

Contest Soapbox

2003 ARRL November Sweepstakes (CW)

25 Soapbox entries available

AK1W -- Apr 13, 2004 23:09 ET

This is the first time a station in New England has finished in the SS CW High Power Top Ten in as long as I can recall. At least within the last 25 years!! This has been my main operating goal for the past few years. Very happy to finally make it.

My 27th consecutive year of SS CW with more than 1000 QSOs. I'll probably be back next year.

Used the AK1W club call in an effort to cut down on repeats. Too many people had trouble copying K5ZD in WMA. They kept getting it as WPA, WTX, WWA, or something else. Being a "real W1" didn't hurt either as the states up here are a bit more rare than in W5. :)

This is my favorite contest of all. It requires real operating skill to seek out every last QSO from the bands. -- *K5ZD*

W1VE -- Dec 3, 2003 20:24 ET



Sailing along in SS CW 2003!

My good friend, Jim, K1IR, had spent a good part of this past off-season rebuilding his station, moving from 25G to 45G, adding stacks for Europe, and building a new shack. I operate with Jim in a M/S for the CQ and ARRL contests. Jim offered his station to me for SS CW, and I jumped at the chance. One of the other members of the K1IR contest team is KE1J, who had added an SO2R controller and WX0B stackmatches to the station... Thanks Lars! This would be my first attempt at SO2R... WOW! A real blast.. It makes the contest really fun. It certainly helps fill in the rate on Sunday! The only problem I had was starting the contest

late!! First QSO was at 0125z, and only got 1.5 hours of actual sleep. When it was all said and done, I'd put 1049 QSOs in the log, and I only missed NT... The flares really killed conditions.

73 es cu next year, Gerry, W1VE -- *W1VE*

W0EB -- Nov 26, 2003 10:49 ET

Started out using my Small Wonder Labs DSW-II-20 at 3 watts on 20 meters. Used my Yaesu FT-847 turned down to 3 watts out on the other bands. Propagation was pretty good, and I ran mostly "Search and Pounce" though I even managed to command a frequency for a while with the DSW-II.

I was pleased that even most of the "Big Guns" answered on the first call. I never did sign /QRP except when calling CQ and had only 1 station fail to be able to copy me. That was on 40 meters and He must have been running a KW because he was loud here in KS. He made a couple of attempts to pull me out, but couldn't get the call right, so missed that section.

All-in-all it was a fun contest even though I wasn't seriously attempting to win anything. Made around 150 Q's and about 17000 claimed score. Sent the log as a check log.

Browsing the submitted log list, I was very pleased to see quite a few QRP ONLY stations in there. If everyone would run 5 watts or less, it would really be fun and a heck of a lot better challenge hi hi. Look at power density/bandwidth, and you'll see that a 5 watt CW station is roughly equivalent of 100 watts on SSB. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see why CW needs to be retained as an operating mode.

Jim, W0EB -- *W0EB*

N9CO -- Nov 21, 2003 12:51 ET

CW Sweepstakes has been my favorite contest, and it continues to fascinate and challenge me. It is a totally unique and ultimately rewarding experience in contesting, and I hope that it never changes.

I was fortunate this year to be able to operate from the QTH of W0AH in Woodland Park, Colorado. Doug has assembled a fine station at 9000 feet ASL just north of Pikes Peak. Having monoband yagi's available on 40 through 10 sure made a noticeable difference over the 140 foot all-band dipole at 30 feet that I used last year!

As much as I hate putting up antennas right before SS, this year it turned out to be worthwhile. Around 1900z, Doug and I decided to assemble the old Hy-Gain 105BA that was laying next to his garage and put it up on a small 30 foot tower that will eventually support his 432 MHz array. Doug wasn't even sure that the antenna would work, as he had never used it. It was "donated" to him some time ago. We found some missing hardware, and we weren't sure of the dimensions (we didn't have a manual), so we just "eye-balled" it until it "looked right".

