



March 2023

Editor: Kevan Nason, N4XL

Thank you to our group leadership:

President – Ed, K3DNE

Vice President - Dave, WN4AFP

Treasurer – Scott, KG9V

Secretary – Kevan, N4XL

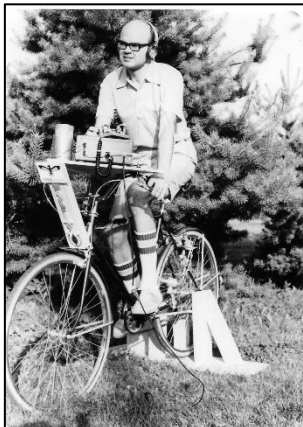
Web Master – Dave, WN4AFP & Frank, KG4IGC

SFCG Webpage: [swampfoxcontestgroup.com](http://swampfoxcontestgroup.com)

### KD4S – Welcome!

Please welcome Dick KD4S to the Swamp Fox Contest Group! Dick was invited to the club by Burton KY4ID back in December and again by me after our W1AW/4 SC VOTA activation. Dick holds an Extra Class license and has held an amateur call since 1959 (N9XO, W9MDW, W2FWO, K9TCO and KD4S). He graduated from Purdue University in 1967 with a BSEE and retired in 2007 after 41 years with same company (mostly called Delco Radio as a division of General Motors located in Kokomo, IN). Dick moved to SC in 2015 and lives in Travelers Rest. His station: Elecraft K3S with P3 display and a KPA500 amplifier. Antennas: SteppIR Big IR for 40 thru 10 meters - it has about 45 radials of various lengths and an 80m EFHW with home made transformer which can be used on other bands. The transformer has relays to bypass it which allows the 132-foot wire to be used as Inverted-L on 160 meters. Please check out his QRZ.com page for more info and photos. Dick told me via email that he isn't a "big contester" but likes to make Q's in contests which sounds like a perfect mutual fit to me!

Dick: Happy to have you on board and part of the SFCG team! 73, Ed K3DNE



## K4RLC – Welcome!

Please *re-welcome* Bob K4RLC to SFCG! Bob has a family beach house and a station at Windy Hill in North Myrtle Beach SC sandwiched between the ocean and a saltwater marsh. Unfortunately, he had problems with significant hurricane damage, flooding and electrical issues that limited his ability to operate his station and he left the club in early 2022. He has since resolved the electrical issues and will soon be working on antenna repairs. Subsequently, he purchased a small camper van for travel and radio operations which gives him even more operating opportunities! Bob enjoys CW contesting, POTA, SOTA and has run the K4 SC state for the SKCC month the past few years. Bob's ham radio experiences are wide-ranging and far-flung - please check out his QRZ page for much more info. Professionally, Bob is a neuropsychologist/neuroscientist and works with patients with sport concussions, TBI and dementia. He's married (K4AAC) with two grown children - his primary residence is in the Raleigh NC area.

Welcome back to the Swamp Fox Contest Group Bob!

73, Ed K3DNE

Editor: Bob knows how to contest in style. What do you keep in the cooler, Bob?



## K2SX – Welcome!

Dennis comes to SFCG via our W1AW/4 SC Volunteers on the Air Event - when it ended, I asked Dennis to consider SFCG membership - we traded several emails and I received his application last evening.

Dennis holds an Extra Class License and was first licensed in 1955 as WN1DYE in Concord NH. He later upgraded to W1DYE, moved to NY and became W2FVS then K2SX and now makes his home at Pawleys Island, SC. Dennis is a well established and well known contester (prefers CW contesting). He finished #1 in the world as a M/M with HC8GR and M/S with CR3L and op'd at VP5M, PF4A, PJ5W, V31AO, VP2VI, 8P9EL, FS7RT, PJ5ME, AH6XX, HH2VP, 4U1UN, K2LE, K1KI and W4BVV. More info can be found on his QRZ.com page.

His home station consists of a K4D, K3, KPA-1500 amp and a THP-HL-1.5KFX amp. His community doesn't allow towers but that hasn't stopped him from putting up dipoles for 80 and 40m, delta loops for 20 and 15m, H-doublebays for 10 and 6m and an inverted-L for 160m. He's a member of FOC, SECC (but out of their ARRL circle!) and CW Ops. He's a former member of YCCC, OWLs, CDXA, WIN and the ARRL Contest Advisory Committee and PR Committee.

Professionally, Dennis worked on Wall Street for 40 years as a research analyst specializing in covering the media, entertainment and leisure time industries. In addition to contesting he is active in community theatre.

Dennis: Welcome to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!

