

The SKCC Centurion

The official newsletter of the Straight key Century Club

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

MARCH 2007

Slow Speed Traffic Nets

Melinda Alsbrook, KC4CIA

One of the great things about traffic nets (besides the service they provide to the community) is meeting operators who are within your state – maybe the same city or region. What’s even better is when you get to know them by name, voice, mannerisms, calls, etc. and then get to meet them face to face at a hamfest or just walking in the mall. There are many operators involved in traffic nets who are helpful to newcomers and are always there to answer questions or give advice and encouragement when needed.

One of the biggest advantages to me was that checking into a net helped me overcome mic fright (and later helped with the key fright). For a while, the only contacts I made on HF were with a traffic net.

But the key fright was harder for me to overcome than the mic fright. It was after I (finally) made my first CW contact that I discovered the CW traffic nets, and that they actually had slow speed “training” nets, which are designed for the operators to make their mistakes and get familiar with the procedures. Just that little bit of activity a couple of times a week helped my copying skills and helped me not be quite so nervous when I put my call on the air.

So, if you’re one of those who still struggles with key fright or maybe you just think traffic nets sound interesting, here’s some tips to help you get started:

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Each net is different, but they all have the same basic procedure for checking in (and out) of the net. Here’s how the Georgia CW Training Net goes – and I’ll use my buddy Rodney, N4RAY, in my example.

Net control calls for check-ins –
GTN de N4RAY PSE QNI K
(*please check-in*)

To check in, just send a single letter – it could be the first letter of the suffix of your call or your name (“C” or “M” for me, I prefer to use “M”).

Net control acknowledges you by repeating what you sent (“M” for me).

Then I send:

de KI4CIA GE RODNEY QRU K (*good evening Rodney, no traffic*)

Rodney would respond with something like,

GE MELINDA TU PSE [AS] NEXT K
(*good evening Melinda, thanks, please stand by, next check in please*)

Usually, net control takes four check-ins then starts releasing operators (in the order they checked in).

So, Rodney sends – KI4CIA

I answer “C” (yes, I’m here). Other ops will usually just send a dit or HR for “here”.

Rodney sends,

TU FER QNI HV GUD WK NW QRU QNX 73 DE N4RAY K

I’ll send

TU RODNEY 73 DE KI4CIA

So, Rodney basically said thanks for checking in, have a good week, I have no more traffic for you and you are free from the net. I can turn off the radio then and go about my business, or continue to listen, if I wanted.

And it’s as simple as that, and it’s loads of fun too!

For more information on traffic nets, visit these websites <http://ad4dx.com/gtn/> (Georgia CW Training Net) and <http://www.qsl.net/n5lf/cw-nts.html> (by N5LF - “Quick and Dirty CW Netiquette”).

FISTS has a site listing CW nets - <http://www.fists.org/cwnet.html>. It’s not a completely perfect listing, but will help get you pointed in the right direction on finding a net near you.

Look for more information in upcoming Centurion newsletters.

The SKCC Centurion is now available via email subscription. To begin receiving your issues of The SKCC Centurion in your inbox, simply visit http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The_SKCC_Centurion and join or send an email to The_SKCC_Centurion-subscribe@yahoogroups.com with Subscribe in the subject. Once subscribed, you will receive each issue of The SKCC Centurion in your inbox on the first of each month.

Getting It Just Right

This is part one in a four part series describing how to set up your keying devices. Parts two through four will follow over the next three months and will address *paddles*, *Bencher paddles*, and the *bug*.

