

# Contest Soapbox

## 2003 Straight Key Night

27 Soapbox entries available

### W5CN -- Feb 28, 2003 11:40 ET



#### SKN Commentary

With a nice fire in the hamshack stove and ample firewood on hand, SKN and I got off to a frenzied start. After an hour into the melee, I was addicted: Out of 45 QSOs came 17 states, 4 provinces, two Cuban stations, and a DX call from ZL1MAD on 40 meters. The latter was one of the more interesting QSOs--a fellow CW Fists member from down under.

But also interesting were the QRPers; W2WSC, one-watt AB8FJ, and 200-milliwatt N7SR. And my next-county neighbor K5FNI worked me on what sounded like 40-meter long path (it really wasn't) before we QSY'd to 160 meters. My favorite SKN QSO query was: "...what's your telegraph key and the story behind it?" Along with my own key, J-38s were the most common.

Of all the various engaging fists, each with its unique telegraphic temperament, WA4ZIQ stood out; a fist like a tape at 20 wpm. But so did 73-year-old YL VE3ZBB, a CW-only op. The oldest ham in my SKN log is 87-year-old k5APB, and the longest QSO was 46 minutes with K2NV.

All in all, I'm so pleased to see how alive and well straight-key CW still is: Bully for the SK radiotelegraphic art and all the kindred spirits who keep it that way!

73, E. Marcus Barnes, W5CN, ex W5TGV, VP5ME Lifetime ARRL, QCWA CW Fists Club  
8281 w5cn@arrl.net -- W5CN

### KB1JFC -- Feb 6, 2003 05:24 ET

This was my first contest ever and I really liked it. I liked the fact that nobody I contacted was in a rush. I was using my normal key which is a J. H. Bunnell that I got from a box in the cellar of this great surplus electronics place that used to be on Richmond St. in London, Ontario. I got it in 1979 for, I think it was \$5. Don't I wish I'd gotten a bunch of them! I was just starting to



**J.H. Bunnell & Co. Straight Key**

learn then. I had been bitten by the amateur bug after reading Hammond Innes' book, "The Land God Gave to Cain".

If you want to read a real page-turner with an amateur sub-text, this is the one.

Anyway, thanks very much to ARRL and all the folks still pounding keys. And, for any of you who love this stuff, please consider joining FISTS-- <http://www.fists.org>

73, Clair Dunn -- *W1CQD*

**WA0VSW -- Jan 31, 2003 10:51 ET**

Thanks to Steve KB8SCI, my only contact, for making SKN memorable! -- *WA0VSW*

**N8CDN -- Jan 25, 2003 11:02 ET**



**A picture of the shack before I removed the mikes! Operate CW, PSK31 and RTTY.**

This was my first SKN ever in 22 years of being licensed. I made a total of 5 contacts on 80 and 40 meters (and one on 15). This was a real enjoyable event and it was good to hear so many hams participating and all the vintage equipment. I used by back up rig, a Kenwood TS530S and my Nye-Viking straight key.

I look foward to SKN 2004.

73 to all

Terry -- *N8CDN*

**N2JPR -- Jan 23, 2003 19:45 ET**

I went downstairs a little after 7pm and warmed up the Knight twins. No, this year we had not made plans to go out for New Year's Eve because of the flu. Well, I was healthy enough to crawl to the basement and pound out a few for SK night.



**N2JPR - Straight Key Night 2003**

I made my first contact with W1WAI on 80 meters. Dave had a nice signal for a homebrew 5W rig. I was using the Knight R-100A receiver, the T-150A transmitter (shown in the picture) and a J-38 key with 100 watts to my window. We had a nice exchange and I listened to the many great QSOs going on at that time.

The next day I tried 20 meters and had a nice chat with K4BYF. Jack was also QRP running 3W into a 3 element something. I was using my FT-7 (also shown in the picture) and a Canadian military key with 10 watts and a vertical outside. We also had a nice chat.