73, K3DNE

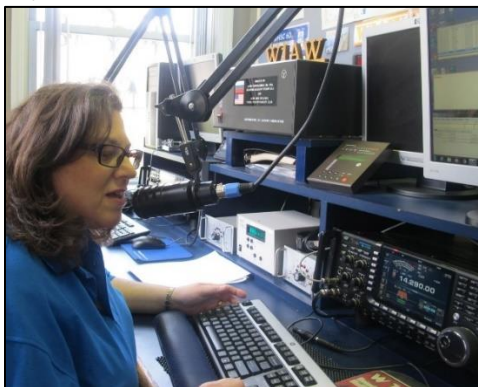
Editor: As you can determine from the above description, Dennis is an excellent operator. Hopefully he will open up and contribute some of his advanced knowledge about contesting and suggest improvements to our group. He has a lot to share.

## **N1SUZ – Welcome!**

Please welcome Suzanne N1SUZ to the Swamp Fox Contest Group! Suzanne comes to SFCG through an invitation by Dave WN4AFP. I think Suzanne's first sentence of her SFCG membership application says it all: "Hello! I'm Suzanne, N1SUZ and I love Ham Radio". Suzanne started as a Technician licensee and enjoyed talking on 10m and operating CW - she later upgraded to General and now Extra. She states that she "loved the hunt" and enjoys operating NAQPs, the New England QSO Party (she's originally from CT), SCQP and the 13 Colonies Operating Event. In 2014 she and her OM (Jim KJ4WKD) had the unique opportunity to operate the NEQP from ARRL Headquarters station W1AW. Check out her QRZ.com page for some great photos of that event and others. Also prominently displayed there are a couple of photos of her Begali Iambic Paddle! Her favorite mode is phone but she writes that she'd love to get back to CW "someday". The last sentence of her application also says a lot: "it would be nice to talk with and learn from some of the great contesters" which puts a little pressure on our club but I know we can help mentor Suzanne along her contesting journey.

Suzanne: Welcome to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!

73, Ed K3DNE

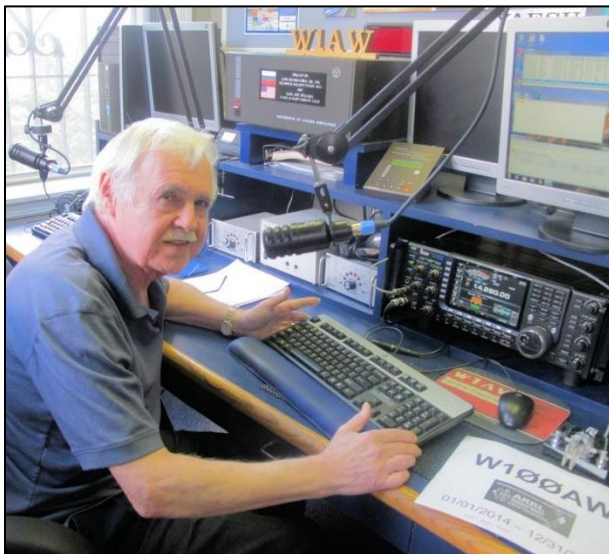


## KJ4WKD – Welcome!

Please welcome new SFCG member; Jim KJ4WKD. Jim is Suzanne's (N1SUZ) OM and is joining SFCG as part of our family membership option. Jim was first licensed as a Novice in 1961 (WN4CNE) and drifted from the hobby until retirement in 2010. Jim now holds an Extra class license. He earned DXCC in 2014 and has operated with Suzanne in the New England QSO Party at W1AW and from home in the 2023 South Carolina QSO Party.

Jim: Welcome to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!

73 Ed K3DNE



## Contest Tips:

From Operating Mechanics: The X Factor in Contesting Success, by Patrick Barkey N9RV

How to Run Faster Rate – Tightening up your act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dead time will kill you</li><li>• Learn a way to cut it out or your competition will eat you alive</li><li>• Possibilities include: Keep a hand on the paddle Learn to use your software Responding to sounds, not calls</li></ul>
How to Run Faster Rate – Cutting out the fluff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You are working the next person in line, not the station you're logging</li><li>• Every transmission has a purpose</li><li>• The most effective way to handle an interloper is to work people <i>(Editor Note: Another "trick" I've read is to have a pre-written list of calls handy. If you want to CQ a bit longer and someone tries to take your frequency because you aren't being answered, use those "dummy" calls to fake q's. Sending exchanges to those calls breaks up the rhythm of how a long</i></li></ul>

	<p><i>string of unanswered CQ's sounds. Sometimes the intruder thinks you are stronger than they are and will move away. I've adapted that advice to simply reusing past calls from my log window. Because they are dupes the log checker ignores them, and no penalties are incurred. Of course, if I don't get real answers I eventually move off and find q's somewhere else.)</i></p>
--	---