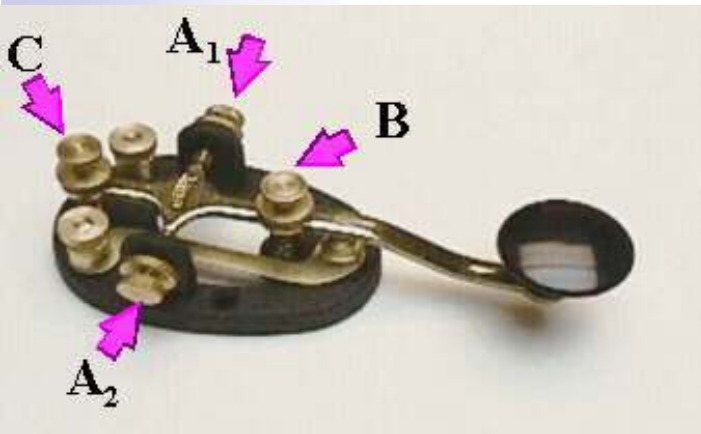
Reprinted with permission from Marshall Emm, N1FN. Morse Express <http://www.mtechnologies.com/index.html>

These instructions use simple, generally familiar examples of equipment types and are designed to help you find the adjustment that suits you best. What you are looking for ultimately is a particular feel, and that will vary from person to person. Not all keys and paddles offer the same adjustments, or even use the same terminology, but hopefully this will be enough to get you started and to illustrate the general principles.

The Straight Key

The example shown is a Nye Speed-X Model 312, which is typical of a great number of straight keys.

The available adjustments are:



Arm Tension, the force needed to move the lever up and down. It's usually exerted by a coil spring between the arm and the base, and is adjusted at **B** in the drawing.

Bearing Tension, the setting of the pivot bearings on which the arm rotates. It is controlled by the pressure on the bearing surfaces, and there is one bearing (and one adjustment) on each side of the pivot arm, shown at **A₁** and **A₂** in the drawing.

Contact Spacing, the space between the two electrical contacts when the key arm is not depressed (unkeyed). The contacts are located beneath the arm, toward the front of the key. The adjustment for the 312 and similar keys is at the back end of the arm, shown as **C** in the drawing.

The two unmarked screws at the back of the key, on either side of C, are the binding posts for connecting the key to the transmitter.

Here are the four steps you will need to "set up" your key:

1. **UN-adjust the key.** That's right- we need to loosen everything up and get to a common starting point, because each of the adjustments has some impact on the others. Loosen the spring tension on the arm (**B**) until no resistance is felt when you depress the knob. Open the contact spacing (**C**) as far as you can without removing the adjustment screw from the arm. Loosen the bearing tension screws (**A**) until the arm wobbles loosely.

2. **Adjust the bearing tension.** Choose one of the two bearings and tighten its adjustment screw (**A**) until you can just barely feel a bit of friction as you move the arm up and down. Now back the screw off until *just* the point at which the arm moves freely again- usually it's just a fraction of a degree of screw rotation, or about as fine an adjustment as you can make. Repeat with the other bearing tension adjustment screw. Setting the second bearing is likely to have had some effect on the first, so re-adjust the first bearing and then finally the second bearing. At this point the arm should move up and down perfectly freely, with no sideways play or "slop."

3. **Adjust the contact spacing.** The contact spacing determines the amount of vertical movement when you depress the arm. It's entirely a matter of taste, but if you haven't used a key before and haven't developed your own preferences, start with a sixteenth of an inch or about the thickness of a penny. Adjust screw (**C**) until you have the desired spacing between the contacts.

4. **Adjust the arm tension.** Tighten the arm tension adjustment screw (**B**) to a comfortable level of tension on the arm. Again, this is a matter of preference, but it is possible to suggest a good rule of thumb if you haven't developed preferences- set it for the minimum amount of tension that will allow you to feel that you are in control of the key.

My First QSO

Scott Laughlin, N7NET

An Elmer might have helped

After earning my Novice license, nearly twenty years ago, I drove to the Northwest Electronics Surplus Store in Eugene, Oregon. I needed something that would get me on the air. Marv, the proprietor at that time, had just taken in a rockbound Heathkit DX-20 transmitter. Few scratches shown through the gray crinkle finish. It appeared as though it might compliment my ancient Lafayette general coverage receiver.



