

Contest Soapbox

2004 Straight Key Night

55 Soapbox entries available

W0AA -- Sep 27, 2004 12:43 ET



2004 J-38 trophy and that famous elixir of CW magic, MWA Brasso, to keep the old J-38 spit-shined and polished.

SKN is an excellent opportunity to flex those CW muscles. For many, the 'code' is a relic of history. A large number of hams understand the value in using CW and enjoy the mode exclusively.

During the 2004 running of 'SKN,' the Minnesota Wireless Association sponsored a trophy to any "non-CW-op" within its 175 mile contest circle, that would complete at least 10 QSOs during SKN. Contestants are judged based on the number (at least 10) and the quality of QSOs. Perhaps most importantly, did the participant have fun.

Check out the details on the club's website: <http://www.w0aa.org>

The 2005 rules will be similar to 2004. -- *NOFP*

WA1RKS -- Feb 19, 2004 17:56 ET

While I don't consider myself to be a avid CW op, I do have fun getting in on SKN. This year was as much fun as last, I worked the same station this year as last, WJ0C Jim in Iowa, on the same band, within 10min, and 10khz of our qso last year! The old J-38 gave me a workout, got tired quick, need more practice to build muscles! 73 C.U.N.Y. de Ellis. -- *WA1RKS*

WB6IYM -- Feb 4, 2004 21:02 ET

Had a great time at the SKN this year....Averaged about 1/2 hour per contact.

I have two straight keys mounted side by side on the same wooden base here in my shack. Since 1971, I have been using them on a regular basis to tune and test my rig or to send slow CW when needed. They are plugged into the straight key jack (rear panel) of my IC756PROII, so

they are always ready to go. I got both of them in a junk box given to me by an old timer when I was just getting started in ham radio. The two keys are both surplus: an J-48 Army Signal Corps Field Radio Key (originally used with the BC-654 receiver) and a Navy CMI-26003A flameproof key.

Looking forward to next year's SKN already.

73's de Charles -- *WB6IYM*

WB3DSJ -- Jan 26, 2004 19:50 ET

Made six contacts on both eighty and forty but heard MANY stations on both bands from here in western PA. Only one rig newer than my HW101, rarest a Meissner Signal Shifter. Never heard one before! Thanks to N4QA for that contact. Boat anchors and stright keys a great combo. skn sk till next year -- *WB3DSJ*

WA5TMN -- Jan 31, 2004 10:32 ET

My first time to do SKN after being a ham for over 35 years. There have sure been some periods of inactivity in those years too. I had a great time and contacted 8 stations during the event. There are some great fists out there. It would sure be a shame to see CW disappear from amateur radio. Stations worked were N0IK, K0JW, KA4UPW, K4MY, N3MVX, KJ5CR, N4DU, and KD5UOH. All QSO's were enjoyable. The band was better at times than others. Most QSO's were on 40 meters with a dipole. The most enjoyable chat was with John, KJ5CR a retired physician in Bryan, Texas where I lived while at Texas A&M. The rig was a TS-520S that I bought new while living in Bryan. I'm looking forward to next year.

Marty Kirkland -- *WA5TMN*

WA9PWP -- Jan 23, 2004 13:15 ET

I enjoyed 16 contacts, using various of my keys, from the tiny Western Electric test set "spy key" to my massive Marconi "Titanic" replica built by G0NVT. The best fist I heard (and worked) was Dan W6SBE. The most interesting QSO I had was with Ward N0AX, we were both using Brown Bros model CTL-B keys, what are the odds of that happening? I missed working W1AW on 40 mtrs around local midnight, skip was too long! 73, Paul -- *WA9PWP*

W1FP -- Jan 22, 2004 22:37 ET

Had to tear down my sloping dipole that the wind broke and put up an inverted vee with help from xyl to get on SKN. Managed to fit in just 4 qos between New Year's Eve celebrations. But great time again warming up the shack with some boat anchor gear as usual. Ran a Viking



II and NC-300. Dragged out the Titanic replica and had a great time. Worked W1TS, K3SEW(great fist), KC8VCB, and K1CR from my Vermont QTH. CUL 12-31-04, Bob W1FP.
-- *W1FP*

W1AW -- Jan 19, 2004 13:09 ET



I used the straight key from Hiram Percy Maxim's spark gap transmitter "Ole Betsy," the one that is on display in the lobby at W1AW.