From the Florida Contest Group, Contesting Do's & Don'ts Rev. June 2021

<b>Before the Contest</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know your sleep and break plan in advance – set the alarm clock</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know the log-submittal deadline</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check NG3K.com to see who is going to be active from the rarer locations. Keep the list handy during the contest</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If multi-op (<i>Editor: or remote</i>), setup and test your network</li> </ul>
<b>For Any Contest</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine if the contest rules allow for a power multiplier.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a goal for your effort: Beat my buddy, beat my last year's score, work new ones, contribute max score for FCG, keep my butt in the chair for X number of hours or "just have some fun."</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know your station's strengths and weaknesses. Spend more time on bands &amp; modes that work well with your station.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As you move up the band, you increase your chances of finding a space in which to CQ.</li> </ul>
<b>For a Low-power Entry</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose your CQ spots/bands/modes intelligently. For example, don't open up with your mighty 100w on top of someone you know is running higher power and better antennas.</li> </ul>

### EI8IC Contesting Tips

<p>Tape a piece of paper or old QSL card behind the TUNE and LOAD controls on your amp and record the setting for each band and antenna so that you don't have to do a major retune when you change bands.</p>
<p>When home brewing antennas, a monobander is generally easier to construct and get working properly. Don't fall into the common trap of using traps ! They are poor performers in anyone's book, reducing gain and bandwidth; they are best forgotten about. Better to use multi-dipoles attached to the same feedline and supports, either in a fan or using multi-core cable. Better still, a big dipole fed with ladder-line that can be used on many different bands - more on this later.</p>
<p>Not got the room for a beverage? How about a receive-only loop for the LF bands. This can easily be made at home using bamboos to provide a 6-8' diameter support. Because its a closed circuit, its a lot less susceptible to noise than long wire or vertical, and its rotatable too, which can be very useful for nulling out the interference and improving the S/N ratio. You will find a site with homebrew loop information on my Antenna Links page, or just have a look in one of the handbooks.</p>

## From the Reflector:

*Editor's NOTE: As I sat down this month to pull out some highlights, I discovered there were over 600 posts to our reflector since my last newsletter. WOW! It is great to see such activity. Thank you, fellow members. Well... maybe not thanks. Y'all have made me work to pull this section together. (Just kidding!)*

- John NJ4Z received the 2022 Roanoke Division Service Award. From the ARRL's announcement message, " The Roanoke Division Service Award is the highest and most prestigious recognition of an ARRL member operator in the four states of the division who has shown consistent and extensive leadership." Congratulations John!!!
- SFOTA rules are located on the club's website at [swampfoxcontestgroup.com](http://swampfoxcontestgroup.com). It was noted any contacts made with WW4SF do in fact count toward your SFOTA totals. Contact Dave NJ4F if you want to use the group's call for a contest. As Ed K3DNE mentioned, the WW4 prefix is relatively rare in the CQ WPX contest which is in two days.
- Several members of our skulk were fortunate enough to work 3Y0J. Congratulations!
- Several new members joined in the ARRL DX contests. Unfortunately, John NJ4Z's first outing resulted in amplifier failure. Not sure if it was rejecting John's joining the SFCG or just telling him it needed some TLC before it could leap to the forefront of the SFOTA. We're hoping the latter. Sorry to hear of your troubles, John.
- We missed John K4FT in the ARRL DX CW, but glad he could work with the fine folk at W5MX. That was surely a great experience.
- Take a look at the end of the newsletter and you'll see some Foxes are branching out into less popular contests. That's great! Some noted on the reflector that N1MM did not support them. Others responded that you can sometimes find UDC's (User Defined Contest) for unsupported contests on the N1MM website.
- Burton KY4ID noted an SFI of 343! Amazing. Although Kevan N4XL thought it a fluke reporting error and band conditions would be good but not great, the bands turned out to be very good indeed. It's great to see the bands picking up.
- Frank KG4IGC noted what many hams have come to hate. Cut numbers too often slow q's down. Especially since there isn't a standard for their use. European stations are especially "notorious" for using them.
- Ted K7OM reached his ARRL DX CW goal of 300 q's. Dave NJ4F responded from the peanut gallery with "Bout time." Tom added a few more and ended with 329. Reckon we need to get Dave NJ4F's station back on the air so he can show Ted how it is supposed to be done.
- Even Bob AC4MC got dragged into the ARRL DX CW fun when he found out just how wide open the ARRL DX CW was.
- Gil KS4YX tried something different this year. He racked up 122 q's while 10m Single Band QRP. Good job, Gil.
- The SCQP racked up some great scores with good participation from many SFCG members. N4IQ, W4JLP and WN4AFP came up with a way to fit the standard reports from FT8/4 contacts into the rules allowing continued growth in SCQP participation.

