# TALES FROM THE SWAMP

## May 2020
**Author: Kevan Nason, N4XL**

Thank you to our current group leadership
Interim President and VP - Dave, WN4AFP
Treasurer – Phil, NI7R
Secretary – Ed, WB4HRL

## From the Reflector:

- After two months apart from each other Sarah, KG4NKG, is finally coming to home and Frank, KG4IGC. That's Great!
- Dave, WN4AFP, went through the CQWW results and pulled out some good info about Matt, NU4E. Matt used a temporary antenna on a 17.5 meter tall fiberglass pole with three radials in that contest. Even so, he took #2 in W4, #3 NA and #20 World in the SO(A) 40 LP category. Amazing job Matt! You are truly a great operator and deserve a round of applause. Throwing modesty to the wind, also placing well was your editor, N4XL. #1 W4, #7 NA and #26 world in SOAB(A) LP. Kevan was using a triband yagi at 50 ft, 40/80 vertical and horizontal loop at 25 feet. Both strong finishes are especially noteworthy since they came from the southern end of 4 land which does not benefit from the stronger signals to EU enjoyed by the New England or Virginia stations.
- Dave, NJ4F, says his lawn care business has picked up so much he is usually too tired to get on the radio. Dave's law enforcement background makes me think of prisons and I'm reminded of what the Warden in that old movie said to Paul Newman. Dave is obviously having "A failure to communicate." Would one of you guys down that way put on a mask and go knock some sense into him? Dave needs to readjust his priorities.
- COVID-19 caused Dave, WN4AFP, to lose a great opportunity at the NR4M superstation. Dave did a fantastic job contributing to the team at his opening visit last year, but sadly social isolation will keep him in South Carolina this go round where he is planning on a 36-hour BIC marathon using his OCF dipole. Good hunting, Dave!

- Kevan, N4XL, asked if we need a President for the SFCG. We've been five months without one.
- Matt, NU4E, and Bill, N4IQ, got together and used 4NEC2 to develop a better antenna for Matt to use in the Stew Perry 160 contest. It worked very well. Matt's Top Band haul in 251 q's in 8.5 hours using 100 watts into a temporary top loaded vertical in the parking lot of his workplace.
- Once again Matt needs mentioning. He made some of us feel slightly sick by posting a picture of damage to his home antennas at his station back in Germany. That limited his ability to remotely operate until repairs can be made.
- Dave, WN4AFP, asked how people handle a runner giving you an incorrect call back when on CW. Discussion was active.
- Frank is finally back in the chair now that his wife is home. Good to have you back Frank.

## Contest Tips:

K1AR Contest Tips

17 If you are a packet-assisted contester, always be sure to verify the callsign and exchange of the "spotted" station you are working. Many times a busted callsign has been spotted. Make the mistake appear on your screen -- not in your log! (*See examples further on in the newsletter – Ed.*)

19 Want to know something that can help your contest score nearly as much as a big signal? For me, it's focus and utter concentration. Whether you're trying to lift a heavy weight in a gym or push a few more QSOs out of your station, the key is diligence and unabated attention to the task at hand. Consider another pastime you enjoy that requires intense concentration. If you apply the same techniques to contesting that you do in your other endeavor, your scores will climb--and without a single db of added signal strength.

22 Have you ever thought much about your shack's operating chair? I always found it odd that we could invest $10K+ in our equipment yet use an abandoned $25 operating chair found at a yard sale. When you consider the time invested in contest operating, think about the advantages in score than can come from a comfortable seat. You can't quantify it, but you can be sure your score will go up with comfort!

John, K1AR, mentions the need to always verify the accuracy of spotted call signs. The same is true if you use the Super Check Partial (SCP) files put out by Stu, K6TU. I still make mistakes even though I know that lesson very well and try hard to be careful. My latest Log Checking Report from the CQ WW DX CW Contest has an example. Steve, N2IC, uses two TS590's in an SO2R setup like I do. I pay close attention to his posts since he is a better contester with more knowledge and experience than me. I know his station is located out west in CQ Zone 4 and expect to hear a 4 from him. Evidently the SCP file says he is in 4 too because that is where I logged him for that contest. Steve operated from Zone 5 for that one. I lost the Q and the Zone 4

multiplier. Oops. He was the only station in my log for which I had the wrong zone. I should have listened to what he sent instead of accepting what I expected him to be and the computer said he was. Guess K1AR hit the nail on the head squarely—twice – because he also said focus and concentration are critical too.

