



TALES FROM THE SWAMP

December 2020

Editor: Kevan Nason, N4XL

Thank you to our current group leadership.

President – Ed, K3DNE

Vice President - Dave, WN4AFP

Treasurer – Phil, NI7R

Secretary – Ed, WB4HRL

Annual Meeting:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic our annual in-person meeting is canceled. Plans are being made to hold a Zoom meeting. To maximize participation, our President has asked everyone to respond to his poll and indicate which dates and times he proposes offer the best chance for each individual to attend. Please check back in your email folders for his December 11th email titled "Poll - Annual Meeting Date (and time) #poll-notice". Follow the "Vote Now" link or email Ed directly.

Presidents Corner:

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Scott KG9V - the newest member of SFCG. Scott and I worked each other in SS SSB and I reached out to him last week via email. We

exchanged a couple more emails about our club and he submitted his application. Scott lives in Fort Mill, SC, holds an Extra class license and is relatively new to the hobby and contesting. He's a member of the York County Amateur Radio Society where he got "hooked" after operating Field Day with them! He uses an IC7300, Elecraft KPA500 Amp and KTA500 Tuner into 2 EFHW antennas (one S-N and one E-W). He also uses an IC9700 and Mirage amp and a dual band Diamond X200A on VHF. Please see Scott's QRZ.com page for more info.



Scott: Welcome to our team and the Swamp Fox Contest Group!

73,
Ed K3DNE
President, SFCG

From the Reflector:

- Jim, K9JDP, posted a link to a YouTube video about his Sotabeam Contest Console.
- Hans, WU0B, discovered he could make QRP RTTY contacts to Europe. Congratulations!
- Frank, KG4IGC, provided a link to obtain Contest Certificates from the Worked All Europe RTTY DX contests provided by the DARC. Certificates from other modes and contests are also available from that web page.
- SFCG activity has been strong lately. Representation, and chatter, was high in the WAE RTTY, CQWW CW, ARRL Sweepstakes, and ARRL 10 meter contests.
- Ed, K3DNE, forwarded information that next year the CQ WW WPX contests will combine the Unassisted and Assisted categories. That announcement created shockwaves throughout the contest community.
- The current SFCG Officers all agreed to serve another year in their current positions. Thank you.
- The sunspots are coming back! SFI numbers are steadily climbing which is bringing high band openings along with them. Don't assume a band is closed anymore. Try a CQ. Begin to rethink your operating strategies to include the possibility of short, but strong, band openings. Ed, K3DNE, forwarded information from Frank, W3LPL, about 10 meter propagation.
- Ed, K3DNE, requested all answer the Poll in his December 12th post and indicate their desired meeting date and time.
- Ed, K3DNE, has been looking at how SFCG people have been placing in 2020 contests. Send him any scores you are particularly pleased with.
- Dave, WN4AFP, shared some information about the 2020 State QSO Party Challenge.
- Scott, KN4SMO, is trying to move to N1MM, but his Mac laptop isn't cooperating.
- Matt, NU4E, asked what general logging programs people like. N3FJP is the favorite. Log4OM is also used by some.
- Bill, N4IQ, put up a new 160 Inverted-L. Look for him to be very competitive on Top Band.
- Matt, NU4E, is constantly improving his antenna farm. He needs to since he appears to live in both high wind and flood zones.

Contest Tips:

K1AR Contest Tips

18 We often think about receiving antennas in terms of the 80 and 160 meter bands. Have you ever tried using a beverage (or similar antenna) on 40 meters? There have been countless times when a separate receiving antenna on 40 Meters has dramatically improved my signal-to-noise ratio, more than compensating for reduced signal strength levels. The bottom line is: improved copying ability. I've even heard of limited success on the higher bands. Give it a try!

33 Contest rules are always changing. Although we make our best effort to report them accurately, even we get them wrong sometimes. Although you may think you know the rules of a contest that you've operated for years, the fact is that rules change all the time. Make the effort to "re-read" the rules for any contest you plan to participate in and you may be surprised how a little knowledge can improve your score!

40 Take a standard mouse pad and punch or drill holes in the pad to correspond with the three feet of your keyer's paddle. The paddle feet are now touching the table top, so the height of the plastic your fingers touch is correct. However, you now have a giant surface area of rubber designed not to slide, holding the paddle in place (tnx K1VR).

46 If you're like me, there are probably dozens of little problems in your shack. Here's a few examples: burned out lamps on your 930, Tailtwister control box, and amp, an intermittent coax switch position, torn headphone pads, a sticky "A" on your keyboard. Like most procrastinators, after you fix these things (usually in minutes), you say: "Why didn't I do that 2 years ago?" Well, fixing the small problems in your contest shack won't make you a better operator, but it will make your comfort level rise; and so will your scores. Get out that soldering gun. Are you up to the challenge?