Besides the historical significance of using this key, I certainly gained a new appreciation for the skill of the operators of ole. It's quite a key. It feels good in the fist, but at the same time, a handful to operate correctly. The stiff springs required in the spark days to ensure a clean break of the key contacts makes for a challenge to make the contact. The old adage is reversed, what goes down, must come up...and quickly. Needless to say, the fist got a little sloppy as the evening progressed...working against what felt like a car leaf spring and all.



Joe, NJ1Q (the W1AW Station Manager) once told me that he sometimes feels Hiram's presence in W1AW when he is working late at night. I won't go as far as to say I think the place is haunted...but...something happened during one of the SKN contacts that was a little weird! Right in the middle of an exchange, the side tone abruptly changed to a lower frequency, the output power dropped from 90 watts to 5 watts, and the SWR on the antenna went to infinity. In a panic I checked the frequency LED



display...nothing changed. Sure enough, the panel meter kept reading 5 watts and infinity SWR. So I quickly ending the transmission and held my breath hoping the other station was still with me. Sure enough, everything seemed to be okay, the other operator continued our conversation without missing a beat. With some panic, I checked everything out...all seemed in order...so I tried again when it was my turn. Everything worked as expected, the side tone was back to 800 Hz, the power was back up to 90 watts, and the SWR was back to 1.5 to

1...and it stayed that way for the rest of the night. Hum, was it Hiram, just letting me know that it still was his station?!? Or better yet, Hiram had a reputation of being a real prankster...perhaps he was just playing a practical joke on me?!?

Finally, I had a QSO with someone operating an old Heathkit DX-100. The transmitter had just a hint of chirp. What a wonderful tone...reminiscent of the old days when you could tell individual operators not just by their fists, but also by the unique sounds of their transmitters. I am sure glad he put the old rig back on the air. --WA8SME -- *WA8SME*

N0OA -- Jan 16, 2004 19:45 ET

I had a blast. I did this on a whim. Drug out the ol' radio shack key. This is the same key that I learned on as a high school kid. I made ten Q's. It took about 19 hours of intermittant operating. But, I did get 9 different states in those 10 Q's.

The most fun was talking with Nick (W7NMD) who was using an old 1900 railroad key. He had a great fist, great sense of humor and VERY patient with my very klutzy code. If there was a QLF catagory, I would qualify. HI HI

I was inspired by a "contest" put on by the Minnesota Wireless Association. (A can of brasso for the ol' key if you made ten contacts.... I don't think Brasso will do much for bakelite - chuckle) The "contest" was set up by Ford-N0FP. Ford, Thanks for encouraging us to get on the air for SKN! -- *N0OA*

N2KZ -- Jan 15, 2004 18:31 ET

In 1968, I built a Heathkit HW-16 and matching HG-10B VFO with my Dad looking over my shoulder. I would listen to it for hours trying to learn the code along with practicing with a buzzer key complete with a big D cell battery. I never was able to pass the code test, and eventually the Heathkits went into a box.



Goldie the cat keeps our Heathkits purring - Karl Zuk N2KZ

Fast-forward 32 years to Straight Key Night 2000. On the first day of the new millennium, a newly licensed tech. plus, KC2FPM, completed his first QSO on 3700 kcs 80 meter CW to W1EES. It was a moment of great achievement and reward after three decades of waiting! The pride of that day still makes me glow and now the Heathkit gear continues to glow daily!

Since then, I have earned my extra class and commercial GROL tickets. I have a new CW-friendly call sign, N2KZ. I serve as an active volunteer examiner and Fists code buddy

teacher. I am passionate about sharing the joy of CW with everyone!

Each Straight Key Night celebrates the legacies of Mr. Morse and Mr. Vail, their telegraphic code and all the fine amateur radio operators that rely on it daily. Continue the tradition and keep this time-honored language alive! Happy New Year and keep CWing! Karl Zuk -- N2KZ

K6JEY -- Jan 15, 2004 17:52 ET

Didn't get any boatanchors on but did use my old Signal Electric brass key and a TS930S/AT. The highlight was not only talking with K6KPH on two bands but copying their LF message on 426 khz. (KPH is a resurrected ship to shore station run by hams up near San Francisco.) Next year I'd like to run my Morrow Twins. -- K6JEY

W2RJJ -- Jan 12, 2004 17:11 ET

As soon as i turned on the radio, one hour into SKN, I could hear there were lots more participants than in previous years. I worked 24 stations, and, as usual, the ops were great to chat with.

I started with a J-38 and finished with my British Air Ministry "73" key. I like the straight key so much that one is always connected to the radio.