- Van N4VGE got into the SCQP fun. He entered multi-multi with KB1AWM with an extremely impressive 514,582 claimed points. Great job Van and Greg. Hey Foxes... We might have a sleeper in our midst. Greg did the SCQP by himself last year and scored a respectable, but much much lower, 126,230. Could the extra 400K score the team received this year be due to Van? Only time will tell but keep your eye on N4VGE's scores.
- Bob KZ3P jumped right into the SFCG SFOTA competition by logging 596 SCQP contacts for a whopping 192,180 points. Good showing, Bob.
- Many Foxes have been enjoying 6m propagation. Ed K3DNE has been sharing his wisdom about propagation, antennas, and such. FT8 is unquestionably the predominate mode.
- Kevan N4XL gave some guidance for self-spotting for N1MM in ARRL contests.
- Gary AF7T made me break out the dictionary. His post started with "Greetings Gangue." Gangue – "the commercially valueless material in which ore is found." Reckon he's right in that we certainly don't contribute anything of commercial worth. I choose to believe his point was there are some truly valuable folk in the SFCG if you dig a bit deeper. Well done, Gary.
- Ed K3DNE pushed SO2V operation. If you have that capability it can truly enhance your scores.
- Hans WU0B came out of hiding to work the NAQP RTTY. He even brought his 6 year old daughter into the shack to work Dave WN4AFP.
- George N4QI continues to rock on and had fun in several tests. Keep sending those scores in George.
- Frank did some antenna work earlier in the year and found a broken wire on his OCF dipole, corroded connection on a balun terminal, and some defective coax running to a Delta loop. He set a good example for all of us. Now that the weather is getting better, give up some BIC time and do some maintenance.
- Dave NJ4F is making steady progress on recovering from his tower and antennas being destroyed by a hurricane. Hopefully he will be back on the air in a couple months.
- Matt NU4E managed a 6 band sweep of PJ2T in just a few hours during the ARRL DX SSB. Way to go Matt! That should tell everyone just how much the bands have changed from last year. Everything is opening much more than before. Matt has true contester dedication. When he found out he was leading the US on the Contesting Online Scoreboard he decided he needed to stay home from work and keep his lead.
- Bob KZ3P completed his 10 meter DXCC during the SCQP. He also completed WAS on 20 and 40 meters during that event. Congratulations Bob. Contesting pays off.
- John NJ4Z completed his 10 meter DXCC during a contest too. Congratulations Jon. Contesting pays off.

## South Carolina QSO Party – KY4ID/AA5JF Expedition After Action Review

By Burton KY4ID

Well here we are, here we are again with another installment from ID. I hear the cheers...I mean jeers. Let's jump right in, shall we? Standard disclaimers apply; I have no financial interest in the SCQP, you may already know all of this, I have no idea what I'm doing, etc. etc.

Andy (AA5JF) and I got to know each other while I was preparing to operate portable in the GAQP last year. I missed day 1 due to a work meeting, so I tried to pull out all the stops and gain every advantage on day 2. I bounced those ideas off Andy ahead of time. He was gracious enough to endure all my machinations and helped me refine my strategy. In December, Andy floated the idea of operating portable M/2 in the SCQP, which kicked off this adventure.

We knew that Andy would arrive to the party late on Saturday due to a prior work obligation. No problem. We pulled some pages from the GAQP playbook to try to offset that loss of BIC time. The plan changed several times, but we settled on a POTA activation in Aiken County, a non-POTA operation in Edgefield County, a POTA activation in McCormick, then a game time decision on Abbeville County. The 2022 QSO totals that AFP sent out helped form that strategy. Andy would operate SSB and I would operate CW.

### Henderson Heritage Area

I've activated this park before, so I knew what to expect. I arrived at 8am, setup my antenna, hooked up the radio, computer, etc., configured N1MM for the 991a, and fired off a couple of CQs to get an idea of conditions. RBN spots were favorable, so I shut everything down, charged batteries, and waited for the opening bell. I did bring a table, chairs, etc., but it was raining that day, so I setup everything in the car. 10am hit and the action was fast and furious for 2 hours. Calls started to dry up around noon...perfect timing as that's exactly when I planned to stop and move to Edgefield anyway. I'm thinking it's going to be a great day. I turn everything off, start the car to charge the batteries, throw the antenna in the trunk, and speed off to Trenton.

Learnings – charge batteries first, take them off chargers last.

### Trenton, SC

Trenton has a 3 acre park they use for the Peach Festival and nothing else. It was still raining in Edgefield, so I operated from the car again. I actually left everything hooked up when I left Aiken, so all I had to do was setup the antenna, hook it to the tuner, turn everything on, and go. Trenton was a little lighter than Aiken, but steady. I expected that since it wasn't a POTA entity.

