical which might be useful for space considerations. As shown the key runs at 15 wpm and handles very well. The bus bar section is vertically disposed in the picture but can be horizontal if you wish, makes no difference.*

*I don’t like adding weight to a bug, makes it clumsy to handle.”*

Another version of a tamer is shown here; basically a brass tubing fitted over the existing pendulum and extending out with weights attached. This tamer would involve a bit more drilling. Two different sizes of brass tubing could be used; one to fit over the existing rod and then a small one fitting into the far end so the regular Vibroplex weights could slide on.







This is the commercial version of a tamer made by Vibroplex. I'm not sure it is still available but I have seen them for say on the web and at hamfest occasionally. Note the weight is vertical and the shaft provides room for plenty additional weight.

The tamer below is also a commercially available unit and is sold on the internet. The yellow cone has several holes in the end where weights are placed as needed. The price is around \$10.00.

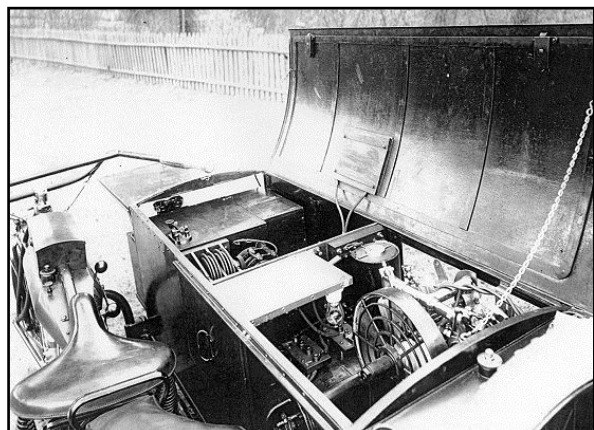
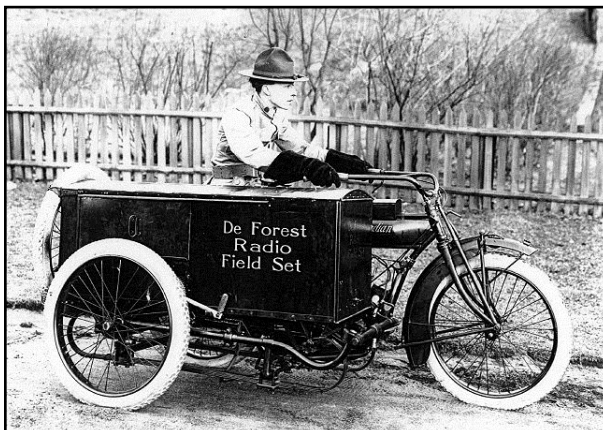
There is no doubt other tamers by others have made, these are just a few I know of. YouTube has several examples available for viewing.



## Could this Be the First Mobile?

Can you imagine a spark gap mobile on a 1913 Indian motor cycle? de Rich K8UV #2250t

*This was sent along by Rich K8UV; several questions come to mind, does it have a "mobile" antenna, where is the key and does the operator have to sign as a portable....who would know what that would mean back then?*





## K8NP's Variation on a Lightweight 2L 20m Yagi

In a previous issue of the Rag Chew the basic construction of this antenna was given as a yagi built upon "Crappie poles" using wire taped to the poles as the elements. But what if you want a more permanent installation but still wanted lightweight turning with a TV rotor?



*Driven and 1:1 balun*



Neil, K8NP #6150 took-up the task and here is his variation on the yagi. Using the measurement data below Neil scrounged pvc and aluminum to build the antenna. Instead of taping wire for elements Neil used #12 hard drawn copper "inside" the pvc for the elements. The pvc was a bit short and the elements extend about 1 ft beyond. Sag is not an issue with hard-drawn copper and even if some sag happens it doesn't change the swr. The ends of the pvc are plugged and holes drilled in the bottom of the pvc for drainage.



*Wire protruding from the pvc*

Neil lives in Florida and has the antenna mounted on a "Hazer" and lowers it to roof line when heading north for the summer.

This antenna is basically from the design found here:

[http://5tx.de/load/ham\\_radio/20m\\_2ele.nec](http://5tx.de/load/ham_radio/20m_2ele.nec)

The following is the "technical data" for construction:

Boom length: 1.75 aluminum tubing 11.75 feet

Four fiberglass crappie poles 16.5 each

1 piece 10 ft x 1.75 schedule 40 gray pvc pipe (later to be cut in-half (5ft) and then sliced on a ban saw, now it's 4 half pipes 5 ft long)

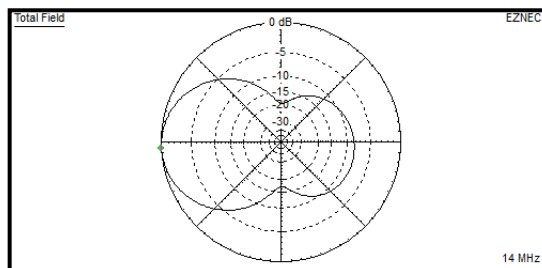
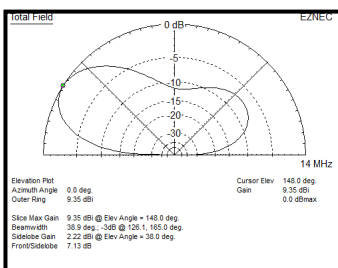
2 u-bolts to fasten elements to the boom

1:1 balun to feed the driven element

SWR: 1.25-1.8 across the 20m band (driven maybe cut for lowest SWR at desired frequency reflector 5% longer)

Gain: 9.35dbi at centered frequency, 30 ft height (according to EZNEC)

Power handling: KW easy (the DLs used an Alpha at 1.5 KW!)



Weight: about 12 lbs when assembled

## Monroe, MI Hamfest

Tucked midway between Detroit and Toledo on I-75 is Monroe, MI and the annual “on Father’s Day” Monroe Hamfest. It’s about 15 miles each way so very easy for amateurs in southeast Michigan and northwest Ohio to find their way to the hamfest. Since it is on Father’s



Day who can tell Dad he can’t go on his “special” day? It’s not a huge fest only about 300-500 attend but it’s a friendly fest.

A group of SKCCers from the Adrian-Tecumseh, MI area setup for sales and eyeball chats. No keys just “rag chewing” was to be the order of the day. The weather was miserably hot for us Yankee types... over 90 F and lots of humidity so the two pop-ups, extra chairs and cold water were really welcome!

A total of 22 SKCCers signed in during the event and a group picture

was scheduled and regularly announced for a 10:30 photo op. The trouble was, by 10:30 due to the heat and humidity most had cleared out so our group photo only represented 9 of the 22 who signed in! Regardless, those of us who hung around for the photo and the great rag chews had a great time. Lots of “fleas” were purchased and gear also sold so the Monroe Hamfest will go down as a very successful event. Pictured in the group photo are:



Front row L-R:

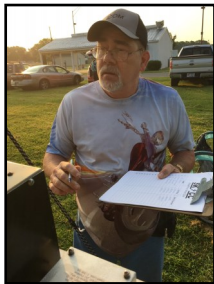
Greg KE8CEW 15805t, Gary W8GMD 18633, Rick N8XI 15024s

Back row L-R:

Wes AC8JF 10115, Rich K8UV 2250t, Tom N8ZI 2856, Larry KA8HFN 2046s, Bill KD8TTM 11614, Jeremy KD8VSQ 13072t



## The Gang at the Monroe Hamfest



Tim K8TJ 3667



Bill KD8TTM 11614



Gary W8GMD 18633



Denny WE8Z 3172



Jeremy KD8VSQ 13072t



Ken N8KR 7669s



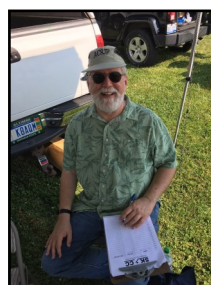
Lee N8LJ 9954t



Stan AC8W 2813



Ken K8KIC 2938t  
Neil K8NP 6150



Wes AC8JF 10115



Max W8KBW 17557



Paul KW1L 10700



Jan K1ND 6099t



Rick N8XI 15024s



Greg KE8CEW 15805t



Mike W8RF 1853c



Tom N8ZI 2856



Steve N8NM 3173



Dave KB8ECG 10169



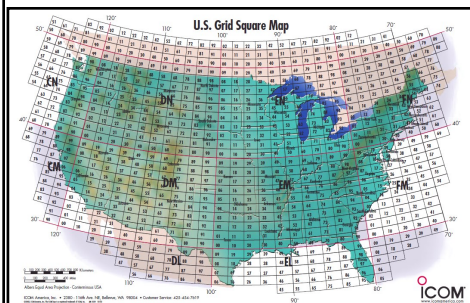
Brian KG8CO 6362



Larry KA8HFN 2046s



## First SKCC QSO Party October 6-7



*This is a reminder of the upcoming SKCC QSO Party event scheduled for October 6-7. The complete rules were published in the June Rag Chew and are on the SKCC homepage but for a quick run-down the rules are as follows:*

**1. Object:** For Amateur Radio CW operators worldwide to exchange information with SKCC members worldwide (SKCC members work anyone and non SKCC members work SKCC members) on any band **except 60m, 30m, 17m**

**and 12m.**

**2. Date and Event Period:** Starts on Saturday October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 18:00 UTC and ends on Sunday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 18:00 UTC. Event period is 24 hours with no operating time limits.

### **3. Entry Categories (All categories are CW mode only):**

**3.1 Single Operator :** The use of spotting assistance or automated, multi-channel decoders is permitted.

**3.1.1 QRP** 5 watts or less

**3.1.2 Low Power** (100 watts or less)

**3.1.3 High Power** (Over 100 watts)

**3.2 Multi-operator, Single Transmitter :** The use of spotting assistance or automated, multi-channel decoders is permitted.

**3.2.1 QRP** 5 watts or less

**3.2.2 Low Power** (100 watts or less)

**3.2.3 High Power** (Over 100 watts)

**3.3 Unlimited:** Any combination of transmitters, receivers, operators and use of spotting assistance or automated, multi-channel decoders is permitted. All transmitters and receivers must be co-located. All transmitters must claim the highest power level used on any one transmitter.

**3.3.1 QRP** 5 watts or less

**3.3.2 Low Power** (100 watts or less)

**3.3.3 High Power** (Over 100 watts)

**3.3.4 Unlimited class operations** may only have one operator per band at any given time.

### **4. Event Exchange and Calling**

**4.1.1** The exchange must include: RST, SPC, Name and four digit Grid Square (ie: EN41) *NOTE: SKCC member number is optional and not required unless you wish to use the QSO toward SKCC award credit. In that case, both parties must have and exchange SKCC member numbers and must conform to all SKCC rules for valid exchanges.*

**4.1.2** SKCC Members calling CQ should identify themselves as SKCC members by calling. CQ **SKQ** de call sign.

**4.1.3** Non-SKCC stations calling CQ for SKCC members should identify themselves as non-members by calling CQ **NSK** de call sign.

**4.1.4** Stations operating from multiple grid squares should ID with "/P" or "/M".

### **4.2 Logging**

**4.2.1** Any logging program that will generate a text file for submission (if requested) may be used.

**Logs are not required unless requested. See section 8.1**

## 5. Scoring:

**5.1 QSO Points:** One point for each unique QSO. QSOs with the same station in multiple Grid Squares on the same band are allowed and are counted as one QSO point each. QSOs with the same station in the same Grid Square but on a different band are allowed and are counted as one QSO point each. These same rules apply to DX QSOs (QSOs with stations outside of the United States).

**5.1.1** Non-member to non-member QSOs do not count for QSO points or multipliers.

## 5.2 Multipliers

**5.2.1** For the purpose of scoring multipliers, **each individual four digit Grid Square number may only be used as a multiplier point one time** regardless of how many individual stations you work within that Grid Square.

**5.3 Final Score:** Multiply QSO points by multiplier. Example: KE1BE works 357 stations (including multi band QSOs) and has a multiplier of 67 (67 unique Grid Square numbers). His score would be 357 QSO points multiplied by 67 for a total of 23,919 points.

**(KS8KCC #16000t EN71 will be QRV as multi-multi and QRO)**

## Give Your Cootie/Bug/Paddle A “Soft Touch”

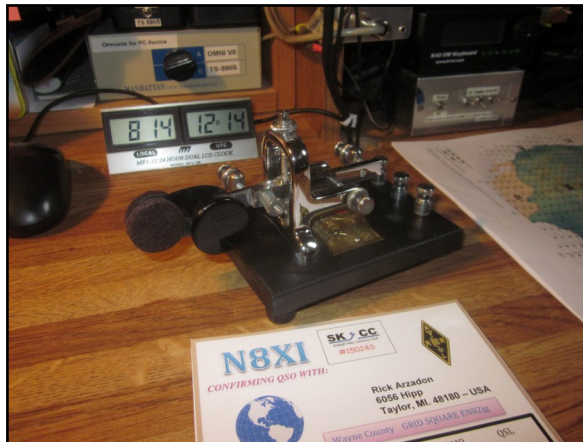
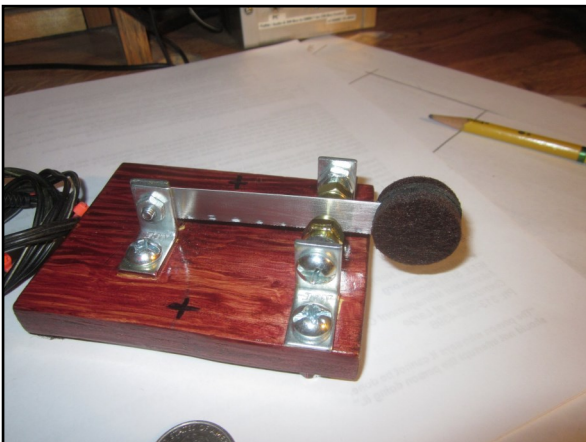
*It's amazing the ideas that SKCCers come up; “necessity is truly the mother of invention!” Here is a great idea from Rick N8XI #15024s.*

Rick applied furniture slide pads to his cootie and paddle; feels good on the fingers and helps prevent sliding. These pads come in various sizes and shapes, are cheap and can be found in all the big box stores and local hardware stores. The pads have adhesive on the one side and are made of soft felt.