73 to all who participated and thanks for a great event! --Ray, W2RJJ -- W2RJJ

N1FZ -- Jan 11, 2004 19:26 ET

I had a great qso with WB9CIS and we found out that we also had a cw qso in 1996 he is a retired industrial electrician from Illinois and I am currently an electrician too! My rig is a Ten -

Tec OMNI 6 and my key is an antique Nathaniel Baldwin key My antenna is an inverted "vee"
A great qso to start the new year ! Sincerly es 73 Fred Zerkle N1FZ -- *N1FZ*

K9VKY -- Jan 11, 2004 17:02 ET

Though a little light on the number of contacts at 22, the 2004 SKN contacts using 52 year old glow-in-the-dark equipment and the J-38 from my mentor, W9FUF, were of quality rather than quantity. Many QSOs were well over an hour long, and the 2+ hour contact with AA1A went into "overtime" even after SKN officially ended. Hats off, incidentally, to K9LA and AA1A who proved that one need not send slowly to send well. Here's hoping that the QSOs throughout 2004 continue to be as rewarding, and keep those filaments glowing. -- *K9VKY*

K9VKY -- Jan 11, 2004 15:18 ET

Though short on the number of QSOs (22), SKN 2004 was no exception for a wonderful time. Using 52 year old glow-in-the-dark equipment and the J-38 once owned by my mentor, W9FUF, quality made up for the lack of quantity. Several contacts passed the one hour mark, and the last contact of 2+ hours went "overtime" well after SKN had officially ended. Brasspounders K9LA and AA1A proved one doesn't have to send slowly to send well. Here's looking forward to similar contacts throughout the year and not just on SKN. -- *K9VKY*

W6SGJ/KL7 -- Jan 10, 2004 00:24 ET

I have been operating SKN for several years but this year from my son's QTH in Soldotna, Alaska. My home QTH is in Vancouver, WA. and am up in AK visiting my son. I brought my TS-440 and J-38 with me so as not to miss SKN. On Xmas Eve my son brought me over to a local ham and when I went into his shack I spotted an old dusty key sitting on top of a pile ... I asked my fellow ham if he uses it. He said no, I'm not into CW, take it home with you, Merry Christmas. It turned out to be a spark key with the large contacts made by Signal Electric back in the 1900 mid teen's. It's solid brass and my son is into wood work and made a really nice and heavy oak base for it. The J-38 had to stand on the sidelines while I pounded away with my new acquisition for all 12 QSO's. How's that for being in the right place at the right time!! It really looks nice all shined up and on the new base. Next SKN I'll be modulating my big Valiant with Mr. Big. 73 to all of you straight key men ... and ladies too!

Dick W6SGJ/KL7 -- *W6SGJ*

KD5UZJ -- Jan 9, 2004 22:42 ET

SKN was wonderfull my equipment was embarrassingly new compared to most. The Rig was my Yaesu FT-897 and my key a Vibroplex Double with straight key beside an original bug. I made 7 contacts all enjoyable Rag Chews. 4 on 80 m, 1 on 40m, 1 on 20m, and 1 on 15m.

Stations worked were KK5UEX, W3DCG, KG6GHS, NW0O, K7TFW, KD7GIM, and K7HP. K7HP Hank gets my vote for both best fist and most interesting QSO, although all my QSOs were very interesting and every fist music to the ear. My Poor Arthritic Glass Arm might be recovered in time for SKN 2005 Hi Hi. Several of the contacts were old freinds.

73s Billy KD5UZJ -- *KD5UZJ*

N2JJF -- Jan 15, 2004 00:09 ET

What a great idea SKN is!!! I am an ex marine radio officer and never had a qso with any other ex R/O until SKN. Due to work constraints I only had time for 2 contacts and the first contact was with VE1ZF. He was an ex r/o and we had a wonderful 40 minute qso reminiscing about the good old days being ship's "sparkies". My straight key has not been used since i left the sea in 1984 and it felt real nostalgic using it again. I was a little rusty but i was able to manage about 20WPM. I am certainly looking forward to next year but I intend to use the straight key a few times again before then. -- *N2JJF*

N5VWN -- Jan 14, 2004 23:29 ET



SKN night feels like a night of making freinds instead of the barnstorming contesting. Thanks all!