There was no way to detour the need for crystals, at least one. Marv had a drawer crammed full of them, but a half-hour search was ill rewarded. Nearly all of them were from commercial

transmitters. Not a single one of the few we salvaged fell within the Novice bands. Marv, fearful of loosing the sale, produced a crumpled business card bearing the address and telephone number of JAN Crystals in Florida. Defeated, I forked over the fifty-five dollars and took the radio home.

The Internet did not yet exist, so details concerning the purchase of crystals were slow in arriving. However, before the week was out a JAN pamphlet arrived. Selection was relatively simple. All I needed to do was choose a frequency and send some money, of course. The money was where the complications began.

The individual costs have escaped me. However, a waiting period of three to four weeks for a basic fee really stuck in my craw. Adding an additional sum—call it a bribe, would shave a week. A week's pay (I'm kidding) would insure my crystal was in the mail before Friday.

Staying in the 40-meter band was a given. Selecting a frequency would require the use of my trusty Lafayette receiver. But it wasn't that simple. The entire 40-meter band was crammed into a 3/8-inch space on the dial. Only a wizard could make sense of that.

Turning to a friend, Leo, KB7LOC, I asked how I would determine what frequency would be best. "Doesn't matter," he said, "one frequency is probably as good as the next." So, my choice became a pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey event.

In the meantime, an idle travel trailer was selected as a radio shack. An antenna, a 68-foot Zep, identical to those I'd repaired and/or replaced on Air Force C-54s, C-121s, and C-124s, many years earlier, seemed like a good choice.

One day the crystal arrived.

That evening, after work, I fired up the DX-20, and proceeded to zero beat the receiver. Much to my horror, my new crystal was dead center on a European broadcast station, and some screechy lady was singing her heart out. The evening eventually became morning. Someone silenced her about 0700Z, local Pacific Time, when they hit the power switch.

That was when Leo and I conducted our first QSO. Leo still claims I went to sleep in the middle of it and fell over on the key. But I think he was having a nightmare.

New Members

2861 N3EJS Charles Felton DE
 2862 K1HAH John Plainville CT
 2863 KI4QVB Paul Orlando FL
 2864 N5JRS Jim Rockport TX
 2865 KB5HPL Peter League City TX
 2866 KG4KGW Brian Pensacola FL
 2867 KI4MPQ Glenn Candler NC
 2868 VE7BGJ Walter Burnaby BC
 2869 K4BXN Crit Hendersonville NC
 2870 W5VYN Ron Whitesboro TX
 2871 KC0JOE Tom Cape Fair MO