Here is another example of why you need to verify spot information. It is a screen shot taken from my Mult and Q window during a contest. If you do not use the M&Q window, be aware that these spots show up both there and in the Band Map Window too. Even if you didn't have the M&Q window open almost everyone using N1MM uses the Band Map window so these spots would have been waiting there to trip you up. These spots came from the clusters. The spotting cluster station is to the right and has the # symbol. See if you can figure out from the spot list what station is really on frequency. If you just pointed, clicked, and then logged who you thought was there you would have had a good chance of losing the q and incurring a penalty by guessing wrong. It is <u>always</u> best to copy what you hear and not what the computer tells you.

| Spot Call | Frequency | Bearing | Spotter |
|---|---|---|---|
| N7WA | 7035.3 | 294° # | KM3T-2-# |
| VE6EX | 7035.6 | 321° # | K2PO-# |
| WW4LL | 7035.7 | 240° # | K3LR-# |
| RU1A | 7036.0 | 030° # | W3LPL-# |
| RA1A | 7036.1 | 030° # | KM3T-2-# |
| RM1A | 7036.1 | 030° # | KM3T-# |
| VE3UWC | 7036.4 | 012° # | W4KCN-# |
| PJ4I | 7036.7 | 147° # | W3LPL-# |
| T40A | 7036.9 | 171° # | N2QT-# |
| K3LR | 7037.1 | 039° # | W4KCN-# |
| MW5R | 7037.4 | 046° # | W3LPL-# |
| IO2X | 7037.6 | 051° # | K2PO-# |
| CF3SZ | 7037.9 | 012° # | W4KCN-# |
| SN2B | 7037.9 | 040° # | K1TTT-# |
| W7RH | 7038.0 | 294° # | W4KCN-# |
| DL1T | 7038.1 | 044° # | W3LPL-# |
| G3P | 7038.2 | 045° # | N2QT-# |
| VE6WZ | 7038.3 | 321° # | N2QT-# |
| 4X/UA9CTT | 7038.4 | 050° # | KM3T-# |
| N1SZ | 7038.4 | 043° # | W3LPL-# |
| UA9CTT | 7038.4 | 020° # | N2QT-# |
| AD1C | 7038.6 | 301° # | K2PO-# |
| KA5M | 7038.6 | 260° # | W3LPL-# |

This is also a good example of how skimmers and the RBN algorithms are too often wrong. Look at the RU1A/RA1A/RM1A block. Those calls were spotted by W3LPL and two different KM3T skimmers. Each skimmer came up with a different decode. But don't bash skimmer accuracy. If conditions are poor, three different operators can listen to the same station and come up with three different call signs too.

Wrong skimmer decodes that make it to the spotting list happen quite often. I have put the following in my N1MM Telnet filter so that they do not appear on my Band Map or M&Q Window. They are bad spots 99+% of the time. They are wrong so often I decided if by some chance they were valid I would accept not working them just to avoid the aggravation of having so many bad spots. I still spin the VFO knob while entering Assisted, so I could possibly find them despite being blacklisted spots should they be the actual calls of a station.

| Spot Call | Actual Call (Blank means I just stopped giving the reason in my notes.) |
|---|---|
| EK3LR | K3LR |
| DX1CV | D41CV |
| GJ2T | PJ2T |
| WR1IT | WR1ST |
| WR1S | WR1ST |

Spot Call          Actual Call (Blank means I just stopped giving the reason in my notes.)
K1EMI
T2IC
SC0T
P5NY               PY5NY
P5AX               PY5AX
YV5B

As a last point, Many times I have been looking at a single call sign in N1MM's spot lists without any apparent issue, like VE6EX is at the top of the spot list shown above, yet while looking at that call another similar call pops up right next to it. Something like VE6AX appears on the same frequency as VE6EX. That usually happens when another skimmer decodes things differently from the first. Or it could be a person manually spotted the call. Which is correct, VE6EX or VE6AX? You won't know unless you listen.