Andy joined me about 45 mins after I started, and setup about 100 yards away from me. We started out using band pass filters, but testing showed that we didn't need them, so we ditched the filters and operated at will. Andy managed to churn out 150 Qs on SSB in less than an hour. CW started to dry up right around the time I planned to move to McCormick anyway. Once again, I'm thinking we crafted the perfect strategy. More on that later. I left for McCormick, while Andy stayed behind to try to work 15m SSB.

Learnings – leave everything hooked up in the car, BPFs not needed when 100 yards apart.



## Hamilton Branch

I arrived at the shelter Andy reserved at Hamilton Branch to find it was occupied with a weigh in for a fishing tournament. The reservation was made to avoid this scenario. I diplomatically encouraged them to leave post haste, and by the time I was setup they were gone. McCormick was absolutely on fire. I hit the "time to leave" mark as my run on 20m was just starting to dry up for the first time. It was starting to get dark, but I hadn't had an opportunity to check 40m/80m yet.

We did run into an issue. POTA has a neat feature on their website. You can go in ahead of time, schedule your activation, and when you show up on the RBN, the POTA website will also spot you. They made that feature for parks that have no cell coverage, and normally that would be a great feature. The problem is that when Andy tried to spot himself on SSB, my CQs would flip that spot to CW. Deleting the activation from the POTA website had no effect. The fix is to add a modifier, "/R01" after KY4ID on the POTA spots page. Doing so will get a shared call to show up for both modes. Unfortunately, we figured that out after the fact. At Hamilton Branch, I was drowning in QSOs, and the action for Andy was on the lighter side. He broke down and went to Abbeville, while I stayed behind a little longer to work 40m/80m.

I did notice some gnarly QRM right before he left. Where's that coming from? We're in the middle of nowhere! Oh, its happens when Andy keys the mic and we're on the same band. LOL.

The pileups at Hamilton Branch were brutal. Brutal as in not fun. In N4XLs AAR for ARRL DX CW, he mentioned that he wanted to work on handling large pileups. I need to do the same. We all know that one of the tricks to handling an SSB or CW pileup is to mentally lock onto a call ASAP and block out everything else. I just couldn't do it. I'd get something like KB1 [QRM] N. I also broke one of my own rules. I gave a presentation on portable contesting a while back. In that video, I mention that going out to contest means different priorities and equipment than a POTA activation. I should have taken my 590SG instead of the 991a. Better, more accessible filters, which would have probably helped. Also, the keying on the 991a is done over USB. I've never had a problem with computer lags affecting keying, but there's a first time for everything and that was the day.

Another issue I ran into was light. My keyboard is not backlit. I used the light from the screen for a while, but eventually had to stop and go grab the lantern. I also found that my muscle memory is not the same when using the laptop keyboard, and my fingers and brain don't work well at all when it's cold.

I gave it another 30 minutes and shut everything down. I immediately noticed that the park that was previously bustling with activity was pitch black dark and empty. It was kind of like being in an episode of the Twilight Zone. I dunno if I was distracted by the "flow state", or if I felt like I had company with all the callers on the radio. Breakdown was painful. A combination of cold and sitting still for 3 hours made it exceptionally hard to move. I sat in the car for 10 mins to get myself together. 5 back and forth trips later, I was on the way to Abbeville.

Learnings – POTA spotting issue, practice with the laptop keyboard before the contest, bring the 590SG, bring a hat, gloves, handwarmers, and a better coat, maybe skip the shelter and

setup from the car to save time, use bandpass filters when antennas are only 20 feet apart, and definitely buy a computer with a backlit keyboard next go round.

### **Sumter National Forest (Abbeville)**

I left Hamilton Branch with an hour and 45 mins left in the contest. It's a 45 minute drive. I decided to pull over as soon as I saw the Abbeville County sign, delete the POTA activation from their website, and get back on the air. Wouldn't you know, I passed that sign 2 miles from my destination, so I just forged ahead. Being that this was a National Forest, there was no shelter, etc. Just a gravel road with no traffic. I setup 100 yards from Andy and hooked up everything in the car. He runs down to hand me a chair. No...keep the chair, I'm done with the outdoors. Lol. The cold at McCormick had a big effect on my operating abilities. I did find a system to getting my antenna up fast. Roll out the wires, hammer one stake into the ground, go to the other end, pull it tight, leave 2 feet of slack, hammer that stake into the ground, and raise the mast. Doing so kept the wires taut and supported the mast while I hammered the 2 remaining stakes into the ground. Setup was down to 10 minutes from about 20-30.

A little less than an hour later, time was up and the game was over. Perfect timing too; a convoy of trucks came rolling down the road and I had to hop out and tear everything down quickly.