2872 KB2EE Chuck Saranac NY
 2873 WP4F Danny Toa Alta PR
 2874 N9IIF Jack Byron IL
 2875 WA4CX Bill Oakland Park FL
 2876 WP3A Jaime Christiansted VI
 2877 KK4BE Ray Evensville TN
 2878 NP4H Nomar West New York NJ
 2879 NK2X Larry Phillipsburg NJ
 2880 G3XOV Ron Stourbridge England
 2881 K4NAB North Augusta Belevedere Radio Club North Augusta GA
 2882 K8BBM Dave Selby SD
 2883 WJ7O Frank Houston TX
 2884 WA2VMO Bob Staten Island NY
 2885 WB5RYB Bill Fayetteville GA
 2886 N9GGE John Godfrey IL
 2887 AD5LT Tom San Benito TX
 2888 KI6DZU Rick Palm Springs CA
 2889 W4BGH Bernie Riverview FL
 2890 K5SI Stephan Victoria TX
 2891 W9BRE Brian Wonewoc WI
 2892 W8DXI Michigan DX Association Grand Rapids MI
 2893 LU5BE Horacio Buenos Aires Argentina
 2894 WA2OVT Robert Big Flats NY
 2895 K8OT Ed Birch Run MI
 2896 N8MOJ Marion Warren MI
 2897 N7DS Jeff Salem OR
 2898 N9KR Bob Columbus IN
 2899 KY8I Tom Frankenmuth MI
 2900 W2SXX Steve Hudson NY
 2901 K1GUG Dick Braintree MA
 2902 HB9SVT Tom Niederuzwil Switzerland
 2903 WN1OTV Don Millinocket ME
 2904 NY5K Bill Trenton FL
 2905 N5AF Sam Cleveland YX
 2906 WQ9T Richard Monmouth IL
 2907 WN4BOT Robert Louisville KY
 2908 W3HYW Don Darlington SC
 2909 KC9IEQ Chris Sandwich IL
 2910 KI4FVB Brenda Powder Springs GA
 2911 WA9JTU Ken Porterfield WI
 2912 AG4WH Gordon Aiken SC
 2913 WR3K Bob Conshohocken PA
 2914 KI4PGS Jacob Wilsonville AL
 2915 K6ESE Trevor Long Beach CA
 2916 K6DDX Bob North Hills CA
 2917 W9MSL Erwin Freeport IL
 2918 W2SNX Sam Ithaca NY
 2919 K0BCA Randall Spring Valley MN
 2920 N4CDB Cary Jacksonville FL
 2921 AD6YU Loren San Jose CA
 2922 W5RCP Ron Houston TX
 2923 KI4CXO Jodie York SC
 2924 9A7WA Mirko Poljani Croatia
 2925 W7FKI Jim Federal Way WA
 2926 K2MEN Sheldon Gibbstown NJ
 2927 KE7S Joe Wellington NJ
 2928 W6QHD Jay Tehachapi CA
 2929 KC2GEP Tom Clarence NY
 2930 KI4KGU James Gate City VA

2931 VA3SIE Martin Ottawa Ontario
 2932 K7TRT John Livingston TX
 2933 W8AEC Marvin Martinsburg WV
 2934 XE1YJL Joseph Tlalnepantla Mexico
 2935 W0UAK Jerry Chisholm MN
 2936 N7GTW Vern Spokane WA
 2937 K1NNJ Tom Shirley MA
 2938 K8KIC Ken Adrian MI
 2939 K4FPF Paul Springfield VA
 2940 WL7WH Bob Anchorage AK
 2941 KB1MNN Kyle Holland MA
 2942 AB2WH Dave Montclair NJ
 2943 KD5ENR Scott Tuscola TX
 2944 W8TQE Adrian Amateur Radio Club Adrian MI
 2945 KG4JGQ Rusty Mills River NC
 2946 AA9WK Lee Wayne City IL
 2947 KD7EVN Joel Gig Harbor WA
 2948 N2JQI Woody (Delos) Auburn NY
 2949 W8WFB G.W. Morrow Memorial DX Club Greenford OH

Mar 17 to Mar 18 1200Z Russian DX Contest
 Mar 19 0100Z-0300Z Run for the Bacon QRP Contest
 Mar 24 0000Z CQ WW WPX Contest, SSB
 to Mar 25 2400Z
 Mar 26 0000Z-0400Z QRP Homebrewer Sprint

Shack of The Month

Eric N3EF, HF rigs are, on the left, a K2 with K1 sitting on top. To the right are a couple of MFJ tuners and another kit radio



I built from Small Wonders Lab's, the DSWII 40 meter version. To the right of that is a Yaesu FT2800M 2-meter rig. Bottom left is an old Icom R71A shortwave receiver and a Yaesu FT897 to the right of that. I use both paddles and a straight key. I have a Vibroplex Presentation model, a Begali Simplex, a homebrew paperclip paddle and my Bunnell Radio key. On the right is an Icom PS60 power supply, MFJ TNC for APRS and another small power supply on top. Antenna's are a 135' ladderline fed dipole, a fan dipole for 40, 20, and 10, and a Carolina Windom. These are strung between trees on our 2 acre lot.

