

Straight Key Night 2002

New Year's Day is a time for tradition. Those raised in the southern US view New Year's Day as a time for a great meal. A feast of black-eyed peas, collard greens, corn bread and a roasted pork loin equates to good luck. A friend from New York says you should burn a bayberry candle all day long, also for luck. First Night celebrations across the world hold to a tradition of great entertainment as well as a fireworks gala at midnight. Thousands line the streets of Times Square to watch the Waterford crystal ball drop to usher in another year. Whether standing at the foot of Big Ben in Westminster as it chimes the midnight hour or viewing a laser show at the Eiffel Tower, you sense New Year's is one of the most tradition-filled times of the year.

On January 1, 2002, several hundred amateurs from across the globe took part in another tradition—ARRL Straight Key Night. A total of 169 logs were submitted by the participants in this year's event. A review of those logs showed contacts made with hams in all 50 US states, many Canadian provinces and several DXCC entities. The allure of SKN continues to be that the contacts are "old time" radio style. You kick back, relax and spend time talking with your fellow participants (instead of the rapid-fire contest style exchanges that are so common). Several participants noted that aside from the keys being used, many participants transform SKN into a "vintage gear" event. The soapbox comments below will give you a good sampling of SKN at its best.

One participant claimed QSOs with others spanning a total of 79 years. He worked 12-year-old W2AU as well as VE4JN, a full 91 years young. Numerous participants noted that SKN is a most popular affair for them. Be it the Smith family (W5KL, W4YE and W4AGI), who make this an annual event, or one of the numerous first-time participants, SKN has special magic and traditions that appeal to young and old, male and female, newcomers and old-timers. Congratulations to the participants in SKN 2002. Why not consider joining them January 1 for SKN 2003? Who knows—maybe it will become a new tradition in your household.

Soapbox

In 1974 my Dad gave me this Speed-X key that was discarded from the Navy Radio School, Bainbridge Naval Training Center, MD. I had never mounted it to a board and BOY that sure made a difference (KA3YNV)... This was the 25th anniversary of my first QSO with NN7A. We met on New Year's Eve 1977 and found we were both in Flagstaff. We still try to work each other every SKN (W7YS)... Best fist was 88-year-old W5KL—flawless, smooth and

Participants: AB7YB, AB8FJ, AD6YU, AE6C, AF8A, AI2Q, K1FP, K1RV, K1ZDI, K2GBH, K2IUC, K2NPN, K2NV, K3LN, K3PX, K4BKD, K4BYF, K4CHE, K4FS, K4KSR, K4ME, K4TP, K5IQ, K5XK, K6ETM, K6IX, K6KRD, K6PBQ, K6TEM, K7EA, K7TFW, K7ZYV, K8AAX, K8PUJ, K8QLM, K8SB, K9KEU, K9KVY, K9LCK, KA1BNO, KA3AVB, KA3YNV, KA5BOU, KB0CRG, KB1DSB, KB2QIU, KB5NJD, KB8SCI, KB8TXZ, KB9BVN, KB9UWR, KC2EQA, KC2HRP, KC0IEM, KD1XU, KD7MJV, KE6QR, KF3DC, KG2OR, KG6TH, KH6GJV, KJ6CA, KK5FX, KN2GSJ, KN6YD, KO0Z, KQ5U, KS6CW, KT5X, KU4BT, K0ADL, K0CDJ, K0LMD, N1RL, N2KZ, N3BF, N3MVX, N3RY, N5AF, N5BF/6, N5OHL, N5PV, N6ZFO, N8AA, N8KC, N9BOR, N9EXY, N9KO, N9PLK, N9WAT, ND2T, NF6R, NJ3K, NM0L, NN7A, NT2W, NU7T, ON6ZJ, W1KR, W1RO/7, W1YT, W2AU, W2LID, W2LYH, W2VMX, W2VTV, W2ZR, W3CEI, W3DF, W3IZ, W3MGL, W3TZW, W3UHP, W4AGI, W4YE, W5AI, W5ETK, W5KL, W5KP, W5RZ, W5USM, W5XW, W6LFB, W6PRI, W6TUR, W7BMI, W7IZE, W7KTY, W7LBV, W7TVI, W7YS, W8FDV, W8JNO, W8JZI, W9FCG, W9ISC, W9ZC, WA1ABI, WA1CFX, WA1UMA, WA2DAX, WA2QQF, WA3GQU, WA4EUL, WA4PSO, WA6RND, WA7CS, WA7GSN, WA8WV, WA9FFZ, WA9PWP, WA9QWX, WB3GCK, WB5LLI, WB6IYM, WB8CFO, WB9CIS, WB9HFK, WB0B, WD4CBZ, WH7E, WN2A, WN8FTC, WN8VIX, WN9U, WO3B, WP4LNY, WR1C, W0TUP

