

The SKCC Centurion

The official newsletter of the Straight key Century Club

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MAY 2008

Michael Leo Hernandez, SK KD5PCM SKCC # 769



Michael Leo Hernandez, 58, of Ponchatoula, died Sunday, February 24, 2008 in North Oaks Medical Center. He was born on February 4, 1950 in New Orleans, son of the late William and Elsie Bourgeois Hernandez.

He was an accomplished freelance photographer. Surviving are his wife of 34 years, Catherine Peterson Hernandez; daughter, Rainell Leigh Hernandez; 3 sons and daughter-in-law, Marc Adam Hernandez, Scott Michael and Rebecca Bodenheimer Hernandez, and Sean Patrick Hernandez; 1 brother, Elvin Hernandez; and 2 grandchildren, Trent Mason Hernandez and Sabrina Morgan Bodenheimer; and a host of cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Mike was a transplanted ham from New Orleans and was always the first one to step up and volunteer his services, no matter the job, and was every ham's friend. He had a wonderful sense of humor and always had a new joke to tell. He went on to join SKCC and was an avid code operator. His dream was to set up a portable station on the top of a mountain in Tennessee and make contacts. Unfortunately, his dream never came to fruition and he was taken from us at the young age of 58.

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SDR - What it might cost to try something different.

Jeff Peters—K9JP—SKCC # 3008

I started into a newer aspect of this ham radio hobby this last year. It's called SDR or Software Defined Radio. For those of you who have not ventured into SDR, I thought, I would chronicle the true cost of getting into this aspect of the hobby.

After seeing a presentation on commercial SDR transceivers at my local radio club. I searched the Internet for SDR to learn more. I found a Yahoo group called SoftRock40. I joined this free group and started reading about SDR, and what the group was doing. I found out they sold kits of SDR receivers and transceivers. I started by ordering a SDR receiver kit. Not bad only \$10 for the kit. Put the kit together and downloaded the free software to my shack computer and I was able to tune the little receiver.

It worked! I was using a receiver about two inches square, with much less than a hand full of parts, and listening to ham signals on 40 meters. Wow!

The kit has some SMT (Surface Mount Technology) parts, soldering was hard but not impossible. Doing another search on the Internet, I found many pages and videos on how to work with and solder this little parts. I then, found out about Solder Paste. Ordered solder paste \$5. Solder Paste is flux with powdered solder mixed in it that you place on the printed circuit board, stick the small SMT part in the paste, and then using hot air melt the paste and solder the part to the printed circuit board. This is easy, but you can over heat the board warping it or cook the parts. Be careful!



Next, I ordered a SoftRock40 transceiver kit for 40/30 meter bands. The RXTX v6.1 kit cost was \$28. I built it, and powered it up using the computer, and learned I needed a second sound card for the transceiver to work. I added a second cheap surplus 16 bit sound card for transmit. The internal sound card does the receiving work and the other second card generates the trans-

mitted audio signal. Another \$15.00 spent. I realized right away how cool this was going to be.

The problem was I needed more horse power from the computer as my transmitted signal sounded like a buzz saw.

Reading more and learning, I then upgraded the computer. I needed a faster processor and more RAM.

Cost \$269.00. A better sound card was also needed. I upgraded to a 96 bit M-Audio - Delta 44 sound card. The cost used, \$75.00. The increased bandwidth of 96K bps allows you to see, hear, or copy 96 KHz of the band you built the radio for.

I started again making contacts using this 1 watt transceiver on 40 or 30 meter CW. All was well. The on the air reports where very good! The software allows you to see all the signals over a part of the band. A signal is displayed as a spike showing the strength of the received signal. To listen to (tune in) or work that station you just click on the spike, listen to the CW, PSK31, or SSB. Then to transmit you either use a straight key, or paddles, for CW. The computer keyboard for PSK31, or a computer headphone set with microphone for SSB. Doing this evenings after work for an hour or two each day was even cooler!

