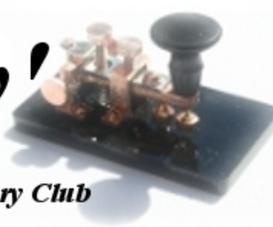


# 'Rag Chew'



*The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club*

*The official newsletter of the Straight Key Century Club*

Volume 5 Issue 3

September, 2014

## 599X ? K5ZOL 3945S

Long, long ago, but not very far away in January of 1960, my novice license arrived. Eager to get on the air with my one tube, home-brew transmitter and 40 meter crystal, I loaded the long wire and called CQ! My first QSO was with a station a staggering 100 miles away and he gave me my first RST, 444. Oops, back to my Elmer, W5JNX, to figure out what to do. Fast forward a few months to the summer of 1960 and I acquired a used Viking Adventurer. My first QSO with my “high powered” Adventurer and a newly acquired 80M crystal snagged an old timer: a W5\*\* with a two letter call. My RST was 599X! Oh No, now what is wrong? Back to my Elmer. All you Old Timers will be chuckling now. For the really new cw ops among us, the “X” meant “crystal characteristic.” That is a rock solid (pun intended) stable signal with no chirp.

Today, no one thinks about appending an “X” on to an RST because very few crystals are in use and solid state VFOs are very stable. Last summer, while operating from St. Croix, I gave a Caribbean station a 579C. His signal was chirping like a parakeet. With every key closure, his frequency would shift 50 to 100 cycles. VFOs in today's solid state circuitry are not generally subjected to supply voltage variations when keying. Some hams have never heard a chirpy signal.

With renewed interest in home brewing and restoring boat anchors, we may see “X” and “C” coming back into use. Indeed, I am restoring a Viking Adventurer (nostalgia) and a Heath VF-1 VFO. I'll also be using a 40 meter crystal I got from Bry- AF4K, who seems to be *the* FT243 crystal source for old boat anchors. So, if we QSO while I'm using my boat anchors, don't be reluctant to give me a “C” or and “X” if warranted. Three years ago during SKN I gave a station about 4 blocks away a 596C. He was strong, easily readable, but with a raspy note and chirp. He was running a WW2 Navy rig and clearly still had some additional restoring to do.

Even if we receive an RST less than 599, it is not a criticism. RST is our ham's helpful shorthand that let's the other station know the copy-ability, strength, and quality of their signal. We do each other a good service when we give accurate RSTs.

## How to Raise an Antenna!

Raising antennas is often very hard work and requires knowledge and skills to have a



successful antenna raising. Mike K8NS sent along this picture of an antenna raising at the W8PD QTH of a 30m rotary dipole. From left to right are Bill K8WSN (4986S), Mike K8NS (10580T) and K8JJC (8818), all enjoying some liquid refreshment while W8PD is up his tower and installing his antenna. Clearly these three friends understand that the best way to raise an antenna is to be sitting on the grounds letting someone else do the work while enjoying something “cool and liquid” while someone else goes the tower work! Well

done guys, you have found the secrete of “How to Raise an Antenna!” Picture taken by W8PD’s xyl while her husband did all the tower work!

Mike K8NS lives in Florida and was back in Michigan visiting his friends. Mike sent along a picture of his collection of keys. Recently Mike has acquired a Telegraph Apparatus Company “Hole-in-the-Wall” bug he



refurbished. The bug can be seen there on the right. The Bencher was given to Mike by K8JJC, the straight key is a Signal Electric M-100 and that’s an Autronic paddle to the left of the bug. I also know that Mike has a “knife blade cootie” (home brew).

Mike is often on the K3UK sked page early mornings and is a sure bet for an easy Florida QSO.

## The History of Amateur Radio



Cliff KU4GW (652), ran across a very interesting article, “The History of Amateur Radio.” The article can be downloaded as a 99 page pdf file at:

<http://www.w5txr.net/upload/History%20of%20Ham%20Radio.pdf>

This is a great article and really gives an insight into the history of our hobby. Thanks Cliff for passing this along!

## SKCC members attend Nevada ARRL Convention Jim Bassett, W1RO

I thought I'd take a minute to let the SKCC members know that some of us are enjoying other aspects of amateur radio. The Nevada ARRL Convention took place May 31 through June 2, 2014 in historic Virginia City, NV with the theme being the role of the amateur in Emergency/Disaster events.

Mike, KI1U, 2679T, ARRL Emergency Manager. He presented on emergency communications, the role and programs of the ARRL on Friday. He was one of the co-presenters in the ARRL Forum on Sunday morning as well.

John, N7UR, 2148, Vice Director the Pacific Division gave a program on retaining and building your club or organization Saturday afternoon. He also answered many questions during the ARRL Forum on Sunday.

Jim, W1RO, 1379T, (me), Nevada State Director, Navy-Marine Corps MARS co-presented with the Army MARS State of Nevada Secretary on, "What is MARS and how does it work with amateur radio," on Saturday afternoon.

One of the highlights of the convention was a tour of W7RN, <http://www.w7rn.com/>. Check out the photos on their web site. They have 3 over 3, 80 meter beam setup along with lots of other antenna systems. After the convention KI1U went to the station to operate CW and I was fortunate enough to find him on 20 meters in my mobile, while driving back to Las Vegas, for a quick contact.

It was nice to see other SKCC members at a convention helping to educate our fellow hams.

You can be sure I discuss with more than one person SKCC and told them how to join. It's all about having fun.

One of the themes that kept popping up during the convention was, "Are you having fun in ham radio?"

If you need an excuse to see the country these conventions are a great way to do it. We had hams from all over the country show up for the fun. Gordon West gave a couple demonstrations during the lunch breaks. A good time was had by all.

You should be able to see the convention power-point presentations in a few days on the Sierra Nevada Amateur Radio Service web site, <http://snars.org/>.