It was 2030z when we finally got it assembled and up on the tower. Not much time left to sit down and tune the bands, much less plan strategy. It turned out that 10 was HOT and signals were 20 to 40 over from the east coast. It didn't take me long to stake out a frequency before the starting gun went off. I was rewarded with a 81 hour that included numerous power-downs of my TS-930 due to what I would eventually find was thermal shutdown. I'm sure that I could have had an even better first hour.

I ended up missing WY and NT for the sweep. This was no fault of the station; strictly operator error. I found out after the contest that VY1JA was working the western states around 0400z on 20m; I had abandoned 20m some 2 hours earlier for the promise of rate on 40.

I want to thank Doug and his wife Judy for being such gracious hosts and for giving me the chance to experience CW SS from a fine station. As always, it was great to hear so many friends on the air. Thank you for the QSO's.

73, Charlie N9CO -- *N9CO*

K3STX -- Nov 20, 2003 08:59 ET

This was my first CW Sweepstakes ever and WHAT FUN!. Not a great score, but I had a really great time. Thanks to my XLY for taking care of the kids during the evenings. Working 40 meters in the evenings sure gave the front end of my TS-520S a workout. What a great way to improve operator skill and I can't wait till the next one. Paul -- *K3STX*

K5GN -- Nov 19, 2003 23:42 ET

The November Sweepstakes. The contest to test your mettle. The contest that proves how much of a lid you are, with no one able to really run away from the pack, with the long and complex exchange, with the combination of high rate and efficiency in the first half and lower rates and perseverance in the second half. Every year brings a new level of understanding of the operator, the station, and the competition. Thanks to all for a terrific event! -- *K5GN*

N4SL -- Nov 16, 2003 23:35 ET

The Sunday solar flare was a first for me in a contest. I yammered with some locals for a while, it was a nice break but the conditions never really recovered up here in 'suffering sevens' land (near Seattle in WWA).

My picture shows the first steelhead I've ever caught, one week before the contest. Somehow I think it's relevant, don't you? -- *N4SL*



N4SL's first steelhead, probably SS related somehow.

VO1AA -- Nov 13, 2003 10:32 ET



Cabot Tower, site of VO1AA.

The NPR "Car Talk" guys, Tom and Ray, probably would call it a "historic, folkloric" ARRL November Sweepstakes. For the third year in a row, I operated the CW weekend from Canada--this time from Newfoundland.

Thanks to the assistance of Paul Piercey, VO1HE, I was privileged to operate VO1AA--the Society of Newfoundland Radio Amateurs (SONRA) <<http://www.sonra.ca>> club station in historic Cabot Tower. The site overlooks St John's Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean. It's immediately adjacent to the spot where Guglielmo Marconi claimed to have copied the first radio signal--the Morse letter "s"--transmitted across the Atlantic Ocean. Marconi's antenna was held aloft by a kite, and that may not have been such a bad idea for my operation.

The tower was erected in the late 1890s to commemorate both the 60th year of Queen Victoria's reign and the 400th anniversary of the discovery of Newfoundland by explorer John Cabot.



Rick Lindquist, N1RL, at VO1AA. [Jean Collier, N1MJC, Photo]

"Bump! Bump! Bump!" was the near-constant backdrop as fierce winds battered the building. Contributing to my mediocre score was an hour or so of total radio blackout Sunday afternoon. That was preceded by intense echo for a time on some signals, which made even the strong ones extremely difficult copy. The slow times were punctuated by sporadic pileups of 10-15 stations or so, and the rate meter rarely went above 70. Outside of the occasional local, even the "loud" signals weren't showing on the S meter. This also was the Year of the Missing Mult for me, many of them also in Canada.

While ongoing solar flares, the high winds and an intermittent connection at the antenna feedpoint (Cabot Tower is a national historical site, and Parks Canada allows SONRA to erect only a single, multiband wire dipole) made operating--especially reception--difficult, it was a thrill to operate from this historic location and to provide a somewhat rare mult for other SS participants.

Many thanks to SONRA for letting me use their station and to Parks Canada for allowing me off-hours access to Cabot Tower!

