

A (Radio) Wave of Nostalgia —Straight Key Night 2005

Dan Henderson, N1ND

It only lasts 24 hours, but those hours seem to bring back a cavalcade of memories to those involved. Crisp, clean, precise “dits and dahs” generated by computers and electronic devices give way to the rhythmic, unique traits inherent in the fist of each participant in the annual ARRL Straight Key Night.

An experienced ear can quickly identify old friends by the sound of the Morse code they send. Perhaps unconsciously, those sending with straight keys linger a small time longer on a dash in a particular letter. Maybe it is the crisp dits that seem to come in rapid succession in forming another letter. In the feedback from participants one is surely struck by the

sense that SKN is a sort of “homecoming,” where new acquaintances become old friend during a short QSO.

Feedback from the participants underscores that SKN is more than just getting on the air to pound brass. It seems to have evolved on its own into a “vintage radio” event. When you peruse the ARRL Online Soapbox for SKN 2005 (www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox) the old-timer will find a veritable “memory lane” of old keys and transmitters, while the neophyte will catch a glimpse of some of the tools of the trade that date back to the origins of our hobby. For example:

...Mark, K9TR, putting his old Ranger 2 on the air using a McElroy 300 series teardrop...

...Carl, WA7CS, and a Lionel J-36 lit up the ether with both a K2 and a set of Drake B-line Twins for the day...

...Whitey, K1VV, put the Marconi Ra-

dio Club W1AA call sign on the air using “the Mighty 4 Watter,” a single tube crystal controlled transmitter from a 1956 *QST* article...

...Ellis, WA1RKS, was the first-ever CW contact for Chris, N1CCF. Of course it was exciting that they are Father and Son...

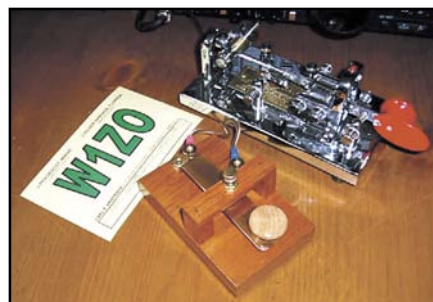
...Jim, KW3U, keyed his Johnson Adventurer with a large Kent key...

...Bruce, K8UDH, using a homebrew two-tube rig built by his dad, the former holder of his call sign, built back in late '50s or early '60s from an article in *The ARRL Handbook*...

Straight Key Night began modestly on December 31, 1970, with participants operating for a five hour period starting at 8 PM local time. An additional 2 hours of operating time was added the following year. It finally evolved, in time for SKN 1977, to the 24 hour leisurely oper-



Hank, HP11BF, using a J-45. Designed for use in planes or other vehicles, it is a J-37 mounted on a metal band that clamps around your leg.



Carl, W1ZO, used this setup, which includes a replica of his original 1952 key.