Could this technique be applied to a straight key. Sure, why not, it would also give a soft surface to the knob of the key.

If you have ideas of making sending easier/smooth send along to the editor so they may be shared with the gang.

Thanks Rick for sharing your good idea with us.



## Photos and Comments from June WES



Few stations (virtually nil) heard from NA. But interestingly good sigs from Portugal which is south of here. This has been the same for quite a few months now. Anyway - all good fun...73 John GORDO



Bought a Japanese bathtub key at a hamfest Saturday morning. Had it adjusted in time to use it in the contest by 1100. The key worked great. was very smooth...de Bob K3CKO



Great fun putting my Hallicrafters HT32/SX101 on the air. This setup has a total of 35 tubes working and cost nearly \$1k in 1958! S&P is challenging to zerobeat each station. Did get a run going which made thing easier. Fourty meters carried the load at this QTH. Apologies to those who had to copy my "bug" fist. Need more practice with it. The straight key still rules though. 73 to all and will be looking for you at the next event... de Jerry K9PMV



Had to go to a family cookout on Sunday, and the bands were lousy all weekend, so I only logged 5 QSOs. Still, it was fun to once again fire up the boat anchors, and experience a smile of satisfaction as I received my signal reports with a "C" proudly affixed to the end! The sound of history, long live the mighty chirp!!...de Frank K8FAC



Running 50 watts from my 2NT. QSB was really tough this time and noise level took out a number of stations...sorry to those I couldn't copy. I always look forward to exercising the tube rigs...de Gary KF7WNS



Conditions weren't the best, but managed to work 40 & 20m. Used the K1 & K2 this time around with my Vibroplex Blue Racer Bug. Still had a good time thou, got a couple of Europe stations ! Thanks to the ops again, you guys are great ! See y'all next month....73 de N7EDK

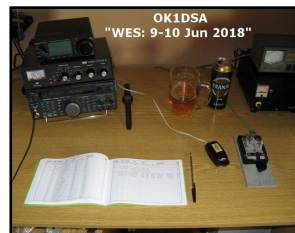


A busy weekend here in TX. Managed to work a few stations with the old Swan boat anchor at 90W using 14 tubes into a dipole with a Kent straight key. Thanks to all, 73's

Great time exercising the DX20 and Drake 2B with the NC183 as my cw monitor. Switching and tuning was a chore and I apologize if I missed a call.73, Greg WA1VIL



Although I've been a member since 2010, this is the very first time I've ever participated in an SKCC activity - I guess better late than never! Only made 6 QSOs "to try out the system." Very impressive SKCC website, variety of activities, informative newsletter and useful information. I think "this could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship. Everybody has a mouth but how many people have a good fist?? CW Forever! 73, Stan OK1DSA



Warmed up my Drake "fraternal" twins. T-4XB and R-4A. Much bigger workload than my K3 but lot's of fun! Antennas - 2 element 5 band quad at 40' and 160 meter loop fed with window line. Bencher RJ-2 key...73, Bill NZ0T



## Pics and Comments from July WES



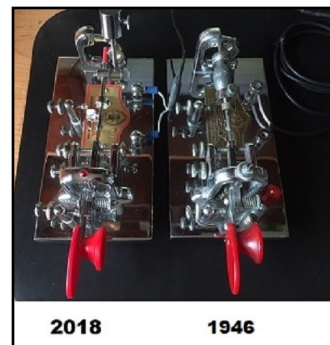
Just arrived home Sunday evening after 7 days of Bermuda Cruise, and right into the radio :) Managed to operate 1h and make a few contacts. 40m worked best for me. Glad to contact a fairly new SKCC member! See you in the next event! 73 de AC2RJ, Ruben.



Difficult conditions and I didn't get any of the colonies and only one transatlantic qso at all with Bert W5ZR. Thanks to Bernard (F5DE) for France on 20 and 40m and to Paul (G4PVM) for UK. Love WES, looking forward to the next one...73 Peter GM0EUL



Rough Start Saturday. My Japanese bathtub bug acted up until I swapped it for a Vibroplex bug. 40 meters was not great but 20 and 80 meters made up for it. Had fun as usual... 73, Bob K3CKO



Back in PA for the summer with an actual, real outside wire antenna! G5RVjr @ 35ft. After compromise antennas in FL all winter, feel like I'm running 2KW instead of 50w. Using my 1946 Vibroplex Deluxe Original I bought in 1955 at age 11. Sure works SO much better than the brand new one I brought to PA for the summer! Really enjoying SKCC. 72/73 ... Don



Poor propagation again plus my QTH not the best for playing radio, also the weather here been hot for weeks now (up to 35c Sunday), I spent a lot of time CQ'ing & searching. Key pictured is an Admiralty Pattern (Navy) AP 5475 Remote Key, quite unusual. 73. John / G0RDO / SKCC 2133s



I enjoyed the theme this month, although I should have saved figuring up the letter challenge and the ensuing math until morning. I couldn't decide if conditions were good or bad. 20M seemed very short Sunday. I was working stations in neighboring states. The Sporadic E on 10M was fun...73, Marty, N9SE



For those of you in Rhode Island (and Providence Plantation) who slept this one out...Shame! Oh, well, I'll get over it. Other than running out of "I's", the rest of the bonus points went pretty well. Thanks to all who participated under trying conditions on 20 meters. Nice as always to see a bunch of new folks -- hope you enjoyed it...John W1TAG



Worked /P from DE on 20 meters for abt 2 hours with little success. I was struggling to give out one of the rarer 13 colonies. Tnx to those who got me in their log. Operated from a campground in FM28II using my FT-757 and a Hamstick mounted on the roof of my van. WX complicated things with wind gusts off the ocean up to 35-40 mph. All in all it was fun to operate in the great outdoors ... much like a field day operation. Hpe to C U next time. 73, Bill



Back to 100 watts with the K3 after QRP for the 2 hour sprint. 20 was open a lot but conditions seemed to deteriorate a lot on Sunday so shut down early. Antennas used were 160 loop on 40, 2 element quad at 40' on 20 with a 43' vertical used from time to time. Key used was a Bencher RJ-2...Bill NZ0T

## More July WES



This month I had more time than usual to be active in this interesting WES theme, but propagation did not help me. However I took pleasure to have 28 contacts. Many thanks and 73 to all! See you next time ! On the photo is my very simple and easy to tune speed tamer on my Lionel J36 bug key...73, Bernard F5DE



Just had 2 hours on Sunday, at the end. Made a few contacts on 10, 40 and 80M. Managed to work 5 of the 13 colonies!..73 John K8JD



Saturday morning on 40 was the most productive for me. Sunday was kind of slow. Not a lot of contacts on 20 meters. Great WES for me. Where are all the C's? TX is doing great on participation this year. Way to go guys. CU next month. ICOM 7410 and 80 meter inverted vee and home brew cootie... 73, Allen KA5TJS



Okay, not my best effort, but we were doing a lot of house maintenance this weekend. Did get to operate backyard portable, my favorite mode. KX3 + trapped EFHW and homebrew cootie. Thanks to all the ops that make this such a great event. 73, Mike N2HTT



Sorry Al..Hi Hi !  
Fun WES, as always!  
73, Rich W4RQ



Enjoyed the sprint as always. Best DX was VK7CW Steve on 40 meters and Carlos CT1BQH on 20. Fair band conditions on Saturday but not so good on Sunday. Thanks to all the great operators and to the guys making it all happen... 73, Gerald WA5AFD



Greetings and thank you all for the great WES. Worked 20 Meter Band all the time. 40 had lots of QRN (S-9 in my area) Alinco DX-SR8 100 Watt. Fan Dipole at 25' in the attic. 73, Sergey KD9EBS

What a thrill this was for me. I got my Cx5 and my Tx7 this weekend. With condx being horrible because of the solar winds, Friday told me this weekend was going to be challenging. However, as Saturday moved on into the evening hours, I had more and more success with 5 watts. By Sunday evening I was having problems sending. A huge, huge thank you to the members who had problems hearing my QRP. I appreciate you hanging in there with me. My 101 year old Blue Racer once again pulled thru for me. 80 QSO's for me was a huge step towards my Tx8...Chris N3MLB



Didn't have much time this weekend for the WES, managed 5 QSO. Conditions weren't the best on 40 and 20m for me, but had fun anyway ! The K2 did the bulk of the work along with my Blue Racer bug. See everyone next month....73 de Bradenton, FL Ed N7EDK



A very fun WES due to the conditions. Rapid QSB and weak sigs were a challenge. Way more fun than FT8 could ever hope to be. WES signal reports indicate I need an improved antenna ;) See you all next month.73, de N4ow AL 11375S



## Stealth Antennas and the HOA

*Editor...Wow! In early July I put out a feeler requesting anyone who had used and build a stealth antenna to avoid HOA rules to please send me information on their antennas and success. The response has been terrific! The following are the results and ideas of SKCC members who use and build stealth antennas.*

...Regarding your request for stealth antennas, I have been on the air from our condo since 2011, so compromise is the name of the game. Currently I have attic dipoles for 20 and 15 meters, and a 30ft end fed with a 9 to 1 unun that loads 40 thru 6 using an older TenTec manual tuner. Interestingly, the 15 meter dipole will load 17 thru 10 with the simple internal tuner in my FT450D. I can work some DX with about 40 countries to date and all 50 states running 30 watts. In the past year, I have had two contacts with Europe using 4-5 watts. I do realize that I am fortunate to have an attic to play with antennas. The 20m dipole has one bent leg to fit the available space....**Dave Chase K8RXB #8714t**

...I have lived in Florida for almost 50 years. I have installed several stealth antennas for hams. One of the best was a loop under the eaves with a auto tuner up at the peak of the roof on the end of the house. Of course it is better on a 2 or 3 level home.

Flag pole or bird house pole verticals work well and better than in attic antennas. If there are trees available a vertical loop or delta fed with 450 ohm line and an auto tuner is great. I particularly like an 88 to 102 foot center fed doublet with parallel line. I installed mine with a 35 foot pole and one leg vertical and the other sloped to a 20 foot PVC pole. Installed so the feed line was at the back of the house and not readily visible from the street and mostly hidden against a palm tree behind it. Worked the world with 100 watts and QRP, but propagation was better back then. I still like inverted "L" antennas.

Some time back QST had a shortened 40/20 meter antenna made with 450 ohm line where the overall length was about 54 feet and the ends of the 40 meter portion were folded back on each end. I made one and added a 30 meter dipole by threading a wire in between the 450 line wires through the cutouts and through a few holes in the plastic spacers to center the wire. I liked it because the 40 meter band bandwidth was wider than trap or loaded shortened antennas.

Being a ham over 60 years I have made many wire antennas. I try to avoid traps and magnetic loops because of the inefficiencies. But of course, some have no choice. The isoloop style antenna works well as does the cobweb but are not as stealthy.

I hope this has helped your project. I will have some of these antennas in my new book I am writing about simple wire antennas. I have to finish some drawings yet and then publish it on Amazon and maybe LULU.... 73, **Dr. Don W4BWS 81c**

...On occasion over the years, I have found myself in situations which required apartment or condo living. Career changes, moving to a new city, and the like occasionally require renting in locations that are not "ham radio friendly." Yet, I have always been able to get on-air.

The key to such situations is stealth. One stealthy friend of mine has always been magnet wire. It is nearly invisible when stretched from an apartment or condo window to a nearby tree. Of course, one must be a bit careful about when he erects the antenna. I usually found the very early hours of the morning are a good time. When doing so, act relaxed and comfortable



comfortable and most people, if they see you, will simply assume you have authorization for what you're doing.

Another good friend has been the rain gutter and downspout. Provided one doesn't run high power, a system of rain gutters can make a surprising reliable antenna. Simply drill a small hole in the downspout and connect the antenna lead-in using a stainless sheet metal screw and flat washer. If one "owns" a home located in a home-owner's association, rather than an apartment, he has considerably more flexibility. One can bond rain gutter sections to ensure a proper electrical connection and limit noise and improve efficiency.

Of course, such "random wire" arrangements are Marconi antennas. Their performance is heavily influenced by the extent of I-squared R losses in the ground system. Copper plumbing offers great advantages for stealth arrangements. Older houses and apartment buildings with baseboard hot-water systems can provide an excellent counterpoise. In short, bond everything available to the ground return path including any available water or heating pipes, heat ducts or pipes, and so forth using flat copper braid or a similar low-impedance conductor.

A single-family dwelling in an HOA has considerable advantages over an apartment or condo because one still has some control over the yard. Generally speaking, "out of site is out of mind" when it comes to antennas. DX Engineering sells a nice black antenna wire that is incredibly durable and essentially invisible to the eye unless one really looks for it. They also sell flat-black rope which is impossible to see against the backdrop of a tree. A random wire constructed with this material will generally be invisible to all but the most obnoxious of neighbors.

Vertical antennas are also an option if a reasonably tall tree is present. A vertical antenna need not be made of aluminum tubing. Instead, cut a quarter wavelength wire for the band(s) you want to operate and run the wire(s) vertically parallel to the tree, using a branch as the upper support. Height is not always problematic. For example; a 20-meter 90-degree radiator is only 16 feet tall. Bury a few radials just below the surface and run a buried length of coax underground to the entry point of the house and the entire installation will be invisible to your neighbors. If the tree is reasonably tall, one can cut several quarter wave wires and install them on opposite/adjacent sides of the tree using a common feed-point and ground system.