Rick, N1RL -- *N1RL*

KS1F -- Nov 13, 2003 00:04 ET

Another great contest. CW SS is about the only weekend each year that I'm able to dedicate to ham radio, other than Dayton. The day before the contest, our contractor called and said they were going to start putting the new roof on my house Saturday to take advantage of the great WX!!! oooops... Had to take down the vertical and go with dipoles at 20 feet, with 100 watts. Still had a great time and worked 78 sections, never hearing AK or NT. Operated SS from KH6SQ in 2000 and 2001, sure is different from WPA. Also, decided it's time to get a 3 call after living here 20 years. Got many requests to repeat section!!! -- *KS1F*

KE2SX -- Nov 12, 2003 19:54 ET

Well, this is the main event of the year for me, and of course I had to work 3 pm to 11 pm both days. Since I hadn't finished installing the HF rig in the car, I took my FT-817, Z-11 tuner, and a gell cell to work with me, and used the 20 meter Ham Stick on the car during lunch. Made only 15 contacts for the hour, but I had fun and was surprised how well 5 watts and a Ham Stick did.

So later that night and Sunday morning, I used the same rig (and battery) in the house with the G5RV. Glad I installed the CW filter - it made a big difference.

Thanks to all who had difficulty hearing me, but went the extra mile to pull out my signal.

73, Gregg -- *KE2SX*

N8QGC -- Nov 10, 2003 13:22 ET

This was my first entry ever into CW Sweeps. I was semi terrified and not certain that this is what I wanted to do, but I did it anyway.

First things first, I'm no where near a serious contestor. Point in case I was operating on 80 meters and my wife yelled at me because I was destroying the television, I QSY'd to 20 meters. A real contestor would have showed the XYL the door prior to the start of the contest or so I'm told.

I must say that N8CPA's soapbox comments were most enjoyable. I'm still laughing about the Sun answering his CQ with a Solar Flare. If this is going to be a trend I'd prefer that he not send CQ :)

In the end I had fun, I guess that's all I could ask for. CW is not my mode of choice, I'm SSB all the way! Now don't get me wrong, I'm not a code basher, I just prefer to work SSB. It takes great concentration for me to work CW, especially in a contest, and my young family requires much more of my time than I can give to studying and or working CW, so SSB is my choice for now.

I would only say to the ops that I call rude, and I won't identify you as I'm sure you know who you are and don't care! Shame on you! Fortunately I only ran into a couple of knuckleheads that would fit this category. These ops are of course the ops that when I would ask for a fill on SEC, or PREC, or whatever would just simply skip me and move on to the next station. How rude! Yeah I know it's a contest, but man oh man chill.

I'd like to recognize one station which I will never forget. KH7X which I got on 40 meters 02/NOV/03 05:59 UTC This op was fantastic. First off this was for the PAC sec so forget that I would just about kill another human being to get this one in the log. Wouldn't you know it the band was swingly wildly up and down with QSB and KH7X was swinging with it. I listened and listened to make sure that I got as much of his info as possible. When I finally made my call it took a time or two but KH7X answered me, I was beside my self. My little 100 watt dipole station had busted the pile up and I was about to confirm PAC or was I? Oh darn what number was that he gave me? I sent NR ? until I finally got it all and sent it back to him what a contact.

What made it so special? The exchange probably took 1 or 2 minutes. He never gave up on me. He or she I should say, but it was great. We went back and fourth until KH7X had all my info and I had all his/hers and then he Thanked me. I was in shock!

So to the KH7X crew, many many thanks from a guy who is not a CW operator. I thank you for putting up with me and being patient. To all else whom I may have asked for fills thank you too. To those stations who passed me by because I asked for a fill, phooey on you! Remember you need us little guys too. A station with a loud signal is only as good as it's receive. Kinda like a fast car with no breaks, in the end you'll be hurtin....