### **Post contest**

Parks on the Air is super easy going. They really don't care what you do; contesting while activating a park is totally ok, etc. But the one rule they have is that you are required to send in your logs. They have an extensive awards system which is fed by logs from activators. I chose to keep 4 separate logs. Andy kept one log, and used Alt-H when changing parks. Alt-H opens the "Rover QTH" box for you to enter your new county. The short answer is Andy's way is the best/easiest. Each op keeps one log, each uses Alt-H when moving, and those 2 logs are merged into one after the contest, either using N1MM or ADIF Master. It's an easy process either way. Then, using ADIF Master, you have to split out logs for each park and submit to POTA.

The POTA piece gets a bit complicated. They have several scenarios –

**Pass the mic ("standby for second operator")** – 2 ops, 2 separate callsigns used on the air, 2 logs, almost identical QSOs for each op, and an activation credited to each op

**Multi op (either M/S or M/2) with a club call** – they prefer this scenario.

- Club call gets credit
- Each operator gets credit applied to their own call for the QSOs they actually made, even though they didn't use their personal call on the air.

**Multi op with a non club call** – what we did. Andy suggested using a 4 land call based in SC. The downside to this approach is that all QSO/activation credit goes to the call holder (me in this case) only.

### **Results**

The KB1AWM multi-op team posted results on Monday morning. They got us. A quick comparison of QSO totals reveals the answer. We were short on SSB QSOs. Ok, there's our problem right there! Just make sure that both ops can operate full time next year! Case closed!

...Right? Not so fast, Burton. Remember, I said in the beginning that we knew ahead of time that Andy had to work Saturday morning. We pulled a page from the GAQP playbook and crafted the 4 county strategy for the purpose of offsetting that disadvantage. I had to remind myself of that. So, the learnings are slightly different –

1. that didn't work,
2. **the real kicker** – the upside of being able to work everyone a second, third, and fourth time is not enough to offset the loss of BIC time caused by changing parks. Even if Andy had been there from the beginning, we would have arrived at similar totals to Team KB1AWM.

I'm still shocked that's the case, but it is. Another comparator is WZ4M. Single op, but let's look at CW Qs only to get an accurate comparison. He operated from one park in Dillon County. 680 Qs in 11 hours, compared to my 700 Qs in 9 hours. My BIC time was shorter and my total was greater, but I had the advantage of resetting my pool of callers 3 times. He was stuck with the same pool of callers for 11 hours.

Setting up and breaking down 4 times is a lot of work for 20 more QSOs. In fact, I'm gonna go out on a limb and say that's within the margin of error. Switching parks does earn you an additional multiplier each time you move, but I doubt any of us would burn 2 hours chasing 4 mults in a conventional contest. Oh! And both KB1AWM and WZ4M beat us in CW multipliers anyway; 61 and 70 respectively.

My theories as to why things worked out this way –

- POTA hunters hop on the radio for an hour or two and QRT. They come and go.
- Most SCQP ops are not in it full time. They come and go.
- S&P is worthwhile, given that SC counties are mults for SC stations. We didn't have time for S&P.

Again, all theories. Either way, based on our experience this year, the strategy will change next year. I'm good with that. Setup/teardown x4 is a ton of work, and doing it in the dark is not fun. Maybe next year, we rent a cabin in a state park, bring some steaks, beer, maybe some cigars, operate indoors in the heat, then spend the night and do the NCQP the following day. Sounds like the perfect way to wind down after the SCQP. The downside is that we only activate one county vs four. Not a good thing for the SCQP, but I'm not quite sure how to fix that. Maybe heavier incentives for switching counties, grouping stations together by the number of counties they activated, or a minimum county requirement. Or...maybe continued growth in Expedition/POTA is the answer. Speaking of which....

### **Parks on the Air**

Parks on the Air has been a great thing for amateur radio. Here are some quick stats –

- SCQP Expedition stations on the air – 7 in 2023 vs 1 in 2022
- GAQP Expedition stations on the air – 14 in 2022 vs 8 in 2021
- 2022 activations – 141,477, a 195% increase YoY
- 2022 activators – 7,187, a 171% increase YoY
- 2022 QSO count – 6,260,162, a 220% increase YoY

Based on those trends, I think we will see even more Expedition stations on the air next year. More POTA activity = more counties on the air = a more active event and more interest/participation from outside SC. I do think it would be worthwhile to add mode categories (SSB, CW, Digi, Mixed) at a minimum to incentivize more Expedition activity.

### **Conclusion**

Planning for next year is already well underway. We will return with an all new playbook, and plenty of new tricks up our sleeves. It's possible that an extensive, in-depth analysis of our logs has been completed, and that proprietary data holds some secrets that only we know. Secrets that will inform our strategy for next year. Or...maybe this is all sleight of hand and misdirection, and our strategy is hiding in plain sight in this article. Time will tell. I do know this, no one will know either way until it's all over. Ha! See you next year!