Every QSO Matters!

By Kevan Nason, N4XL

Some of us were exchanging emails encouraging each other in the heat of the 2020 CQ WW CW battle. Dave, WN4AFP, wrote "I am about 60 points [from] having 1000 Q points... so very soon every mult will add at least 1k to my score." I love it when that happens. You finally feel like you are getting somewhere. The excitement builds. It is easier to keep Butt In Chair (BIC) because you can clearly see that every new QSO matters. Early on in contesting I used to hate slogging through those early beginning q's to get to that point. Then I realized something. Every Q counts exactly the same no matter when it happens. The first q you make is worth the same number of points as the last q. Dave knows this. I know this. It is still exciting to reach that milestone but reaching it doesn't really mean a thing to improving your final score.

I pulled my log after the 2017 CQ WW CW and looked at how much my 101st QSO was worth, then at my final QSO. In the CQ WW you get points for a QSO, maybe points for a country

multiplier, and possibly a second multiplier for a zone multiplier. Depending on the location of the other station, the QSO may be worth up to three points. I assumed it was a 3-point contact. I didn't analyze what my score was after the 100th QSO, so I assumed some figures that ended up with 12,000 points. Whatever the actual score was is irrelevant as it does not change the logic being presented. Here's what QSO 101 was worth:

Score after 3 hours							
QSO's	Pts/Q	QSO Points	Zones	Countries	Score	Difference	
100	3	300	10	30	12,000		Theoretical
101	3	303	10	30	12,120	120	If made just 1 more Q
101	3	303	10	31	12,423	423	If that q was a mult
101	3	303	11	31	12,726	726	if that q was a double mult

That next QSO would be worth from 120 to 726 points, depending on its mult status. Not bad, but nowhere near the thousand minimum Dave was excited about.

I ended with 1081 q's. If I had managed to squeeze out one more q this is what it would have been worth:

Score after 39 hours (Numbers from claimed 3830 score N4XL CQ WW CW 2017)							
QSO's	Pts/Q	QSO Points	Zones	Countries	Score	Difference	
1081	3	2983	112	377	1,458,687		Actual
1082	3	2986	112	377	1,460,154	1,467	If made just 1 more Q
1082	3	2986	112	378	1,463,140	4,453	If that q was a mult
1082	3	2986	113	378	1,466,126	7,439	if that q was a double mult

Wow! That next QSO would have been worth from 1,467 to 7,439 points! Ten times QSO 100. It surely pays to keep BIC.

How can I say Q's are worth the same whenever they happen? Look at it this way. If I had missed that 100th q instead of making it, then instead of 1,081 q's I would have ended with 1,080. I didn't do a chart for it, but going from 1,080 to 1,081 is clearly in the same range as going from 1,081 to 1,082. So, every q I make early on is why those final QSO's are worth so much. Failing to get those early q's means you lose out on the high point q values each QSO brings at the end. QSO number 100 (or 1, or 437, or...) is what made QSO 1081 worth so much at the end. Even though most don't appreciate it, slacking off anytime in a contest costs you dearly in the end. That realization changed my contesting style. That is about the period I moved from what I call a "Serious Contester" to a "Competitive Contester". That is also around the time when I developed my saying "If what you are doing isn't working then try something else, anything else, to improve your rate".

By the way... I finished #3 in the US, SOLP(A) that year. I was chasing W3KB on the Real Time Scoreboard during that contest. I finished with a claimed 1,458,687 while he claimed 1,463,304.

If I only had 4 more q's, or 1 mult and 1 q, or a single double mult, I would have finished #2 instead of #3. I certainly should have been able to find that many Q's in a 48 hour contest. Sadly, another problem cropped up too though. My accuracy wasn't as high as it should have been. He stretched his lead and would have remained #2, but the point about every QSO being of equal importance remains valid.

Observations by the Editor:

- There is a renewed energy throughout the SFCG since Ed, K3DNE, volunteered to be President. That is great! Thank you, Ed. We all should give him as much support as we can. We don't have to wait for him to come up with ideas though. This is your club so help guide it along.
- I've added another item to my pre-contest checklist. Tell Windows not to update itself just before (or during) a contest. Sometime after completing station checks Friday morning for the CQWW contest and its starting Friday evening, Windows10 downloaded an update. Silly me clicked the wrong button and implemented it rather than saying not to. I lost a couple hours during the contest figuring out why things weren't working right.
- The following is from a recent Contesting.com Reflector post. As Frank, W3LPL, commented, this is why you should have more than one antenna for a band; with each covering different take-off angles.

Jari, OH6BG, and team did a refresh of VOACAP.com a month or so ago - cleaning up code and using new maps, etc.

More recently Jari has added a new beta feature - a path takeoff angle analyzer. Given both ends of a path, the code uses Voice of America software to figure out the statistical occurrence of different takeoff angles for available paths.