Now, I am waiting to receive some small Si570 chips that can replace a crystal. The neat thing about this chip is that it is a tunable crystal oscillator that is very, very stable. The oscillator output can be changed from about 10 kHz to over 600 MHz. This chip is USB programmed or controlled by a simple computer program.

I don't know about you, but I realized this is the future of amateur radio for me and maybe for others as well. You can guess where this is headed. I am now saving up for a manufactured commercial version of a SDR transceiver. I hope to purchase a used Flex-1000 or maybe the Flex-5000 some day. Until then, I have already worked 46 states, and 17 countries with 1 watt or less output this past few months with this little SDR transceiver.

NOTE: A good starting place for the SoftRock kit is the AMQRP.org web site, <http://amqrp.org/kits/softrock40/#Kit%20Assembly%20Service> and the SoftRock40 Yahoo Groups site, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/softrock40>.

Editor's Soapbox

Mark Saunders, KJ7BS SKCC 2240T

I continue to be impressed with our membership numbers and our growth rate as a club. There seems to be more member activity on the bands and SKCC QSOs are not as difficult to come by these days.

When you look at the SKCC Sprint participation, we have gone from 25 participants in August 2006 to 65 participants in April 2008. The really impressive numbers are the participation numbers for the Weekend Sprintathon (WES) event. In March 2007 there were 16 participants and in April 2008 there

were 67 participants. The K3UK SKCC Interactive Sked page is even seeing more use, although it should be much more.

The SKCC email list is a very busy place these days with discussions from "hello, I'm new" to "how do I make this key smoother and easier to use?". We have truly become a resource for ourselves. There is a depth of knowledge in our not so little band of CW operators that is accessible simply by asking.

Most satisfying, to me, is the number of members who subscribe to the electronic delivery of The SKCC Centurion. Subscriptions are picking up and are just over 10 percent of membership now.

Recently, a member asked where all the members are since we have just over 4400 members now. Someday, probably once the sunspots start coming back, these members will come out of hibernation and be stunned at the SKCC activity

Now Go Pound Some Brass!

SKCC Contest Results

SKS Sprint

April 2008—Congratulations to Russ K0LUW for taking first place. In second place was Frank K4BT and third place to K9MMS who also operated the club call K9SKC. Congratulations gentlemen.

WES Sprintathon

March 2008—Congratulations to Bert W5ZR for winning the April sprint. His win was followed by Russ, K0LUW in second place and third to Michael WR5U. Congratulations gentlemen.

New Members

4317, N4CPA, Duane, Cottontown, TN
 4318, K4ING, Frank, Smyrna, TN
 4319, NM4K, Bill, Louisville, KY
 4320, KA2VEG, Tim, Syracuse, NY
 4321, NG5D, Lleo, Carriere, MS
 4322, VA3RAW, Ray, Mount Carmel, ON, Canada
 4323, KC7QY, Jim, Socorro, NM
 4324, DL5CL, Ron, Eisleben, Germany
 4325, KN6E, Rick, Hermosa, Beach, CA
 4326, VA5CW, Bill, Regina, SK, Canada
 4327, N8LA, Louis, St., Louis, MO
 4328, N4RJL, Robbie, Summerville, GA
 4329, W4VJ, Jim, Johnson City, TN
 4330, KB0NIL, Wayne, Saint Peter, MN
 4331, IK0IXI, Fabio, Civitavecchia, Italy
 4332, DL4FDM - HB9CSA, Fritz, Bensheim-Auerbach, Germany
 4333, K0PQ, Steve, Lakewood, CO
 4334, K9QHO, Michael, Elwood, IN
 4335, K2ZN, Al, Rochester, NY