One of the highlights of the convention was a tour of W7RN, <http://www.w7rn.com/>. Check out the photos on their web site. They have 3 over 3, 80 meter beam setup along with lots of other antenna systems.



## Helping You Remember “What to Say” In Your Next QSO Dialog De Bob, AC2HJ

While sending CW - I find that keeping that flow of correct CW dialog can be difficult at times with stress of the day and our fading memory. I've noticed when practicing together with fellow SKCC and NAQCC short timer members, they seem to have the same problem.



AC2HJ station

While your keying away, suddenly your mind goes blank - a moment of hesitation - then start keying back again - hopefully before the other ham wonders where did you go. Ok, maybe after I get years of practice under my belt, maybe the problem will fade, but maybe not. In the mean time there must be a simple solution.

My goal was to think of a simple, easy to memorize short phase or mnemonic what would help to keep the QSO dialog moving along without delay. First you need to establish, what is the best flow of CW conversation that helps both parties. Going back and reviewing the SKCC CW Beginner's Corner - you can see a simple CW workflow.

Typically you need to Callsign exchange (let's use the letter C to represent) followed to the thank you (let's use the letter T) , next the signal exchange RST (let's use the letter R), next the QTH with city, state (let's use the letter Q), your name (let's use the letter N) and end with the how copy ? (let's use the symbol ? )

The first part of the exchange creates the letters: C T R Q N ? Then using a memory aid or mnemonic phrase you could get: **Can Talk Real Quick Now ?** So by remembering the phrase: Can Talk Real Quick Now ? - helps the CW workflow by first thanking them, sending a RST, providing your QTH, Name and asking how do you copy - in proper order. In typical CW shorthand using memorization phrase “Can Talk Real Quick Now?”

<Callsign> DE <your Callsign>  
TNX FER CALL BT  
UR RST 599 599 BT  
QTH is <my city/town>, <State> BT  
HW CPY ? <callsign> DE <your callsign> KN

For the second part of a longer CW exchange, after the callsign exchange will typically send the Weather (let's use the letter W), Rig name and model (let's use the letter R), Antenna (let's use the letter A), Power in watts (let's use the letter P) ending with HW CPY (let's use the symbol ? ). Therefore the second part of a longer QSO exchange creates the letters: **WRAP ?** Again here could be a typical CW shorthand exchange using WRAP?

<callsign> DE <your callsign>  
WX HR COLD BT  
RIG XYZ123 ES ANT DIPOLE 50 WATTS BT  
HW CPY ? <callsign> DE <callsign> KN

Summary: When you are on that QSO and suddenly forget what's next, memorize the phrase: "Can Talk Real Quick Now?" and the word "WRAP?" to help you along to better CW workflow.

And for the goodbye.....

HP CU AGN BT

73 <callsign> DE <callsign>

Note: This CW workflow matches the recommended workflow found in the CW beginner's corner section of the SKCCgroup.com website. Along with regular practice, these short memory phrases should be a good aid in better CW exchange.

73,

AC2HJ

**Can Talk Real Quick Now ?**

<callsign> de <callsign> KN  
Trx fer call =  
RST 5NN 5NN =  
QTH is city, state =  
Name is <name> <name>  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN

**WRAP?**

<callsign> de <callsign>  
WX hr is <weather stuff> =  
Rig <name, model>, ES ANT <antenna> <power> WATTS =  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN  
HP CU AGN = VY 73 to U ES URS SK <callsign> de <callsign> e e

**Can Talk Real Quick Now ?**

<callsign> de <callsign> KN  
Trx fer call =  
RST 5NN 5NN =  
QTH is city, state =  
Name is <name> <name>  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN

**WRAP?**

<callsign> de <callsign>  
WX hr is <weather stuff> =  
Rig <name, model>, ES ANT <antenna> <power> WATTS =  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN  
HP CU AGN = VY 73 to U ES URS SK <callsign> de <callsign> e e

**Can Talk Real Quick Now ?**

<callsign> de <callsign> KN  
Trx fer call =  
RST 5NN 5NN =  
QTH is city, state =  
Name is <name> <name>  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN

**WRAP?**

<callsign> de <callsign>  
WX hr is <weather stuff> =  
Rig <name, model>, ES ANT <antenna> <power> WATTS =  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN  
HP CU AGN = VY 73 to U ES URS SK <callsign> de <callsign> e e

**Can Talk Real Quick Now ?**

<callsign> de <callsign> KN  
Trx fer call =  
RST 5NN 5NN =  
QTH is city, state =  
Name is <name> <name>  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN

**WRAP?**

<callsign> de <callsign>  
WX hr is <weather stuff> =  
Rig <name, model>, ES ANT <antenna> <power> WATTS =  
HW CPY? <callsign> de <callsign> KN  
HP CU AGN = VY 73 to U ES URS SK <callsign> de <callsign> e e



## Strange Call, Stranger Ops!

Nozomi AD7TN (10713) happened to see these two very strange name tags being made at Dayton this year. Stranger than the call are the names of the two ops.... "OM1" and "OM2"! Must be the "OM" stands for "Old Man?" Maybe "OM1" is the older and "OM2" the younger? Actually the "OM" stands for "Ohio-Michigan" CW Club and OM1 is Ken N8KR and OM2 is Ted K8AQM. There is also OM3, Ken K8KIC. WS8KCC is the club call and used for mini Dxpeditions; most recently WS8KCC/WH6 in Maui, Hawaii. Did you work WS8KCC/WH6? QSL via N8KR CBA. Thanks Noz!

## BUYING A WATCH IN 1880

If you were in the market for a watch in 1880, would you know where to get one? You would go to a store, right? Well, of course you could do that, but if you wanted one that was cheaper and a bit better than most of the store watches, you went to the train station! Sound a bit funny? Well, for about 500 towns across the northern United States, that's where the best watches were found.