*A few humorous stories:*

Many years ago, the author lived in an apartment building in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A neighbor noticed an HF mobile antenna mounted to a balcony and immediately called management claimed it was interfering with his television. When asked when the last case of interference was observed, he said, "it happens constantly." When it was pointed out that the ham radio equipment was used only once or twice a week, he had no response. The result was a visit to his apartment where a simple technical investigation revealed the interference was caused by a nearby paging transmitter! At another apartment, the "magnet wire" antenna was never discovered. What disclosed the ham radio operation was the sound of CW heard through the apartment doorway. One day, the manager knocked on the door and asked why he was hearing CW. I explained that I was participating in a MARS net. The response was unexpected:

*"I served in Vietnam. You guys were my link to home. I love MARS. Would your equipment work better if you had a full-sized antenna on the roof?"*

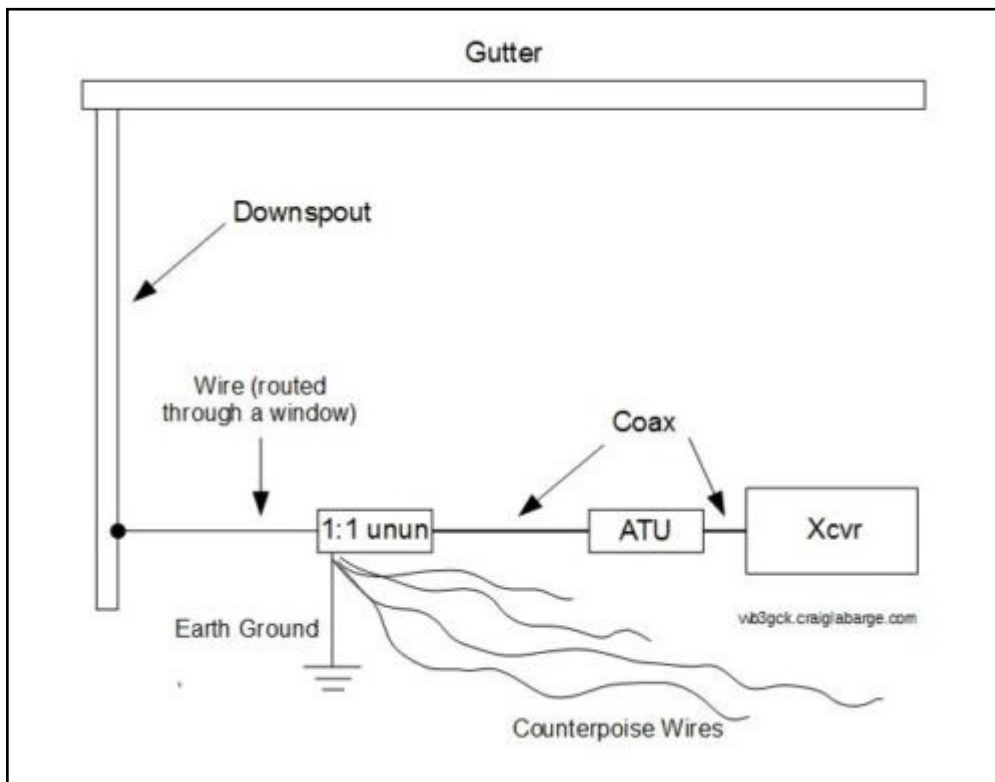
Conclusion:

There are few cases in which one can't get on-air in an HOA if one is determined. However, it usually takes some very basic technical skills to improvise the solution. In many cases; the store-purchased antenna will not be the solution.

Well it is true that compromise random wire antennas and disguised vertical antennas will not work as well as a nice tri-band beam at 60-feet, one can still get on air and work plenty of contacts. As a matter of fact, performance can often be sufficient to perform more demanding tasks, such as handling traffic on schedule with specific stations regardless of conditions....**James WB8SIW #6191**

... After years of trying to come up with a good way to get on the HF bands from my little townhouse (without attracting a lot of attention from my neighbors), I started experimenting with using my aluminum rain gutter and downspout for an antenna. The results have been surprisingly good. In fact, it has turned out to be the ultimate low-profile antenna!

The downspout has a vertical run of about 16 feet, connecting the horizontal rain gutter which is about 16 feet long across the front of the house. Including the feed wire into the shack, the total length is in the neighborhood of 42 feet; over a quarter wavelength for 40 meters and almost a half-wave for 30 meters. The house is made of brick, so the entire system is isolated from ground.



WB3GCK Downspout Antenna

I use my downspout like a random wire antenna, using a commercial autotuner (or internal tuner, in the case of my KX3). I feed the antenna through a homebrew 1:1 unun. I use a short run of coax between the unun and the autotuner on my operating table. A length of #22 stranded hookup wire is used to connect the output of the unun to the downspout outside.

To connect the wire to the downspout, I first sanded the downspout and connected the wire using three sheet metal screws. I used multiple screws to help ensure a low resistance connection. After making the connections to the downspout, I sealed them up using an adhesive/sealant called Goop. Goop is available at most hardware stores.

With the downspout behaving essentially like an end-fed wire, it really helps to work this type of antenna against a good ground. Fortunately, my basement operating position is only a few feet away from where the water supply pipe enters the house. I used a piece of 1/2-inch copper pipe as a ground bus between my operating position and the incoming water pipe. A tinned copper braid strap and a couple of ordinary automotive hose clamps were used to connect the bus to the water pipe. A short braid strap connects the ground stud on the unun to the copper ground bus.

For good measure, I attached counterpoise wires to the ground stud of the unun; one each for 40, 30, 20, and 15 meters. The counterpoise wires are made from garden variety stranded hookup wire cut to a quarter-wavelength. I just run these wires around the shack, hiding them under the rug. Operation on the 80 meter band has been successful using just the ground bus.

How well does it work? During the first few months of operation, I worked 49 states; all with 5 watts or less. I've also worked a bunch of DX stations (though I'm more of a casual rag chewer than a DX-chaser). The length of the "antenna" is somewhat short for 80 meters, but performance on that band has been a big surprise. Signal reports on 30 and 40 meters, my primary bands, have been consistently good. In fact, the downspout has been my main antenna at home for more than 20 years.

While this arrangement has served me well, it is not without an issue or two. I find that it helps to clean up and re-do the connections at the downspout periodically. Typically, I do this maintenance every other year or so. Also, I have noticed that my local noise levels on 80 and 40 meters have steadily increased over the years. I attribute this to the proliferation of electronic gadgets both in my house as well as my neighbors' houses. Those bands are still usable, though.

Some words of caution are in order, however, if you plan to use your rainspout as an antenna:

1. Make sure your gutter and downspout are isolated from ground.
2. Make sure there is solid electrical continuity between the various sections of your downspout and gutter. Mine are fastened with pop rivets (not the greatest for RF work, but they appear to be doing the job.)
3. Watch your power. I wouldn't recommend running a kilowatt into your rainspout. Ham radio is fun, but not worth burning down your house.

Make sure people and pets won't come in contact with the "antenna" while you're transmitting. This isn't too much of a problem at QRP power levels, but be careful.

So, if you find your HF antenna options are limited by either space or legal restrictions, take a look at the outside of your house. There just might be a free multi-band antenna hanging out there!...72, **Craig WB3GCK#15052t**





Not in an HOA, but still using a low 20M dipole on CW. Used it get W.A.S. (2010-2014) using an MFJ Cub (2W). With an Icom IC-718 at 100W, when band conditions are good have used it to work and QSL Japan and Asiatic Russia, Alaska, the West Indies, Chile, Uruguay, France, etc. "Big guns" make disparaging comments when they see it, calling it a laundry line and the like. But it works for me, withstands 60 MPH winds, and does the job... **73 de Loren AE7CG, #2921t**

I just built out a K8NDS 80,40,30M Helically Loaded Fractional Wave (Magnetic) Loop. It is 6 feet in Diameter and it sits about 8 feet above the ground 12 feet from the house. For the quick story look at the K8NDS QRZ.com page. For more detail K8NDS lists a website on that page. There are a variety of Fractional Wave Loops. The 39 inch version can get onto 40 M and is reported to be real sweet on 20, 17 and 15. I made some errors in my construction but I am still getting good signal reports. As an example of performance, from California, I worked KH1/KH7Z, Baker Island on 40M CW using my new loop and 500W. These loops can run up to a KW.

**73 de Brad AI6DS #16860**

I put up a Carolina Windom at 45 feet in the back yard. Had HOA for all those years. Painted the two baluns with Green paint and it was not seen by any of the HOA spy's in all those years. I took down several times on the pullies I had the ropes through to maintain and repair as necessary.

I presently have the Windom up in a new location and it has been up for 4years. I also put up a HEX BEAM on a push up mast at 45 feet. I painted the arms on the beam with Rustoleum green paint and the mast as well. The guy ropes at 3 stages are black 5/50 paracord. The antenna is in the back of the lot and there are trees around and behind it. No complaints and no interference on the two antennas.

I plan to put up a 40 meter (33.6 ft) vertical I built with 36 radials next and see how that one looks in the yard. I am not painting that one; but, I will put to the side of the lot at the tree line to keep out of sight of the walkers and onlookers who constantly check the back yards of neighbors.

I am fortunate in that both my neighbors on either side and across the street know I am a HAM and know what I use the antennas for. When I first moved here I was still in NAVY/MARINE MARS but left that when it disbanded.

I also made up a special mounting post for the HEX beam. Rotor on the bottom, with thrust bearing at 8 feet and mast rotates very well with that setup...Johnpaul AB4PP #

**John-Paul AB4PP #32t**

**CW 4ever**

The Villages ARC has 200+ members in the Florida town of the same name, a retirement community that is 100% HOA. This includes some SKCC members. The club has posted a thorough guide to stealth antennas at: [http://www.k4vrc.com/.../101.../2015\\_tvare\\_antenna\\_guide.pdf](http://www.k4vrc.com/.../101.../2015_tvare_antenna_guide.pdf), though some of the material is Florida-specific.

Spoiler: they like inverted-L antennas. Some stealth construction articles are also scattered around the [k4vrc.com](http://k4vrc.com) web site... **de Wes AC8JF #10511**

I live in a mobile home park that does not allow outdoor antennas. There are no trees close enough to utilize either. I ran a wire along the roof peak which is 80 feet long. I then followed the molding down the front of the home and under the skirting where I have an Icom AH-4 auto tuner running to my Icom 718. I am constantly amazed at the contacts I make running 50 watts. The roof peak is no higher than 15 or so feet high...**de John WB2TQC #149**

## Semi-stealth Antenna

**de Bob K5ZOL 3945S**

In 1988, I bought a house in an HOA community not really paying any attention to what HOA was all about other than yards were mowed, fertilized and watered by the HOA's contractor.

After a 20+ year hiatus in ham radio, I decided to get active again.

YIKES! No outside antenna's allowed. Compounding the problem, I was elected President of the HOA (Lesson: never suggest you might be willing to participate on a committee.)

A 40M dipole would just barely fit in the attic. Converting it to a G5RV for 40M through 10M was the next step, but 100W just above the ceiling was a struggle on SSB. (SKCC hadn't been founded yet.) So, violating the rules I was supposed to enforce, I installed a semi-stealth vertical. In the back of the house off the patio were two large well branched-out, mature trees limiting any view from the alley to the upper part of the house structure. On top on the patio, with shielding by the trees in the back and the house roof line in the front, I installed a screwdriver antenna with a 7 ft. whip on top. From the bottom of the screwdriver, I ran tuned radials across the patio cover and across the roof. Anyone driving down the alley looking in just the right way could see the screwdriver, but only a ham would guess what it was.

It tuned well and with a SB-200 I had many DX QSOs on SSB and cw. I especially liked being able to get practically 1:1 SWR anywhere on any band. The screwdriver was hiding virtually in plain sight but no one ever noticed – or at least said anything. Hypocrite that I was, I did not stand for re-election and eventually moved to a neighborhood without restrictions. Now I am comfortable with my very visible beam, 43 ft vertical and bazooka antennas.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.



Yaesu FT-101ZD MK 2. Just got the front panel and knobs all cleaned-up. Now it's time to put it into the console and make some serious SKCC contacts!

**de Jon WB5KSD 11611S**

## My HOA Antenna

I live in an HOA with a "No Outside Antenna policy."  
My current "Antenna Farm" consists of a 40 Meter Horizontal Loop, 130 feet of wire, squeezed into my attic. I say current because I continue to try other ideas. My loop is sort of rectangular. It has a couple of short jogs allowing me a few more precious feet of wire. My house is single story, so the loop is about 20 feet above the ground. I fed it with Window Line and use a roller inductor tuner. I can load it up on 80 thru 6 meters. It's a compromise antenna so performance is not equal on all bands. How does it perform? Well....

Sometimes surprisingly well. But most of the time, I do OK, stateside that is. It does not do very well as a DX antenna. I did some comparison with a local friend using Reverse Beacon. The problem with any antenna mounted in the attic is noise, RFI. Even though loop antennas are less noisy than other types of antennas, it's still a struggle to hear the weaker signals. My current solution is to use a Small Receive Only Amplified Magnetic Loop mounted on a tripod. Mine is the W6LPV version. MFJ also sells a similar one. With the small magnetic loop, I am able to copy the weaker signals that are covered up by noise when received on the 40 Meter Loop. I also rotate the small magnetic loop for minimum RFI. Even when the signal is 599, I still use the small loop for receive since the background noise is less. Another great tool for antenna comparison is WSPR.

Currently, I am burying radials in the back yard, but have currently stopped at 8 since the hot weather has turned the ground to "concrete" here in the Chattanooga area. I have been experimenting with a 40 meter Hamstick mounted as a vertical. My idea is to place it inside a vinyl fence post, having a "See Rock City" Bird House mounted on top. I'll have about 6 inches of the whip extending up thru the roof of the bird house.

I've read about putting a Hustler 5 BTV inside pvc and disguising it as a flag pole. Of course mine would need to include the 30 meter coil. The Zero Five Flagpole antenna with an external antenna tuner is my "Dream" HOA Antenna. Email me if you have questions...via QRZ.com

73

Barry W4LSV 2795S

## The Ultimate Stealth Antennas?





## The Doormat Vertical Antenna

de Rick N8XI #15024s

I purchased a telescoping vertical antenna more than 5 years ago. I think it is the longest I have procrastinated about a project. What was holding me back was a missing piece of spring brass or steel for the coil slider. I had one in my junk box all along. Collapsed it is 49 inches long, extended it is 17 feet tall.