See you all in SSB Sweeps. My club does a little inter club contest where we split the members of the club into two teams and compete against each other. Total Sweeps combined score of one team vs. the other. Winner gets served a speghetti dinner by the looser in March of the following year. I was served last year, and I intend to be served this year.

73 de John N8QGC -- *N8QGC*

WB8RFB -- Nov 8, 2003 14:35 ET

It was a bit rough going this year with the solar flare on Sunday, elusive sections that I never contacted, and some real CW speed demons with the "pedal to the metal", but fun nonetheless.

Is it my perception (or my advancing age and sore ears) that CW speeds are creeping up each year? With the advent of computerized logging and transmission, it seems that machines are doing more of the work.

I'm not against that as I use a computer to log and check for dupes too, but it won't be long before all we do is sit back and watch adaptive software do everything for us. That will be fun for some, but not for me. I'm not in SS to win as much as I am to try and improve my CW skills. But it's a nice contest that offers some sort of challenge for everyone.

Whether its to win outright, or just beat last year's score or to achieve a clean sweep, we all have our niche in SS. I'm still trying for a clean sweep but fell short by 5 or so sections this year. Just didn't hear them at all. 10 meters was dead, 15 produced just a few QSO's and 40/20/80 meters were the most productive for me in that order.

The most enjoyment I had was working the QRP stations as they sure tried hard to get all of the elements of a complete contact sent. I'm seriously contemplating trying that mode in future years to see what I can achieve.

SS CW draws a unique blend of operators and in our individual way, we all seem to be drawn

back to it. Thanks to all who shared a contact with me. See you guys and gal's again next year!
-- *WB8RFB*

K8BZ -- Nov 8, 2003 11:41 ET



As always, my goal going in to the contest was to work a clean sweep. I got serious about the contest 6 years ago and have only been able to manage a clean sweep every other year. Since I worked a double sweep in the CW and SSB contest last year, the odds were not in my favor this time out.

The solar flare and temporary dead band conditions didn't help matters any and it couldn't have come along at a worse time. In the end I missed Quebec, which I heard on 15 meters but was unable to work due to unfavorable skip distance, and I never heard Northern Territories which in previous years was not a problem.

I will be unable to participate in the SSB contest so my clean sweep coffee mug collection remains for the even numbes years only.

Thanks to all participants and good luck to those able to participate in the SSB contest. -- *K8BZ*

WA3SES -- Nov 7, 2003 12:10 ET

Going in, I had visions of 1000 Q's and a mult sweep; I only have one sweep in SS CW in 15 years. But no such luck....missed AK, NT and MAR.

About 5 hours into the contest I had 70 mults and was feeling like I might do it. But it was a little strange to see that I had all the 0's and 6's and 7's but hardly any of the 1's and 2's. And while my rate ref sheet told me I was ahead of my personal record pace (142k in 2000), my QSO points were behind that year and I was ahead only because of a much higher mult count than normal.

Highlight: Making an honest to goodness, real, true, second radio QSO while running on radio #1.....ain't no stopping me now!!!!

My decision to call it a night at 0530z, I think, was good. From what I've heard rates were not very good between then and 0830z, the usual start time for my first break. Never had (or I totally missed) any decent local propogation on 40 and 80 meters Saturday evening/night.

It's getting harder to "stay in the chair". I really wanted to put in 24 hours, and even with a solid 6 hours sleep Saturday night/Sunday morning, I just could not keep at it Sunday afternoon and took two more two hour breaks. Is it my age or something else?

The Sunday outage was an experience I won't soon forget.

This is still my favorite contest. I really like the "work 'em only once" rule. But I would not mind if it were a "work 18 hours out of 24" contest also.

73 and see you next year

Ed -- *WA3SES*

KA8OKH -- Nov 6, 2003 23:01 ET

Bittersweet and aggravating at the same time. I'll be issued a new 1x2 call before the next contest, so this was probably my last test using KA8OKH (only call held since 1980). Set up station to try SO2R Saturday morning - nothing like preparing the day the contest starts!

