

Simply Magic— Straight Key Night 2004

We're not quite sure of the source, but there was magic in the air January 1, 2004—ARRL Straight Key Night '04.

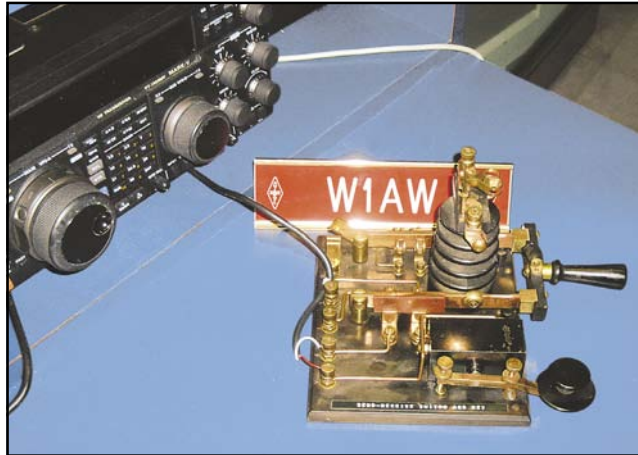
Two things always seem to come together during SKN. One is the result of the memories of the operators. The mystical feel of their old reliable friend—the straight key—stirs the ghosts of QSOs past in their mind's eye. Be it for a single QSO or for many, the mesmerizing allure of times gone by brings out the best in so many participants. Whether an old reliable J-38, or some homebrew derivative, the sound of brass pounding in the shack stirs the senses of many an operator.

I have noticed a second thing in looking at SKN these past few years. It is not only for pounding brass, it is also a time to light up the ether with electrons generated by the old reliable gear of our youth. For some the youth is decades ago. For others now is the time of their youth in our hobby. When you visit the Straight Key Night On-line Soapbox at www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox you will find over 50 stories and numerous photographs from some of the 2004 participants. Many highlight not only straight keys but vintage equipment as well. Perhaps SKN is evolving into Vintage Radio Night?

Yes, you probably heard a couple of key clicks and perhaps a few signals that tended to drift, but that is simply part of the magic of SKN—along with a lot of history. Each operator has a story to tell—about the key they are using, the rig they dusted off, or perhaps the contacts they were making.

If you had one of the 22 contacts made with W1AW, or if you heard the Maxim Memorial Station on the air, indeed there was history. ARRL HQ staffer Mark Spencer, WA8SME, used the straight key of the Old Man himself—Hiram Percy Maxim. W1AW station manager Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, made the key from Maxim's "Old Betsy" spark-gap transmitter available for Mark to use during SKN. There are those that claim the presence of the original 1AW is still around. Read Mark's soapbox entry and decide for yourself.

A record number of submissions were received for SKN 2004, as 227 stations submitted summaries totaling 2264 contacts. That turnout breaks the previous



The key from Hiram Percy Maxim's spark-gap transmitter "Old Betsy" was put to use for SKN 2004 at W1AW.

high total of submissions by almost 40%! Perhaps the magic *is* contagious...

The quality of the fists and QSOs was high as always. An outstanding 147 different stations received votes for "Best Fist," with **K6KPH** garnering the admiration of 4 different operators while **N4QA's** magical fist impressed 3 participants. One hundred thirty one different stations received consideration from their peers for "Most Interesting QSO" with **KL7V/5**, **KB3AAY**, **W7ZMD**, **W9AVM**,

KA7SKN, **W1DV/2**, **K9VKY**, **KO6YG**, **K1DC**, **AC5P**, **WW3K** and **N4QA** all receiving votes from two stations. Congratulations to these outstanding and interesting brass pounders!

Whatever their motivation, SKN night participants unanimously seem to relish the opportunity to relax and enjoy a vanishing part of our hobby. Whether your code speed is 5 or 50 WPM, why not set aside some operating time the next time SKN rolls around. You won't regret it!

Participants

AA4ZS, AA8PW, AB7MP, AB8FJ, AC7PB, AD4E, AD6FR, AE3A, AE4MZ, AF4JD, AK4RB, AL7JK, HP1AC, HP1IBF, I1MQ, IZ4FHT, JJ1BDX/3, K0JW, K0KEY, K0LWV, K1DC, K1FP, K1GUP, K1PDY, K1RV, K1YA, K2GBH, K2PQ, K3KYR, K3MD, K3SEW, K3XT, K3YZ, K4AAL, K4BYF, K4DRQ, K4HJN, K4JYS, K4NCG, K4RDU, K4RT, K4TP, K4UY, K6DF, K6ETM, K6FFY, K6KPH (W6AWO, KK6PR, ops), K6LQ, K6PBQ, K6YR, K7HP, K7TFW, K8BBM, K8PUJ, K8QLM, K8SOM, K8WIW, K9DGS, K9KEU, K9LA, K9LCK, K9QH, K9UQN, K9VKY, K9YKL, KA4JQZ, KA5BOU, KA7T, KB2KDV, KB2QIU, KB3AAY, KB3HJQ, KB8GOY, KB8TXZ, KC0PBY, KC1TX, KC2HRP, KC8VCB, KD0RC, KD5JOM, KD5RFC, KD5UZJ, KD5VRK/4, KD7LEE, KE6QR, KF3DC, KF4PD, KF6PVY, KG2OR, KG4QDH, KG6TH, KH6/W3GW, KI0G, KI6ZX, KJ6CA, KK5FX, KN6YD, KO6YG, KS5V, KW3U, KX5F, N0EID, N0FP, N0JL, N0OA, N1WH, N2KZ, N2OH, N3AWS, N3IW, N3MVX, N3NZ, N3RK, N3ZOC, N5AF, N5BF, N6ZFO, N7CFO, N7EIE, N7ORS, N7TOD, N8GU, N8KC, N8KV, N8XMS, N9BLK, N9NM, NB0Z, NC5K, NJ0E, NJ7C, NM0L, NN7A, NO6E, NU7T, OH3WD, ON6ZJ, VE1GM, VE7BQO, W0CGV, W0KIZ, W0ROE, W0RTK, W1AMZ, W1AW (WA8SME, op), W1DV/2, W1RO, W1TPB, W1TS, W1TW, W1VR, W1YT, W2AGN, W2GDJ, W2III, W2LID, W2LJ, W2OBJ, W2RJJ, W2TI, W2WIL, W2WSC (W2USF, W2KH, ops), W3CB, W3CEI, W3HQ, W3TZW, W3UHP, W4ARM, W4BNO, W4RQ, W4WYD, W4YE, W5ETK, W5WAX, W5XW, W6MTC (KS6CW, op), W6PRI, W6VNR, W7BMI, W7DRA, W7IZE, W7ZMD, W8JZI, W8WTS, W9MVB, W9RSX, W9YK, W9YO, W9ZC, WA0HQQ, WA1ABI, WA1CFX, WA1VQY, WA2FDK, WA2JON, WA2QQF, WA2VQV, WA4GIR, WA4GLH, WA5ZJK, WA6BOB, WA7GSN, WA9EKQ, WA9PWP, WA9QWX, WA9S, WB0CNK, WB0TRA, WB1FLA, WB2AWQ, WB3CQD, WB3DSJ, WB3EFP, WB6CGJ, WB6IYM, WB8DQT, WB8LZG, WB8P, WB9HFK, WB9MII, WB9UEZ, WB9WHG, WD4CBZ, WD8NVN, WN7Y, WP4LNY, WW3K