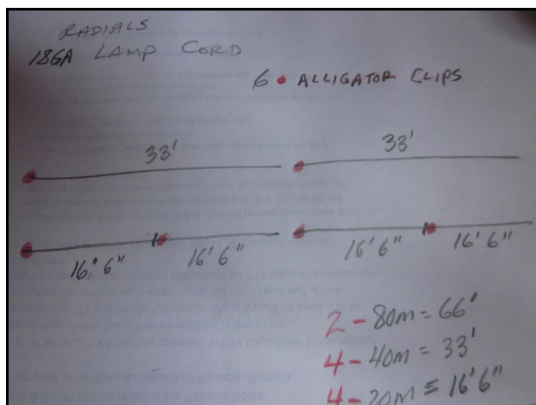
The coil length is 14 inches, diameter  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches at 9 turns per inch. The Fiberglass telescoping pole is 14 feet 10 inches long when extended. A wire attached to the top of the coil is 12 feet 10 inches long. There is a stud and nut for the radials, but I added a loop of 12 Gage to attach the radials via alligator clips. I mounted it on a large ground spike and dowel. I added a piece of PVC to the dowel for a better fit to the bottom of the vertical.



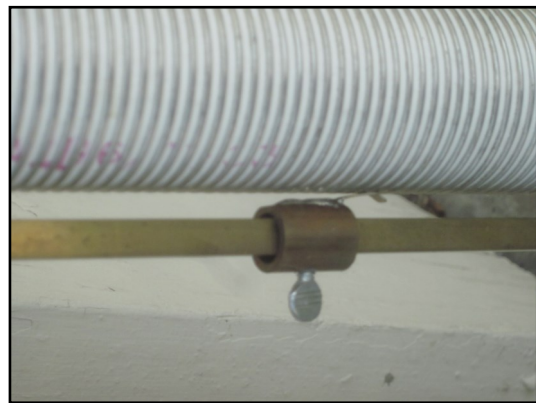
Collapsed view



Ground Buss



Radials



Slider

## "Easy Ten"

### Simple 80 Meter CW Transmitter Using a 2N3904.

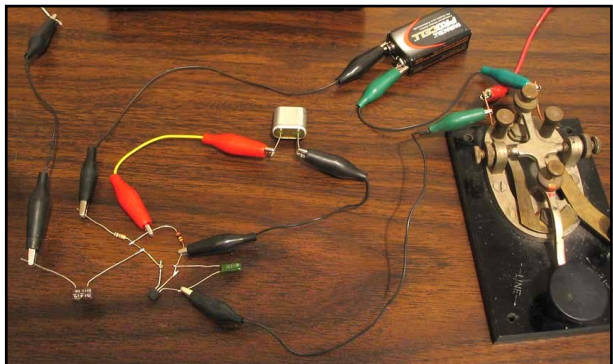
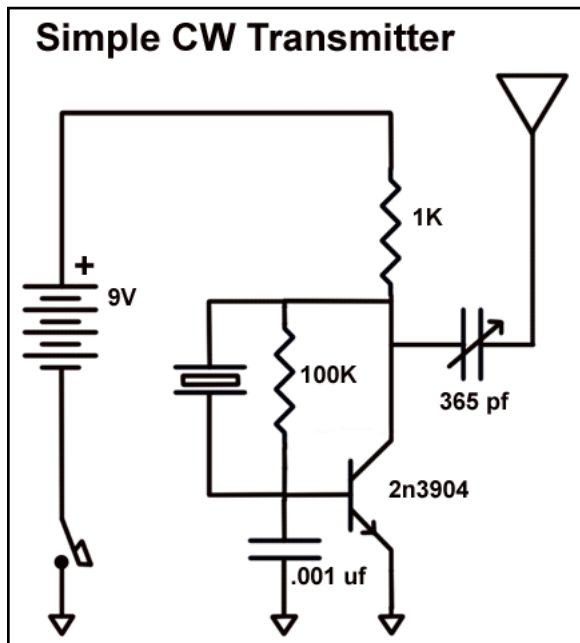
By Nyle Steiner K7NS April 2008

*This article was sent to me from Larry K8TEZ #8426t who got it from Bob W8BTD #8972 who got it from ....Might be a neat project for QRP so weekend?*

I call this very simple transmitter the "Easy Ten" because it can be easily heard at a distance of 10 miles. Transmitter antenna is a random length wire run through a hole in the wall and thrown into a tree.

The white wire just visible in the upper left is the antenna. The Red clip lead that exits at the upper right is a ground wire connected to the ground screw of an electrical outlet.

Looking toward the transmitter location in a small town that can barely be seen 11.5 miles away. The transmitter could be heard clearly from this location, the top of a hill overlooking a lava field.



#### Antenna Adjustment.

I am not an antenna fanatic and I like to work with the simple stuff, especially when it comes to working with frequencies in the 3.5 and 7 mhz range. Fussing around with coax lines, SWR, baluns and all that fancy stuff does not usually appeal much to me, nor have I found it

at all necessary for getting a signal out. A simple random length of wire thrown into a tree works very well if you can simply adjust the transmitter to put a signal into it.

I certainly am not trying to say this is the best way to make antennas. The point that I wish to emphasize is that the simple techniques that I am describing here, do work well and make good respectable antennas. I have made many many contacts across the pacific ocean and across the United States using simple antennas as described here and just one watt of output power. I have almost always been able to make contacts with stations at least two states away from any given antenna setup using just one watt. A simple homemade level meter can tell you when you have optimized the signal output to the antenna. The signal meter is capacitively coupled to the antenna and reads it's RF voltage level.

A signal level meter can be easily made from a DC microameter and a germanium diode. Connect the germanium diode across the meter with the cathode on the positive side. Then connect one side of the meter to ground and the other side of the meter to a short wire (one or two feet long) that rests near the antenna wire from the transmitter. It does not matter which side of the meter goes where.

With the key down, adjust the 365 pf variable capacitor in the circuit above for a peak reading on the meter. That is all there is to it. With the circuit described above, a big antenna will tend to swamp the oscillator and prevent it from running. The variable capacitor attains the best compromise between swamping the oscillator and having too little of antenna coupling. The picture above shows a fixed capacitor feeding the antenna. A variable capacitor was first used to peak the signal meter and then an equivalent fixed value capacitor was put in its place. A capacitor is not necessary at all sometimes with shorter antennas. In this case the antenna can be connected directly to the transistor collector.

This simple meter has worked well on numerous other transmitter projects. This meter can not tell how much power a transmitter is putting out but it is very good for indicating when the transmitter is putting the most signal into the antenna. For a given transmitter, you don't really need to know how much power it is putting out. You just need to know when the transmitter is putting what it is capable of into the antenna. This meter seems to accomplish that.

With all other conditions remaining the same, the more signal voltage there is on the antenna, the more power the antenna is radiating. It is that simple. Don't worry about near field and far field theory or any of that stuff. According to theory that I have read, you can not have a near field without having the far (radiating) field.

There is a basic rule about loading an antenna with this signal level meter. The indications from the meter are valid as long as changes or adjustments are made between the meter and anywhere in the transmitter. The meter indications may not be valid for any changes made beyond the meter (farther out the antenna or ground lead).

When you want an idea of how much power the transmitter can put out, it is easy to substitute dummy load resistors at different values in place of the antenna. The peak to peak voltage across the resistor read by an oscilloscope, can then be divided by two and multiplied by .707 to get the rms value. This value when squared and divided by the resistor value will give the power being fed to the resistor according to ohms law. I am usually curious about the values obtained using 50 to 220 ohm resistors.

It appears that the simple circuit shown above can work well into a wide variety of load values without using any additional load matching components. Using a 9v battery I measured the transmitter RF output power into several dummy load resistors as described in the previous paragraph. The result was in the range of about 5 to 7 milliwatts. They are listed below.

56 ohms 1.5v pp 5.02 milliwatts  
150 ohms 3v pp 7.49 milliwatts  
220 ohms 3.5v pp 6.96 milliwatts  
510 ohms 5v pp 6.1 milliwatts

I was also able to run this transmitter on 3 volts but the power output was much lower - in the range of 300 to 400 microwatts. These microwatt levels could still be heard (not as strong) several miles away.





*Looking toward the transmitter location in a small town that can barely be seen 11.5 miles away. The transmitter could be heard clearly from this location, the top of a hill overlooking a lava field.*

The circuit above is far from a representation of the amount of RF power output that can be supplied from a single transistor circuit. The main purpose of this project was to get an idea of what can be accomplished by simply coupling an antenna to a simple oscillator circuit. It seems that the biggest disadvantage to all this simplicity is the difficulty in knowing exactly how much power is going up the antenna. Getting optimum power up the antenna is not nearly as difficult and is the main concept presented here.

The dummy load resistors tell how much power can be put out with different loads but the exact load these random length antennas present to the transmitter is a bit more difficult

to determine. These questions can be answered by delving into more sophisticated practices.

## Smoke!

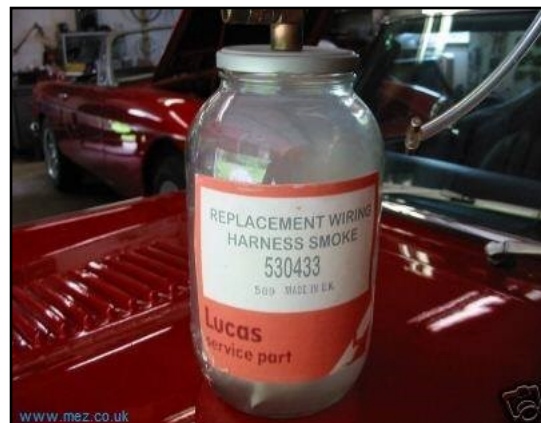
Smoke is the thing that makes electrical circuits work; we know this to be true because every time we let the smoke out of an electrical system, it stops working. This has been verified repeatedly through empirical testing by countless amateurs.



Tom Peteerson... Here ends my fun for the day.

When, for example, the smoke escapes from an electrical component (i.e., say, a transceiver, voltage regulator or a 741 Op Amp), it will be observed that the component stops working. The function of the wire harness is to carry the smoke from one device to another; when the wire harness "springs a leak", it lets all the smoke out of the system. Once this happens, nothing works afterwards.

Large transceivers, amplifiers and power supplies are frowned upon largely because they consume large quantities of smoke, requiring large amounts of replacement smoke and a great expense!



Tom OH6NT #17525... You obviously know, that all electronics works on smoke... If you let it out, the appliance stops working, and you'll have to return it to the factory to replace the smoke... Then it'll start working again!

## Field Day and the “Mouse”

*These pictures were on Facebook and are from Juddie WD8WV #18884, Juddie’s Field Day setup but what caught my eye and those of many others were the cooties seen in the picture. The cooties were built on the bases of mouse traps and after many requests for details Juddie posted the following explaining his “Mouse” side-swiper keys.*



Okay, I sat down last night and started on “The Mouse 3” which is a swiper key or what some call a “cootie” key, I think. In the photo of all three keys you have on the left The Mouse (straight key), in the center you have The Mouse 2 (paddle) and on the right The Mouse 3 (swiper key). I have included a video of me trying to send CQ and my call thru my sounder that I made. All of these are for me to use with my QCX 40 Meter QRP rig and/or my uBitx when it arrives and I get it built.

*As you can see by the picture Juddie’s QCX 40 Meter QRP rig and his uBitx came in in time for Field Day and he got it built and running.*

First FD contact made using “The Mouse 3” swiper key! W9GA was my first contact all the way up in WI!! Not bad for a QRP resonant 40 Meter end fed up about 18 feet!



***Editor...I received this from John W4YG #17637....a great "Elemer" story and a terrific cw poem.***

Back in 1979, when I was a wet behind the ears rookie ham, a guy by the name of Jim Hatherley took me under his wings and encouraged me to use CW more than I had been. I had been a Novice for all of about 1 month before upgrading to Technician, and 2 meters back then was hopping, so I was content. Jim talked me into checking into the Eastern Massachusetts slow speed traffic net on CW to help me improve my CW speed, and get that General ticket. Well, he talked me into it. He had a way about him, and he never lost an opportunity to espouse CW. He also hooked me up with my first non-boat anchor rig, a used Kenwood TS-520S. He found someone in his club selling it at a local flea market, and talked him into selling it to me for a song. Needless to say, I got my General (and Advanced, on the same day) and became very active on HF as well as VHF/UHF.

Jim and I lost touch over the years, and it saddened me when I learned he had passed away. Over the years since his passing, I think of him often, and always with a smile. Jim was the prototypical Elmer, always looking to help out a fellow in need. His generosity and kindness were spread among many. I've included a write up about him at the time of his passing.

Anyway, this is all by way of introducing a poem Jim wrote. It's kind of corny, and will never win the Nobel for literature, but I think it sums up our feelings about our favorite mode of operation. Maybe you will find it suitable for publication.

## **CW Forever and Ever**

You must have at times,  
thought into the past,  
where some things go out  
while others last  
What comes to my mind is the old Morse code,  
That has weathered the storms  
from any abode.  
To talk with ones fingers  
is surely an art,  
Of any info you care to impart,  
In most conditions  
the signals get through,  
While the same about phone  
is simply not true.  
Those dits and dahs  
cut through the trash,  
Of nearby noise  
or lighting's crash.  
To the sensitive ears  
of the hams receiver,  
Who records this data  
with ardent fever.  
He knows he's doing  
something unique,  
(in such poor conditions,  
To roger the message  
that came off the air,

These brass pounders  
sure do have that flair.  
They say Morse ops  
are a dying breed,  
But don't despair,  
there's always that need,  
That when conditions get rough  
for the new automation,  
Be rest assured, there'll be need  
for your station.  
CW is dying? Believe it never,  
This mode will be 'round  
forever and ever.  
But one thing is sure,  
what we really need,  
Is to relay our knowledge  
to the younger breed.  
To carry the torch,  
long after we're gone,  
To send Morse Code  
thru the air like a song.  
When at last,  
Silent keys pull that lever,  
We can rest in peace,  
it's CW forever.