Why were the best watches found at the train station? The railroad company wasn't selling the watches, not at all. The telegraph operator was. Most of the time the telegraph operator was located in the railroad station because the telegraph lines followed the railroad tracks from town to town. It was usually the shortest distance and the right-of-ways had already been secured for the rail line. Most of the station agents were also skilled telegraph operators and that was the primary way that they communicated with the railroad. They would know when trains left the previous station and when they were due at their next station. And it was the telegraph operator who had the watches.

As a matter of fact, they sold more of them than almost all the stores combined for a period of about 9 years. This was all arranged by "Richard", who was a telegraph operator himself. He was on duty in the North Redwood, Minnesota train station one day when a load of watches arrived from the East. It was a huge crate of pocket watches. No one ever came to claim them.

So Richard sent a telegram to the manufacturer and asked them what they wanted to do with the watches. The manufacturer didn't want to pay the freight back, so they wired Richard to see if he could sell them. So Richard did. He sent a wire to every agent in the system asking them if they wanted a cheap, but good, pocket watch. He sold the entire case in less than two days and at a handsome profit. That started it all.

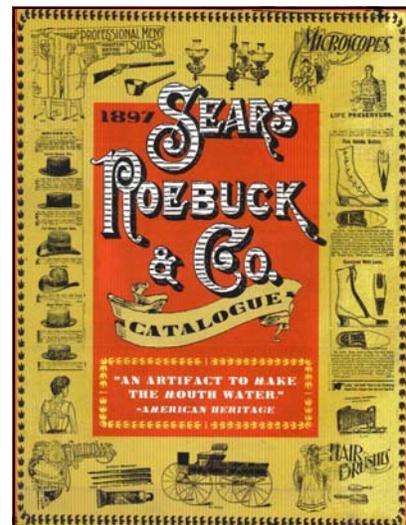
He ordered more watches from the watch company and encouraged the telegraph operators to set up a display case in the station offering high quality watches for a cheap price to all the travelers. It worked! It didn't take long for the word to spread and, before long people other than travelers came to the train station to buy watches.

Richard became so busy that he had to hire a professional watch maker to help him with the orders. That was Alvah. And the rest is history as they say.

The business took off and soon expanded to many other lines of dry goods. Richard and Alvah left the train station and moved their company to Chicago -- and it's still there. **YES, IT'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT** that for a while in the 1880's, the biggest watch retailer in the country was at the train station. It all started with a telegraph operator: Richard Sears and his partner Alvah Roebuck!

**Bet You Didn't Know  
That!!!  
Now that's History!!!!**

*Ed....People made a mad "dash" to get these watches!*



## Field Day at W5SC



This is Cray K5MUG on the CW Rig (Kenwood TS-5700) @ Shavano Park City Hall, Bexar Co., TX (San Antonio) W5SC (San Antonio



Radio Club) 5A, STX. Cray is SKCC # 11591.

## The Original Digital Mode?

It is commonly dubbed the "original digital mode " but Morse code is not strictly digital. Listen on the HF amateur radio bands and you will find fluctuating sending speeds, inconsistent dot, dash, and space durations, Doppler-shifted audio pitch, rapidly changing amplitude levels, and a host of other factors that make Morse code decoding very analog in nature, especially under low signal-to-noise conditions.

In fact, it is only the incredible processing capability of the human brain that makes it appear digital after it has been decoded.

There are quite a few digital modes that you can use if you're so inclined. Google with something like 'ham radio digital modes' and you will find a wealth of information on the subject. A lot of technical progress has been made in this area over the past decade and performance levels are quite outstanding.

But, at least for some of us, typing on a keyboard and staring at a monitor feels less like a hobby and more like a typical day at work!

To learn Morse code in a novel way and use that processor between your ears, take a look at <http://morsefusion.com>

(Share this email with your ham radio friends and club members!)

73,

Steve Harris,

<http://morsefusion.com>

*Ed... thanks to Rick AB1KP #5640 for this info*

## July SKS...W1EJ/8 @ K8AQM

Last year Ed W1EJ (#1594T) came to Michigan visiting family. I was lucky to meet ED and we enjoyed a day of swapping radio stories and enjoying ourselves. This year when Ed came visiting the timing was perfect as we could get together and operate in the July SKS.

What fun to operate multi-multi from the shack and to introduce Ed to two other SKCC friends, Ken N8KR (7559S) and Tim K9TM (12335T). From left to right in the photo is N8KR, W1EJ, K9TM and K8AQM.

I figured that Ed being from California and having operated in the SKS had never experienced 40m



for this event from the midwest. Everyone here knows “there’s no meters like 40 meters” when it comes to rate. Although it was July and not the best time to be on 40m with QRN, I figured with a K3, KW and a 100 ft log periodic on 40m Ed would still be plenty busy. That’s Ed to left running 40m; below to the left is N8KR on 15m and K9TM on the right on 20m. Me, I had 80m... ugh, 80m in July, you have to be kidding me!

We had a great time and I know Ed enjoyed the event. I hope to see Ed again and maybe even for a WES next year!





## HIGH SWR ? No Problem!!!

Finally, every ham's answer to standing waves.....**SWR** – imported from Arizona! Forget expensive analyzers and dual needle SWR bridges! Just pour about ½ oz of this amazing formula on each PL259, dampen a cloth with some and wipe down your entire feed line. 100W Baluns or Unun's only take ½ oz, larger baluns need a full oz. Once you open it and air gets to the contents, it is best to treat all your antennas at once, because after all of your antenna systems have been treated the remainder cannot be stored.

Read the label carefully. Follow all warnings on the label. Do not climb towers, trees or other structures with **SWR** in hand.