SK night is the only event I look forward to as I am pretty much a non-contester. I'd much rather chew the RF fat instead of making popcorn QSOs for the logbook. I heard a lot of great fists out there and hope this CW activity continues strong into the new year. I nominate K3DZ, Frank in Pittsburgh for the best fist worked in a long time.

Lou Bellock N2JPR -- *N2JPR*

### **K1YPP -- Jan 16, 2003 21:45 ET**



**K1YPP shack and some of the gear.**

My goal this year was to make the QSO with each station last as long as possible. I wanted to learn as much as possible about the operator on the other end. I'm not a contester, I really enjoy the QSO itself, quality, not quantity.

This operating event brings back fond memories of Novice Roundups over the years. The straight keys, the tired wrists, the vacuum tubes, it is a sheer delight!

Of the many wonderful contacts I enjoyed,

WR3K (80M) was one of my favorites. His receiver was an old Hallicrafters Sky Buddy and the transmitter was a Heath DX-40. I had worked him a few days before when he was checking the gear out to see if it still worked. I was using an old Drake TR-7 (usually at QRP levels) and after listening to Bob, I was tempted to put my Sky Buddy and DX-40 on the air as well, but didn't. His fist sounded great and he carries on a fine QSO.

Another great QSO was WB0RHJ, (30M) Jay, in Sioux Falls, SD. He is a professor at the U of SD and convinced me that I will have to visit that area at some point. My other favorite pastime is Mountain Bikes and MTB racing and he certainly made riding out there sound like a lot of fun. He wanted me to be certain to look him up if I'm ever out there, I may just threaten to do that!

Several stations were using indoor antennas, a trend I have seen more of lately. Some of the signals are quite remarkable. KG6ZR, Len, in Bristow, VA has a remarkable signal on 80 meters. He was running 100 W and I was QRP and we carried on for twenty minutes with no difficulty.

I connected with Steve, AD4E in Tallahassee, FL on 40 meters and he was a wealth of information on living in Florida and antenna restrictions. We're considering a place down there at some point so he even emailed me afterwards to offer more help if needed. It was a very enjoyable three quarters of an hour on 40 CW.

This event is so much fun it would be great to have another one like it during the middle of the year, perhaps to celebrate the first day of summer, etc.

Thanks for an absolutely wonderful time!

Dennis, K1YPP MIQRP, QRP-L and Bicycle Mobile on two-meters -- *K1YPP*

#### **K4JK -- Jan 16, 2003 17:46 ET**

This was the first time I did SKN for quite a few years. I was hoping to get a little more practice before going on the air, but jumped in any way. I made only one contact, Joe K0IVK, and it was as enjoyable as I remember my previous SKNs. I used an E.F. Johnson key that was used at a Government radio station. -- *K4JK*

#### **K9LA -- Jan 13, 2003 21:24 ET**

I had a great time in SKN 2003.

I used an old Ranger II and Drake 2B (my General station back in the early '60s) with a J-38 key.

I enjoyed working KC2DMH with his DX-40 and HQ-110.

The accompanying photo shows me at the rig.





Carl -- *K9LA*

**K9LA at the key.**

**KA1BNO -- Jan 8, 2003 06:54 ET**

I had a great time participating in this years SKN, I did not get a chance to operate till New Years Day. When I tried working some contacts on Wednesday morning most of the bands seemed quiet so I got on in the afternoon and early evening and made a few SKN QSO's on 40 and 15 meters using my Master Key, straight key. Can't wait to do it all over again in 2004.