Who knew, e.g., the path from Portland, OR to Washington DC on 40m most commonly uses a takeoff angle of around 5 degrees, whereas the longer path to Peru most commonly uses a takeoff angle of above 10 degrees.

If I have a 40m sked with my cousin in Boise on 40m, I'll commonly be taking off at around 18 degrees. To chat with my son in Austin, Tx, on 15m, I should elevate my dipole to optimize a takeoff angle of about 5 degrees.

Lower angles are much more prevalent than the antenna literature seems to commonly suggest. It's unusual to see predominant takeoff angles much above 15 degrees.

(The take-off angle analysis covers all months from January to December, and assumes a fixed SSN. Naturally, condx vary month to month, and with changes in SSN.)

Look for the "TO Angle" button at the bottom of <https://www.voacap.com/hf/> :

- Equipment is becoming available at prices not heard of just a few years ago. Examples are a free Force12 C31XR, another ham sold a 50 ft Rohn 25G with additional top and base sections for \$200, a third ham sold a Hygain T2X rotor for \$50. Rather than being happy about that, I find myself feeling concerned about what that means for the long-term prospects of our hobby.

N1MM+ Tips:

- The N1MM+ groups.io reflector has been full of error reports lately. Most seem to be related to things other than N1MM, but it seems to be having troubles too. Most problems are Non-N1MM issues and seem to fall in two general categories.

Windows10 lately seems to be doing far more updates than it has in the past. Unfortunately, Windows updates often change things like LPT/Com ports and audio stream default settings, and those directly affect how N1MM functions to control your radio. I haven't had much time for radio lately, but a priority for me is to refresh my station documentation and ensure I have recorded the software settings needed are well documented and readily at hand.

Another area many are having problems was new to me. Antivirus programs are known to sometimes throw a wrench into the smoothly functioning tool known as Microsoft Windows ("It's a joke, son."). A new one, at least for me, is for some reason some antivirus programs are grabbing control of a com port(s). Sometimes that port is needed by N1MM or other ham programs. I have seen this here at N4XL and have discovered, like others on the reflector, that persistence usually solves startup issues. If N1MM reports a port is being used by another program I can usually solve it by closing N1MM and restarting it.

Hmmm. I have been having problems with an SO2R filter/antenna switch controller randomly tripping offline for about 10 seconds. Sometimes it happens two or three times an hour, or I may go through the entire contest without an issue. It uses a Com port. I wonder if that problem might be related to my antivirus program?

- In a recent SFCG post Ed, K3DNE, mentioned QSOrder. It records the audio coming from your rig and links it to your N1MM log. Neat tool.

- I commented to Bill, N4IQ, many months ago that I did not like how N1MM slowed down whenever I used its internal Spectrum Window. There is a noticeable delay in how fast the Entry Window responds to changes whenever the Spectrum Window is open too. Sometimes the delay is as long as a half second. It is not because I am using a slow computer or video card. Others have noticed delays too. Spot handling is also sometimes slow or erratic too. The N1MM Development Team put out an experimental version which might address those issues. Below is the post about it. I might give this a try.

Hi N1MM+ users,

I have a few changes that we did not want to introduce before the major contest season is over. Its ready to be tested. Any telnet related connectivity issues should not have any impact on the EntryWindow anymore.

Changes are cumulative to the latest downloadable version.

EXPERIMENTAL CHANGES

- Local spots: Duplicating original spot's comments property for new local spot. SNR, gridsquare etc. get carried forward (Coded by KU7T)
- Performance: Moving Telnet window to run on its own thread. After this change, connectivity issues do not affect or block the main UI thread (i.e. EntryWindow does not freeze) (Coded by KU7T)
- Multi-threading: Some code refactoring to streamline creation and "bring to front" for multi-threaded windows (Coded by KU7T)
- SpectrumWindow: Faster start (Coded by KU7T)
- Giving Main UI thread a proper name so error logs have more troubleshooting information (Coded by KU7T)

Download link: <https://n1mmwp.hamdocs.com/mmfiles/telnetthreadingfixes/>

Please let me know how it goes.

73 and many thanks,

Andy
KU7T

- Another interesting tidbit from the N1MM groups.io site. If your rig isn't right next to your keyboard then one of these might help station ergonomics.

Hello all,

Would like to share my experiences with a nice remote knob that will follow N1MM's band map using the up/down arrow assignment. It's called the Contour Shuttle Express, \$59 at Amazon. About 4.25" diameter, nicely weighted with small rubber feet, and has both a dimpled jog knob as well as a shuttle ring (think of the old Yaesu FT-1000MPs with

an inner knob and outer ring). I now have it set up so that it tracks roughly with the 1KHz vfo full rotation on the FTDX-9000D and FTDX-5000MP on the N1MM band map.