Aggravating because I blew up (and repaired!) my power supply 3 TIMES. The gods did not want me to operate. Thus I submitted my all time worst score. No sweep... no matter. It was fun as always. -- *KA8OKH*

W4MY -- Nov 5, 2003 16:45 ET

Thanks for the qrs to my 25 wpm for my first entry into a CW contest. Was lots of fun. Made 184 Q's and 62 sections. It took me 2-3 minutes of listening and writing before calling a cq-er. How do you guys get all that in one answer to your cq? My hat is off to you guys, I'll definitely be back next year...

One more thing... I could almost copy the guys clipping along at 35+ and could get it after listening 2-3 times. Then I'd call, that worked. Harder were the guys that would send the repetitive stuff real fast and instantly slow down for the pre then real fast for their call, then slow down for the ck and sec. Don't do that. For me (a 20-25 wpm guy) its better to go at a steady pace, even if its a liitle fast. When you slam on the brakes my head lurches forward and hits the radio!

73 Marty -- *W4MY*

K6KYJ -- Nov 5, 2003 01:53 ET

This comment is for those ops in the CW SS who set their speed at 35 wpm and never deviated.

When you are driving on an icy road, do you still drive right at the speed limit? Sending at 35 wpm during two major solar flares makes as much sense as driving on ice at 70 mph.

Remember, you don't get any points if you are not in MY log. Those stations who gave garbled fills at the same high speed as their original exchange simply got deleted from my log. A LOT of the top ops adjusted for the conditions and keep speeds around 25 wpm. Good for them. Knowing I had a weak signal (dipoles & 100w), I did most of my exchanges at 19 wpm and was seldom asked for a fill. If I don't have to give a fill, I can move right on to the next QSO. And folks, you DO need us Lil' Pistols to win! -- *K6KYJ*

KQ6Q -- Nov 6, 2003 03:57 ET

The CW SS is my annual station fitness test (tradition restarted in the last ten years). After my mobilehome park re-wrote the standard lease, leaving out the part about "No Transmitting Allowed", I put up my antique Webster Bandspanner on a triple mag mount, in addition to my 40 meter Isotron on a short pole. Made a few contacts. Went to HRO, for the next year had two triple mag mounts, with three Hustler resonators on each. Made more contacts, on all bands, but logging in pencil was tedious. Mentioned this at club meeting, WA6ES recommended the N3FJP NovSweeps logging software. Good suggestion, made more contacts, and a lot easier to send the log in. Discovered that my 1980 Argosy showed broadband noise where a Scout showed signals - revisited Cornell Drentea's article on Argosy improvements, replaced 7 small signal diodes in the IF/Mixer board, and picked up some 8 pole crystal filters used on the internet. Great improvement! This 2003 CWSS, I made myself leave the pencil in the cup, used the N3FJP software exclusively, and made more contacts (135) in more sections (55) than ever. Actually shut down a few minutes before 0300Z due to 'brain fry'. And resolved that for next year, I WILL have a memory keyer - my HD-1410 has served well, but it would be really nice to have memory features to take advantage of! I love the CWSS - see my article on arrlweb "Key Up for CW" before it scrolls off. I may spend more total operating time on 2m and 70cm FM because I do it mobile around town, but the CWSS is the true annual test of my station! Thanks to all who worked me! Fred Wagner, KQ6Q -- *KQ6Q*

W2BEE/4 -- Nov 5, 2003 17:27 ET

Through pure stupidity on my part, I fell about 5 feet onto my heels, putting myself in a wheelchair until at least 11/18. (Not radio related!)

Soooo, not to be deterred, I used the W4MQ IRB for a total of 15 20m QSO's. With my laptop on the kitchen table and an internet connection, I dove right in.



2003 SS with Laptop & Wheelchair working through W4MQ IRB

It's great fun operating with the IRB, but the lag time of only a few milliseconds from hitting send on the computer and the signal actually leaving the antenna, can be frustrating. In addition, sometimes there is break-up in the internet audio which adds to the confusion on my end. Did he send a 1 or a 2?