Really enjoy it this year. 2nd time I've done it and I felt like a drunk with that straight key. hi hi! Thanks to all the hams who came back to my 5 watt sloppy signal. KM6XO John nice qsl card guy, (he said mine was the first qsl he'd gotten in a year), KE6OIO Ann on her smart sounding ft840, N7ORS Rick, KI6ZX Pat and his home brew receiver and Knight TBoXM xmtr(my top award vote), WB6CGJ Dennis, and WA3PTY Al who was also qrp. Good show Ya-all! Let's meet again next year. I'll get the coffee ready. FUN! -- *N5VWN/6*

W7OS -- Jan 14, 2004 09:24 ET

W7OS is the call of the Antique Radio Museum of the Radio Club of Tacoma located in Tacoma, WA. www.w7dk.org

Some of the "old radio buffs", Morel-W6LIX, Worth-W7WG, and Rich-AE7RW, got together and organized a gathering for Straight Key Night.



KD7SXZ, Roddney, QSOs with Club Member WA7IVO-Nick.

The Rig is a World Radio Globe Scout-65 XMTR running about 50 Watts to a link coupled parallel tuned antenna matching circuit and then to a balanced fed (wooden spacers boiled in parafin) 80 meter dipole antenna. The RCVR is a Hammarlund HQ-140X. A J-38 Key from WW2 (made by Lionel) was used as well as an unidentified old key. The station was "rock bound" to 7.010, 7.025, and 7.050 MegaCycles. Power input to the 6146A was 55 Watts. We had a Knight Kit T-50 standing by just incase of difficulty with the Globe Scout.

Three hams operated the station: KK7QW-Pete, KD7SXZ-Roddney, and AE7RW-Rich. 12 QSOs were made with mostly Radio Club members over a period of about 5 hours. The conditions were quite good on 40M.

Quite a few people showed up at the radio clubhouse for this event and all had a good time.
-- AE7RW



KK7QW, Pete, pounds brass.



AE7RW, Rich, tunes the HQ-140X- hoping to hear that answer to W7OS's CQ SKN. The antenna tuner is top right in the photo.

N2EY -- Jan 11, 2004 16:46 ET

Another great SKN! Used my J-37 that I've had since 1966 or so. Rig was my homebrew 100 watt CW transceiver, known as the Southgate Type 7.

Only two QSOs (K8VBL and K5LG) but what great QSOs! K8VBL was running a homebrew 35 watt, so we were homebrew-to-homebrew. K5LG was "camping out" with his rig in a camper in his backyard.

73 es HNY de Jim, N2EY -- *N2EY*

KDØRC -- Jan 11, 2004 11:24 ET

2004 was the best SKN that I remember in a long time. I worked 12 stations, culminating in a QSO with a ham that I have not seen in many years. I operated SKN using my K2 at 5 watts, and loved every minute of it. I was disappointed that I did not work any other Elecraft rigs, but I was happy to work some fellow FISTS members. The best fist I worked coincidentally belongs to the most interesting (and longest) QSO - Glenn, W9FFU/7 (Yes, he is a FISTS member!).

Years ago Glenn Rosenberger, NØFIO, moved away from Boulder, CO, and I lost track of him. During SKN, he answered my CQ as W9FFU/7 from Oak Harbor, WA and asked if I remembered him as NØFIO. WOW! I sure did! Glenn and I used to work Dale, KC4AAA (South Pole) from the Boulder Amateur Radio Club station in the basement of the Boulder County courthouse on a regular basis, and Glenn prompted Dale to do a presentation to BARC when he returned to the continental US. Glenn and I reminisced for nearly an hour about

Boulder, Dale, kids, and great grand kids. Glenn's 89th birthday was last Friday, yet he kept up a full speed, interesting CW QSO for the entire time. If he didn't need to get ready to go visit his daughter, we might still be pounding brass! It was sure good to hear him on the air and doing great! By the way, W9FFU was Glenn's call sign from 1930 - 1941. -- *KD0RC*

K4REB -- Jan 9, 2004 23:29 ET



K\$REB Shack

This was my first time working SKN with my old straight key. I have been wanting to do it for the past two years, but would either forget it or something got in the way on SKN night. This time was no exception. I just had major dental surgery on the 29th of January and couldn't talk very well yet. Thank God for Morse Code and straight key night. It helped to forget all my pain while I was working the 22 stations who had to endure the dit's & dah's from my straight key. I think I might have been the first to call CQ SKN on 20 meters. I was ready when my grandfather clock struck 7pm and so was Gary AF4BI, who answered my call right away. I forgot about the

pain and worked stations until almost midnight. I started back on January 1st at 10:20 a.m. working K4UK Stan Reas who is the QSL manager for FISTS CW Club. I Finished by working Wayne K1ERB from Dudley Ma. at 5:10 p.m. on 40 meters. Of the 22 stations I worked, 15 were members of the FISTS CW Club. Can't wait to do it again next year! -- *K4REB*