2005 Participants

AA1HO, AA3TG, AA4ZS, AB1BW, AB7MP, AB8FJ, AC7AC, AC7AF, AC7PN, AD6FR, AE3A, AE4MZ, AE6C, AE6PX, AF4MY, AF4O, AG4VA, AI4EV, AI4II, AK4GY, AL7JK, HP1AC, HP11BF, JJ1BDX/3, K0AQO, K0AZ, K0LWV, K1DT, K1LGQ, K1NV, K1PDY, K1YA, K2EKM, K2EM, K2HT, K2UY, K2WI, K3IN, K3KLC, K3LNT, K3MD, K3PEG, K3PX, K3QS, K3WWP, K4BYF, K4CHE, K4DXU, K4HJN, K4MR, K4TP, K4UK, K5HK, K5NZ, K5SOH, K5ZTY, K6FFY, K6HJC, K6HRT, K6KPH, K6LQ, K6PBQ, K6YS, K7AO, K7DU, K7NTW, K7SIM, K7TFW, K7TUC, K7ZD, K7ZYV, K8AB, K8UDH, K8WB, K8WIW, K9DGS, K9DI, K9HE, K9KEU, K9LCK, K9PET, K9PFA, K9QH, K9TR, K9UQN, K9VKY, K9YKL, KA2SJG, KA3AVB, KA3LOC, KA3YNV, KA4JQZ, KA5PNE, KB1LQC, KB2KDV, KB2QIU, KB3HBD, KB4WJA, KB5IRC, KB6NU, KB8TXZ, KB9WBM, KC0OSB, KC0TLW, KC1TX, KC2KWA, KC4AUF, KC6T, KC7PM, KC8PAR, KC8YDU, KC9BSP, KC9ECI, KD1XU, KD5JOM, KD5TLC, KD7REM, KE0G, KE6QR, KE6SLS, KF3DC, KF4PD, KG2OR, KG4IUM, KG4KLR, KG4LDD, KI0G, KI4CBF, KI4CBN, KK5FX, KL7IDY, KN4VL, KN6YD, KO4OP, KO6YG, KR4JI, KS5V, KS6CW, KT3A, KU8T, KW3U, KX5F, KZ7P, N0EID, N0FP, N0UNL, N1CC, N1LN, N1LWK, N2BE, N2GT, N2JF, N2WM, N3FWE, N3IW, N3ZOC, N4BBB, N4HAY, N4QA, N4SSD, N5BF, N5DY, N5ET, N5LH, N5UW, N5VI, N5XGG, N6KZ, N6NAX, N6NR, N6YEU, N7CFO, N7DB, N8GU, N8KC, N8XMS, N8YE, N9BOR, N9CJT, N9JR, N9NM, N4A0, NB0Z, NE9A, NM0L, NP3CW, NQ4Q, NU6T, NWR8L, NY00, OH3WD, ON6ZJ, SM6CLU, VE1GA, VE1GM, VE3OSZ, VE3WMB, VE7NI, W0CGV, W0CZ, W0LMS, W0OGZ, W0QQS, W0RTK, W0SJS, W0TUP, W0WM, W1AA, “W1AW (WA8SME, op)”, W1CPR, W1DV/2, W1HGY, W1KMH, W1OG, W1PID, W1TPB, W1TS, W1YT, W1ZB, W1ZO, W2GIW, W2KEI, W2LID, W2LJ, W2TKG, W2WSC, W3CB, W3CEI, W3DCG, W3GW/KH6, W3MT, W3TZW, W3UHP, W5ESE, W5ETK, W5KL (W4YE, op), W5PDW, W5WAX (K5SW, op), W5WRL, W5XW, W6FU, W6JHQ, W6LFB, W6PRI, W6VNR, W6VTK, W7BMI, W7GB, W7IZE, W7LNG, W7OIL, W7RFE, W7YS, W7ZMD, W8DO, W8IQ, W8IVF, W8JFB, W8UI, W8WTS, W9AVM, W9CBT, W9GLG, W9PSU, W9YO, WA0HQ, WA0JLY, WA0QZK, WA0VKC, WA1ABI, WA1CFX, WA1RKS, WA1UMA, WA1VQY, WA2ZOD, WA3WFM, WA5MUF, WA5TMN, WA5VQM, WA6OCP, WA7CS, WA7GSN, WA7YUL, WA8TOX, WA9PWP, WA9QWX, WB0B, WB0CNK, WB1HGA, WB2AWQ, WB3EFP, WB4FDT, WB4NNY, WB6CGJ, WB6IYM, WB7QBO, WB8CFO, WB8MON, WB9CIS, WB9WHG, WD4CBZ, WD8NVN, WD8Q, WF5W, WG8W, WM9M, WN5KNY, WN9U, WO3B, WQ5P, WU3Y, WU7R

ating event many now enjoy.

A record number 312 entries for SKN 2005 were received, representing a wide range of geography, experience, equipment and excitement. Entries were received from 43 states, several Canadian provinces and territories, as well as at least six other DXCC entities—Belgium, Finland, Japan, Panama, Puerto Rico and Sweden. The list represents four of the six continents. SKN 2005 also set an all-time record for the number of entries!

Perhaps the nostalgic aura is spreading. We noted in the Soapbox comments and in many logs that many participants were active in both SKN 2005 and in the Scandinavian CW Activity Group's "Straight Key Day," which has also been held on

New Year's Day for the past few years.

The "Best Fist" competition was tough, as 161 different stations received at least one vote. Congratulations to Bill, W9ZN, who received 4 votes, and to John, N5DY, and Bill, K0CDJ, who each received 3 votes. The same holds true for "Most Interesting QSO"—157 different stations received a nomination. Top honors went to Bob, K7TUC, and Handley, KA2SJK, who tied with 3 votes, with 7 stations each receiving 2 votes in this category.

Aside from vintage straight keys and "boatanchor" radios, we also noted that several participants got on the air for SKN with old-fashioned manual "bugs." A case could be made that bugs are actually "pounding brass" in a slightly different

way, just as the case might be made that they "don't belong." For many, at the end of the day bugs are just another piece of the history of our hobby, fitting nicely into the nostalgic feeling of the event. And since there are no points or awards, just good, old fashioned, on-the-air radio fun, anything that gets more people involved for the day can't be too far off course.

Remember to visit the ARRL Contest On-line Soapbox to see dozens of comments and photos from participants in this year's event. And who knows, come next winter, you too might decide to cast aside cares and modern electronics for a day and join in the fun of pounding brass across the airwaves. **QST**

2005 IARU HF World Championship Contest

Date: 1200 UTC July 9-1200 UTC July 10, 2005

What is it: A worldwide 24 hour contest on HF bands sponsored by the IARU and administered by the ARRL.

How to participate: Amateurs across the globe work as many amateurs as possible on 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters. Single Operators participate as Mixed Mode, CW-Only or Phone-Only according to power levels (High, Low or QRP). All Multioperator stations participate as multi-single Mixed Mode only.