- Jim Hatherley, WA1TBY (SK)



## Photos from June SKS Postings



Lots of fun tonight, this time with my old key J44, thank you all, 73 de Ric HP1RIS



Bands seemed rather weak. Thanks for the Qs. 73 Dale K3SEN



Got a late start, but good to see 40M and 20M active, tried 80M, but no luck. 73, Steve K4JPN



I think I know where the K8XXX bone crushing signal was emitting from ...anyhow nice to work you guys up there & thanks for the bonus points...73 Larry K8TEZ



Snagged K8XXX first one out of the gate. Had a great time. 73, Mike KK7H



My old new toy. My first SKS after Hurricane Maria. Good conditions, nice signals 73, Felix KP4RD



TNX to Ted & Ken for their patience @ K8XXX. I have been working for 6 months to be able tell an A from a Z! A milestone event for me! TNX es 73, Steve NQ8T



Started on 20M and made a few QSOs there, then moved to 40M and finished the sprint there. QRN was sever here in Mid TN with all the storms around. 73, Brian KQ4MM



Ran QRP for the first time in an SKS using my uBITX kit. Did better than I thought I would. 20 meters was good here until about 8:30 when I switched to 40. Antennas were a 2 element quad at 40' on 20 and a 160 meter loop fed with window line on 40. Key was my usual Bencher RJ-2. Thanks everyone for copying my QRP signal! Bill NZ0T



Rough conditions for all but sure had good time working the stations thanks to all. 73, Bud W8BUD



Enjoyed operating the SKS on my new screened-in porch. Used my IC-756PRO3, OCF Dipole up 55ft, 60w and Bencher Straight Key. Thanks for the QSO's...de Karen W4KRN



## Flea Market Goodies

The Nevada ARRL Convention wraps up this morning. It was nice to meet other SKCC members face to face. If you could not attend this convention, you might want to add it to your bucket list. Let it be known there have always been keys and key accessories for sale of the new and used variety.

This is the 3rd year in a row I've seen one of the old Vibroplex carrying cases that opens on the end for sale. My key accessory find this year is the old cloth covered stranded wire with the blade type connector on the end. This

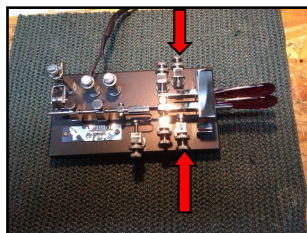
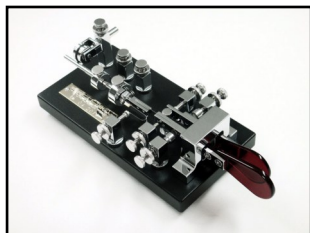
is the blade the operators can slide onto a straight key to add it to the circuit.

The picture shows the type of carrying case and the connector mentioned...de Jim W1RO



## New Bug at K8AQM

I enjoy using a bug as often as I do my Junker straight key; my bugs of preference have been either a TAC or any TR McElroy but I wanted to try a magnetic bug. I ordered the "Evolution" from I1QOD and it is a beauty! The dual paddles give it an iambic paddle-like smoothness. Magnetic adjustments are indicated by the arrows. It doesn't move...weight is



5.28 lbs.! I installed both paddle blades the same length, more like an iambic feel.

73, Ted K8AQM  
1629s

## The Group Picture from the Dayton Hamvention

We are still looking for four names.

#3, #21, #25, #31

If you know these members, please send me their callsign so we can have a complete listing.

73, Alton N4IDH ([webmaster@skccgroup.com](mailto:webmaster@skccgroup.com))

SKCC Group Photo  
May 19, 2018



Dayton Hamvention  
Xenia, Ohio



1) NK8O Chas; 2) WA9VFD Kevin; 3) Unknown; 4) VE3KCY Ken; 5) KI8JY Dave; 6) W4KRN Karen; 7) NX1K Mark; 8) N4OW Al; 9) AA8MI Gene; 10) N2JKA John; 11) W3ASW Mike; 12) KA4WYC Jeff; 13) AC8XU Jon; 14) K8CHP Chip; 15) WA2JSG Curt; 16) KA8GOV Cliff; 17) WB4OMM Steve; 18) KC9IL Warren; 19) AA8CS Gary; 20) W8RXY Alan; 21) Unknown; 22) W0EKS Jack; 23) K0FD Dan; 24) BX8AAD Gene; 25) Unknown; 26) KE8CEW Greg; 27) K4SAF Carol; 28) K8GSD Gary; 29) KM4FO Dwight; 30) NR3P/WB4FUN Paul; 31) Unknown; 32) KA8HFN Larry; 33) K8FAC Frank; 34) W8QB Doug; 35) Non-SKCCer; 36) KD8VSQ Jeremy; 37) N8KR Ken; 38) WB9TFF Donna; 39) KD8AZO Dave; 40) K4NYI Doug; 41) K2PI Harv; 42) N9OL John; 43) NR3N Angel



## Night of Nights XIX

*Much has been written in our reflector about the "Night of Nights" operation but for many of us we have no understanding of what it is or what it was. Here is the history and story of the "Night of Nights" thanks to Rich K8UV #2250t who has forwarded the official report and story of the "Night of Nights."*



## MARITIME RADIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

18 July 2018

### BULLETIN After Action Report Night of Nights XIX



2359 GMT, July 12, 1999: A day and time that will live in infamy in the hearts and minds of all those who have an interest, might we rightly say a passion? for the technology, history, and culture of maritime radio in the United States of America. On that day, the vanguard of a body of souls that would shortly be known as "True Believers" gathered to mourn at the KFS/KPH/WCC receive site near Half Moon Bay, CA as what was believed to be the last Morse transmission in the maritime service from these shores was sent out into time and space. Perhaps those last signals -- appropriately ending with the words that legend has it that Samuel Morse himself used to launch the era of telegraphy, "What hath God wrought?" -- escaped the ionosphere and are, even now, emanating through space. Ever weakened by the harsh realities of the inverse-square law, but still perhaps detectable, these simple "dots and dashes" are now safely past the star Alsafi in the constellation of Draco. And then, Morse silence ...

But July 12, 1999 was not, as expected, the end. It may have been the end of the century-long Golden Age of Wireless in the maritime service, but it was not the end. Some of those Proto-True-Believers, gathered at the wake of Maritime Morse at Half Moon Bay, had the inspiration, the vision, and the will to give the lie to that seeming reality. Maritime radio was not dead, it was simply asleep - at the abandoned "tomb" of the Wireless Giant of the Pacific - perhaps the greatest station of them all, at KPH, at "Bolas Radio" and at "RS," the receive site on Point Reyes. From that wake arose what we now know as the Maritime Radio Historical Society. And in a few short years, with restoration of KPH sufficiently complete, new transmissions of the "Music of Morse" from KPH, KFS and KSM went chasing after those "last signals" from KFS, and are now well clear of Luyten's Star, in the constellation of Canis Major. A New Golden Age of Wireless had begun.

Each year at 0001 GMT, July 13, True Believers tweak the nose of history, and another "Night of Nights" commences. Each year, on that day, and at that time, KPH resurrects the art and science, the technology, history, and culture, of Morse in the maritime radio service in a special way by simply doing what countless shipboard and coast station operators did for over a century - communicate by wireless telegraphy. Many, most, of those wireless pioneers of the Golden Age are gone ... most lost to the vagaries of mortal life, but some, true heroes, gave their lives by practicing their craft in service to the safety of life at sea. It is their memory that we honor, in a special way, each year on this "Night of Nights." If you could not be there, we send along these words to offer you a glimpse into this world on this most special night, which was marked by preparing, remembering, and homecoming,

#### "Preparing"

"Night of Nights" began at 0001 GMT (5:01 pm PDT) on Thursday, July 13 (July 12, local time), but for the Transmitter Department the campaign began in earnest on Wednesday, July 11, and would continue (due to normal Saturday operations) until late in the day on July 14, local time - an intense four-day effort. It takes a significant amount of work to configure the transmitters and antennas for KPH and KFS operations on "Night of Nights." This includes rearranging heavy antenna transmission lines and bolting them into place on the proper transmitter. This also means adjusting the antenna tuners positioned near the clerestory windows that serve as the egress points for the transmission lines, as they head out through the fields surrounding Building 2A (the home of "Bolas Radio"), and to the many antennas that populate the vast spaces, where the quiet is interrupted only by the wind off the sea, and the varied sounds of grazing cattle.

Here is MRHS member Paul "The Human Fly" Shinn, working on the antenna tuners.



From this unusual, rarely seen, perspective, you can see the main transmitter gallery in all its splendor. In the foreground, to the left and right of Paul, you can see the vintage RCA "H," "K", and "L" sets. Above Paul's head are the "modern" Henry transmitters installed at KPH by MCI at the time of the last re-build of the station.

On behalf of the Operations Department, Chief Operator Dillman spent Wednesday at the Receive Site on Point Reyes, preparing that space for the influx of True Believers who gather there for "Night of Nights."

With "Preparing" complete, it was time for "Remembering"

...

#### "Re-Membering"

When we think of "remembering" the first thought that comes to mind is perhaps the psychological process of recalling past events or thoughts. But there is a deeper meaning to remembering, that is, to "re-member" - to be united once again to things that are in the past, but still live within us. The essence of "Night of Nights" is to "re-member," to be united once again to a technology, history, and culture that was, and is. And, in this, we are united to all those who share in that "re-membering."

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As tradition demands, "Night of Nights" began on the published: 0001 GMT, July 13. Chief Operator Dillman was at the key and sent the Opening Message - inviting the vast throng present in the Morse room, and those listening afloat or ashore, to remember what was, and to celebrate what is. During the Opening Message the MF transmitter went off line, but the crack Transmitter Department had it back in revenue service in minutes. With the exception of the historic RCA "H" set, operating on the KPH 22 mc channel, all transmitters performed well for the long hours of this annual event.

Chief Operator Dillman sending the "Opening Message"  
at 0001 GMT, July 13.



An important aspect of "Night of Nights" are the commemorative broadcasts. This year we added a message remembering two recent "Silent Keys": Rene Stiegler, the proprietor of MOBILE RADIO/WLO, who passed away suddenly in February, and MOBILE RADIO/WLO itself, which suspended operations in recent weeks after seventy-one years of faithful service to the maritime community. Rene was a faithful supporter of "Night of Nights" over the years, with WLO once again participating as a Morse coast station. We missed their participation this year.



MOBILE RADIO/WLO -- Another "Silent



True Believer, and holder of the coveted Radiotelegraph Operators License, Rob Harris made the pilgrimage to KPH from Southern California. Here he is at Position One sending a memorial message in honor of all radio officers.



Former US Navy & US Coast Guard Radioman Mike Payne/MP sitting the circuit at K6KPH. Notice the Word War One era Vibroplex Blue Racer "bug". This key served in World War One, on the Canadian National railway, and now at KPH.





During the first batch of commemorative messages, the 22 mc calling channel came to life with signals from MV POMPLUN CIRCUMSTANCE/WDI4501, with our good friend RO Don Pomplun at the key. KPH was holding one radiogram for him. Shortly after the 0100 GMT Traffic List went out we were called by SS AMERICAN VICTORY/KKUI in Tampa, FL on 16 mc - QTC 5! As RD went to work clearing the hook at KKUI, we were also called by MV RJ PFEIFFER/WRJP, enroute to Guam, also on 16 mc! As MP later observed, how long has it been since KPH was called by two ships at once, on the same channel? And to add to the drama, one ship was in port by the Gulf of Mexico and the other was underway in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Truly, one of the memorable moments of NON XIX. We hope that those listening enjoyed joining in, and being a part of, this experience that was very much a connection to the world of the Morse maritime service, at its best. Later in the evening, KPH relayed a radiogram from KKUI, on the Gulf coast, to WRJP, on the Pacific - "re-membering" these two great ships, united via the facilities of "The Wireless Giant of the Pacific." We are grateful to these three ship stations for their participation in "Night of Nights," enriching the experience for everyone.

Our Amateur Radio station, K6KPH, also did yeoman work in uniting hams around the world with our commemoration of maritime radio. We were fortunate to have five guest amateur radio operators who "sat the circuit" at K6KPH, joining regular KPH staff MP and KM, keeping all four sets humming throughout the duration of NON. Over the course of the event, these stalwart operators made 116 QSOs (contacts) with other amateur radio stations around the world. Some highlights from the log: our friend from AUCKLAND RADIO/ZLD, Neil/ZL1NZ, former RCA coast stations operator, Ed/AL7N in Fairbanks, AK, and Toza/JA7CME in Tokyo. Via email we also received a KPH/K6KPH signal report from Bernard/F5DE in Touvre, France.



Chris/AI6U and John/WB6UBK from the Samuel Morse Radio Club in Sacramento, made the trip to Point Reyes to help keep K6KPH standing tall during Night of Nights!

Operations at the receive site ended at 0500 GMT with the solemn "Salute to Coast Stations." This broadcast is a roll call of the many Morse coast stations of the United States that are now "silent keys." Each coast station is called, and a long pause is left for them to reply. Sadly, none answered the hail ... KPH and KFS are the last ones standing. This broadcast ended with a memorial "silent period" of three minutes, in memory of these silent keys, and the countless coast station operators who served at these stations throughout the twentieth century.

With that, operations at RS were secured and the Operations Department headed to "Bolinás Radio" for the Closing Benediction ...

"Homecoming"

"Night of Nights" is not just about "re-membering," but it is also a time of "homecoming" - sometimes in mys-

terious ways, as will be seen ...

Like those who gathered at Half Moon Bay on 12 July 1999 to mourn the end of the Golden Age of Wireless, countless True Believers gather each year on 13 July to celebrate the New Golden Age of Wireless. For some, it is a true homecoming - former staff members, or former ship or coast station radio operators, come to re-member and revel. As always we were joined by our beloved "DA," Denice Stoops, the first woman telegrapher hired by RCA. Denice is a true treasure, and we are grateful that she assists us each year by simply telling her compelling story to our visitors. Sadly, the last station manager of KPH at Point Reyes, Jack Martini, and Senior Morse Operator Ray Smith were not able to join us this year. We look forward to their next "home coming."



Jane Puleo Rivera (Left) made a return visit to RS on Night of Nights. Jane's father had been a Merchant Marine Radio Officer during World War Two. Jane donated her dad's vintage National receiver to our collection. On this trip she left us copies of some fascinating documents related to her dad's service in the Merchant Marine.

While almost everyone who comes through the door at RS has a compelling story, and a reason for "coming home," during the time of Night of Nights, two stories will have to suffice for now.