WB2AWQ -- Jan 8, 2004 15:36 ET



SKN is the best way to kick off the new year! 6 great QSOs with terrific people - WB4FSF, W8LJ, W4VHH, K8TEZ, K3USA, and W1DV. Showed off a Swan 350 on 40 and 20 meters, and a homebrew Hartley oscillator build from 1921 QST, using a pair of UV202 tubes, coupled with a 1940 National HRO receiver. Keys used were an old Speed-X, and a WW2 Brelco flameproof key. -- *WB2AWQ*

KM5VY -- Jan 8, 2004 18:15 ET

This was a nice event, gave me a good excuse to fire up my rig after a long hiatus. Rig was a



KM5VY's J-38 and K2/100+KAT100.

K2/100, key was a vintage J-38. I only contacted 5 stations in the hour I had to spare, but it was fun doing so. I'll be back next year.
-- *KM5VY*

WB5HJV -- Jan 6, 2004 20:01 ET



A great SKN! Had several enjoyable contacts using my old Novice station consisting of a Knight Kit R100a receiver and T60 transmitter. Great conversation and some good stories - thanks all! 73, Dave -- *WB5HJV*

W2QU -- Jan 5, 2004 15:55 ET

A holiday "tradition", Straight Key Night is a great opportunity to dust off some of your older gear and fire it up! Which is exactly what happened to my HW-16; snap, crackle, pop! Switching over to a more modern rig, I was able to make a few contacts in between entertaining guests at our lodge. Found Ken. N8KC, was doing the same; operating while at a party! Always fun, looking forward to next year. -- *W2QU*

W3GW/KH6 -- Jan 5, 2004 23:24 ET

Working SKN with 4 watts from Hawaii and an attic loop was challenging. I was thrilled to work K6KPH at the site of the old coastal radio station KPH. A few folks from Japan and Mitch NH6JC on Kauai rounded out the log. Missed my old buddy Ben N6SL...Joe W3GW/KH6

-- W3GW

K0JW -- Jan 5, 2004 17:56 ET



Steve, K0JW prefers bugs, but not on SKN!

I enjoyed SKN this year very much! Completed re-capping my Johnson Ranger just in time and it worked flawlessly with my Collins 75A-4. What a trip down memory lane to rag-chew with the J-38 again! Thanks to all who responded to my calls, looking forward to the next one! 73, Steve Wilson K0JW

(note, the attached photo shows my usual preference for operating CW, but not on SKN!)
-- K0JW

N0RRY -- Jan 3, 2004 20:15 ET

Got to make only one contact, by the time I got my old Globe Chief 90A setup with a t-r relay to run the receiver, but it was a very friendly qso with Don, k9dgs, who put up with my shaky fist and forgetting to switch from xmt to rcv. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event and the chance to brag on their firebottle powered rigs! -- N0RRY

KØCSD -- Jan 4, 2004 21:35 ET



As usual, SKN was great and it's always an honor to be participating. I made only three contacts but I have a tendency to be a bit long winded. The highlight QSO was with Kathy, KS6CW, who was operating with the call sign W6MTC, the call for the Morse Telegraph Club, of which I am a member. I removed most of the "pile" from the operating desk and used my DX-60B/HG-10B and TMC GPR-90. The "cans" are 1924 Western Electric and the key is a solid brass WW2 Signal Corps that I found in a box

of tractor parts some years ago. I couldn't get my starter rig, an Adventurer and NC-125, going, due to a need for filter caps. Next year! 73-de Dave

-- KØCSD

W1TS -- Jan 4, 2004 18:59 ET



Heathkit AT-1 & HQ-150

Once again a GREAT way to end the old year and usher in the new with Ham Radio! This is my annual ritual of bringing out my ORIGINAL Heathkit AT-1 and getting it operational for SKN! This year I even changed out the electrolytics in the power supply even though the note was still hum free. Nice to hear all the activity up and down the bands when CW is said to be a dying mode. It was especially appropriate to have been able to work W1AW as my first QSO for 2004, where the original holder of my call, Don Mix, worked for many years! I am proud to have his call and keep it active as I'm sure he would have liked. Some ops referred to this as "Silent Key Night", and who knows, with all these re-issued calls out there, maybe it just is! -- W1TS

K2AKW -- Jan 4, 2004 17:55 ET

After being licensed for 51 years, this was my first SKN night. I only made one contact: 40 meters: KA2REY. I used my ICOM IC-706 at 5 watts, but increased it to 30 watts due to QRM. Have been studying CW to try to get my speed up after no CW activity for the past 40 years. KN2AKW was my 1952 Novice call, with K2AKW as a General a few months later. Looking forward to next year's SKN. Only one QSO, but PLEASE include me in the count of operators for this year. -- K2AKW

JJ1BDX/3 -- Jan 3, 2004 22:25 ET

I submitted two QSOs for the SKN 2004. I worked one SKN participant and one SKN-participant candidate this year.