4336, N4LP, Emory, Ocala, FL
 4337, K0DXC, Calvin, Waconia, MN
 4338, WM1L, Sean, Falmouth, MA
 4339, KI0TB, Lou, Denver, CO
 4340, W5KID, USS Kidd Amateur Radio Club, Baton Rouge, LA
 4341, AC4HD, Tony, Greenville, SC
 4342, KC0ZIX, Jeff, St. Louis, MO
 4343, NA7CS, Curt, Maricopa, AZ
 4344, UU1AZ, Jim, Kerch, Crimea, Ukraine
 4345, N3HU, Rob, Annapolis, MD
 4346, AE5I, Tom, Jackson, MS
 4347, K4CQW, Quint, Virginia Beach, VA
 4348, WD0CHR, Don, Pueblo, CO
 4349, KC9CS, Bill, Largo, FL
 4350, N4QDA, Malcolm, Reno, NV
 4351, KC2QKU, Joseph, Tinton Falls, NJ
 4352, KD8IGC, Walt, Dayton, OH
 4353, W9MIU, John, Pleasant Hill, TN
 4354, AB5DK, Thomas, Pineville, LA
 4355, N4EKZ, James, Waycross, GA
 4356, ZL2BLQ, Stan, Greytown, Wairarapa, New Zealand
 4357, W9BT, Jerry, Lexington, IN
 4358, K5XYL, Dee, Hammond, LA
 4359, KC9MUB, John, Green, Bay, WI
 4360, WB7CAG, Gary, Glendale, AZ
 4361, KG2G, Bert, Lakeland, FL
 4362, KF4LNE, Dan, Roan, Mountain, TN
 4363, KC9MEA, Nick, West, Bend, WI
 4364, NC5B, Steve, West, Bend, WI
 4365, SM0GII, George, Ekero, Sweden
 4366, KC4OCS, Don, Auburn, AL
 4367, WB0WLS, Rich, Grand, Island, NE
 4368, N0SH, Richard, Erie, CO
 4369, KG6TGR, Jonathan, Apple Valley, CA
 4370, G4GDR, Rev Adrian, Swindon, Wilts, England
 4371, KJ4CGI, Mike, Vonore, TN
 4372, KI4UYA, Wayne, Winter Springs, FL
 4373, KD4RAP, James, Greenwood, SC
 4374, N4SNB, Alfred, Medina, TN
 4375, M1ETX, Andrew, Stockton on Tees, England
 4376, NS1W, Sandy, Cambridge, MA
 4377, NM1K, Russell, Enfield, CT
 4378, KA0WJC, Kevin, Mountain Lake, MN
 4379, N3RSD, Frank, Wilmington, DE
 4380, WD8INF, Ron, Lebanon, OH
 4381, NH7WB, Paul, Honolulu, HI
 4382, W4XQ, Steve, Virginia Beach, VA
 4383, XE1MR, Luis, Tamaulipas, Mexico
 4384, MI5MTC, Mick, Irvinestown, Northern Ireland, UK
 4385, NT4D, Jay, Cary, NC
 4386, KG4WAE, Chuck, Charlotte, NC
 4387, IZ8FAV, Giorgio, Naples, Italy
 4388, CT1BYK, Victor, Santarem, Portugal
 4389, W7GM, Ira, Overgaard, AZ
 4390, K4RD, William, Birmingham, AL
 4391, NA3VY, Duane, Tigard, OR
 4392, HC2SA, Rene, Guayaquil, Ecuador
 4393, WA2PJI, Joe, Bronx, NY
 4394, KB3OGV, Nicholas, Forest Hill, MD

4395, KG5VK, Steve, Benton, LA
 4396, KM4AF, Chip, Edisto Island, SC
 4397, KE7QXW, Rick, Eugene, OR
 4398, WY7N, Bruce, Grantsville, UT
 4399, KE7XU, Richard, American Fork, UT
 4400, NH7D, Ben, Hilo, HI
 4401, KA8YTK, Claude, Warren, OH
 4402, N2YQ, Carlos, West Point, NY
 4403, N2ATB, Tony, Cherry Hill, NJ
 4404, LU1KAK, Jose, Tucuman, Argentina
 4405, M0XIE, Simon, Camberley, Surrey, United Kingdom