On the Saturday following Night of Nights two couples came through the door and were obviously very interested in the station and its history. In the course of receiving their first-class tour of the facilities it was revealed that one of these visitors was the granddaughter of one Walter Adams, who was a carpenter who lived in Bolinas in the early years of the twentieth century. His story joins ours in that he worked on the construction of the Marshall receive site and Bolinas transmitter site of the Marconi point-to-point station, which opened in 1914. Our visitors appreciated learning more about the place where their ancestor made a lasting contribution to the history of wireless. They believe that they have a rare picture of

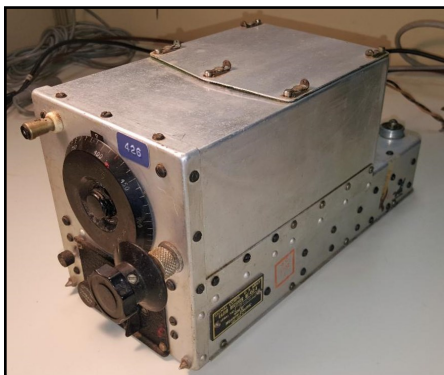
the "hotel" at Marshall, under construction. If that photograph comes our way, we will definitely share it with you in these pages.

On Night of Nights itself we were joined by the son and the granddaughter of RCA engineer Walt Matthews, who served at KPH. Walt's son offered a curious gift that marked a true "home-coming." Chief Operator Dillman will tell us this fascinating story:

"Readers of a certain age will recognize the BC-453 as one of the command set receivers that were used by so many hams when they became available as surplus after WWII. The BC-453 is the low frequency version that became known as the Q-5er when used as a tunable IF for high frequency receivers.

The BC-453 covers 190kc to 550kc - which includes the medium frequency maritime mobile band. And that, brothers and sisters, led to the unraveling of what first seemed a mystery.

On Night of Nights XIX we here honored by visits from the son and granddaughter of Walt Matthews. Walt was an engineer at the RCA receive station in Point Reyes. The son and granddaughter brought with them some artifacts from his estate - including a BC-453. At first this generated no more than mild attention. But gradually the true importance of this particular BC-453 came into focus.



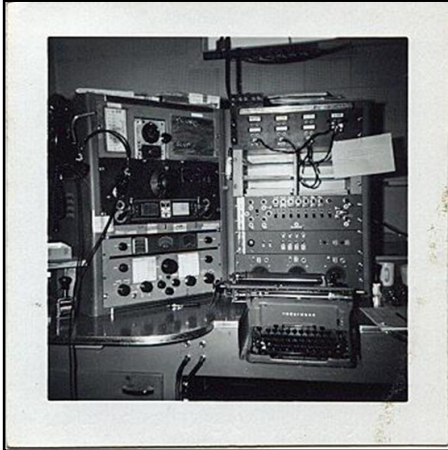
The first discovery was the true purpose of an obviously home built mystery box that came with the receiver.



After some pondering it became apparent that this was the power supply for the receiver which fit neatly on the rear deck of the BC-453 where the dynamotor originally was. But why would Walt have a BC-453?

The first clue was obvious: a Dymo label on the front panel above the frequency dial with the numbers 426. This is of course the MF working frequency of KPH. A closer examination revealed that the spot on the dial for 426kc was marked with barely visible red paint.

At this point the memory of an early post war photo of KPH came to mind - a photo in which a command set receiver could be seen. After some searching that photo was located. And there it was. A BC-453 with the same manual tuning knob as the one we had on a shelf at a KPH operating position.



Notice the BC-453 in the top rack on the left.

Now the whole picture became clear. BC-453s were used at KPH as keying monitors for KPH MF transmissions. Why only 426kc and not 500kc too? Because, unique in commercial maritime radio communications, 500kc is a simplex Morse channel. So no keying monitor was needed there.

We love this kind of thing. The detective work, the emerging of a complete story about an artifact and, most thrilling, the return of that important artifact to its original home."

#### "Benediction"

For the members of the Operations Department, perhaps the most satisfying moment of the day comes after a fantastic evening of operating what we believe is the greatest Morse coast station the world ever knew - KPH. After a long, relaxing drive south through the dark roads of Marin county one arrives to see Building 2A of "Bollinas Radio" blazing with light emanating from the clerestory windows, high above the transmitter gallery. As you approach and make the short walk towards the building one often encounters a merging of two powerfully meaningful sounds: the "Music of Morse" and the pounding of surf. An aural experience, truly, of "maritime - radio." Once inside, the transmitters are pounding away, rectifier tubes flashing in rhythm with the dots and dashes. The weary members of the Transmitter Department, their work almost done, can take a moment of leisure to exchange a passing word, and a report of the days activities. All of this leads to the Control Room, and perhaps the most solemn moment of "Night of Nights": the sending of what has come to be called the "Closing Benediction." The text of this message was composed many years ago by DA, and was traditionally sent by her. This year, Chief Operator Dillman took to the key, while the rest of the staff and visitors stood in respectful silence.

These words are a fitting way to end this report of another successful "Night of Nights" ...

"DEAR GODDESS THE MEMBERS OF THE MARITIME RADIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARE YOUR HUMBLE SERVANTS AND WE THANK YOU FOR PROTECTING US THIS PAST YEAR AS WE CONTINUED OUR STEWARDSHIP OF THE STATIONS KPH AND KFS STOP THE MUSIC OF MORSE HAS GLADDENED THE HEARTS OF MANY AS OUR SIGNALS CROSSED THE BARRIERS OF TIME AND SPACE AROUND THE WORLD STOP WE ASK THAT YOU GUIDE OUR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS DURING THE COMING YEAR THAT WE MAY BE WORTHY OF THE VALUABLE EQUIPMENT AND THE HONORABLE TRADITION THAT HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED INTO OUR HUMBLE HANDS STOP BLESS ALSO THE MANY EARS THAT SHARE THE FRUITS OF OUR LA-





-BOURS ZUT 73/88 ("Morse Forever! Best Regards and Love and Kisses") DA ("sined" by our Denise Stoops) - WE NOW INVOKE AND REQUEST THE BLESSINGS OF THE RADIO GODDESS TO HELP OUR BELOVED DENICE AND ALL RADIO MEN AND WOMEN IN THEIR HOUR OF DIFFICULTY WE WISH YOU FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS GL ("good luck") AND VY 73 DE KPH/KFS SK CL ("end of communications and closed")

At the conclusion of the "Closing Benediction" we were "finished with sets," so the Transmitter Department powered down the thirteen transmitters that had served us so well once again this year. The assembled True Believers then repaired to the Engineers Lounge for the traditional "Night of Nights" cake ... an appropriate way to conclude the celebration of the "birthday" of the Maritime Radio Historical Society.

There is much more that could be said, and perhaps will be in coming issues of this report. Stay tuned. While "Night of Nights XIX" is in the log, "Night of Nights XX" will be here before you know it, and 1700 GMT on Saturday, when operations resume, can't come soon enough. But until then ...

... QRU BV ES GL 73/88 ZUT DE KPH SK EE



## Microwave SKCC QSO Down-under!



This is so rare I had to ask Ron AC2C how to record it in SKCC Logger.. Sunday 22 July 0023Z during SOTA activation I made a summit to summit SKCC exchange with Andrew VK1DA #11257. So what? It was made on 1296 MHz 23cm band.

Radio FT857D feeding 5w IF to SG Labs transverter to the 23cm yagi pictured. Key used a J45 (J-37) leg strap..Min temp that morning minus 6C. Hence the fashion statement woollen beanie ! All logged and I am half way to my C with that one! 73 Bill VK1MCW #16949

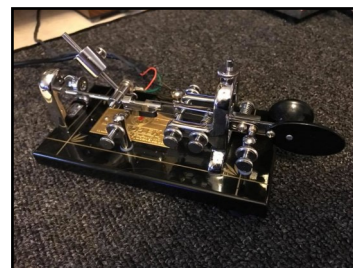
## New Toy

New toy on the desk...73, Paul KC5PRT 15927c



## New Bug

Got my new bug today! Looks and works great ...Jason N3YUG 15885s



## **Dowdell Knob de Brian N4API, #11673S**



Dowdell Knob summit with FT-450D and MFJ – 935B loop tuner rigged for 40 meter operation.

Dowdell Knob is located in the F.D. Roosevelt State Park near Warm Springs, GA and is a WG4/CE-004 Summits on the Air (SOTA) site which is 1,395 feet high. It is a spot where FDR would have picnics during his time at the Little White House in Warm Springs. They would remove the back seat of his convertible car, and place it on the ground for him to enjoy his picnic lunch using his fine china. Pictures of him sitting on the back seat with his crutches are displayed, along with a preserved barbecue grill, are also at the summit. Numerous times FDR was known to spend time alone at

this summit. He would send his bodyguard down the road away from him, and summoned him back by blowing the car horn. The only noise that can be heard across the valley floor, is an occasional

rooster crowing, which may explain why FDR wanted “a chicken in every pot”.

This is the only mountainous spot (Pine Mountain Range) in Middle Georgia, with any other mountains in Georgia located hundreds of miles away. The mountain strip runs for about 15 miles with a road running along the very top of the mountain.

This is an easy SOTA activation as the Dowdell Knob spur has a parking lot and picnic area at the summit. This is also a favorite spot for the Columbus Amateur Radio Club (Columbus, GA) to conduct their ARRL June VHF Contest operations.

The area tends to be very hot and humid in the summer, despite the altitude, and very cold and windy during the winter. The view on the mountain summit is spectacular and the most noticeable feature of this mountain to a ham radio operator, is the lack of any Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) while on the mountain. If no atmospheric static is present, an operator will think the bands are totally dead. Sending out a CQ into the dead silence will sometimes result in a mini-pileup. This would be a great site for an extended WES operation, but unfortunately there is no camping allowed at the site. The area closes at sundown. My WES operations here have been limited to just a few hours, but this is a fun noiseless WES dream location.

*“I wanted a picture with myself in it, but my wife never could get a good view of the antenna. The antenna, and the background was the most important feature, I wanted to capture. Did not get anyone that day using the antenna. It was also pointed East/West, and that is not a good orientation. I would have had to set the antenna at another picnic table to get a North/South orientation and I would not have gotten the view of the valley. If you just slightly move the antenna, you have to retune the loop tuner. Lots of storms in the southeast that day too, so the QRN was high that day. Man was it hot too. I was going to add some of that to the story, but I wanted to keep it to just one page.”*



## July SKS Photos and Chat



Few signals heard inside the auroral oval tonite. Kept at it anyways. Thanks to VE7HI, Ken for digging my weak signal out of the noise level. 73 to all, hope to hear and work you all again soon. Cu on the bands... John, AL7JK

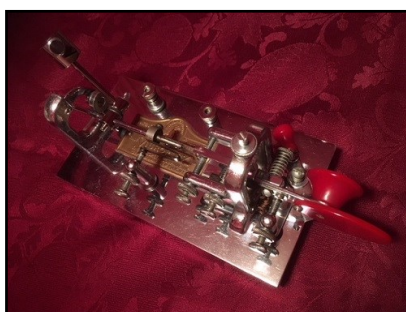


Bad propagation tonight and much qsb, anyway a lot of fun, thanks to all...73 Ric HP1RIS



I worked 20M only and had to take a break toward the end due to 95 deg.F in the hamshack. My air conditioner doesn't like the direct sun and tends to shut down when the outside temperature exceeds 110 F. Conditions seemed pretty good and there was some evening short skip to CO and NM. N1CGP in ME made it into the log as well as several mid-Atlantic and southern states. The highlight of the night was a QSO with ZL2BLQ with a couple of minutes to go in the Sprint. He was on 14.048 just above the W1AW broadcast, but very good copy here in Nevada. Alas, I never heard the VE3 special station, but he may have been down on 40 or 80 meters.

The picture is of a monsoon gusher, Nevada style...73, Jon K1NV



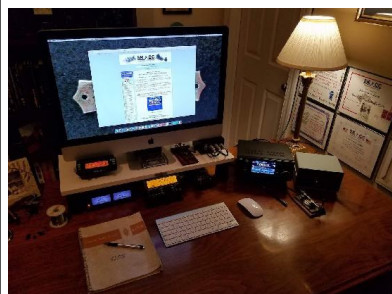
IC-706 to G5RVjr @35' with my old 1946 Vibroplex Deluxe that I have had since 1955. Great signals; excellent operators; busy and fun evening. Thanks for the contacts. Nice to finally meet WB3GCK on the air. 73 ... Don K3RLL



Good to see all the activity on 40M and 20M, even worked one on 80M. Thanks to all who pulled out my 4W QRP signal...Steve



Fun night tonight. 40-meter band held up pretty well. Ran the KX2 and my mini "sideswiper". Managed to snag our "Bonus" station right away. Nice to see some more new members on ... welcomed them to enjoy the sprint. Thanks for all those good "ears" out there..Jack KK0I



**Brian** Great sprint, 20 and 40 were alive and well...checked 80 once but saw very little activity so went back to 40... Thanks for all the contacts.. 73 .. Brian ... Photo is of new station arrangement...Brian KQ4MM





I worked the SKS for about an hour-and-a-half, all S&P. I had 15 contacts, 7 on 20 and 8 on 40. Using my FT-450D to the Hustler mobile antenna and the Speed-X straight key. I always enjoy working other members for the first time and there were some tonight in addition to the other old timers I hear each time...Wes W1LIC



After what seemed to be lousy daytime conditions, the activity level for the SKS seemed pretty good. Prop to the west coast was lousy, but everything else was OK. Quite a few newer folks were worked, and a third of the contacts were non-C,T,S. Thanks to all. And the photo was taken about 64 years ago, of me (then K1VHO) with my Lafayette Radio bug...John W1TAG

## Two New Keys



Two new keys in the collection, model G.Damjanov, Razgrad city, Bulgarian, souvenir from the HAM meeting in Hungary, Mako city HA8KCI, 3. key, TKF

Soviet army key I already have, but I could not resist buying it 😊 :- ) 73 de YU7AE SKCC 5790T



## Sweet Gear!



De Bry AF4K, #1879s...A visit with CW op Hank Dean KU8S #5962 today with his side swiper key and beautiful HQ100 / DX40 station.