Zhi, BU2AA has been active on 40m above 7025kHz these days, apparently with a straight key though he did not participate in the SKN (I told him about the SKN on the air and he seemed to understand). Taiwan hams with the 2nd class license are restricted their activities on 40m from and above 7025kHz (as for the US General class licensees), so you may notice those ops above 7025kHz. In Japan you can hear many Taiwanese CW activists and most of them are highly skilled.



My GHD GT504 Photo

Les, W6AUG was the only one I could contact as an active SKN participant this year. He and I called VK6IP though VK6IP didn't hear us, so I called W6AUG instead. He was a bit QRS but the code was quite stable.

I used GHD's GT504 American-style straight key (photo attached), which has been my favorite since I bought it on September 2002. Usually I send the code with an electronic keyer or even by a computer program, but using the straight key reminds me of the old time when I was a teenager 25 years ago when I could not

afford an electronic keyer. -- *JJ1BDX*

W1DV/2 -- Jan 3, 2004 11:51 ET

Although I have operated only cw for the 44 years I have been licensed, I have not operated SKN since 1995/1996 because my wife and I have lived in Asia and Africa the last seven years as missionaries. What a joy to hear all those true and legitimate fists - not electronically generated sterile code, but real cw with fists and character. Looking forward to next year already; too bad we need to wait 363 days semper cw -- *W1DV/2*

W2AGN -- Jan 3, 2004 10:39 ET



Tuna Tin 2 + MRX-40 Receiver

Operated my old HT-17 and S40B receiver on 40M, and Harvey Wells TBS-50C and HQ129X on 80M. Also made one QSO with my Tuna Tin 2 and MRX40 receiver combination. (See picture attached).

Really enjoy firing up the old rigs for nostalgia on SKN. Wish there were more SKNs!
-- *W2AGN*

W3CEI -- Jan 2, 2004 22:55 ET

Another Straight Key Night has come and gone, but not to be forgotten. It was nice to hear all the activity on the band (I worked 40 meters) Thanks to all the CW operators who brought out their J37, J38, Western Electric, E.F. Johnson circa 1970, Bowman Spark key, to join with my Nye Viking circa 1965 to make common sense out of a series of dots and dashes. The current trend may be to delete or diminish the need for the code but it seemed very clear that the faithful will hold steady to the relaxing rhythm and verse of CW. -- W3CEI

K0TCP -- Jan 2, 2004 20:34 ET

I made just one contact but it was a good one. Using my Elecraft K2 at five watts and a Kent key, I worked W0RTK in Belfield, North Dakota. Clarence told me he was using a key he made especially for Straight Key Night. Reminded me of the last meeting of the Minnesota QRP Society where we all brought our code keys for show and tell.

73, Dave -- K0TCP

KA9P -- Jan 4, 2004 19:42 ET



The SKN rig at KA9P - all older than the op!

Neat. Expectations ran high the week before as I fought to get my 51J1 (SN1, bottom left) and 310B3 (about 10 watts, top right) running before the end of the year. Barely made it and was it a blast.

Especially enjoyed the 10 meter QSOs with the West Coast QRP crowd. Had a great chat with K7HZ on his K2 (most interesting QSO), and AK7D, also QRP. Was really pleased when Hank, HP1IBF, called in with a few minutes left using an old aircraft straight key.

Used my original Radio Shack key from the 1968 WN9BCR novice days, as well as a J38. Next year the 4-125 final for the 310B should be finished, then look out!

Thanks to everyone that struggled along with me. 73, Scott -- KA9P

KW3U -- Jan 4, 2004 18:34 ET

This was another wonderful SKN for me, With 8 qso's using my Johnson Viking Adventurer and HQ-180 rcvr, the key most used was my Chinese PLA army key (can be seen at www.morsex.com). Oldest fellow worked was Ed VE3GX in Ottawa at 82 with a RR key (shud



The SKN station which gets used most evenings

there be a category for oldest ham worked?), and most interesting with best fist (IMHO) was Ron WB3DOM fm ERIE,PA using a J37 with leg clamp(actually on his leg) and we found out we were both in Nam at same time(him Army ASA and me Navy NSGA) cool. -- KW3U

K1RV -- Jan 4, 2004 14:16 ET



SKN 2004 QSL

This was a great SKN! I made a total of 19 contacts with some nice ragchews. Several stations were using older rigs and some homebrew gear. There were quite a few QRP stations and LOTS of FISTS members!