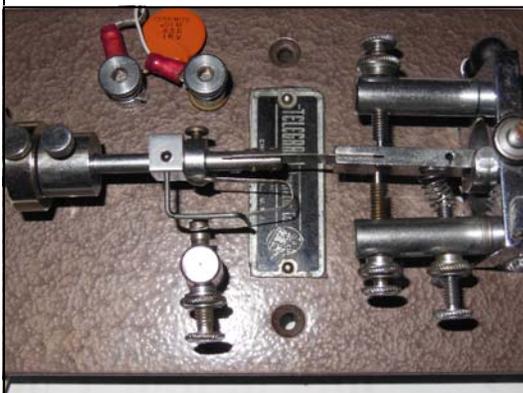
This solution is only available in 12 oz containers. For best results keep refrigerated

until used. Once all antennas have been treated, we recommend drinking the rest. **SWR** is available at any purveyor of fine Elixers. For first hand testimonials contact: Joe Bunko, PH0NI@larceny.nyet (*....Ed note....or K5ZOL!*)

## Bug De-Scratcher



Lately there has been much talk about “scratchy” dits while using a bug. Jim W0EB, has “re-made” the “dot stabler” first developed by TR McElroy. It’s a simple device that prevents “bouncing” of the dot spring on the bug. I have several of these on my bugs and they work very well. If you’re interested in finding more about this simple device contact Jim at “[w0eb@cox.net](mailto:w0eb@cox.net) “. The theory and pictures of the original McElroy device can be seen at: <http://artifaxbooks.com/dotstabilizer.htm> . Jim



makes these for round pendelums and also for flat bar pendelums. Drop him a line!

## W1AW/3 Field 2014

Ron AC2C, has sent along some great pictures of his club's Field Day as they operated as W1AW/3 in Maryland. Ron sent along some explanations of the pictures and I'll try to line them up as best as I can.

### ...de AC2C

"This is the group usually known as W3AO in Field Day - a combination of the Potomac Valley Radio Club (PVRC) and the Columbia Amateur Radio Association (CARA). We operated as a Class 28A Field Day station from the grounds of the Triadelphia Ridge Elementary School located at 13400 Triadelphia Rd, Ellicott City, MD 21042.

Setup starts on Friday with a group who put up the towers with the Yagi's. I do not know the exact number of towers that they erect but believe there are 10 to 12 of them. The process starts with a team that follows a carefully planned out map that places markers on the fields labeled with what goes where. There are markers showing where each tower goes and designates the Band and mode of the antenna. There are also markers showing where each dipole feedline goes vertical. The Friday crew erects the towers and pulls the coax cables to the designated markers.

Saturday morning the tent setup starts along with powering up the generators, erecting the main tent, setting up the tables, installing all the PCs, setting up the server. Each operator sets up his station - using either his own equipment or equipment provided by the clubs. I brought my own radio, power supply, memory keyer, keys, headphones, etc. Out in the antenna field, a team continues with pulling dipoles using previously strung pull ropes.

By Noon, lunch is served and most of the operators are already testing their radios making contacts - we used W3AO up until the Field Day start. Antenna and PC work is prioritized carefully based on the biggest need for immediate operation. 160M, therefore, is at the bottom of the list."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Antenna Field A is looking North from the farthest South Tower - the white tent in the middle is the main operating tent. "



## W1AW/3 Field 2014



“Antenna Field B is again looking North and shows the North end of the antenna field -- was taken from near the Satellite tent.



“Generator A and B show the three generators used for the entire operation. Two generators provide general power and light while one is also a UPS that powers the PCs and Server ONLY.”



“The food tent is a central hang out area. Each operator is provided with a menu about an hour before each meal and every operator has the choice of getting their own or having a selection delivered to their operating position. Overnight, the tent has a motion sensor light and is stocked with fresh coffee, assorted desserts, coffee cake, and various drinks.”



“The satellite tent uses an Icom IC-9100 as their main radio along with software to automatically track each satellite pass. I was called away from 160M CW for most passes to be the CW operator for satellite passes. “



“The VHF-UHF guys are almost an independent group - they operate in their own (Air Conditioned) tent and use separate logging software. Very much like the satellite guys.”



“The welcome tent greets visitors as they come into the site and are given guided tours before being taken to the GOTA station.”

“The Operating tent is pure mayhem once the event starts. As a CW operator, I sure wish that more of of SSB ops would use their voice recorders for SSB exchanges. Each table is dedicated to a particular band with the SSB and CW operators side-by-side to make hand offs easier. The networked PCs also give immediate readings of QSO counts and a listing of QRGs used by each mode/band so handoffs are easy.”



"You may notice the operator in the blue T-shirt in the upper right quarter of the image - the HamRadioNow.tv crew is taping him operating. That is Frank Donovan, W3LPL, who always runs 20M SSB. Frank supplies all the yagi antenna and does the antenna layout plan to minimize interference. ON 160M, I was on 1.818 and the SSB station was on 1.845 and we never heard anything from each other. My wife took the photo and I am mid picture operating the 160M CW station.”

" The picture on the right shows me taking a break and talking with the 160M SSB operator. You can see the PC screen with multiple windows displayed.”

***Ed.... And this is how you do a Field Day! Thanks Ron for the great pictures and writeup!***



## 100 lb Dxpedition

Wondering what antenna is best to take into the field? Here are some great choices all in one place with “all the facts.” Just go to this web site:

***[k9jy.com/blog/2008/08/20/antennas-for-100-pound-dxpeditons/](http://k9jy.com/blog/2008/08/20/antennas-for-100-pound-dxpeditons/)***

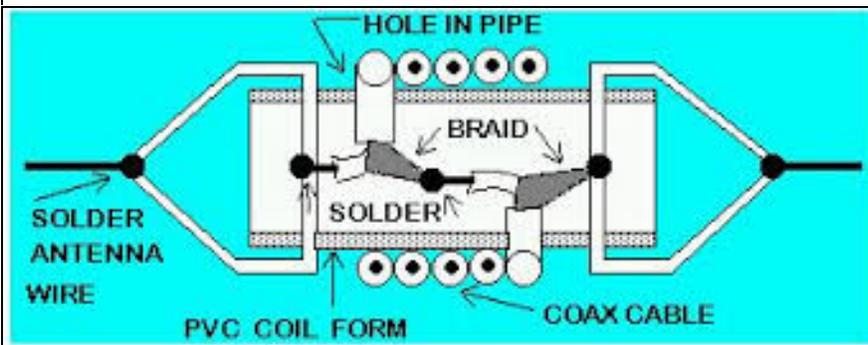
Download “100 lb Dxpedition” pdf by NE1RD. It’s 238 pages of great facts on antennas and gear for “going light and working the world.”