AF4K

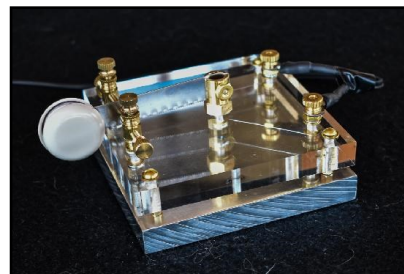
## July Brag and Pictures



Just a score of 2 for July. Thanks to Gino/IZ2QXG and Bert/F6HKA, both on 20m. Picture enclosed is of a beautiful little morse key, as yet maker unknown. The base is 4" by 2" and stamped G.B.1091. 73. John / G0RDO / SKCC 2133s



Moved at the end of June and didn't get an antenna up until the 15th. New QTH is working out very nicely. Thanks for all the brags this month!! 73, Dave KB1WOD



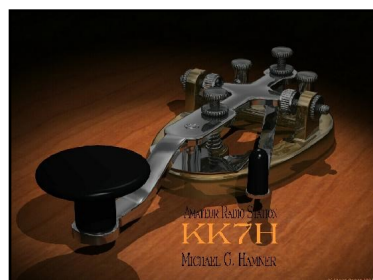
As the Brag Bonus station for the month I attempted to maximize my presence by posting in the groups.io network and on the SKED page where I announced I am QRG for your Brag Bonus contact. Even with that concerted approach, I logged only 119 members, and if the early numbers of those reporting are a clue, I wonder where all of those 119 folks have gone. I even noticed several who have reported but failed to claim your due for the 25 bonus points. Hopefully the future volunteers will find a technique to truly build the participation in this monthly fun event. Pictured is my favorite homebrew Cootie used exclusively for the QRS contacts below 10 WPM. More pictures at my QRZ page... 73, Mike K5MP



Always fun.73, Tom KB3CVO



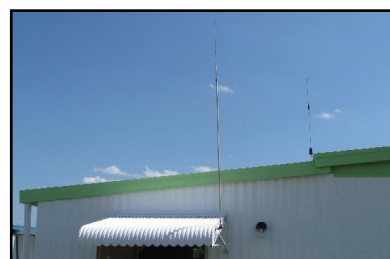
Es mi primer brag espero lograr los 100 SKCC gracias a todos y usando mi primera straight begali spark 73, Che WP3PW



Not a bad month considering the house was full of kids, grandkids, great grandkids, and an xyl full of honeydos as the result of the above. Thanks to K5MP for pulling me out of the muck for the bonus...73, Mike KK7H



Spent the last week of the month operating QRP from my daughter's home near Memphis, TN (picture shows my station). Made several contacts on 10 meters during the month. Thanks to all my contacts...73, Curt WA2JSG



Another month with majority of "brag" (don't care for that word) contacts being on 10 meters with a few also on 6 meters. I enjoy the sporadic-E season. Photo is of the massive antenna farm here at W1LIC. :-)...73, Wes

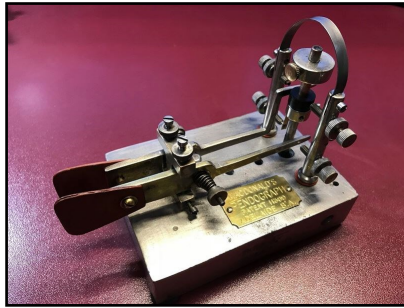


## KM4AHP Has the Key(s)!

While checking out the SKCCFacebook page I ran across this neat key posted by Mark KM4AHP #17086. Just “because” I checked out Mark’s QRZ page... WOW, WOW, WOW!!!! Talk about keys and paddles; treat yourself to just some of the pictures of keys, bugs, cooties and paddles from Mark’s page! There were so many pictures I spent the next 30 minutes admiring his collection.

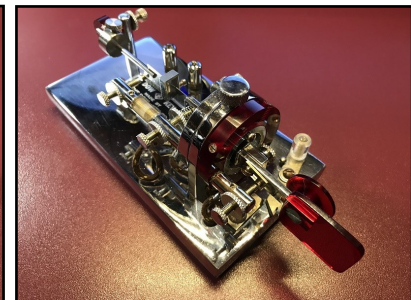
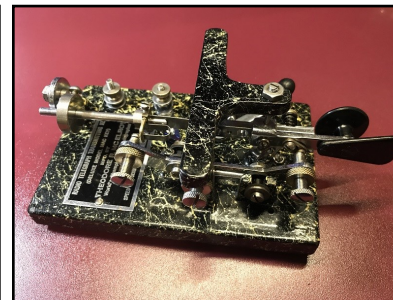
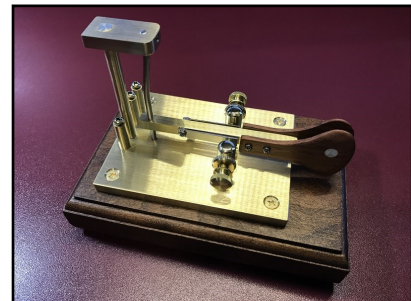
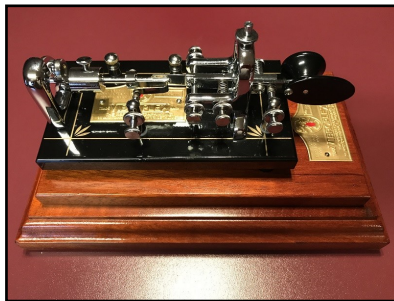


Mark KM4AHP 17086



1909 MacDonal Pendograph made in Australia.

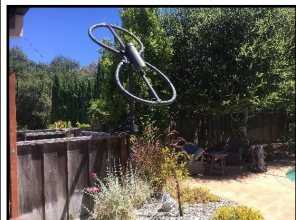
Here are just a very, very few pictures from the QRZ page! The man has the key(s) and is a photographer too!



Like I said,....just a FEW of the fine keys shown at Mark’s QRZ page. Check it out!!!!



## August WES Photos and Chat



Enjoyed the fun in spite of the ever present QSB and difficult band condx. Started with a couple QRP contacts but after going dry for most of Saturday put on the amp and started sending CQ. Got a chance to try the newly built 2-element 40 inch diameter (K8NDS design) Fractional Wave Loop up 10 feet but used the Hexbeam for most of the 20M contacts. Here is a picture of the Loop. The rest of the station was a KX3+PX3+KPA500 using a W1SFR Torsion Bar Cootie Key. Love that Torsion Bar Sideswiper!...73, Brad AI6DS



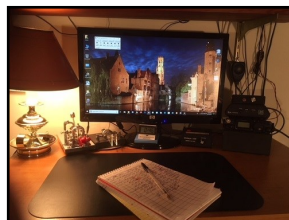
Dismal conditions for a low-power op, but in a glutton-for-punishment fashion, typical of the ever-hopeful QRP enthusiast, I forged on for a total of 7 QSOs. Operating outdoors from the comfort of my deck, my station consisted of an LNR Mountain Topper (output 4 watts), an Alpha Loop, and a single paddle Palm Pico key, set up in cootie mode..K8FAC Frank



Joined in the fun for an hour or two with QSO's on 20, 40 & even one on 80m. Thanks to F6HKA/Bert, K1EEE/Mike, GM0EUL/Peter, G4PVM/Paul, KB8KMH/Bud & K1EDG/Ed. Used my favourite rig - Kenwood TS-440s at 100 watts to Cushcraft MA6V vert for 20m and a 20ft tall fishing pole mounted on gate post with loading coils for 40m & 80m. Keys - the magnificent Marconi PS No213A plus a big GPO Reversing key. 73. John / G0RDO



WOW. I had too many projects this weekend. Just got to operate a few minutes at a time. Then Sunday afternoon was thunderstorms. Thanks to the QRP stations for the bonus points. Thanks for the Qs. Sure was fun....as usual! 73 Dale K3SEN

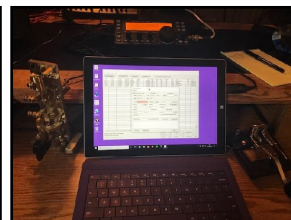


FT-817nd wide open at 5w to G5RVjr @35' with 1946 Vibroplex Deluxe - Even with propagation taking a lot of time off during the WES, this event was still a lot of fun with some very strong QRP stations. Have had this bug since 1955. Someday I'll get good

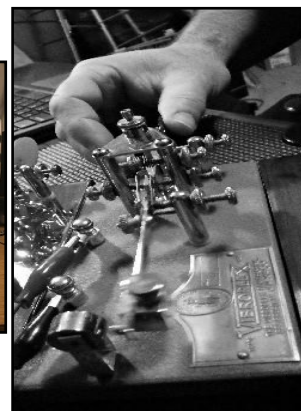


IT IS TOUGH TO WORK OUT OF THIS NW CORNER .. 4 STATES WORKED WA, ID, OR AND CA .. NOTHING HEARD EAST OR SOUTH OF US .. NOTHING ON 20 .. 40 AND 80 GAVE ME THE 12 STATIONS .. GIVES A PERSON A LOT OF BREAK TIME THOUGH .. MAYBE BETTER RESULTS NEXT MONTH ..K7ROH Tom

Best month in a long time. Did a lot of CQ WES and got a lot of Qs on 15m. Thanks to all the QRP stations out there!..KB1WOD Dave



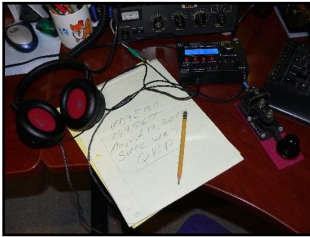
My 1776 score would have been more appropriate for July WES. High noise at times, poor band at times, but thanks to those who pulled out my 4r6 watts. Either have bad coax, a poor band, fewer stations, or maybe all three, but still fun trying. 73, 72, Jim K5TSK



Was unable to complete any qso's at qrp power levels with this weekends band conditions. Switched to the FT-450d @ 100w and completed 4 qsos. Even then the Qsb played havoc, thanks to all whom searched the noise level for my weak signal. 73 look forward to putting ya'll in the logbook. Cul AL7JK John



## More August WES



Greetings: It was fun working QRP this WES. "Youkits" HB-1B Running 5 Watts into Fan Dipole in the attic, at 25 feet. Flame-proof Navy Key. I wish only for better CONDX ;-). Thank you all. 73/72..Sergey KD9EBS



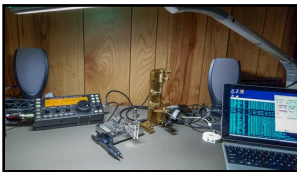
Had planned to run QRP portable but ended up with too many other commitments. Was able to work the last hour and made 8 QSOs on my newly build 40M QCX kit.. Thanks to all who pulled my weak sig out for a contact... Brian KQ4MM



Fun WES in spite of the conditions. I applaud all the hearty souls running QRP ! Only in for a few hours on Saturday and Sunday. 73 to ALL de AI N4ow 11375S



Enjoyed the WES, albeit with only limited time available. I ran 900mW for most, but I managed to make 3 QSOs at 4mW! Thanks to K1PUG, K3CKO, and especially K1EEE for hearing my signal. The latter was a new personal best for SKCC at 196,384 miles per watt... N9SE Marty



First time in WES as QRP. Learning curve for sure. Not really able to run a frequency. Most points were Hunt and pounce. Need a lot of patience. Used 5 ah battery for power and Buddipole on 40 mtrs. Yagi for 20 mtrs...



Set up for a while at our Radio Club picnic with KX2 and QRP Guys 3 band vertical. Other than that operated from home as time allowed. QRP was a challenge but operators were top notch at pulling out signals... Mark NX1K



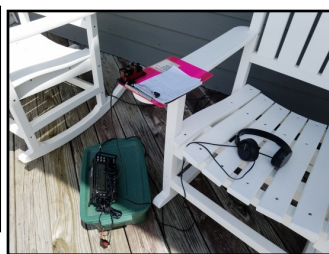
Enjoyed all the QSOs. Rough copy on Saturday with band noise. Then better on Sunday afternoon but with storms in our area. Thanks to all and look forward to the next one. Pic is Mustang, OK sunset.. Gerald WA5AFD



Busy weekend plus storms around so didn't have the time to get on as much as I would have liked to. Thanks to all the QRP and QRPP stations for their patience as I dug them out of the noise though many had excellent signals! Use my K3, Bencher RJ-2 key and 43' vertical with my new MFJ remote tuner at the base. Worked mostly 40 meters with some 20 thrown



First WES for me since last year and first ops since K3Y! My wife has not been well I will try to get on more often. For this WES I turned off the KXPA100 and ran my KX3 at 5W. I only had time for a few QSOs but it felt good to use the key again. 73/72, Howard WB1AJX.



I was traveling down to the Outer Banks of North Carolina on Saturday but I managed to get on the air and make a few contacts on Sunday afternoon. I was operating "rocking chair portable" from a 3rd story deck of a rental house. The local noise here is pretty high, which made it challenging. Craig WB3GCK



I had a fun weekend on



on the mend. . Had QSO with Bert F6H-KA ..W2NRA ART



## How I Learned CW de Kevin WA9VFD #17995t

It's August. The solar flux index is all of 68. The bands are poor so my key sits idle as I make contact on the Yaesu Fusion system. A friend is on the air as well. It's through him that I learned about SKCC.

We had just had a QSO on 40m the past weekend. "Kevin, you've gone from zero to 20WPM in just 6 months. You might consider writing an article for The Ragchew on how you did it," he said.

He's right. I got my ticket less than a year ago. My father, WA9VFD, had passed recently. He had that call for some 60 years, from the Korean War until his passing in late 2016. While making arrangements I came to realize his license was set to expire in a few months. So I got my ticket to keep that call in the family. Dad is the real WA9VFD. I'm just holding it for now.

"You know, dad never used the mic, ever," my sister said on Christmas Day. I had just opened a gift from her, a Vibroplex. It sounded like a challenge. "Maybe your sister is right," said the YL, "you're not much of a talker. Morse Code would probably suit you better."

So I had to learn CW but I had to do it with a full time job, two teenagers at home and the rest of life that we all have. There was a lot of advice, some of it really good, such as: "Never look at a chart of dits and dahs", "start at a higher speed to learn the sounds", "enroll in CW Academy".

I did all of that but once I had my first QSO (thanks, Bill WB4DBO) I was hooked, couldn't get enough of it and wanted to learn faster. Even CW Academy's beginner class was too slow. I started to make my own learning tools.

I knew a computer could do certain things really well. It can read words. It can make tones and it can do these things quickly. One day I was driving in my car and a song was playing on a CD but I couldn't remember its name. I looked at the dash and it read, "Stop Draggin My Heart Around." Then it hit me.