Burton out.

### **Observations by the Editor:**

- Discovered a new “trick” during the ARRL DX CW for fighting QRM. Conventional wisdom is to turn off anything that might cause distortion in the receive chain of your rig when band conditions are crowded. Doing so optimizes the RMDR of the rig. The ARRL DX CW contest had very crowded conditions and I normally left the noise reduction circuits (NR) off. When pointing the yagi towards southern EU and northern AF I have been picking up an S2 to S3 broadband noise on what is otherwise a normally quiet 10 meters. To combat that when weak signals are present, I sometimes turn NR on. I forgot to turn it off when I went to the crowded and QRM heavy 20 meter band. While trying to copy a station through a particularly loud adjacent signal I noticed NR was still on. To my surprise, when I turned it off instead of improving things the higher pitched QRM distortion due to that adjacent station became worse. Apparently, the NR settings I had selected recognized the QRM as being an unwanted signal and improved my reception. A new tool for the QRM tool box.
- Those of you who order electronic parts might be interested in a thread about Newark Electronics from the Amateur-repairs reflector. Newark was a go-to supplier for me 20 years ago. It now seems many folks are no longer happy with them. Specific complaints brought up by several people are noted below. Despite the issues I'll mention I ordered from them a couple times three or four years ago without any problems. I'll also point out supply train issues that started with the COVID pandemic could account for some of these, but even so Newark's ordering system should take that into account.
  - Minimal customer service. Account problems mentioned were linking business and personal accounts together and then refusing to separate them requiring cancelation of both accounts and creation of new. Unexplained canceling of an account.
  - Commonly showing parts to be in stock for immediate shipment when they aren't.
  - Refusal to ship a common microchip on the grounds there was a restriction on the microprocessor. The person instead ordered a quantity of the chips from both Mouser Electronics and Digi-Key without any mention of them being restricted.
  - The microprocessor above was part of a much larger order. Although it was only the microprocessor they wouldn't ship the entire order was canceled. Adding insult to injury the

company's robot sent the man an automated message asking him to rate the parts that were canceled.

Most of my recent orders have been from Mouser and Digi-Key. After reading the experiences some have had I think I'll continue to first look in their direction for my future orders.

- It is likely many of you who operate Assisted have the same problem I do with busted spots too frequently appearing on your Band Map or M&Q window. Ran across this on the CWOps reflector. Haven't used the tip yet. To be honest, although I believe I have a good idea how to do it I'm not exactly sure how to use the filter directly within N1MM. However, it sounds like something I want to figure out. The idea came from Pete N4ZR. If you're not familiar with him he is the biggest driving force behind the Reverse Beacon Network. When he speaks, people listen. At least I do. If Pete found it useful in reducing bad spots, then it's worth my looking at too. He wrote:

"Rich makes an interesting point about validity filtering. AR Cluster V6, for example, offers a filter called "skimvalid", which looks back to see if there are two more spots of the same call on the same frequency (within +/- 0.3 KHz). That's fine but will delay the first spot you get when someone begins CQing on a new frequency. I started using "not skimbusted" instead, which only looks for evidence that the current spot is a bust, and it made a useful difference in how soon I would see new CQers, allowing me to jump on their first CQ on a new frequency."

The comment sparking Pete's reply is interesting too. Rich VE3KI said:

"I too see no point in self-spotting in CW. If it's busts that bother you, use a cluster node that has validity filtering to remove random busts. If you see lots of busts of your own callsign, that should suggest to you that maybe the timing is off in your CQ message. For example, if you don't leave enough space between the CWT and your callsign, you might get spotted with a T tacked on to the beginning of your callsign."

I, and others, disagree with the "no point in self-spotting in CW" comment, but I wasn't aware there are some cluster nodes that have something called "validity filtering" that apparently use an extended filter command set. And of course, I've no idea what clusters use that feature.

If you're wondering why I think you might still want to self-spot in CW despite the RBN it's because some ops prefer to use CQ formats that the RBN does not pick up. They use things like SCQP N4XL or N4XL CWT instead of putting CQ or TEST in their CQ solicitations. Virtually every CW contest I operate in I find stations not spotted by the RBN whenever I turn the VFO knob.

Isn't it a great hobby? With all these smart people involved it is always changing and there is always something new to learn – or relearn because it has been improved. It's said an active mind helps stave off Alzheimer's Disease. I wonder if the percentage of Hams having that affliction is less than the general population.