## Coaxial Traps

Bill KD8TTM (#11614) was planning on operating portable from South Carolina this summer and wanted to operate mainly 40 and 20m with a smaller trap dipole. The antenna had to be light as Bill was camping and wanted to carry the minimum weight and gear. Searching the web found a great article on coaxial traps by VE6YP, Tony Fiel and available at:

<http://www.qsl.net/ve6yp/coaxtrap.zip>

This program gave us a calculator to determine the number of coil winds based on the coax used. Bill decided that he was only going to run 100 watts and that RG-174 would do fine to handle the power. Using a grid dip meter to “tune” the coils it was an easy job to get the



antenna at a 1:1 swr for 20m and to add to necessary wire to make it resonate correctly on 40m. The picture to the left shows the trap construction. The “help file” of the program explains clearly how to design and use the program. The coil on the



left is a “kilowatt” version using teflon coax. I used “lugs” on this trap to connect the antenna wires. On my recent A35 and 3D2 trip I made an 80m/160 version for a “vertical” (rather than a dipole with two traps) that worked well.

Below is Bill’s camp set-up using his Alinco rig and with the coaxial trap dipole and the setup allowed many fine QSOs for KD8TTM/4.

Check out the program for coaxial traps, it’s simple and easy to use/build....and they work!



## Rediscovering Ham Radio K4CNW – Jack Burks – SKCC 2961T

You may find it strange that someone like me would be writing about rediscovering Ham Radio. I got my Novice license 59 years ago at the age of 15 and there has never been a period of time that I was not actively involved in the hobby. As a novice, I couldn't wait to get home from school so I could get on the air. I made lots of friends who shared the same passion for ham radio that I had. We spent hours on CW talking about our rigs, antennas, families, and our radio projects. There were quite a few Hams who were about my age and after I got my driver's license I visited many of them on the weekends. We shared many adventures and misadventures and had a great time along the way. I'll never forget the homebrew "Bishopville finger fryer" transmitter or the 15 meter vertical made from soldered together beer cans that had been scavenged from trash cans.

After upgrading, the camaraderie and adventures continued. A friend of mine and I would borrow the best equipment we could get anyone to loan us and haul it to his house on the weekend for all night operating sessions on 40 meters. One Friday night a particularly nice commercial transmitter that we had borrowed smoked and when we couldn't find the problem we panicked. When we told my friend's father our predicament, he said "load it in the car boy's, I think I know someone who can help you". After about an hour-long drive we arrived at house outside of Orangeburg, SC and were welcomed by world renowned DXer Gus Browning, W4BPD. Within fifteen minutes Gus had diagnosed the problem, replaced the defective part and declared the transmitter ready for the air again. Gus then gave us a tour of his rhombic farm and then took us to his shack and for a working demonstration of his impressive station. What a thrill for two young hams! Over the years I visited with Gus many times both at his home and at various hamfests and nearly 30 years after our first meeting he laughed and asked me "did your friend ever find out you blew his transmitter up?"

Over the years, my ham radio interests became centered on low power DXing, using wire antennas, and 160 meter contesting. At one time the area that I live in had a fairly large and active community of DXers who got together both on the radio and at the local coffee shop to exchange information and brag about out DX exploits. Over the year's interest seemed to wane among the old-timers and even with my encouragement the local newcomers to the hobby only showed a passing interest in DXing. There never was a local interest in contesting, especially on 160 meters. Also, my primary operating mode is CW and that didn't seem to help matters. My DX totals grew (I need BS7, that's a story for later, and P5 to have them all) and because I don't collect band countries except on 160 meters I began to operate less and less. Exchanging signal reports, names and QTH's with non-rare DX stations became mundane and I found myself doing something that I had always despised others of doing, jumping in pile-ups on rare and semi-rare DX stations just to see if I could work them. Except for the 160 meter season I wasn't having much fun playing radio. I would do some casual operating in some of the HF CW contests but something just seemed to be missing that diminished my enjoyment of our great hobby. I tried new activities such as CW mobile, county hunting, slow scan TV and QRP but nothing held my interest.

I'm comfortable carrying on a CW conversation at thirty five to forty WPM and when I saw a notice about SKCC, the Straight Key Century Club, I thought to myself "how much fun can whacking away on an old straight key be"? I took a look at the SKCC web page in February of 2007 and one thing stood out. Although SKCC was only organized in January 2006, membership in the club was fast approaching three thousand! I figured that with that kind of rapid growth maybe I needed to explore this a little further. I listened on the calling frequencies that they recommended and started eavesdropping on SKCC QSO's. I found myself listening to conversations about their ham radio projects, their interests outside of ham radio, their careers both past and present and their families. The typical QSO would last for well over thirty minutes and you could tell by what was being said that these folks talked to one another on a regular basis and actually enjoyed doing it!

In March of 2007 I dusted off my old WWII J-38 straight key and joined SKCC. I was immediately welcomed to their ranks both on the air and by email. It wasn't long before I was had met a lot of very interesting people.