Using the Python language (and Linux, BASH, etc) I could generate tones programmatically and output them into MP3 audio files to be played in the car. Most importantly, my code would name the file after the word that was being played in Morse. The word would play and I would decode it in my head and could always glance at the dashboard of the car to see if I was right. The same could be done on an iPhone or any MP3 player that displays the name of the song.

```
NUMBEROFFRAMES = int(BITRATE * LENGTH)
RESTFRAMES = NUMBEROFFRAMES % BITRATE
RESTFRAMES = RESTFRAMES / 10
WAVEDATA = ''

for x in xrange(NUMBEROFFRAMES):
    WAVEDATA = WAVEDATA+chr(int(math.sin(x/((BITRATE/FREQUENCY)
28))
```

I started with letters, numbers and the punctuation marks. Later I downloaded lists of words, including CW terms, and fed them to the program. It generated about 2,000 words. I recreated them each time I needed to increase speed.

The entire library is online at <http://www.tinyurl.com/CW-WA9VFD>. About once a week someone on Facebook will ask, "How do I learn CW? None of the apps



work for me.” I send them that link.

We all spend more time in the car than we would wish. I’m always looking for ways to do something while driving that’s not distracting but also somewhat productive. All those wasted hours in the car turned out to be the best way for me to learn CW.



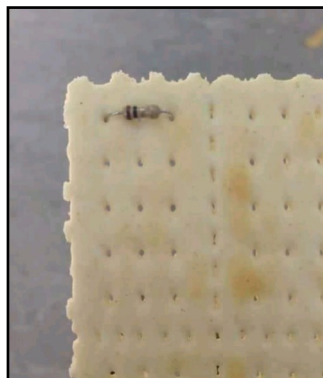
The “original” WA9VFD  
 (“Dad” 100% cw op)

Kevin WA9VFD #17995t

*Editor.....Learning cw is not the same for everyone, Kevin offers a method not commonly known...it just may be what will work for you!*



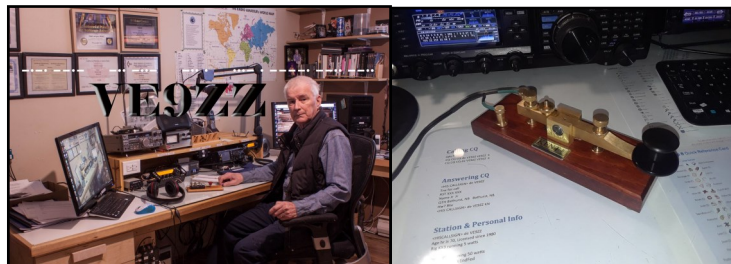
Gonna go a little retro...Jason N3YUG



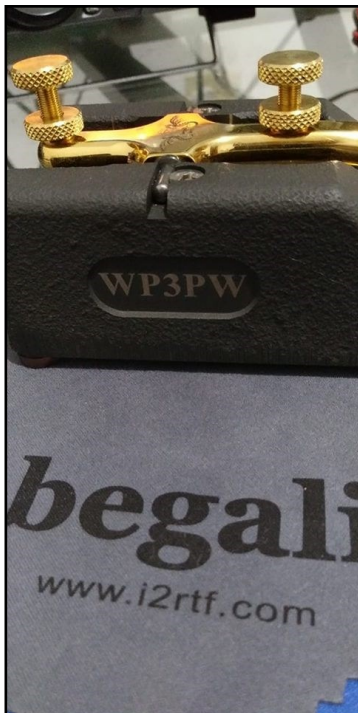
KD8VSQ says this is his solution for projects when he runs out of proto boards!



Absolutely true! Pass it on!



Got my new Kent Key kit today, all assembled and ready to go. Now all I have to do is get up the nerve to get on the air...Fidel VE9ZZ



SWEET!



Hilton Head island. Fire to the wire ...de KA4GUM/4



Managed to make a few contacts today with 5 watts from Kathio State Park in Minnesota. ..73, Joe N0JOL

**Hmm, What's This??????**





## Unique Keys at W8BTD

***Editor...Here are some unique keys from the shack of Bob W8BTD #8972. Some are paddles but be sure to checkout Bob's "unique" straight keys.***

I would believe these are a "one of a kind" chrome and one made of brass that looks just like it. Both were made by K8USD Paul (SK) The one I have is the one made which was chrome plated. It was made by K8USD for Ed Shaffer WD8BFC (SK) just recently. It was giv-



en to K8US Mike and he was gracious enough to give it to me. Real smooth but not SKCC acceptable..hihi!



Theses are the 2 keys I made for fun. One is made of wood and works very well. The black one is from a plastic BB gun. Cord plugs into the clip. Good up to 15 WPM



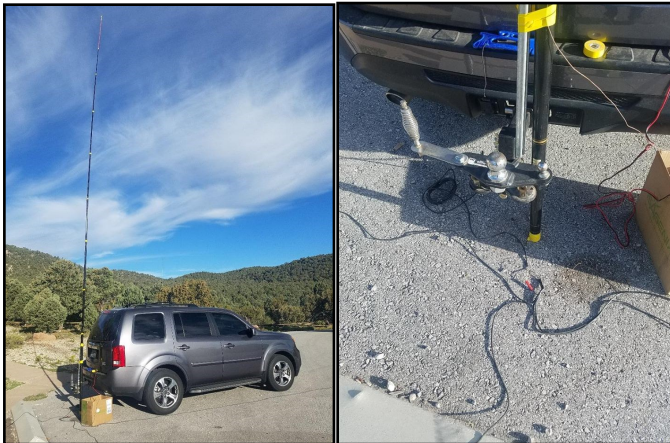
Here is the collection of keys I have now. The chrome key and my "gun" straight keys make a nice addition to my collection.



## As Seen on Facebook



These keys are in the shack of Dennis F5VJC #1913t...you can see the computer here



Check out the antenna I was using during a contact at 1532UTC on 40 meters today. The location for this portable operations was 7526 Ft elevation, east side of Mt. Charleston, (Northwest of Las Vegas, NV) about a mile north of Angel Peak. Actual site is called Sawmill Trailhead/Picnic area, if you want to search the Internet to see the site. The cardboard box is holding a 12 VDC deep cycle battery. 100 watts worked great. Super simple. Flexible wire taped to the MFJ pole (the cheapest pole that always breaks at the top), Pole topped off with a driveway marker pole. Tape the wire to the pole at each of the intersections as you extend it. Comes to about 30 FT. Tape serves 2 purposes, 1. keeps the wire in place, 2 keeps the pole from collapsing when moved by the wind. Wire has a red power pole on the feed end. Coax comes for an SGC tuner in the tool well of the vehicle to a home brew poor man's balun, terminated with red and black Power-poles. Black power pole connects to the ground radials. Connections shown in the next picture 73, Jim W1RO



Managed to make a few contacts today with 5 watts from Kathio State Park in Minnesota. 73, Joe N0JOL



## Fun with E-Layer Propagation

Just because we are at the bottom end of the sunspot cycle does not mean you can not make contacts on the 10, 12 and 15 meter bands, the trick is knowing when to try those bands. Spring and summer months are generally the peak time for sporadic E-layer propagation.

On August 13 around 20:00 GMT there was a nice sporadic E-layer opening between my location in southwest Missouri and Michigan. Ed, W0RJW, and I first made a contact on 15 meters. We used the SKCC Sked Page to coordinate contacts on 17, 12 and 10. Not being content with 4 bands we continued making contacts on 20, 30, and 40. The qrn on 80 was too much for a contact there, but in the course of 45 minutes we had worked on 7 bands. The next morning I worked Ralph, K0RO, in Mississippi on 10, 12, 15 and 17, a new state for me on each of those bands.

So how can you tell if there is sporadic E-layer activity and how do you find people to work when there is an opening? Even if there is an opening unless it is a contest weekend you may not hear activity on the bands. Fortunately there are tools to help us determine if there may be an opening and we can use the SKCC Sked Page to help find hams to work.

The 6 meter band is the key to looking for sporadic E-Layer activity. Most cw activity occurs from around 50.090 to 50.100, even if it is quiet there tune lower in the band to listen for beacon signals. It is a very good idea to listen for SSB stations on the calling frequency of 50.125 and up. If you hear stations you want to determine where they are located so you know what paths are available to you.

Online tools are very helpful in identifying E-layer openings. If your favorite dx cluster site is listing 6 meter contacts it is time to take a further look. There are several sites that map contacts and show the possible location of E-layer ionization clouds, I use <http://tvcomm.co.uk/g7izu/propagation-maps/north-american-sporadic-e/>. These sites map contacts from the dx clusters and show the possible location of E-layer ionization clouds based on the assumption that there must be a cloud half way between the two stations to support the contact. These sites map FT8 contacts so if there is not a lot of activity shown on the map the conditions may not support cw communications.

If the map shows favorable ionization clouds, identify general areas that are on the opposite side of the cloud about the same distance from the cloud as you. These are the target areas for you to focus on.

Go to the SKCC Sked Page and see if there any stations listed in your target areas. If so you can ask them if they would like to try a contact on 10 or 12 or whatever band you want to try. Since most hams who are monitoring the Sked Page are not listed be sure to post a message like "there appears to be E-layer activity now does anyone from the northeast (or NY-PA area, etc.) want to try 10 or 12". Even better post the frequency where you are calling cq and your target areas.

If you want to learn more about E-layer propagation a quick internet search will net you a load of information. Hope to work you on the high bands soon,.

**73, Dan K0FD #15034**



## Serious About 160m!

People can get real serious about their favorite bands but I doubt none are more serious than Jeff N8CC #7541. The following are photos and facts about Jeff's insulated base quarter wave 160m vertical. Jeff has had this vertical up for some years with about a 10ft x 10 ft square of salvaged aluminum sheeting from old truck caps. Attached were 120 130ft radials and the antenna worked fantastic. Of course it helped that Jeff also has 5 1500ft plus two wire switchable beverage antennas! The old aluminum actually corroded and the wires stretched themselves loose as they were gobbled up into the grass. A new improved aluminum pad project has begun. The three pictures here show the past development before the aluminum sheeting goes down.

***\*\*I'll send more pix after I get the cladding done and new radial deployed. I'm getting four 4x10 sheets of 1/16" 2024 aluminum from Alro's outlet store in Lansing (MI) Yes, I'll be putting the new radials***



*around the perimeter, with a bit more slack on the inner end than before, to allow for wire migrating down into the soil over time.*

*I just picked up the sheet aluminum today. Weather permitting, I should be making good progress over the next week or so. Kaz (K8KS #4444t) is chomping at the bit to run radials, so he'll be sweating it out with me as weather permits. Kaz came over Sunday to give me a hand with the 130' radials, and we managed to get 60+ down before the heat of the day, which drove us (me!) off the project and called it a day. Late in the afternoon, I bonded the tower base to the new ground system and did some checking with the analyzer.*



*Everything looked good, so I hooked the feedline back up. I will likely add more radials as time permits over the next several days, just for redundancy. For now, the antenna looks to be performing as it should. Of course, the 'proof of the pudding' will happen when the DX shows up.*

*You can see that I put synthetic wheel-bearing grease in the overlap area between the 4x10 aluminum sheets. This is to inhibit oxidization in that area. Valvoline synthetic grease was used because, over the years, I have learned that it doesn't separate, degrade, or dry out as others tend to. The screws used are special stainless-steel plywood screws that I purchased from McMaster-Carr. The radial wire is mostly surplus from the aircraft industry that I have had stored for decades, it is mostly 20AWG...de Jeff N8CC*





## New SKCC Sideswiper (Cootie!)

Lots of SKCC members re using a sideswiper ("Cootie" is cooler!). If you don't have a sideswiper but want to give it a try or even if you do have a sideswiper then here you go...the "official" SKCC sideswider! Check out the pictures below!



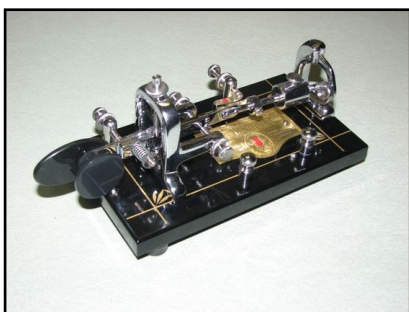
Here are the facts about this key:

1. Base is 4"x3.25" Powder coated cold roll steel.
2. Weighs 3lbs. Will NOT dance around the table! ;)
3. Uppers are silver anodized aircraft aluminum.
4. Blade is high carbon spring steel.
5. Finger piece is Oak.

I've been playing it for two weeks and it really feels nice.  
Very solid tactile feel. Nothing soft or mushy about it.  
Price is expected to be less than

If parts arrive Friday we should be able to have 20 ready by September 6 or 7...de Randy  
KB4QQJ

***Editor...You may want to hurry and purchase one of these...why? Because the next page of the Rag Chew explains about the new SKCC Triple Key Award! Drew AF2Z came up with a fantastic new project for SKCCers to reach for. Read about the program, get you straight key and bug ready and if you haven't a sideswiper yet then fire-off an email to Randy to reserve your sideswiper and get ready for the SKCC Triple Play Award beginning November 10th. Who will grab certificate number 1? Who will be in the Top Ten.***



## Triple Key Rules

### Overview

The Triple Key Award promotes the use of all three SKCC accepted key types-- Straight Key, Semi-automatic (or bug), and Sideswiper (or cootie). It provides an incentive for members to operate with other key types than that with which they are most familiar.

### Requirements

Make contacts, in any sequence or order, with a total of 300 different SKCC members as follows:

- 100 contacts using your straight key;
- 100 contacts using your bug;
- 100 contacts using your sideswiper.

Operators logged in these contacts can use any of the SKCC accepted key types and don't need to be participating in the award.

### Exchange

The on-air exchange is the usual SKCC QSO format with the additional requirement that the key type and/or brand/model should also be exchanged during the contact. Only contacts made after [Date TBD] are valid.

### Application/Log

Include QSO details plus key types used by both operators.

### Miscellaneous

#### Some abbreviations to facilitate award hunting:

3KA = Triple Key Award, 3K Award

SK = straight key; used in QSO as "KEY SK"

BUG = semiautomatic key; used as "KEY BUG"

SS = sideswiper or cootie; used as "KEY SS"