

By Dan Henderson, N1ND  
Contest Manager

# Straight Key Night 1998

**T**hank goodness for the College Bowl Alliance. No longer will the active brass pounder have to choose between two passions: Straight Key Night and the national championship college football game! And judging from the 110 entries received, dits and dahs fared well against touchdowns and two point conversions. A total of 1247 QSOs were reported in the 1998 event. Reports of vintage keys were numerous. What jumps out immediately is the quality of the QSOs: 64 different hams received votes for "Most Interesting QSO." Congratulations to **W3TFA** and **K3LN** for garnering the most support in this category. How good it is to see so many operators carrying on great QSOs, not just "work 'em and move on."

**K3LN** pulls off the "double" for SKN as he also tied **W1LIC** and **W8EGI** for most votes for "Best Fist." **W2GR** edged out **N2FX** as most active during the event by one QSO (60 to 59). Activity was reported to be good on lots of bands, including the Novice/Tech plus subbands. Start planning now for SKN 1999/2000 December 31- January 1. If you subscribe to the theory the new millennium begins with 2000, you have a chance to be the first person to make a CW QSO in the next millennium. You can avoid the Y2K terror, put away the computer and not worry about a system crash. Pound the brass, gang! And pray they don't move the Championship game back to New Year's Day.

## Key Clicks

It was exciting to hear a little of the history of each key and its operator (WN9U)...



Now we all know why KOJW had such a big signal.

I have found no better way to bring in the new year (WB0B)... This year I also decided to use a transmitter built from a Ross Hull article from a 1928 *QST* (WB2AWQ)... W9EX told me he had been a ham for 63 years. I hope I can make that too (WB8RFB)... Nothing sounds better than good CW with a straight key. It is music to the ears (KA7T)... I don't think I will put the straight key away just yet (W1NJN)... The best fist I worked was WOC DJ using a Japanese navy key (W4QBE)... I started with my 1957 novice rig and when the new year began I switched to a home-brew rig based on the 1995 *ARRL Handbook* page 17.79: one watt and 3 QSOs, two over 1200 miles (W3IRZ)... I was encouraged that the Novice/Tech portions of 40 and 80 meters were buzzing with SKN activity (W9SUL)... It was so nice to talk to people, not just name, RST, QTH, rig, age, weather and 73 (KG4BIG)... How about SKC (Straight Key Century)? (AA1KF)... It was very gratifying to discover that courtesy, mutual respect and enjoyment are still part of ham radio (NT8X)... I was fortunate to be able to use a famous key: the J-38



AB5YY rocking 2-week-old Natalie to sleep with the sweet sounds of the code.

key used to send the message to the President on December 7, 1941, that Pearl Harbor was being attacked (W4HZD)... The spirit is willing but the wrist was weak since my last SK contacts were some 30 years ago! (AA2AD)... I enjoyed limbering up on a key I have had for 72 years (W4GC)... I've been on every SKN since it started. This year I made 15 more amateur friends (W5ETK)... We can use straight keys all the time but how many of our computers would be confounded by our small imperfections in sending? Oh dear! We might have to start listening again! (K3LN)... The code always seems easier for others but fleeing a challenge only stunts your growth (K9LCK)... Technology has come a long way but communication will never attain a higher art form (WA1CFX)... My mother always told me to stay off the streets on New Year's Eve. I follow her advice and do SKN (W9EZN). **QST**

## New Books

### SIMPLIFYING DIGITAL SIGNAL PROCESSING

By Rajesh J. Shah

Published by Prompt Publications, an imprint of Howard W. Sams & Co, 2647 Waterfront Pkwy, E Dr, Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46214-2041. First edition, 1998. 127 pages with index; 7 1/2 x 9 1/4 inches, B&W illus; ISBN 0-7906-1136-8. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Paul Danzer, N111  
ARRL Technical Advisor

Don't read this book—at least not cover to cover—because no matter who you are, and no matter your technical ability and background, there are parts of this book that will be too simple for you and parts that will be too complex.

What Shah has done is put together a book

on digital signal processing (DSP) that covers a wide variety of topics. In order to fulfill the promise of the title, much of the mathematics is simple, but much is oversimplified, so some readers will have trouble understanding the real meaning of some of the one-line equations.

Many of us learned radio techniques by looking at equations and waveforms. This book is about digital processing, where the waveforms are converted to digital values and in place of circuit blocks (such as filters, amplifiers or mixers) mathematical computations are made. In order to understand this approach, you have to have a feel for the mathematical representation or model of a waveform, and this is what is done in chapter 2.

Now you can proceed to see what processing you want—filtering, detection or a number of others. These are shown in a block diagram representation (chapter 3) and the actual calculations (or transforms) in chapter 4.

All well and good, you might add—but

we still live in an analog world. The signals in your transceiver are analog. As you might expect, they must be converted from analog to digital before going into the processing and from digital to analog when going back into the transceiver, transmitter or receiver. Chapter 5 contains the explanations of this input/output process.

Finally, chapters 8, 9 and 10 include simplified explanations of filtering and other applications. Not as many as perhaps you and I might want, but enough to make the point that digital processing is here to stay.

Add to your library or not? If you want a simple mathematical explanation of some of the elements in digital processing, many of the chapters and the list of contributors (actually references) makes the book something you should look at. But if you want a readable explanation of digital signal processing, geared specifically to ham radio applications, take a second look at chapter 18 (Digital Signal Processing) of any recent edition of *The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs*. **QST**