There was Bill with his parrot Fruit Loop and John and his goats. I met Dave a salty ex-submariner who's homeport was in my home state for eight years but is now in landlocked retirement in western NY. I had the pleasure of having a QSO with Lou who was licensed after the code requirement was eliminated and who was thrilled to learn that we were speeding along at about seven WPM. All of the SKCC members I have met are courteous almost to a fault. It's a common practice among SKCC members is to answer a station that calls at the calling stations speed. As I learned more about the club activities I began to take part in the monthly two hour Weekday Sprint and the monthly twenty four-hour Weekend "Sprint-a-thon". These activities are fun, slow speed, low-key affairs. It's not unusual to hear a station running contest contacts one minute and rag chewing the next minute! Quite a change from the normal "take no prisoners" style of contest operation to which I was accustomed. To make a long story short, I've rediscovered ham radio. I find myself looking forward to getting in the shack and seeing who's on the air, what's going on with the SKCC gang and making new friends. This doesn't mean that I'm going to throw my keyer paddles away or if the BS7 or the P5 show up that I won't be fighting and scratching for a QSO or that I'm going to quit contesting on 160 meters. It means I'm having fun with ham radio again.

If you find yourself in a rut and losing interest in ham radio I urge you to look around. You



may find something from your early days in the hobby that rekindles your passion for operating like it did for me. You may find that it's something that you have never tried before that lights you up. Whatever it is rediscover ham radio and have fun!

*Ed...Jack's 1955 Novice station*

## THE MORSE CODE

### DIFFERENT KINDS OF MORSE KEYS

**Bernard DELAGE, F5DE, SKCC #6247T**

Learning Morse code is sometimes a tedious and daunting discipline for the beginner. As there is not now an obligation to undergo to a CW examination (almost in my country), interested candidates can be well prepared for this knowledge through courses offered in radio clubs or on the amateur radio bands, using CDs or with the help of programs for use on a personal computer. The prospective candidates can choose their type of learning according to their possibilities and tastes. The best way seems to me to be a harmonious blend of group sessions at a radio club, listening to CW texts given on the air (i.e. W1AW bulletins) and the use of a good software on a PC (there are excellent for free or a few pennies).

When getting the amateur radio CW ticket and having the curiosity to try on the air CW traffic, you might say : **“yes, I know the alphabet but what do I do now and with what kind of key ? I can read to it but I do not feel able to start on the air because ultimately won by my desire to learn the code, I did not have (or not take) the time for a sending training of this famous Morse code”**. This remark was done to me sometimes during ham-radio meetings. There is no question here of giving manipulation rules simply because it is **quite** impossible for me. Initially, only learning (rather quick and easy) at a radio club or with the help of an "elmer" will launch the novice at the assault of the radio waves. Then, little by little the accumulation of QSO bring the desired improvement, and a look to the "past" will show that progress has been real and final !

Following the read of some discussion exchanges on the SKCC Yahoo group about the keys, I thought I'd briefly describe to the novice operators the different types of manipulators (keys) that everyone can use, from the simplest to the most elaborate.

#### **Single contact, or straight key, pump key :**

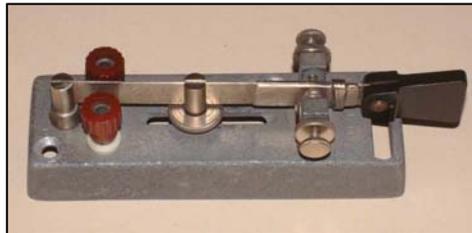
According to the principle of Alfred Vail its inventor (ca. 1840), colloquially called "pick", it is a vertical lever for closing and opening an electrical contact necessary for character formation at a rate needed for a good sending of the code invented by Samuel F.B. Morse .When the key is connected to a transmitter and the lever is depressed, the operator allows the issuance of the RF wave, and regular cutting of dots and dashes become comprehensible to the listener at the other end of the chain. It is simple, effective, but a bit tiring especially during long sessions of traffic or contests. This is an excellent manipulator type to start and learn how to cut different characters. It is very easy to find this kind of key at surplus or flea markets. As for all kinds of keys, there are also possibilities to buy current and new models at radio stores. Some German models of the 40s are very pleasant to use. My key collection includes models with a size from 55 mm (Western Electric miniature key) to 270 mm long (NATO key). For a good **sending** practice, simple keys like J5, J37 or J38 can do the work very well.



a French straight key : the Dyna Manitone

**Single horizontal lever, also called single paddle, saw blade, side swiper or cootie key :**

Here the movement of the hand is not vertical but horizontal in a series of back and forth around a paddle located at the end of a lever arm (saw blade for simpler homebuilt). On each side is a contact that is closed more or less long by the action of the fingers on the paddle and this permanent alternative way : left, right, left, right, etc ... The good signal cutting shape results on the duration of the pressure on the left or right side of the paddle according to the needs inherent of the character sent. Use of this manipulator is less tiring because the wrist is no longer "on the air" but is lying on the table ; the key is located between the end of the fingers (thumb and index). This model will be found on flea markets or radio stores or easily home made. The first attempts are sometimes difficult and discouraging but when a minimum ability is reached, the pleasure to use such a key can be really nice. A look at Internet will show several **sorts** of home built cootie keys to have an idea and try building a simple key needed for the first QSO.



A French side swiper key : the Dyna Maniflex

**Semi-automatic, aka bug key :**

This type of double contact manipulator has retained its familiar name of "bug" which means the little insect on the logo of the main manufacturer "Vibroplex" (still in business for over 100 years). This key is a first approach of automating (or at least simplifying) the generation of Morse code characters. The principle is based on the use of a small horizontal metal rocker whose natural oscillation frequency can be varied by moving a weight along itself. This rocker, once excited by pressure on the dot side (thumb) of the paddle will result in a quick series of closures and openings of a regular contact (the famous jig bug logo !) resulting in a succession of dots sent by the transmitter. The other side (index) of the paddle has a similar operation than the previous type of manipulator. This side will be used to generate the dashes (and only them) manually pressing the dash paddle corresponding to the number of dashes from the transmitted character. Reciprocating hand movement will create the desired Morse sign, leaving longer or less long the thumb supported by the number of desired points (from 1 to 8 in theory). After starting the movement, and if we keep pressing the dot side of the paddle, the amortization of the rocker is low enough to allow the subsequent generation of a number of points up to thirty, which is widely enough. After an apprenticeship making room for many errors, manipulation of this key, particularly pleasant and recognizable on the airwaves will delight the nostalgic persons of the heroic age of "Western Union" operators or other companies of the Far West Telegraph lines ! The description was for a right handed operator. It exists also left handed bug keys, the mechanism is just reversed for this purpose.