Dan, -- *KA1BNO*

**W5EKF -- Jan 7, 2003 23:54 ET**

This was my first SKN in 48 years as a HAM. There were a lot of good fists on. I used a J38 type key from my boyhood days. Several interesting QSO's with key collectors. Everything was at a nice pace. Operators gave their QTH instead of "near Metropolis", rig descriptions were more complete, every one seemed to be enjoying themselves. I know I really enjoyed the exersize. It was nice to hear some of the old IRON on the air again as well. -- *W5EKF*

**VE3NBJ -- Jan 7, 2003 22:09 ET**

This was my first SKN event and I worked five very fine operators during the duration of the event. I work cw quite often with a straight key and enjoyed the idea of the SKN night. Anyway, I will be sure to try and do this again next year. Thanks to the following stations for their good qso's and cw sending.

kb0lur/m Paul ka7t Don ka2hdo Horace ke4run/qrp Hargrave w5cn Marc

73 Norm ve3nbj Owen Sound,Ontario,Canada -- *VE3NBJ*

**N3BF -- Jan 6, 2003 13:26 ET**

I made only two SKN contacts this year but enjoyed both CW ragchews. I used a J38-type straight key. How about a bug night ("BN") for us bug users? 73, Brad -- *N3BF*

**W2JRF -- Jan 6, 2003 12:54 ET**

This was the first SKN I participated in. My goal was to make a contact using my J-38 key from when I was a kid. I had a lot of fun making that contact too! Happy New Year! -- *W2JRF*

**K4JPN -- Jan 5, 2003 14:46 ET**

Had a lot of fun working on and off over New Years Eve and Day. I worked 12 stations with my old Navy Flame Proof key and an old Lafayette Radio key, both which I have owned since I was KN1VKW and later K1VKW, now I am K4JPN.

Kind of fun to work Dan, W2AU who said he was 13 years old and then W5DW who was 85. Hope to work them both again next year.

73, Steve Ray K4JPN ex K1VKW EM82ep Warner Robins GA Elecraft K2 1422 & KPA-100 Heath Fan HW-101, HW-8 -- *K4JPN*

**NJ3K -- Jan 5, 2003 19:29 ET**

To who ever thought up Straight Key Night, I say thank you and if I could I would buy you a beer. I only made 5 QSO's but all were great. My total time for these 5 QSO's was 96 minutes. Not going to win any contests but really had a great chat with one and all. My J-38 worked great but my arm got tired. Next year I'll try to use an older rig too. Thanks to all. 73 Bruce -- *NJ3K*

**W7FOX -- Jan 5, 2003 18:24 ET**

I thoroughly enjoyed this year's SKN after replacing a 54 year old 6ac7 that blew out minutes before 0000Z. W5TNX was using a crystal controlled 80 meter ARC-5, identical to my novice rig in 1964. His ironic comment that we were having a 2-way vacuum tube QSO earned most interesting QSO. This is one of my favorite operating activities, second only to classic exchange, as you can tell from the pictures. -- *W7FOX*



The primary CW rig is homebrew parallel 1625's with command set VFO and Collins 51S-1.



1625 spares

WB8DQT -- Jan 3, 2003 16:04 ET



The usual problems with short operating periods with all the other demands of the holiday, but thoroughly enjoyable. Used my Kent Engineers replica of the Marconi spark key from the Titanic and had eighteen QSOs, most on 40 meters. By far, most of the fists were excellent and a lot of vintage gear was on the air. It is easy to forget the sheer pleasure and free-flowing nature of hand-keyed Morse!

Based on several comments: How about a Nostalgia Night (actually 24 hours, just like SKN) with tube-type transmitters (vintage or homebrew) and straight keys or bugs. No contest, just a celebration of our shared heritage.

-- *WB8DQT*

**WB6IYM -- Jan 4, 2003 23:19 ET**

This was my second SKN in over 30 years of hamming; the first being last year. The most memorable QSO this time out had nothing to do with content, but everything to do with circumstances...I was busy working WA0CFQ when at the stroke of midnight the whole house (in fact, the whole town where I live) went black! A power failure to start the new year -- shades of Y2K!!!!

Other than that, the test went off without a hitch. Had a lot of fun.