Key of The Month

Many years ago a co-worker gave me a Japanese key that he had acquired when stationed in Japan after the end of WWII. Unfortunately I



did not get the story of how he got it, and by now he is a silent key (although he was not a ham.) I often wonder if this key was ever used to send a message that caused the loss of US lives or materiel. I have

New Centurions

63 AA2XB 1681 Frank Maryland, NY 5 February 2007
 64 WA9KPI 719 Bob Lockport, IL 5 February 2007
 65 WB8MON 1205 Dave Lima, OH 07 February 2007
 66 W6UT 2417 Dennis Stockton, CA 07 February 2007
 67 WA1ZFE 494 Bill Norwich, CT 10 February 2007
 68 W9JDH 80 Jimmy Salem, IL 20 February 2007
 69 NT9K 1926 Bill Melbourne, FL 20 February 2007
 70 N4ARO 1099 Dick Johnson City, TN 20 February 2007
 71 AG8A 2532 Randall Greenville MI 24 February 2007
 72 WB1EDI 0164 Barry Manchester NH 24 February 2007
 73 W7GVE 0729 Ed Golden Valley, AZ 28 February 2007

Awards

Band Endorsements

W8III 270 Dave 40m MI 07 February 2007
 KG4W 2416 Ed 40m VA 08 February 2007
 K4VD 605C Kevin 40m VA 12 February 2007

Contest Corner

Mar 3 0000Z to Mar 4 2400Z	ARRL Inter. DX Contest, SSB
Mar 3 0400Z-0600Z	Wake-Up! QRP Sprint
Mar 4 1100Z-1700Z	DARC 10-Meter Digital Contest
Mar 6 0200Z-0400Z	ARS Spartan Sprint
Mar 6 1900Z-2100Z	AGCW YL-CW Party
Mar 10 1400Z-2000Z	AGCW QRP Contest
Mar 11 0000Z-0400Z	North American Sprint, RTTY
Mar 161600Z to Mar 18 1000Z	SARL VHF/UHF Contest
Mar 17 0001Z-2359Z	10-10 Int. Mobile Contest
Mar 17 0200Z to Mar 19 0200Z	BARTG Spring RTTY Contest

used this key for all my SKCC contacts.

A friend of mine had the label translated:



Hand Telegraph Key Type 2—Year Showa 14 (1939), November—Serial # 118, Weight 0.6 kg—Maizuru Navy Company

Maizuru is a city on the west coast of Japan, "maizuru" literally means "dancing crane"

SKCC Awards Tracker

Don Kemp, NN8B

I made the SKCC Award Tracker for myself, to keep track of my progress towards the Centurion award. It began as a simple Excel spreadsheet with just the call signs of those I had worked and evolved into the one you can download from the SKCC Yahoo Group site today. I am just getting into computer logging and have not found any that I can customize to do tracking for SKCC. Thus the spreadsheet was born.

The Tracker is not an automatic program like DX loggers or QSO loggers. It is a manual spreadsheet to keep track of stations you worked and what bands they were on. It also has columns for keeping information about Centurion numbers, SKCC club key numbers, and which states have been worked. It does automatically add up the columns for all the bands and QSOs and states worked and give you a total at the bottom of the sheet.

Recent additions to the Tracker are the 1XQRP and 2XQRP columns. The points for each QRP QSO must be put into the appropriate column to be added up. I have written a guide for how I am using those columns and put it at the bottom of the Award Tracker.

The neat thing about Excel spreadsheet is you can customize it for your own purposes. If you want to add a column for some other number you want to track, it can be done without disturbing what is already there. Barry, WB8LSV has given me a better way to format the cells when new members are added, and I have inserted it into the new Help file. I have tried to explain how to keep the Tracker up to date in a way that even if you never used Excel before you could use it successfully. If you do not have Excel but have Microsoft Works Spreadsheet, the Award Tracker will still load into it. The colors and a little formatting will look different, but it will be useable. I am not an expert on Excel so if you know of a better way to do things I would like to know of it.

Editor's note: Don continually updates the awards tracker so check the Yahoo Groups email list frequently for his announcements and revisions.

The SKCC Centurion

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With SKCC every day is Straight Key Night!