**There** have been attempts to produce fully automatic mechanical manipulators, a second rocker with a slower oscillation frequency and able to maintain the closure of contact three times longer than the dot time, allowing the generation of one or several successive dashes. One of these manipulators, the "Melehan Valiant" was a work of art, and only a few copies exist today, mostly in museums. This type of complex mechanical manipulator operation has not been **much** released because very expensive at a time when each operator should have **had** its own key. In addition this design came too late and it was soon dethroned by the application of electronic circuits discussed in the next paragraph.



a French bug key : the Vibromors

The three kinds of key described above are the ones we can use for totally hand key CW sending. We use them for our SKCC activities. My own CW traffic is done only with them since I discovered the existence of this nice club in January 2010. Only one time in the year I use an electronic key for our National French Contest with other friends from the radio-club. Of course it is not an obligation to use "non electronic keys". It is for me a pleasure to use those old keys as they were used a long time ago. Keying them when in contact with friends who have the same interest adds another pleasure, thanks to the SKCC to help increasing this activity.

Before ending this paper, I would like to write a few words about the electronic keys it is possible to use.

#### **Cootie key connected to an electronic circuit, or El-Bug.**

The evolution of electronics led to the creation of circuits generating series of dots or dashes. So the idea to simplify the complex mechanical manipulators like the one quoted above by combining an ordinary cootie key type connected to a specific electronic circuit. The electronic keyer had its rise with radio amateurs after World War II in a form not unlike the one we know and can use today ; only transistors and integrated circuits have replaced the valves and the bulky and noisy relays. This type of manipulator is nowadays used as easy to achieve. Learning to use it is not very difficult and once the habit is a real pleasure to use. Also fatigue is **insignificant for** long periods of handling such as those encountered during CW contests.

#### **Twin paddle key connected to a specific electronic circuit.**

Also called "Iambic" this key is the next step of using an electronic keyer. The key itself is not very different from the dual contact described above. The difference is that there is not one lever, but two levers each provided with a paddle. The left lever is actuated by the thumb and the right lever by the index. Using this key alone without an electronic circuit is rough estimate identical to that of a "saw blade" so it can be used for mechanical sending the same way than with a cootie key. In combination with an electronic circuit like the previous paragraph, it can be also used the same way. So, where is the difference ? It is done by the result of the development of a specific electronic circuit. In addition to the generation of the dots when the thumb depress the left paddle and the dashes when the index depress the right paddle this circuit is able to generate a series of contiguous dashes and dots when both paddles are simultaneously depressed. The first element transmitted depends on the paddle that closed the contact first. If this is the left paddle, a dot will start the series, if it is the right paddle, a dash will start the series. This option will generate some letters with fewer shares on paddles. The letters and common characters involved in this method of the Iambic CW manipulation are:

|                |               |               |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| C: - · - · - · | Q: - - - - -  | + : - - - - - |
| F: · - - - ·   | R: · - - ·    | + : - - - - - |
| K: - - - -     | Y: - - - - -  | VA: - - - - - |
| L: · - - - ·   | / : - - - - - | AS: · - - - · |

The number of signs involved may seem small, not requiring the use of such equipment, but users who have a great habit of this type of manipulation (which is not my case) enjoy it immensely. It is well known : "who can do more can do less", and such a set will somehow manipulate "classic" way.

The associated electronic circuits can be found easily on radio shops or easily home made. Generally the modern transceivers already include such a circuit as basic characteristics of the equipment.



a British Kent Dual Paddle key

I hope this unpretentious paper (I am not a journalist !) will have interested and encouraged beginners to get started in the CW transmission. Don't veil one's face, the beginnings are often difficult and sometimes discouraging, but the real pleasure belonging from the practice of this traffic mode is soon forgetting the efforts to learning it. I hope that can help a little bit the CW newcomers...

I am available to help any novice operator who does not feel ready to face the CW QSO. When on the K3UK page, I am always ready to have some try at slow or very slow speed with one of my mechanical keys : straight, cootie or bug keys. It is always a pleasure for me, as a SKCC elmer to help a bit the novice operators. Do not hesitate to send a PM for any try.

73 to all and good CW traffic !

Bernard, F5DE  
SKCC #6247T

PS : left handed Friends please excuse me, for you some of the text should be interpreted accordingly, left becomes right, right becomes left, etc ... my poor head, hi !

This article is partly inspired and translated from the one I wrote in 2001 for our local paper bulletin. I hope my translation will be understandable without too many errors!

***Editor's note... This great article by Bernard needed no correction and is an excellent paper on the type of keys used within SKCC. Thanks Bernard for great article!***

## VE3AAQ...aka...W8SR

For many years VE3AAQ and I have been friends. We have met at Dayton, visited each other's homes and even gone on a Dxpedition together (T32). Recently on a visit to Dave's home I "suggested" (demanded actually) he join SKCC. Dave gave in and quickly became SKCC #12520. Dave also holds the call W8SR as #12520 and visits the US where he operates portable while his lovely wife shops.

The picture on the left shows Dave's well equipped shack in Ottawa, ON. When operating in the US lately Dave has been "QRP in the field." The photo on the right is Dave operating in the July WES from a picnic area along the St. Lawrence River while his XYL went "shopping" in town. I'm sure there will be many more SKCC adventures for VE3AAQ/W8SR.