SKCC Awards

Centurion

198, K1MLP, 3895C, Mark, Billerica, MA, 7 April, 2008
 199, KM4VX, 3663C, Ron, Wilmington, NC, 7 April, 2008
 200, K1TXU, 2209C, Skip, Colorado Springs, CO, 12 April, 2008
 201, W9IXV, 512C, Richard, Evansville, IN, 12 April, 2008
 202, KE4KY, 2622C, Glenn, Fisherville, KY, 13 April, 2008
 203, K0MDS, 1524C, Mike, Leavenworth, KS, 13 April, 2008
 204, KD8CGH, 4203C, Bob, Tallmadge, OH, 21 April, 2008
 205, N9OL, 4014C, John, Evansville, IN, 21 April, 2008
 206, KX3H, 2300C, Tim, Pittsburgh, PA, 21 April, 2008
 207, N1VWD, 2143C, Brad, Waltham, VT, 21 April, 2008
 208, NV0S, 2520C, Gary, Northglenn, CO, 21 April, 2008
 209, N3JJT, 255C, Scott, Akron, OH, 25 April, 2008
 210, K9MMS, 4291C, Gary, St. Charles, IL, 25 April, 2008
 211, KP4DX, 2546C, Luis, Corona, CA, 26 April, 2008
 212, WB2KKI, 2493C, Mike, Pocono Summit, PA, 26 April, 2008
 213, KD6SX, 1755C, George, Oroville, CA, 28 April, 2008
 214, K7QHU, 1183C, Steve, Eagle, ID, 30 April, 2008

Tribune

93, WA4ONV, 3316C, Joe, Miami, FL, 31 March, 2008
 94, K4LNN, 3984C, Duane, Micco, FL, 5 April, 2008
 95, W5VYN, 2870C, Ron, Whitesboro, TX, 11 April, 2008
 96, KD6DKC, 1512C, Rick, Merced, CA, 12 April, 2008
 97, K8NB, 3112C, Noel, Stephenson, MI, 13 April, 2008
 98, AB1BW, 2468C, George, Bridgewater, CT, 15 April, 2008
 99, WQ4C, 844C, Namon, Huntsville, AL, 16 April, 2008
 100, KD5RSS, 1910C, Butch, Haskell, OK, 18 April, 2008
 101, WA1LWS, 1933C, Hans, Gaithersburg, MD, 18 April, 2008
 102, K1NV, 2609C, Jon, Pahump, NV, 18 April, 2008
 103, W3RT, 3237C, Red, Fairless Hills, PA, 18 April, 2008
 104, AA4HT, 3352C, Rip, Lakeland, FL, 20 April, 2008
 105, K4HL, 3713C, Les, Pensacola, FL, 23 April, 2008
 106, AB6TY, 2743C, Rich, Paso Robles, CA, 25 April, 2008
 107, WA1AR, 4079C, Alan, Wrentham, MA, 27 April, 2008

Operating Afield

This month we are looking at commercial products which can be used as antenna supports. There are primarily 4 products which are commonly used for portable antenna supports, the

Black Widow Crappie pole, the MFJ-1910 Fiberglass Mast, the DK9SQ, and the Jackite Fiberglass Pole.

The Black Widow Crappie pole is an excellent choice for a 10 to 20 meter vertical. The St. Louis vertical is an excellent portable vertical (more info here <http://www.amqrp.org/projects/stluisvert/STLV%20Project.html>). The Black Widow Crappie pole is 1.25" at the base and the tip is .0625" (1/16"), 6 sections that collapse down to 45". With a top section this small, the Black Widow Crappie pole does not make a good dipole end support, but an inverted vee is possible with proper guying. The St. Louis Vertical is probably the best option with this pole. The fiberglass wall is less than 1/16" thick and may split (I have not experienced this in 10 years of use). The Black Widow Crappie pole is available in lengths from 10' to 20'. You can find the Black Widow Crappie pole for \$24.95 by shopping around the internet.

The MFJ-1910 Fiberglass Mast is very much like the Black Widow Crappie pole except it is 33' long, 1/4 wave at 40 meters. This would make a nice choice for a 40 meter vertical similar to the St. Louis vertical. The mast is 1.75' at the bottom and .0625 at the top. This mast is also not suitable for a dipole end support, but with a guy system may work for an inverted vee. Users of this mast have complained it cracked at the ends of the sections making it useless to hold the next section in place. You can find the MFJ-1910 on the internet for \$79.95 and at any MFJ dealer.