easy to copy (W4YE)... Pounding away on the old Navy Flameproof brought me back to my early days as a Novice in 1960 (W2ZR)... To dedicate this SKN to our military in the war zones, I operated a Navy Winslow-Electronics straight key from the USS Mississenawa mounted on a WW2 radio console off the USS Bunker Hill (W1RO/7)... The 1917 Vibroplex Blue Racer I was using had a unique shaped frame called a "cloverleaf." While talking to WD9FLJ, I discovered he was using a similar model from 1919. KE5C joined in with his 1923 Blue Racer, later followed by N6WU with another 1917 model. We had a real "four-leaf clover"—a neat symbol for the New Year (KT5X)... A straight key is all I use and it continues to be fun (WA9FFZ)... After SKN I drifted off to sleep with the same satisfaction I felt when as a Novice I made my very first QSO with a Johnson Viking II and a Hallicrafters SX-111 (KO0Z)... Was fun to work W2ZM who was running a 1929 Hartley oscillator that sounded SO cool. (NT2W)... As I do every SKN, I pulled out the old key (late 1800s vintage). Something to be said for pounding some really old brass for this event (N3MVX)... I've tried plenty of other modes, but I always seem to drift back to CW, that most elemental of amateur modes (N8KC)... Marconi would be proud of us all (AD6YU)... The QSO with my two sons (W4YE and W4AGI) is always a highlight and this year W4COW joined in (W5KL)... I received a "Titanic" key for Christmas, so I had to try it out (W3MGL)... The QSO with W2LYH was great fun. She is a retired radioman from

SKN Accomplishments

Best Fist Votes

W5KL	5
K6KPH	3

Most Interesting QSO

W2ZM	4
W2LYH	3
K6KPH	3

Most QSOs Completed

WP4LNY	37
K3PX	28
K6PBQ	26
W8FDV	26

the Navy, as is her husband. Being retired Navy myself, we had a great time sharing "sea stories" (KN2GSJ)... Had a great time, but my fist doesn't get better with age. Worked W2AU—12 years old and had the best fist of anyone I worked (K4BYF)... In the midst of a substantial pileup, hats off to Brian, 9J2BO, for taking time to have a good old fashioned QSO with people using a straight key (KB5NJD)... Band conditions were excellent and the number of SKN participants was much greater than I have heard in years (W7TVI)... Been off the air for quite a few years. Got back on just in time for SKN (KB0CRG)... The excitement of a return to my radio roots is a major motivating factor for this event (WA1CFX)... I think there are two categories of CW ops—old and VERY old (K2GBH)... I had forgotten how much FUN we can have. It felt like I had slipped through a time warp (K1RV)... Made my first ever 80-meter QSO with WA0KZL (WN8VIX)... It is surprising how many QRP enthusiasts I worked during SKN 2002 (WN9U)... Made a few Qs until I discovered my old Globe Scout had a nice little chirp. I will get the chirp out before next year! (W7KTY)... Although I have been a ham for 30 years, this was my first SKN. I had a blast (WB6IYM)... I think I surprised a few operators when I told them I was running 3 watts into my rainspout (WB3GCK)... Still a fun event with lots of fun. In recent years, it's also becoming "Antique Rig Night" (NN7A)... Special Thanks to W8DAN for the patience while my 7 year old granddaughter Shelby sent her name over the air (WB0B)... Thank you, Old-Timers, who admonished us novices years ago to: "Listen before you transmit." That truth still holds today (K9LCK)... I used a G4ZPY key—the finest CW key that I have ever used in 45 years of ham radio (K0LMD)... I only made 9 contacts but had LOTS of fun. I am 12 years old and have been a ham for 1 year now. I look forward to many more SKNs in years to come (W2AU)... It seems to me the old WW2 J-38 key was the most popular during this event (K3PX)... It is my favorite event of the ham year (K7TFW)... This was a special night because it was in 1952—50 years ago—that I started transmitting as a Novice (W8JZI)... Though I have been using paddles for the past four months, the feel and control of a straight key truly involves the operator in the process (KC2EQA)... SKN is like Christmas eve Mass. You see a lot of people you usually don't see but all are united and participating because of a passionate belief (N2KZ)... 