

Pounding Brass Forevermore — Straight Key Night 2012

With a nod to Edgar Allan Poe...

Dan Henderson, N1ND

*Once upon a New Year's dreary, while I
pounded brass so weary,*

*Listening for many a quaint and curious
signals as the volume soared —*

*While I called CQ by rapping, suddenly
there came a tapping,*

*As a signal gently rapping, rapping above
my ambient noise floor:*

*"'Tis some station," I did mutter, "tapping
above the old noise floor —*

Wanting QSOs, nothing more."

To some, ARRL Straight Key Night is an anomaly in today's digital era. However, remember that it can be argued that CW is the original digital mode — converting sound and letters into characters that are transmitted electronically. Always held during the twenty-four hours of New Year's Day (UTC that is), SKN has become an annual homage to the traditions of our hobby — where many recall days of simpler times.

*Presently my fist grew stronger; hesitating
then no longer;*

*Pounding brass the call I answered, pon-
dering the fun in store —*

*What new friend I was then making, a new
contact there for the taking*

*The signal of my Straight Key rising, rising
through the ether to explore —*

*Now that I was sure I heard you — here I
opened wide the door; -*

Having fun, and nothing more.

Some are perplexed with the laid-back nature of SKN. Those who venture into this casual, fun time on the air from one of the more hectic or demanding arenas of our hobby (contesting, DXing or EmComm for example) may not understand that there is room in Amateur Radio for all kinds of operations — and operators. Amateurs in 44 states, four Canadian provinces and one DXCC entity accepted the challenge of SKN — making contacts not speedily, but leisurely. The 191 entries received reported 1406 contacts — not contest or DXpedition rate but certainly quality QSOs, each a unique, fun experience.

*Hear the magic of the code
Brass pounded code!*

*What a world of solemn wonder the rhythm
in its ode!*

In the silence of the night,

*How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of the code!*
(Oops, wrong poem)

Long-time code operators can instantly tell when they are talking to an old friend long before a call sign is ever transmitted. Participants in SKN are asked to name their choice for "Best Fist" heard during the event. It does not necessarily need to be a station they worked — just one they heard. For 2012, Mike, N1MX, received four votes for "Best Fist." Garry VE5SG; Bill, W9ZN; Bill, WA7OET; Jim KA1LOA, and Dick, K4XU, each received two votes in this category.

*Much I marveled through this
contact, glad to hear the discourse
plainly,*

*With its answer full of meaning
— lots of relevance it bore;*

*For we cannot help agreeing
much great fun we had that evening*

*And next day different headings
beaming, Make more contacts I
implore*

*Different station signals gleaning
many louder than before*

*Pounding brass and nothing
more.*

You never know what the conversation will bring when you strike up a relaxed SKN contact. That is part of what makes this a fun event — and is why we recognize stations for what participants cite as "Most Interesting QSO." This year, five stations — Jim, WN0I; Jim, WA7OET; Terry, W5TG; John, N2BE, and the operators at the Maritime Radio Historical Society station K6KPH — each received multiple mentions for "MIQ."

One of the best ways to get a feel for SKN is to read the comments of the participants themselves. This is easily done by visiting the ARRL Contest Soapbox online at www.arrl.org/soapbox. Select 2012 Straight Key Night from the drop-down menu.

SKN is always from 0000-2359 UTC on New Year's Day. Whether you are a newcomer to the hobby, someone whose rusty fist could use a good workout or an experienced hand with the key, try SKN 2013. You might find the dreary midwinter's night

quite fun when you light up the ether! 73...

*As the clock approached that hour, the end
I hoped would be not dour*

*Looking back on times remembered from
our common hobby's lore;*

*The legacy of brass a' pounding; the code
meticulously sounding;*

*Making music that the well-trained ear will
appreciate and adore*

*Moments cherished, shared, and stored,
Straight Key Night forever more.*



Jon, K1NV, decided to unpack the 75A-4 and Viking II for this year's SKN.
[JON SCHUMACHER, K1NV]

Participants

AA4ZS, AA5N, AA5TB, AA7IR, AA8UU, AA0QZ, AB2AN, AB7MP, AB8FJ, AC7JW, AC8JW, AD0H, AE3A, AE7CG, AH6V, AI6II, HP1BF, K1NIT, K1NV, K1PDY, K1RM, K2GBH, K2HT, K2NPN, K2RP, K2UY, K3BVQ, K3MD, K4HGX, K4JYS, K4MTI, K4NVJ, K4UK, K5BZH, K5HK, K5IRX, K5SEE, K5VZD, K6CSL, K6FFY, K6KQV, K6LG, K6PBQ, K7ZD, K7ZYV, K8CMD, K8JRE, K8JV, K9AYB, K9PFA, K9UQN, K9YA, KA1BQP, KA3IHS, KA3P, KA3YNV, KA4WJB, KA6ROD, KA7T, KB5IRC, KB8TL, KB8TXZ, KB9W, KD6LM, KD6WKY, KE0G, KF8KS, KG4KG, KG0JD, KH6GRT, KI5JF, KI0G, KK5FX, KN5L, KO4OP, KO8YG, KO8S, K0DTJ, K0LWV, K0VJ, KR4OE, KT3A, KW3U, KW6G, KX1I, KX5F, KX9X, N1CC, N1JD, N1MX, N2VT, N3JUT, N4DKD, N4NQ, N4TS, N5VU, N6CMF, N6TCZ, N7RVD, N8GM, N8KC, N8XMS, N8XX, N9BOR, N9NM, NA4O, NB4M, NC6Q, NE6O, NF8M, NG2T, NI0R, NJ3K, NM0L, N0BGT, N0JBF, N0LOH, N0YET, NP3CW, NQ4Q, NU7T, VA3RKM, VE5SG, VE7NI, VO1NA, VO1TA, W1PID, W1RO, W1TPB, W1UJ, W1WEF, W2LG, W2NZH, W4IT, W4RK, W4TG, W4UR, W4YOK, W5ESE, W5NZ, W5PDW, W5QLF, W5ROS, W6JHQ, W6VNR, W7DK, W7GVE, W7IZE, W7JZE, W7KTY, W7OS, W7YKN, W8FDV, W8IHG, W8IX, W9CBT, W9RSX, W0AAA, W0ESE, W0FBI, W0IKE, W0KIZ, W0RQO, WA1ABI, WA1CFX, WA1VQY, WA2SON, WA2VQV, WA5AU, WA5MUF, WA5OLT, WA6BXV, WA7GSN, WA7OET, WA7YAZ, WA8TOX, WA9ZBW, WA9ZJI, WA0JLY, WA0VQY, WB5LRF, WB6SCA, WB8LZG, WB8YYY, WB9HFK, WB9MII, WB0B, WD8RIF, WD8SDH, WF5W, WN4BFZ (K4YA.op), WS2N