The DK9SQ mast itself has an overall length of 33 feet (10 meters) when extended. It telescopes into the bottom section when collapsed, and is a package 46 inches long. The bottom section is 1.75 inches in diameter and the top section is about 1/8" at the very end. This mast is suitable for dipole end supports with small gauge wire for the dipole elements. Some guying may be needed and is recommended. This mast would make for a good vertical of inverted L support. Four of these will make nice loop antenna corner supports. The DK9SQ mast is available in the USA from Kangus at \$99 http://www.kangaus.com/dk9sq_fiberglass_mast.htm.

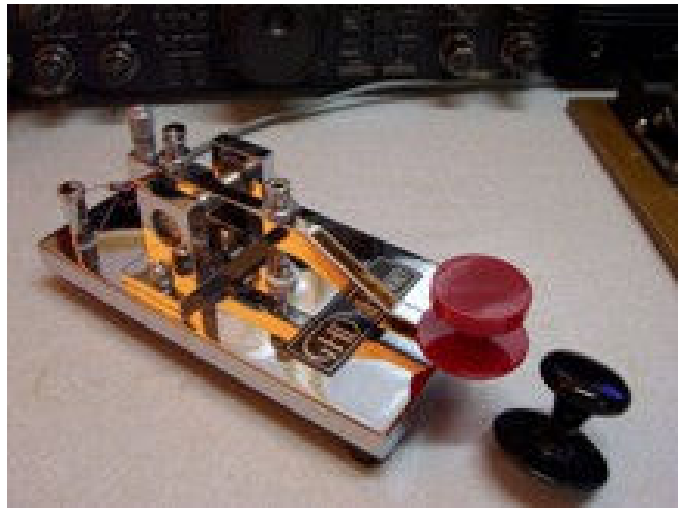
The Jackite masts are really flag poles for RVs and campers. However, because they are designed to withstand a flag or windsock, they are very durable and well suited for antenna mast work. These poles are well suited for dipole end supports or loop corner supports. These telescopic poles are similar to the DK9SQ masts except the top section is solid and will not bend as much. The bottom is 1.75" while the top is a sturdy .25". These poles are only 31" as compared to the 33' for the DK9SQ, but the price is much less expensive at \$54.95. When ordering direct from Jackite <http://www.jackite.com> you will receive an offer for a second pole at discount and no shipping (you will not get this when ordering from eBay sellers).

These are the most popular commercially available antenna masts/supports available. There are many surplus items that may make nice antenna masts/supports, so experiment and let us know your results through The SKCC Centurion.

Editor's note: I have 3 Jackite poles and have used them for a 40 meter dipole, one at each end and one in the center for sup-

port. I am constructing a vertical for 40 and 80 meters using a single pole or possibly 2 poles in an inverted L design.

Key Of The Month



Bill, NT9K

This is a very nice key. Feels even better with a hi-mound knob. The red knob went on my LTA SKCC key. This is the nicest key that I own, but not the best.

If you would like your key featured in Key of The Month, send your picture and a short description to kj7bs@cox.net.

Shack Of The Month



Tom, KC9ECI

My 'shack' as it looked early on when I was first moving things in to my daughters old room after she moved out to be an adult. Things are a bit different now, as some things have moved on and other things have been added. Top row, left to right, Telephone, IC-V8000 on loan from KC9ECH, IC 2AT used for APRS purposes these days, IC-W2A Lower level,

Bearcat scanner, Ranger 6M rig, Mmmmm, Guinness, Icom 703+, monitor, IC-V8000, Alinco DM-330MV power supply, and an old CB just used as a decoration. Once I get things sorted out here again I'll take a new photo of the current configuration.

Send images of your shack and a brief description to kj7bs@cox.net.