I will submit the log as a check log and looking forward to 2004 SS from my usual location in Pine Plains, NY.

Congratulations to all the fine operators. 73
-- *W2BEE*

W5KDJ -- Nov 5, 2003 08:54 ET

500mw - 300 QSO's - 71 sections in 10Hr.17min. Who needs power. Props were very good in Houston, 10m open only west. Had a SID Sunday noon, thought my equip had failed. Appears we had a good QRP turn out as I worked 16 Q stations. Glad to hear a lot of the regular QRP stations. Real nice contest this year. -- *W5KDJ*

N4HY -- Nov 5, 2003 00:12 ET

With 8 hours to operate and my beams on the ground for the new tower, the vertical and I had a great time on Low power. That is until nature turned the lights out. After the flare, literally the only signal I could hear from 3.5 Mhz to 30 Mhz was N2NT who is 4 miles away! Thank goodness it came back in the predictable 1.5-2 hours. -- *N4HY*

K0PG -- Nov 4, 2003 23:03 ET

I am an occasional cw contester. Those occasions usually involve contests that have exchanges like "5NN IL." You can imagine that I was a little shaky taking another stab at this event, but I figured that I would S & P my way through it, listening to the CQers and getting a handle on their exchange before jumping in.

Just for fun I decided to use my Vibroplex Bug. After all, what are a few extra dits every once in a while among friends? To make things more interesting, Pat and I are cliff dwellers in a no antennas environment. With darkness coming earlier I sneaked the Outbacker onto the balcony. It has two random length radials carefully chosen for their color. To top it off, I run QRP to avoid any RFI problems. Since there's no Rover class in SS (Hey Dan, Whaddaya think?) I just had to make the best of it.



Stealth cloak and dagger antenna installation at K0PG.

We had family functions scheduled during the contest period, but I thought that I could add a little to the club effort by making 50 Qs.

After getting into the flow, and experiencing an increase in proficiency I put in as much time as possible winding up with 123 Qs in 52 sections. Remarkably, only three stations I called did not come back, and very few stations had to ask for fills. Thanks to those who QRSed down to 20ish wpm when I called in. I know that I was slowing down their rate, but their help was appreciated.

Good old cw; PR and VI on 40 meters with 5 watts output from an 8 foot antenna on the wrong side of the building. Both stations came back on the first call.

It's a reminder that it's supposed to be fun, and this time it sure was! I'll have more time during the SS phone so who knows what will happen? Listen for the weak ones! 73, Tim K0PG Q 62 IL. -- K0PG

K0WA -- Nov 4, 2003 22:01 ET



1720 Z: "Ummm.... wha' happened?"

1110 QSOs 79 Sections = 175380 Claimed Score
Beloit KS (north-central)

We enjoy operating from the W0NO QTH. Alan has built a top-flight Multi-2 station in rural Mitchell County. While he doesn't operate much cw, Alan enjoys hosting the old Flatlander Amateur Radio Transmitting Society for SS cw, and is always in the thick of operating 2 weeks later in SS ssb.

The cw crew in recent years has been K0WA AB0S and K0BJ. We normally do 2 to 3 hour shifts and the off-duty ops enjoy swapping tales. That WAS the plan this time... Well, AB0S was recovering from flu and K0BJ got a last-minute invitation to a party, so Lee K0WA was on his

own the first 9 hours! Bruce K0BJ took over

through the graveyard stint. Not long after Lee opened up at daybreak, Tim AB0S was present and in good form. With Lee burned out from the long opening session and Tim committed to supper at the regionally renowned Brookville Hotel, Bruce had a fairly long closing stint.

We didn't get in much visiting this time. Worse, we made very little use of the mult station -- none Saturday night when J was workable from NT -- so we missed the sweep in CW '03. Still, propagation was much kinder, for the most part, that what we'd been braced for and it was naturally loads of fun. A couple minor glitches cropped up but it was mostly smooth going from an equipment standpoint. We'll CU next year and try to use the 2nd station more fully. -- *KOBJ*

N8CPA -- Nov 4, 2003 17:57 ET

I am certainly not a real competitor, but I love participating in CW SS with a quasi-religious zeal! I only run low power in my vertical and VEE. I don't make a lot of contacts, but I always have a blast.