## Observations by the Editor:

1. People seem to be enjoying the detailed N1MM+ tips in the newsletters. I am writing those based on what I've learned from my own interests, experiences, and needs. If you have tips, please send them in. If you want to know how to do something post it on the reflector and let someone in the group help figure it out. I have no experience using N1MM for digital contests so if you know a tip or trick pass it along. Same if you use a different logging program and want to share something.

2. Cycle 25 is here. It will be a couple-three years yet before the high bands are hopping again, but that isn't very long. The rise to the peak of the 11-year cycle comes relatively quickly compared to the slower drop to the bottom. If you are chasing DXCC on the low bands now is the time to focus on that. Probably more so this winter since I expect the summer storm QRN to again be high. Use the summer to plan out and erect a new or better low band antenna for the expected good winter months. Plus, even having a mediocre 80 and 160 antenna capability can add a dozen or two multipliers to your log during a contest which will make a dramatic increase in your score. Putting up my first 160 inverted-L with only a 35 ft vertical height often gave me an extra 10 or so mults and a few more q's.

# N1MM+ Tips:

N1MM's Programmable Band Map Window Control Buttons

Good station ergonomics includes making controls you use frequently easy to access. I have my TS590's right next to the keyboard and mouse, the paddles and SO2R box at hand, and the antenna switches and rotor right above them to allow ease of use. They are all within easy eye and head movement of the computer screens which minimizes the muscle strain that inevitably comes with a 30+ hour contest effort.

But there are still a couple issues with my arrangement. One is the TS590 pushbuttons are often dual purpose. Different things happen depending on how long you push them. When in a hurry trying to copy a station through the QRM/QRN I sometimes mess up that timing and select the wrong function. For example, I have put the attenuator on instead of selecting the receive antenna because those two share the same button on the TS590. It's a pain when the weak station goes completely away while you are frantically cycling the receive antenna direction looking for him until you realize you screwed up and attenuated him out. Lost a few q's because of that.

Another problem is occasionally what I want to do cannot be done with the press of a single button. To access it I need to push or turn two or three buttons and knobs. Some of you have your rigs fairly far from your keyboards and one member of our group uses an extension to reach the VFO knob so I'm sure some of you, like me, have an occasional issue or two adjusting your rig controls during a contest. It would be nice if things could be easier. N1MM has a way to help us out.

At the top of the band map window are three fixed use (red circle) and four user programmable buttons (orange square). The SH/DX button downloads spots from a cluster if connected. The "Wide" button switches your rig between wide and narrow filters. Filter width is remembered separately for each of the CW, SSB, and Digital modes. The "CQ" button requires a bit of explanation. If you tune the VFO off your CQ frequency, as is shown in the image, when you click on the CQ button the rig will return to the CQ frequency you last used on that band. Pushing it a second time returns you to that last used S&P frequency. And the "SH/DX" button downloads a bunch of spots from whatever spotting cluster you are connected to.
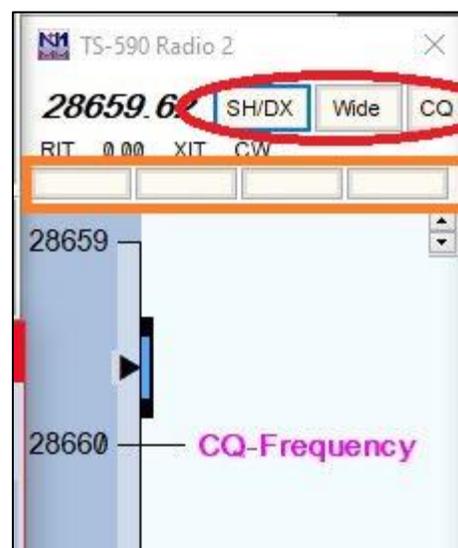
Let's talk more about those orange highlighted programmable buttons. Most rigs allow computer control and have a PC command set of codes that tell the rig what to do. Things like change VFO's, turn the attenuator on or off, what mode to use, go to split operation, etc. You can tell these programmable buttons to perform virtually every command found in your rigs command set.

It is possible to change the command sent to the radio when the fixed use button for the Wide and Narrow filter selection is clicked to any radio command. When I first started playing with these, I had filled up the four programmable buttons and once set the filter button to turn the attenuator on and off. But I could not change the text description of the button. That confused me during a contest, so it did not take long to return the filter button to normal and reassign the programmable buttons to include the attenuator function.