The Straight Key Century Club is the fastest growing CW club focusing on manual generation of Morse code. Founded in January 2006, SKCC has grown to over 2500 members in calendar 2006. Members enjoy a very active email list server, SKCC forums, monthly sprints, and a monthly 24 hour operating event. Information about the Straight Key Century Club can be found at <http://www.skccgroup.com>.



Operating Frequencies

These are the suggested frequencies (+or - KHz) for SKCC members to congregate and look for other SKCC members. These are suggestions only, nobody owns any frequency. Be courteous and find a clear spot.

1.820 MHz	3.550 MHz	3.530 MHz
7.120 MHz	7.055 MHz	10.120 MHz
14.048 MHz	18.080 MHz	21.120 MHz
24.910 MHz	28.170 MHz	50.090 MHz
	144.070 MHz	

Operating Events

SKCC Sprint: SKCC Sprints take place each month on the second Wednesday of the month from 0100z to 0300z (Tuesday evenings 2000 Eastern Time). Rules for participation can be found at <http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/sprint-rules.htm>. For more information, contact SKCC Sprint Manager Kevin Kinderen at kkinderen@gmail.com or check the SKCC Yahoo group Calendar.

SKCC HighER Speed Gathering: Every Wednesday at 0300z, SKCC members interested in building their sending (and receiving speed) gather around 3550 on the 80 meter band or 7055 kHz on the 40 meter band for some higher speed CW. Speeds from 23 WPM on up are typical but any speed that pushes your personal envelope is welcome. Straight keys, bugs, cooties or other side-swipers or any other mechanical key is welcome. The Gathering is NOT a Net. Pick a spot on or about 3720 or 7055 and call CQ SKCC HS at your desired higher speed.

SKCC Member Resources

SKCC website—Everything you need to know about the Straight Key Century Club. Check back frequently as this site changes, <http://www.skccgroup.com>.

SKCC Yahoo Groups Email List—<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/skcc/>. A moderated email list for the exchange of ideas about SKCC.

SKCC QSL Bureau—Dan Rhodes, KA3CTQ manages this free service for SKCC members. Send and receive QSL cards for QSOs between SKCC members via this service. To receive your

QSL cards, you need to have SASE (self addresses stamped envelopes) on file with the SKCC QSL Bureau. Dan also days non-members can send you QSL cards through the SKCC Bureau. For more information see <http://www.skccgroup.com/qs1.htm> (106 members participating).

Award Tracker—Don Kemp, NN8B (SKCC 0036) maintains an SKCC Award Tracker spreadsheet to assist members in keeping track of their current standings with SKCC awards. Don posts updates to this valuable tool in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/skcc/files/>.

The SKCC Centurion—The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club published monthly. The SKCC Centurion is posted on the SKCC site, in the files section of the SKCC Yahoo Groups site, and distributed via email to your email inbox. To join The SKCC Centurion email list, visit http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/The_SKCC_Centurion/ and join the group or send an email to The_SKCC_Centurion_subscribe@yahoo.com with Subscribe in the subject.

Spotting Cluster—Andy O'Brien, K3UK (SKCC 1325) provides a spotting cluster for use with domestic spots where self spotting is ok. SKCC members, check this cluster frequently to find other members looking for QSOs. This is more timely than posting to the SKCC email list. To access this spotting cluster point your Telnet client to cluster.dynalias.org port 23 or cluster.dynalias.org:23. Login using your callsign.

WANTED

Pictures! Pictures of your shack, your keying device, QSL cards from interesting locations. Your picture should accompany a description or story about the key. Each month we will feature a different picture.

Writers! We are looking for SKCC members who can write a short article for The SKCC Centurion. The article can be a story about almost anything amateur radio related, but especially CW. If you cannot write well, give us the goods and let us edit and prepare your piece for publication, complete with your by line.

Elmers! We need a few members who can write elmering articles for our new club members and new hams alike. Everyone needs a little help getting started in amateur radio and SKCC club activities. This column will be reserved for those, how-to, and similar articles.