ARRL Straight Key Night 2013

For decades, during the first 24 hours of January, hundreds of amateur radio operators have participated in the annual ARRL Straight Key Night (SKN). I am always impressed, when reading the online soapbox (**www.arrl.org/soapbox**), by the number of participants who either select a favorite key from their collections or decide to put numerous keys on the air. From J-37s and J-38s to old military keys to a wide variety of homebrew masterpieces, the sound of CW rises from the static, frequently combining with vintage radios, recreating the magic atmosphere that so many of us remember from the days of our youth.

Just as it's possible to identify a beloved song by hearing the first few notes of the melody, experienced SKN participants will often recognize the rhythm of a fist on the air and instinctively recognize it as belonging to some old friend with whom they have shared on-the-air memories over the years. That is part of the joy of the event — having fun with old friends in an annual reunion of syncopated rhythms of "dits" and "dahs."

In 2013, 188 participants from 48 states, provinces and countries submitted logs totaling over 1500 contacts for SKN. Some participants were quite active — K3SEW

completed 50 contacts during the 1440 minutes of SKN while 13 individuals made just a single contact — but those individual QSOs were memorable enough to merit reporting the station's participation in the event.

Each year the participants in SKN are asked to nominate the station demonstrating the best fist for the event, as well as the station who held the most interesting QSO. Five stations each received multiple votes for "Best Fist" in SKN 2013: Brian, K9VKY; Luke, AC8LJ; Howard, K7IRA; John, K7FD, and Brian, KØDTJ. Ed, W7GVE, was the choice of three participants as "Most Interesting QSO" — one more than the seven runner-up stations. Congratulations to all those who in some way were acknowledged by their on-the-air peers for the quality of their style or the quality of their story!

As the clock strikes the second day of a new year, SKN whispers a fond "73" as the last of the participants slips back into the ether, to await the next adventure. Why not add ARRL Straight Key Night to next year's holiday schedule? It would be a great way to usher in the ARRL's Centennial Celebration in 2014.

Participants
AA4Q, AA4TB, AA4ZS, AA5N, AA6E, AA6SC, AA8UU, AAØQZ, AB7MP, AB8FJ, AB9NZ, AC7JW, AC8JW, AC8LJ, AE3A, AE6C, AE7CG, AE7XI, AF4MY, AI6II, HP1AC, HP1IBF, K1EEE, K1LNL, K1NV, K1PDY, K1RM, K3BVQ, K3DQB, K3MD, K3PX, K3SEW, K3STX, K3SWZ, K3VYY, K4IV, K4JYS, K4RCG, K5BZH, K5LXP, K5NZ, K5RIX, K5SOH, K5TUC, K5WL, K5ZRK, K6FFY, K6KQV, K6LG, K6PBQ, K6RQT, K6TY/Ø (WB6VRN,op), K7ETM, K7JF, K7TFW, K7UA, K7ZYV, K8AB, K8JRE, K8JV, K8KK, K8NB, K8OC, K9WWT, K9YA, KA3YNV, KA7T, KB2KDV, KB5IRC, KB9W, KC7YE, KC8UR, KC9KEP, KCØGXX, KD5QHV, KF8KS, KG4KGY, KN4SA, KN5L, KO4OP, KO8S, KØCVN, KØCY, KØDTJ, KØHGN, KT3A, KT4OM, KW6G, KW6R, N1AW, N1CHP, N2BE, N2GT, N2KZ, N2MGT, N4XE, N5DY, N5NT, N7TML, N8GM, N8KC, N8XMS, N9BOR, NC6V, NF8M, NG2T, NIØR, NJ3K, NN7A, NR4J, NW3V, PS7HD, VE2AHH/W4, VE7BQO, VE7NI, VE7OM, VO1NA, W1DUW, W1FWB, W1OH, W1PID, W1RO, W1SFR, W1TPB, W1UJ, W2LG, W2LID, W2QJH, W3CB, W3GK, W4NB, W4RK, W4YOK, W5PDW, W5QLF, W5ROS, W6JHQ, W6KOW, W6LX, W6TDX, W6VNR, W7GVE, W7IZE, W7LNG, W7UYJ, W8FDV, W8IX, W8WTS, W9CBT, W9KMP, W9PPG, WA1ABI, WA2ELW, WA2QQF, WA5YOM, WA7OET, WA7YAZ, WA8OKR, WA8QNN, WA9PWP, WA9PYH, WA9WJB, WA9ZBW, WA9ZJI, WAØVQY, WB2AWQ/7, WB4EDB, WB6FRZ, WB6SCA, WB8CFO, WB8DQT, WB8LZG, WB8SIW, WB8YYY, WB9DLC, WB9HFK, WBØB, WBØCJB, WBØCNK, WBØIXI, WDØECO, WDØK, WI4L, WØCC, WØCZ, WØRQO, WW4DX, XE2JA

W1AW Active in SKCC Weekend Sprintathon

Operators Use Hiram Maxim's Straight Key

Sean Kutzko, KX9X
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Fans of manually sent CW worked W1AW in the Straight Key Century Club's (SKCC) monthly Weekend Sprintathon in March. Not only was W1AW activated by a team of ARRL staffers, each QSO was made with the straight key used by The Old Man himself, Hiram Percy Maxim.

The idea to activate W1AW in SKCC was launched by ARRL Emergency Preparedness Manager Mike Corey, KI1U. A member of SKCC for many years (he holds SKCC #2679C), Mike recently rekindled his interest in sending manual CW when he found an old key and sounder at an antique store. Having refurbished the unit, he mentioned to fellow staffers how much fun it was putting old keys on the air. W1AW Station Manager Joe Carcia, NJ1Q, noted that a staffer had used Hiram's straight key from his famous spark

gap transmitter "Old Betsy" years ago during ARRL Straight Key Night, and the idea to use it during an SKCC Weekend Sprintathon was born.

Corey posted news of the upcoming activation to the SKCC e-mail reflector. When SKCC webmaster Pete Spotts, W1PNS, read the notice, he offered to make W1AW a "bonus" station for the event, allowing QSOs with W1AW to be worth extra points. ARRL staffers were up to the challenge and fun of making QSOs with other SKCC'ers.

A team of ARRL staffers operated W1AW (SKCC #6707) in shifts. While most of the activity centered on 20 and 40 meters, some QSOs were made on 15 and 80 meters as well. "It was exciting to make QSOs with Hiram's old key," Corey said, "but it can be pretty tiring, too! If you're out of practice using a straight key, the 'glass arm' shows up very quickly."
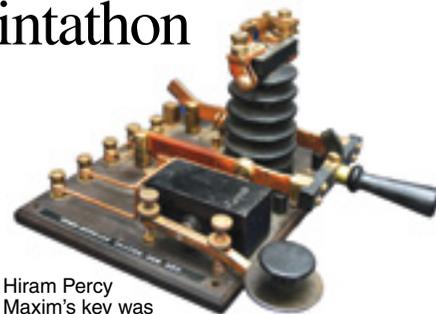
Hiram Percy Maxim's key was used in the event. The key's transmit-receive switch is a knife switch. [Mike Corey, KI1U, photo]

"It was great to use the key from Old Betsy," noted ARRL Test Engineer Bob Allison, WB1GCM, "I hope the stations we worked were as thrilled as we were!"

SKCC offers numerous on-air opportunities to engage in manually sent CW. Their Weekend Sprintathons occur on the second weekend of every month. For more information, visit their website at **www.skccgroup.com**.