When I was a Novice, 32 years ago, an old timer gave me a junk box with a lot of odds and ends. Out of that box I salvaged an old army signal corps (not a J-38) and a US Navy "flameproof" key and mounted them side-by-side on a block of finished wood. I have had these keys on my operating desk for all this time; used mainly to tune up the rig (as of late, just the linear amp). But I really enjoy using them on SKN. It was really fun, and brought back a lot of fond memories of the old days.

Hope to see you all again next year, until then -- 73's, Best DX and Happy 2003! de Charles...  
-- *WB6IYM*

**N0NB -- Jan 3, 2003 23:26 ET**

Well, I hadn't used a straight key in several years and probably hadn't tried SKN for an even longer period. I didn't have a goal except getting on the air for a bit and I lasted about an hour on 40m. I certainly enjoyed the few QSOs I made, which is what SKN is all about.

To carry the tradition one step further, I checked into the KS CW training net Wednesday evening and used the straight key in the effort. Although officially not SKN at that time, it was still quite fun.

Best fist I heard was N0AJ and he was working stations right along on 80m. The keying was so precise that it sounded like a keyboard. Very enjoyable to listen to. -- *N0NB*

**W6RLF -- Jan 2, 2003 14:17 ET**





**Morse Express Xmas 2002 Key and "Titanic" replica.**

My first SKN was two years ago. It set me off both on collecting straight keys (and using them!) and QRP, after working a QRP station. Only worked a few stations this year, but had several great QSOs. Used the keys pictured, along with my trusty TS-520S. It seemed to go better with the keys than did my "modern" rig. Best QSO was with Ernie, WA7THF. Great fist, great chat. -- *W6RLF*

**K9YA -- Jan 2, 2003 11:21 ET**



**Bob Heytow, K9YA SK**  
<http://www.qsl.net/k9ya>

Operated as K9YA - Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club using Bob's original J-38 straight key. While this date always competes with family obligations, I wouldn't change it. I only wish I had more time to operate. I worked no QLF fists and several great ones. Straight Key Night is a must do event for me every year. I would love the impetus of a Bug Night to improve my bug sending skills. Happy New Year, 73 es dit dit! -- *N9BOR*

**N8XMS -- Jan 2, 2003 23:29 ET**

I spent all of the fall and early winter remodeling a couple of bedrooms and turning one of them into an office/shack. This was my first chance to really try out the new operating position and it was great. SKN is always a lot of fun. I didn't really hear any bad fists pounding the brass but W8UE gets my vote for the best fist. -- *N8XMS*



**N9KO -- Jan 2, 2003 21:06 ET**

I was glad to participate in SKN again this year. I started on CW by using a straight key and continued to use it for about a year before buying a Bencher key. It was fun to go back to my original way on CW. -- *N9KO*

**VE3WMB -- Jan 2, 2003 12:01 ET**



**Eddystone S689 Bug (1948)**

This was my first SKN in 22 years as a Ham. I hooked up my 1948 Eddystone Bug, set it for about 17 WPM and had a great time. Lots of excellent fists on the air, too bad this event is only once a year! -- *VE3WMB*

**W7KTY -- Jan 2, 2003 11:06 ET**

Had a house full of people so time was limited. Did get on with my Heath DX20, a National NC57 rcvr and a EF Johnson Speed X key. Lots of fun, will sked guests better next time.  
W7KTY -- *W7KTY*

**K1RDD -- Jan 2, 2003 10:38 ET**

I bought a Viking straight key to participate in my first SKN. Although limited to 10/15/20m, I was able to make a handful of QSOs. I was very impressed with the quality and ability of most of the operators. This gives me something to aim for. ... -.- -.

-- K1RDD

**K8SOR -- Jan 2, 2003 09:39 ET**

Straight Key Night was fun, I had just received an HT-32a, and SX-101a, hooked them up and the first station I worked was a 13 yr old. It was nice to hear a younger ham on cw. I told him thay my radios were 29 years older then he was. -- K8SOR

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