## Shelby, NC Hamfest 2014

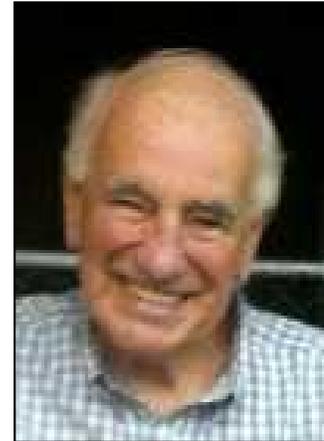
Here's a link to the photos I took of the camper I stayed in all weekend and pictures of friends I got to see and a couple good deals on HF rigs.. Had a great time! Thanks so much to W4WWF Dale for bringing his beautiful camper where I stayed a lot in the AC because it was so blasted hot with high humidity outside! Dale also rented us a golf cart for Friday & Saturday thank the Lord!

<https://plus.google.com/photos/111441191221212975559/albums/6053916669255015249>



## UC2AA Russian Absence

First, a little background. After WWII the Soviet Union hams freely worked Western Block station. By and large they were great CW operators and some were actually extraordinary. In the late 1940s something happened and the Soviet government issued a decree the resulted in a cessation of “U” hams not working any stations in the West Western Block. Interesting, the satellite countries (SP, YO, OK, LZ etc) never stopped working stations in the west. It was very frustration if you were a DXer because the USSR represented about 16 different countries. You could hear them working each other, especially during contest, but no Westerners.



In the middle of 1955 there was UC2AA (White Russia) working Ws. Not only could you work him you could get a QSL direct. He was fairly active and had a great signal. About 3 months later UB5KAB started working Ws. On glorious day in early may in 1956 the Russians were back. I worked about 12 new countries the first night. Over the years I worked UC2AA on a regular basis and we became very good friends. Sadly, both Ben and I drifted away from ham radio.

Pursuing K9JP's new members list some time ago I saw a new member Ben EU1AA. Could it be? Sure enough it was my old buddy from White Russia which is now Belarus. I send Ben an email and our friendship was renewed like we had talked just a week ago.

On Thanksgiving morning or 2012 my receive was tuned to 28050 in the background as it normally is and there was Ben calling CQ. We QSOed for the first time in over 50 years. It was thrilling.

Ben is running one watt to a five element beam on 10 and he was stronger than most Europeans. Look for him and welcome a hero from a bygone era to our wonderful group.

73 Urb W1UL  
SKCC 6668S



## True or False?

If you haven't checked out "Hamhijinks.com" then you're missing some serious ham radio humor! All in jest of course, many of the videos and photos poke fun at our hobby.



## Two Weeks of Dxing!

A week in Tonga (A35), a week in Fiji (3D2) and three weeks in Hawaii (KH6); what a vacation! Four SKCCers spent a week in Tonga and Fiji passing out cw, rtty and SSB QSOs. It was a 100 watt Dxpedition with verticals and a G5RV for antennas. Amps had been planned but the transportation cost were just too much. For the two week effort of Dxing nearly 14,000 QSOs are in the log and there are many SKCC QSOs in that log!

Tonga was great although conditions were poor, but the operating site was excellent. That's K8AQM and KG8CO operating under the palm trees and at the beach. Yup, outside operating during the day. At night we were inside our bungalow (note netting over beds!).

It was a pleasure to work several SKCC members from Tonga and the SKCC QSOs were made with a **KG8CO (A35CO)**



straight key which I had on a separate plug so when needed it was quickly brought into play.

If you are needing a Tonga and/or Fiji QSL for their SKCC QSO just send the QSL either directly to K8AQM or via the SKCC bureau.

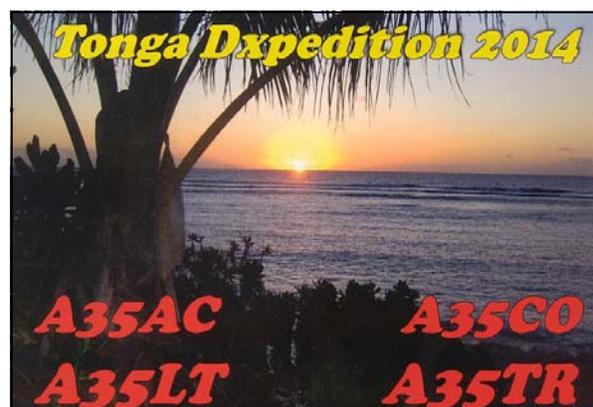


### K8AQM (A35TR)



It was a great Adventure but only half the fun! Read on about the Fiji part of the trip and enjoy the pictures of operators, equipment and our very luxurious accomodations.

### AC8W (A35AC)





Week two was in Fiji and that “house below was our “shack.” We had our own personal cook (Lisa) for the week who



kept us well supplied with wonderful treats! The operational “shack” was out on a porch



overlooking the ocean toward JA, USA and EU, what a view!

Conditions were better and antenna location was excellent. That’s 3D2LJ and 3D2CO with the vertical right in the water. Ops left to right are Lee N8LJ, Stan AC8W and Brian KG8CO... aka 3D2LJ, 3D2AC and 3D2CO. Again many SKCC members are in the logs.

## Cootie Combo



Rich K8UV (2250T) sent along this picture of his cootie...pretty cool!

Also from Rich:

“The only thing I fear of dying is my wife selling my ham gear for what I told her I paid for it.”

“Two antennas met on a roof, fell in love and got married. The ceremony wasn’t much but the reception was excellent”

## From The Editor

Hello All,

This quarter’s paper is rather large. It was great to get so many submitted articles from a variety of members. Thank you all for your submissions.

It doesn’t take much to make a submission of “something,” just about anything can be worked into a very interesting read. I encourage you all to continue submitting your articles and I encourage those of you who read this and have never tried to write or send pictures to just give it a try.

Again, thanks to all. Next issue will be out at the end of December. How about sending something about those “toys” Santa brings you for Christmas?

73,

Ted K8AQM