QSL Of The Month



Send images of your QSL card and see them posted for all members to see. Email images to kj7bs@cox.net

Member Products

Wooden Key Bases

George Osier, N2JNZ, makes beautiful key bases for your keys. I have made bases in Redheart, Chechen and Santo Mahogany in 5/8 and 1 inch thickness. I finish the bases in Minwax Wipe On Poly Gloss which gives a great shine but doesn't make the wood look like its covered in plastic." Samples of the bases are on the SKCC YAHOO group under "photos" and then to the N2JNZ Keys Folder. These are made from exotic woods and some are almost too pretty to drill holes into for mounting your key. Contact George gosier@twcny.rr.com for a list of exotic woods currently available. Key base pricing is \$10 each plus \$5 USPS Priority Mail shipping.

Here are two samples of his work. On the left is Redheart and on the right is Chechen.



These key bases are 8 1/2 inches long, 5 1/2 inches wide and

1/2 inch thick. These will make any key look good and will be a nice addition to your shack.

Gold SKCC Stickers

Mark Saunders, KJ7BS, is making Gold SKCC stickers available to all SKCC members. These stickers are 1 inch in diameter peel-and-stick gold foil stickers. The gold stickers come 63 to a sheet on an 8 1/2 x 11 inch page. The sticker has the SKCC key logo centered on the sticker and member numbers can be printed below the logo, including Centurion and Tribune designators. Pricing for the Gold SKCC stickers is very reasonable \$0.60 per sheet of 63 plus shipping.



- 1 sheet (63) \$1.19
- 2 sheets (126) \$2.18
- 3 sheets (189) \$2.78
- 4 sheets (252) \$3.38
- 5 sheets (315) \$4.15
- 6 sheets (378) \$4.75
- 7 sheets (441) \$5.35
- 8 sheets (504) \$6.12
- 9 sheets (567) \$6.72
- 10 sheets (630) \$7.32

Quantities over 10 sheets, please contact Mark for postage quote. Processing is 5-7 days excluding weekends. Orders and payments via PayPal to kj7bs@cox.net or USPS money order to:

Mark Saunders
13226 N. 62nd Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85304

Please include the above pricing when ordering,

The SKCC Centurion

13226 N. 62nd Dr.
Glendale, AZ 85304
Phone: 623-606-1976
kj7bs@arrl.net

With SKCC every day is Straight Key Night!

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
14.050 MHz	18.080 MHz	21.050 MHz
24.910 MHz	28.050 MHz	50.090 MHz
	144.070 MHz	

Operating Events

Monthly 24 Hour SKCC Operating Event: The first day of each month from 0000Z to 2359Z is designated as a monthly SKCC operating event. For SKCC members and non-SKCC members to work each other for credit. Contact with 100 SKCC members will qualify that person for a certificate of accomplishment. Visit <http://www.skccgroup.com> for more info or contact n6wk@n6wk.com.

SKCC Sprint: SKCC Sprints take place each month on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 0100z to 0300z. Rules for participation can be found at <http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/sks/>.

SKCC Weekend Sprintathon: Every Second Sunday of each month beginning at 0000z UTC and ending 2359z UTC. This operating event is open to all licensed amateurs. Periodically themes will be announced for upcoming weekend sprints. See <http://www.skccgroup.com/sprint/wes/> for more information and rules.

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 re-

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 3700 members in calendar 2007. 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>.



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

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, send an email to The_SKCC_Centurion_subscribe@yahoo.com with Subscribe in the subject. (304 members subscribed to electronic delivery)

Spotting Cluster—Phil, AI4OF (SKCC # 600) has launched a spotting cluster and is making it available to SKCC members. Use this spotting cluster to announce your operations or to find other SKCC members to work. Point your Telnet client to [skcc.matrixlist.com:7300](telnet://skcc.matrixlist.com:7300). Login using your callsign.

SKCC Sked Page—Andy, K3UK (SKCC # 1325) maintains an interactive web page where SKCC members can arrange a meeting with other members to work towards SKCC awards or just to rag chew. Check it out at <http://www.obriensweb.com/skccsked/skccsked.php>.