My nomination for most interesting QSO goes to Mac-WB8OZX/QRP who is 89 years young and has been licensed for 75 years! Best Fist was Uli-DL7EQ.

This year I used a Replica of a key that Marconi used in 1895 and made special photo QSL cards to send to all SKN contacts. This key has quite a heavy spring and I had "glass arm" by the end of SKN!

73, Pi – K1RV

k1rv@arrl.net -- K1RV

K1DC -- Jan 4, 2004 12:54 ET

This was the first opportunity to put my recently restored 1934 vintage Collins 30-FX transmitter through a real test. Worked 20 stations on 80 and 40 meters mostly crystal controlled with a note that had real character. Looking forward to the next SKN when will



hopefully have increased my straight key speed.

73,

Don -- *K1DC*

N5KY -- Jan 4, 2004 00:53 ET

40m was quite busy with SKN QSOs this year. A very impressive level of activity for sure. I was glowing with a Drake B-Line and using a J-37 for the most enjoyable "contest" of the year. Glad to see so much participation. -- *N5KY*

KB3HJQ -- Jan 3, 2004 20:37 ET



This was my first real attempt at SKN, and what a blast. Had QSO's with some of the nicest ops and some of the very best straight key ops anywhere. Fingers still have the blisters, but well worth it. Looking forward to many more SKN's. Also, many thanks to two of my elmers, Jim WA3YLQ for making SKN special, and Chip N3IW for keeping me away from that dreaded paddle. Thanks to all the ops I worked for putting up with my FIST. 73 de Chuck
-- *KB3HJQ*

SKN 2004

K9LA -- Jan 3, 2004 18:42 ET

Last year in the SKN event I used my General station (Viking Ranger II and Drake 2B) to make contacts. This year I decided to use my Novice station - a DX-20 and an NC-60.

Thank goodness I started getting ready early this year. The last time I used the DX-20 (and the NC-60) was in 1992. The DX-20 wouldn't load up properly now, so some 'fix it' time was



K9LA listening for a weak one.

required. Soon it was working great on 40m, putting out 25w.

The NC-60 still worked, so I thought I was ready. Then I remembered that the only crystals I had for the DX-20 were in the old Novice band of 7150-7200KHz. That wasn't going to work for SKN. Luckily I remembered I had two crystal oscillators for receiver sensitivity and two-tone IMD measurements. One of those crystals was on 7039KHz, so I was in business.

Although I only worked three stations this year, I again enjoyed my brief trip back to the "old"

days. I also found it interesting that I remembered a little trick with the NC-60 from my Novice days. With the bandspread dial (0-100) set to 100, I tuned in CHU on 7335KHz with the main tuning dial. Then the bandspread dial nicely covered the 40m band - 7000KHz was at 21, 7150KHz was at 43, and 7300KHz was at 77. Of course the tuning rate left a lot to be desired. One turn of the bandspread dial equaled about 150KHz - a far cry from my OMNI VI Plus at 5KHz per turn of the dial. I must have had a nice feather touch in my younger Novice days!
-- K9LA

KC2HRP -- Jan 3, 2004 14:13 ET

As I do every year, I found that this operating activity is possibly the one that best demonstrates the spirit of ham radio. Among the operators that participate, I hear no comments in bad taste, or have any disrespectful QSOs. It is as if the straight key ops are brothers. -- KC2HRP

WA1ABI -- Jan 3, 2004 11:50 ET

I operated SKN 2004 from 00:00Z thru 09:30Z using a Johnson Valiant, Drake R4B and my original J-38 from my Novice days. SKN, as always, was very enjoyable and there seemed to be an abundance of brass pounders this year. I had 13 QSO's, most of which were ragchews lasting at least 30 minutes. The only other station I heard running vintage gear was my neighbor, WA1VQY. May I suggest to others that next year when you go looking for your straight key, drag out that old Ranger, DX-100, or homebrew MOPA rig and put it on the air. -- WA1ABI

WB8DQT -- Jan 3, 2004 09:23 ET

Despite all the mindless chatter about the demise of Morse, this seemed to be the busiest SKN in recent memory. 40 meters was so crowded that it was a definite incentive to try other bands. There was the usual mix of vintage and modern equipment. J38 key variants were the most



common, but almost anything else, including homebrew keys, could be heard. The demands of the holiday meant limited operating, but I did manage fifteen QSOs on QRP using an Argonaut V and a Hi-Mound Swedish Pump key. Hand-keyed Morse is Amateur Radio's oldest tradition and SKN is always a fine celebration of our shared heritage. -- *WB8DQT*

N3AWS -- Jan 3, 2004 08:02 ET

Worked two stations with an old Radio Shack straight key which my father bought me and my brother while in Cub Scouts. Ran the Icom 706 MKIIG at 5 watts to an indoor 15 meter dipole. Lots of fun!