I made my first incursion into the fray in '95. I entered because I wanted to improve my CW speed for FD operation. I haven't been able to stay away since. In my world, nothing else happens that first weekend of November.

I make no secret of my dedication to the sport. The whole family knows that on the first weekend of November, there are no weddings, there are no birthdays. Though I am otherwise a very generous fellow, that particular weekend is all mine! I would even choose it over Field Day now if I had to make a choice between the two.

Every year I say the same thing: "This year, the broom goes up the tower!" "This year, I earn my mug!" "VY1JA, be ready for me!" Oh, the mantras I chant, the bold promises I make! And every year, though I make more points than the year previous, I have yet to make the ever elusive sweep. I have worked all sections, except one, but never all on the same weekend. The closest I've come is 78/80 last year. Always absent is NT.

In past years, with my weak, low power station, I've relied almost exclusively on hunting and pouncing to find my contacts. But this year, I wanted to try running a little more to increase my chances of making the sweep. I also planned to claim a frequency 30 seconds before start by sending a test transmission with the phrase "What hath God wrought!" just before I start the CQ SS beacon.

I even Elmered my nephew to share my enthusiasm for the event. He and I even have a pre-contest ritual that stems from his Technician days when I control-opped his participation. A few minutes before start time, he and I toast the event with CW (i.e, Contest Water), a mixture of scotch, or bourbon, and water. Now that he and I operate independently, we drink from our own stock in our respective stations. I call him on the phone or on 2M simplex, we make the toast

and drink our drinks. And then we wait for 2100Z. The mutual toast is almost mandatory.

To say the least, things went a bit awry this year. I had not talked to my nephew all of last week. I spent Saturday in SS preparation mode: programming the keyer, testing the computer and software, making on air tests, ergonomizing--if there is such a word--desk space, etc. At 20:40Z, I called my nephew. My Contest Water was in my Clean Sweep mug...

The mug had been sent to me in error when I ordered participation pins a few years ago. When I tried to return it, the League told me to keep it. Now it is used specifically as the vessel from which I sip my Contest Water before SS. It is my chalice of the Brass Sacrament.

...His wife answered. "He can't talk now. We're on our way to a big wedding and we're running late. I'll have him call you tonight." So I sipped my CW alone.

For the moment, pretend I'm merely superstitious. After making the toast, and sipping my CW alone, at 20:59:40Z, I sent my test and started calling CQ. At 21:00:07, I listened for my first Q. At 21:11, I started hunting and pouncing and made QSO #1. The next time I tried calling CQ, Sunday afternoon, the sun answered with a flare!

As I tally this year's CW SS: I made a higher score. I made more Qs. But I missed 5 Sections! The broom is still in the cleaning closet, rather than on my tower. My Clean Sweep mug still only represents an order processing error. At this rate, by the time I get the sweep, it will be a Swiffer that goes up the tower.

And it's not all my nephew's fault--most of it but not all. He shares the blame with VY1JA, KE0A, K2NNY, VE2EF, KL7J and whoever that couple was who wouldn't elope! My poor showing is all their fault, I'm sure!

I will certainly try again next year. How else will I find out if the Clean Sweep is for me as the Great Pumpkin is for Linus? It might turn out that I need a more sincere antenna farm. But I'll be there. My thanks to all who were there this year.

73 Steve -- *N8CPA*

N8XMS -- Nov 4, 2003 16:58 ET

I knew that using a VXO controlled Wilderness Radio SST-40 with 2 watts out to an old trap vertical would be a little bit rough so I set a modest goal for myself and actually managed to reach the goal! It was a lot of fun. Thanks to all of the "great ears" out there who managed to hear my tiny little signal. 73 -- *N8XMS*



My Sweepstakes rig!

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