I have so far programmed three of the four user programmable buttons. The first switches the attenuator in/out. The second switches the K9AY low band receive antenna in/out. That antenna is a directional, but broad patterned, four-way loop. The controller is not set up to switch directions from the computer so I still have to reach over and change directions, but I have found that I often have low band propagation in DX contests to a specific region (i.e.: EU or SA) and am often able to set the direction and only infrequently change it.

I learned to appreciate the versatility of my previous rigs which had three CW filters. The TS590 has several more than three band widths available but is only able to select between two using the filter wide/narrow button. You can change the bandwidth of either of those two choices to any of the fourteen different available CW bandwidths (from 50 to 2500 Hz), but you still only have two available by pushing the "Wide/Narrow" filter button. Additionally, there is no visual numerical indication on the rig or in N1MM that tells me what the bandwidth currently selected is. I recently set up the third user programmable button to allow cycling between filter bandwidths of 80, 200 and 400 Hz. By clicking on the "CW 80" button it changes to "CW 250" and then "CW 400". At one point I had programmed the last two programmable buttons to set the SSB High and Low cut frequencies independently from the chosen wide and narrow settings. That gave me great flexibility to quickly stop adjacent QRM without having to turn a radio knob. I later elected to drop that SSB flexibility for the more used CW options. I instead set my two SSB filters up to filter QRM that was either above or below me. I set one up for a 300-1600 bandwidth and the other for a 500-2200. That covers most of my needs and is still manually adjustable on the rig by pushing the IF filter button or using the Wide/Nar N1MM button if I need to tailor things for particularly rough interference.

You can find details of how to program the buttons in the Bandmap Window section of the N1MM+ manual. Here is the code structure I used for my TS590's. Your codes will likely be different unless you

have a 590 too. And of course, should you want to program different functions for your 590 you will need the codes for them instead of the codes shown here. PC codes for my rig were available online.



If you use SO2R, or maybe SO2V, configuration note the title of this window is "Change Radio 1 Buttons". Buttons are independently configurable for each radio, and perhaps VFO, that you use in your station. You will have to do your own research to determine if this will work with two VFO operation. Below are my second radio programmable button codes. Note the {CAT2…} format verses the {CAT1…} format used for radio 1. I do not have a radio 2 button programmed for the RCV antenna because I do not have a receive antenna connected to the second radio. I kept the button order for radio 2 the same as radio 1 despite no RCV antenna because standardization helps me make fewer mistakes after 30+ hours of contesting. I look the same place in either Band Map window for the button to do the same thing regardless of if I am trying to control radio 1 or radio 2.



# Upcoming Contests: Including VHF/UHF
See WA7BNM.

## SFOTA Current Leaderboard http://www.sfota.com/

**May-10-2020**

**Current Leaderboard**

### 2020 OVERALL STANDINGS

| | CALL | Contests | CW QSO'S | SSB QSO'S | DIGITAL QSO'S | RTTY QSO'S | TOTAL QSO'S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) | N4IQ | 39 | 3161 | 1292 | 395 | 2473 | 7321 |
| 2) | K3DNE | 29 | 0 | 6119 | 0 | 0 | 6119 |
| 3) | WB4HRL | 88 | 3225 | 1103 | 0 | 1675 | 6003 |
| 4) | WN4AFP | 51 | 3023 | 1219 | 0 | 640 | 4882 |
| 5) | NU4E | 8 | 950 | 1576 | 0 | 737 | 3263 |
| 6) | KG6MC | 14 | 1153 | 1197 | 0 | 0 | 2350 |
| 7) | K7OM | 11 | 578 | 180 | 0 | 1111 | 1869 |
| 8) | N4XL | 11 | 1004 | 824 | 0 | 0 | 1828 |
| 9) | NI7R | 17 | 1359 | 58 | 0 | 313 | 1730 |
| 10) | KG4IGC | 3 | 245 | 0 | 0 | 662 | 907 |
| 11) | KS4YX | 8 | 419 | 55 | 7 | 404 | 885 |
| 12) | NJ4F | 3 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 779 | 829 |
| 13) | WU0B | 1 | 0 | 358 | 0 | 0 | 358 |
| 14) | AJ4UQ | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 61 | 67 |