73, Jim N3AWS -- *N3AWS*

N3IW -- Jan 3, 2004 04:38 ET

This was the 25th anniversary of my first QSO. My novice license arrived in late December 1978 and I got on the air for the first time as KA3CEM during SKN 1979. My equipment now is a little different - a Ten-Tec Omni VI+ with a Nye-Viking Master Key as opposed to a cheap Ameco? key with a Johnson Viking Navigator xmtr/Hammerlund HQ-140X? rvcr, but the fun was still there. I only had enough time to work two stations, but enjoyed it nonetheless. Also, I kept KB3HJQ from reverting to paddles just before the end of SKN! I just couldn't let him do that with only 10 minutes left. He thanked me, but blames me for his numb fingers. -- *N3IW*

N5SR -- Jan 2, 2004 22:22 ET

My SKN contact with K5JKK, George, revealed he is 89 years of age, had the call K5JKK since 1935 and been a ham for 73 years. His fist is easy to copy. Thanks for holding Straight Key Night, I am already looking forward to next year. 73, N5SR, Ray -- *N5SR*

N8XMS -- Jan 2, 2004 21:47 ET

Family activities and football games kept my operating time to a minimum but I was still able to enjoy 7 SKN QSO's on 40 meters with my SST-40 QRP rig. As always, it was a lot of fun. I especially enjoyed working WN9U who had a really great fist using a heavy vintage key designed for spark! I also had one of those great "QRP moments" during a QSO with someone who was running 200 watts. His reaction of "Wow, that's amazing" to my report of running only 2 watts gave me a chuckle. -- *N8XMS*

VE3WMB -- Jan 2, 2004 21:08 ET



VE3WMB Swedish Army Key

I only managed to make it on the air for 3 SKN QSOs but I had a lot of fun. I used my Elecraft K1 at 5 watts and a Swedish Army Key that was given to me by some Swedish friends as a gift.

There were a few stations operating at 20 wpm who sounded like W1AW code practice, then there was the rest of use who don't normally use a straight key struggling along at 10 or 15wpm generating lots of choppy sounding code ;-).

I only wish this event happened more than once per year.

Michael -- *VE3WMB*

KZ1A -- Jan 2, 2004 17:47 ET



WN2TBE lives on...Actually, KZ1A operating 2004 Straight Key Night.

The anticipation of Straight Key Night was running very high as I decided to use my Christmas present for the first time. You see, my XYL Leslie found a way to surprise me with my Novice station equipment. Drake 2B receiver with 2BQ, Heathkit DX-40 transmitter, VF-1 VFO and even an AM-2 SWR bridge. I found a dow key in my pile of "stuff" and only tested the gear for performance. The old WN2TBE was ready to go. Then came Straight Key Night. Ah....that smell, and the warm glow of tubes permeated my shack. With trembling fingers, I tuned the Drake 2B on 40 meters and followed up with the DX-40. Wow !!! 55 watts out and low SWR. It was time to make that first contact and a nice one it was with AA8PW, Lloyd in Grand Rapids Michigan. Worked a few others that evening and finally "pulled the switch" as the rest of the evening required my presence with family. Just made a few

contacts, but this year's Straight Key Night will be remembered for a long time. Thanks for the QSOs all, and vy 73 de WN2TBE, I mean KZ1A. Oh, the key was my original J-38 from the Lionel Corporation. I even have the box for it also. -- *KZ1A*

K2HYD -- Jan 2, 2004 15:12 ET

Got my first ticket 49 years ago but this was my first SKN - used the good ole J-38 that I bought a few months before I got my novice ticket. Only snuck in a few times at the key while our weekend company wasn't looking - worked W1NB, WA0OTV, WA4OAB, K1UZ, KN4ZQ, KA7T, KB0AAY, W9KGY. Looking forward to next year! -- *K2HYD*

Responsibility for content of all posted material rests exclusively with the item author. ARRL staff assumes no responsibility for errors, omissions, and accuracy of items appearing on this page. All questions and comments should be directed to the item author.