It's not perfect (you will hear the frequency steps jump as you rotate the knob going up/down. I was told this is because the knob has only 8 clicks per revolution). I don't mind this, and it's the best option so far. I was looking to get something as similar as possible to the K-Pod for the K3 which works perfectly for that radio.

If anyone pursues this, I will be glad to share my settings and setup to save you trial and error time.

I have no interest in their company, but their customer service responded within 24hours by email, and twice more the same day to answer other questions.

73 Darrell AB2E

- The mouse wheel can control rig frequency.
When in run mode, the wheel changes the RIT.
When in search and pounce mode, the wheel changes the frequency.
But only when the mouse pointer is in the logging window.

Upcoming Contests: See WA7BNM webpages

SFOTA Current Leaderboard:

2020 OVERALL STANDINGS

	CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1)	WB4HRL	208	9135	1681	309	2985	14110
2)	K3DNE	62	1121	11072	343	0	12536
3)	N4IQ	57	6321	1296	442	3950	12009
4)	WN4AFP	86	6996	2073	0	640	9709
5)	NU4E	17	2407	2100	365	2133	7005
6)	KG6MC	36	3705	2787	12	105	6609
7)	N4XL	17	2759	2529	0	0	5288
8)	K7OM	29	1875	255	0	2366	4496
9)	NI7R	26	2747	66	0	313	3126
10)	KS4YX	14	952	55	43	624	1674
11)	KG4IGC	6	408	18	0	971	1397
12)	KN4SMO	6	185	714	0	232	1131
13)	NJ4F	3	50	0	0	779	829
14)	WU0B	1	0	358	0	0	358
15)	NE4EA	3	228	25	0	0	253
16)	AJ4UQ	7	8	2	6	167	183

3830 Activity:

Timestamp	Call	Class	Power	Score
ARRL 10				
12/13/2020	K3DNE	SO Mixed Unlimited	HP	1,378,000
12/14/2020	K7OM	SO CW	HP	18,720
12/14/2020	KG4IGC	SO Mixed	LP	44,160
12/14/2020	KG6MC(AC4MC)	SO Mixed Unlimited	HP	60,590
12/14/2020	KN4SMO	SO SSB	LP	1
12/14/2020	KS4YX	SO CW	LP	20,868
12/14/2020	NI7R	SO CW Unlimited	HP	11,252
12/14/2020	NU4E	SO Mixed Unlimited	HP	16,188
12/14/2020	WB4HRL	SO Mixed Unlimited	HP	6,136
ARRL 160				
12/6/2020	AC4MC	SO Unlimited	HP	41,004
12/6/2020	K3DNE	SO Unlimited	HP	26,600
12/6/2020	K7OM	Single Op	HP	24,282
12/5/2020	N4IQ	SO Unlimited	HP	35,175
12/6/2020	N4XL	SO Unlimited	LP	11,270
12/7/2020	NU4E	SO Unlimited	HP	11
12/6/2020	W6UB	Single Op	HP	27,075
12/9/2020	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	2,400
CQWW CW				
11/30/2020	AC4MC	SO(A)AB	HP	305,450
11/30/2020	K3DNE	SO(A)AB	HP	45,144
11/30/2020	K7OM	SOAB	HP	53,040
11/30/2020	KG4IGC	SO(A)AB	LP	27,195
11/30/2020	KS4YX	SOAB	LP	21,175
11/30/2020	N4IQ	SO(A)AB	HP	60,060
11/30/2020	N4XL	SO(A)AB	LP	1,477,791
11/30/2020	NU4E	SO(A)SB40	HP	1,960
11/30/2020	WB4HRL	SO(A)AB	HP	108,170
11/30/2020	WN4AFP	SOAB Classic	LP	318,000
FT RUp				
12/7/2020	WB4HRL	SO Unlimited	LP	13,630

SS SSB				
11/23/2020	AC4MC	Single Op	HP	64,160
11/23/2020	K3DNE	SO Unlimited	HP	251,248
11/23/2020	K9JDP	SO Unlimited	HP	3,150
11/25/2020	KN4SMO	Single Op	LP	56,088
11/23/2020	N4IQ	SO Unlimited	HP	106,344
11/24/2020	NE4EA	Single Op	LP	850
11/24/2020	NU4E	SO Unlimited	HP	35,190
11/23/2020	WB4HRL	SO Unlimited	HP	19,500
11/23/2020	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	48,840
WAE RTTY				
11/16/2020	AJ4UQ	Single Op	LP	2,300
11/16/2020	K7OM	Single Op	HP	73,505
11/16/2020	KG4IGC	Single Op	LP	100,040
11/16/2020	KN4SMO	Single Op	LP	46,332
11/16/2020	NU4E	Single Op	HP	264,114

Guest Article:

Maybe next time

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73 es QRT de N4XL