### 2020 INDIVIDUAL MODE STANDINGS

| CALL | CW QSO'S | CALL | SSB QSO'S | CALL | DIGITAL QSO'S | CALL | RTTY QSO'S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WB4HRL | 3225 | K3DNE | 6119 | N4IQ | 395 | N4IQ | 2473 |
| N4IQ | 3161 | NU4E | 1576 | KS4YX | 7 | WB4HRL | 1675 |
| WN4AFP | 3023 | N4IQ | 1292 | AJ4UQ | 6 | K7OM | 1111 |
| NI7R | 1359 | WN4AFP | 1219 | | | NJ4F | 779 |
| KG6MC | 1153 | KG6MC | 1197 | | | NU4E | 737 |
| N4XL | 1004 | WB4HRL | 1103 | | | KG4IGC | 662 |
| NU4E | 950 | N4XL | 824 | | | WN4AFP | 640 |
| K7OM | 578 | WU0B | 358 | | | KS4YX | 404 |
| KS4YX | 419 | K7OM | 180 | | | NI7R | 313 |
| KG4IGC | 245 | NI7R | 58 | | | AJ4UQ | 61 |
| NJ4F | 50 | KS4YX | 55 | | | | |

## 3830 Activity:

(Activity since the last newsletter and 05.09.2020)

| Timestamp | Call | Class | Power | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7QP** | | | | |
| 5/4/2020 11:52 | AC4MC | SO(A)Mixed | HP | 8,536 |
| 5/4/2020 0:56 | K3DNE | SO(A)SSB | HP | 9,690 |
| 5/4/2020 2:47 | NI7R | SOCW | HP | 9,546 |
| 5/4/2020 16:32 | WB4HRL | SO(A)CW | HP | 5,655 |
| 5/4/2020 20:54 | WN4AFP | SO(A)Mixed | LP | 4,410 |
| | | | | |
| **DeQP** | | | | |
| 5/4/2020 0:53 | K3DNE | Single Op | HP | 520 |
| 5/4/2020 2:53 | NI7R | Single Op | HP | 80 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5/4/2020 14:56 | WB4HRL | Single Op | HP | 120 |
| 5/4/2020 20:48 | WN4AFP | Single Op | LP | 5,370 |
| | | | | |
| FlQP | | | | |
| 4/26/2020 22:31 | K3DNE | SOAB(A)SSB | HP | 2,112 |
| 4/27/2020 12:02 | WB4HRL | SOAB(A)Mixed | HP | 1,239 |
| | | | | |
| InQP | | | | |
| 5/4/2020 11:55 | AC4MC | Single Op | HP | 54 |
| 5/4/2020 0:54 | K3DNE | Single Op | HP | 2,480 |
| 5/4/2020 2:52 | NI7R | Single Op | HP | 140 |
| 5/4/2020 15:41 | WB4HRL | Single Op | HP | 90 |
| 5/3/2020 3:27 | WN4AFP | Single Op | LP | 3,471 |
| | | | | |
| NCCC RY-Sprint | | | | |
| 4/24/2020 2:19 | N4IQ | Single Op | LP | 702 |
| 5/8/2020 2:21 | N4IQ | Single Op | LP | 920 |
| | | | | |
| NewEngQP | | | | |
| 5/4/2020 11:53 | AC4MC | Single Op | HP | 7,410 |
| 5/4/2020 0:56 | K3DNE | Single Op | HP | 8,575 |
| 5/3/2020 23:36 | N4XL | Single Op | LP | 902 |
| 5/4/2020 2:50 | NI7R | Single Op | HP | 7,344 |
| 5/4/2020 17:24 | WB4HRL | Single Op | HP | 9,028 |
| 5/4/2020 21:15 | WN4AFP | Single Op | LP | 20,016 |
| | | | | |
| SPDX RTTY | | | | |
| 4/26/2020 19:05 | K7OM | SOAB | HP | 69,750 |
| 4/26/2020 15:38 | N4IQ | SOAB | HP | 52,080 |
| 4/27/2020 11:54 | WB4HRL | SOAB | HP | 58,707 |

## Guest Article:

Input welcomed! If you have done, learned, or just want to mention something please send it to me. It's a cliché, but this is your newsletter. It could be an article like the N1MM tip above. Or it could just be a sentence or two. Or it could just be bullet points on a topic. Use whatever format you like.

## Space WX: From Tamitha Skov

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkXjdDQ-db0xz8f4PKgKsag

73 de N4XL