What to say: Most stations send a signal report and their ITU zone. If you use standard abbreviations and phonetics, you will find yourself being asked for fewer repeats. The ITU zone is different from the CQ Zones—so be careful. A list of ITU zones and call-sign prefixes is found at www.arrl.org/contests/announcements/prefixable.html and an ITU zone map is found at www.iaru.org/ituzonesc.gif.

Special exchange abbreviations: Stations designated as IARU society headquarters will be sending a signal report and their society abbreviations (such as ARRL, IARU, RSGB, etc). Members of the IARU Administrative Council and the three IARU regional executive committees will send a signal report and either AC, R1, R2 or R3. QSOs with any of these special exchange stations count 1 point each.

Rules changes: None

Quirks: Stations may be worked on both CW and phone for QSO credit on each band. However, multipliers only count once per band, not once per band and mode. For example, if you work the IARU HQ multiplier NU1AW on 20 meter Phone and 20 meter CW, it counts as only one multiplier on the 20 meter band.

Best reason to participate: Since it is only a 24-hour contest, you can have a fun time contesting and still enjoy time with friends and family during the weekend. With many ITU member societies making a special effort to be on the air, it is relatively simple to

earn the IARU "Worked All Continent" or 5-Band WAC in one weekend. Experience what summer DX propagation is really like with activity worldwide.

Things to remember: The multi-single category is a true one-signal at a time category. You can not have a second radio working multipliers.

Relative challenge: DX contesting in the Northern Hemisphere in the summer can be challenging, but you will find lots of stations to work. Watch for those nighttime summer openings on 20 meters. Remember that it is winter below the equator and those stations will be looking for you on 80 and 40 meters, even though it's noisy during summer in the North. Being on the downturn of Cycle 23, the lower bands will likely be more crowded, but remember to look for openings on the higher bands. And being only a 24 hour contest, you don't get a "second chance" the next day, so watch for band openings.

Scoring: Contacts within your own ITU zone or with an IARU society HQ station count one for point each; contacts within your own continent but with a different ITU zone count three points; and contacts with a different continent and ITU zone count five points. Multipliers count only once per band. HQ stations are a special multiplier and are counted separately from ITU zone multipliers. Final score is total QSO points times multipliers.

How to report your score: You must send in your entry by August 9, 2005. E-mail a log in Cabrillo format to iaruhf@iaru.org. E-mailed and diskette logs must be in Cabrillo format. Send paper logs and a complete summary sheet to IARU HF World Championship, Box 310905, Newington, CT 06111. You may also submit the entry using the Web applet at www.b4h.net/cabforms. If you submit via e-mail please make sure your call sign is the SUBJECT line of your message.

Complete rules: The complete rules may be found at www.iaru.org/contest.html. Contest forms and rules may also be obtained

by sending an SASE with 2 units of postage (2 air-mail units for non-US delivery) to IARU HF World Championship forms, Box 310905, Newington, CT 06111.

For more information: E-mail n1nd@iaru.org or phone 860-594-0232. **QST**

VHF/UHF Century Club Awards

Compiled by Eileen Sapko
Awards Manager

The ARRL VUCC numbered certificate is awarded to amateurs who submit written confirmation for contacts with the minimum number of Maidenhead grid locators (indicated in italics) for each band listing. The numbers preceding call signs are the assigned award numbers. The numbers following the call signs indicate claimed endorsement levels. The totals shown are for credits given from December 7, 2004 to February 8, 2005.

The VUCC application form, field sheets and complete list of VHF Awards Managers can be found on the VUCC web site at www.arrl.org/awards/vucc. An SASE to ARRL is required if you cannot download these forms. If you have questions relating to VUCC, send an e-mail to vucc@arrl.org.

50 MHz				
	<i>100</i>			
1420	K4CMS			
1421	K4MSG			
1422	AF4OD			
1423	EH5BY			
1424	W9RPM			
1425	KC7QAG	35		
WA1NYV	325			
AF2K	500			
W3EP	975			
W3HHN	425	145		
WA4QMQ	175			
KD5KPJ	125			
N6HC	175			
K6QG	425			
N6JV	600			
KB8U	575			
K8SIX	675			
W9DRB	300			
144 MHz				
	<i>100</i>			
644	AF4OD			
645	W9RPM			
W3EP	175			
W8WN	425			
KB8U	150			
222 MHz				
	<i>50</i>			
124	VW2R			
KB8U	90			
432 MHz				
	<i>50</i>			
		KB8U		80
902 MHz				
	<i>25</i>			
		35		KB8U
1296				
	<i>25</i>			
		145		KB8U
2.3 GHz				
	<i>10</i>			
		KB8U		15
3.4 GHz				
	<i>5</i>			
		70		KB8U
10 GHz				
	<i>5</i>			
		157		K6QG
		158		KB8U
		N6JV		15
Satellite				
	<i>100</i>			
		N1HOQ		400
QST				