- The subject of autotuner loss came up in the Q&A session after a talk on contesting. I asked if single band antennas were a better route to go than my method of using a multiband inverted-L for 160-40 with a tuner at its base. I was curious what the group thought about antenna efficiency of a monoband dipole vs system loss for the configuration I use. I displayed a chart showing tuner loss. The more inductance you use the more loss the tuner has. Although a definitive answer wasn't arrived at, Lu W4LT mentioned tuner loss is one reason he always cuts his antennas to be resonant

in the CW and digital portion of the bands. He can still use a tuner to achieve a low SWR in the SSB portion, and since the tuner uses mostly capacitance to match the higher frequency SSB portion it has a lower loss.

- In the N1MM Tips below I mention keeping your hands on the keyboard helps reduce mistakes. If you are a touch typist your eyes do not have to be on the keyboard while typing, but you might have to glance down to find the correct position when replacing your hand after it strays to the paddles or radio. I've been saying that for years, but rarely get agreement. Although I feel strongly it is best to keep hands on the keyboard, the lack of response to my saying so has made me question my thinking. So much so that lately I have hesitated to say it. During the same Q&A where tuner loss came up, a blind ham mentioned he hated to move his hands from the keyboard as it was difficult to quickly replace them on the keyboard. He could not always quickly find the correct hand positioning and was too often unable to maintain a smooth rhythm while logging q's. Huh. I felt validated. Anything that distracts your attention from logging q's represents a possibility of lower rate. Reminds me of the old saying "Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves."

### N1MM+ Tips:

- Too often in CW contests my call, N4XL, is confused with N3XL, N1XL, N4XR, etc. Instead of reaching for the paddles I like to set up Fkeys to help. Using Fkeys instead of paddles does two things to help rate and efficiency. It keeps my hands on the keyboard and eliminates a possible error point of me messing up sending CW on the paddles causing further delay for a repeat. The other station is already having issues copying my call and I don't want to further confuse them with mistakes from my end. One of my Fkey's has N4 and another has XL. I will send something like "N4XL XL XL" or "N4 N4 N4XL". I noticed doing things that way will sometimes generate its own confusion (as in "N4XLX?" and occasionally "N4XLXL?") so I decided to modify things by slowing down the computer generated CW when the N4 and XL are sent.

```
F6 N4,N>>4<<
```

```
F7 XL,>>X>>~<<L<<
```

The > sign slows the CW down by 1 step. >> by two. The two << signs return speed to normal. By default, N1MM slows down or speeds up by 2 WPM so there is a 4 wpm difference in speed created by the above method. (NOTE: you can change the default speed steps if you want. I've found 2 WPM to be a good value to use though.)

The ~ key puts a half space between characters instead of the normal spacing found between two letters. I experimented a bit with different combinations of <, >, and ~ and what I have above is my current standard for what works best in marginal conditions.

If that explanation wasn't clear enough, here's another try. I tune across a station calling CQ and send my call at 32 WPM. I hear "N4XR" back from the Runner. It's best to make the call correction before sending the exchange so I hit F4 to send my full call again. While it is being sent, I tap F7 twice. So... N4XL is sent at 32 wpm when I push F4. Then speed slows down two steps to 28 wpm and X is sent. Next, the computer silently speeds back up to 32 wpm waits a half space worth of character separation time and silently slows back down to

28 wpm. Then it sends L and speeds up two steps returning it to the original 32 wpm. Because I hit F7 twice it repeats the "XL" process again. Summarizing -- the sequence sent to a Runner copying my call wrong is "N4XL XL XL" with the two XL's being 4 wpm slower than normal, and to enhance clarity the letters X and L are separated slightly longer than normal from each other.

- I don't use >, <, or ~ in my CQ's though. Skimmers and CW decoders are known to sometimes have a hard time dealing with speed and character spacing changes. Mixing speeds and space lengths in a CQ unnecessarily invites busted spots of your call sign. Maybe we can do that in a couple more years when AI advances a bit further, but best to stay away from doing that for a while longer.
- Keystrokes To Know
  - CTRL + Q quick edit your contact in the log.
  - CTRL + W wipes all fields in your entry window.
  - INSERT or ; repeat the QSO
  - ALT + Q jump back to your last run frequency from S&P
  - CTRL + ALT + ENTER force log a contact, with a note.
  - The Space Bar is the preferred way to move from field to field in the entry window if need be.

### Upcoming Contests:

See the WA7BNM webpages <https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestcal.html>

## SFOTA Current Leaderboard:

Mar-16-2023						
Current Leaderboard						
2023 OVERALL STANDINGS						
CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1) K3DNE	6	135	3742	0	102	3979
2) N4XL	3	2396	1472	0	0	3868
3) K4FT	34	3251	229	0	182	3662
4) WN4AFP	31	2380	698	0	0	3078
5) NU4E	3	500	2300	0	0	2800
6) N4IQ	5	1087	0	0	1272	2359
7) K4QQG	13	0	2069	0	259	2328
8) KY4ID	18	2268	0	0	0	2268
9) K7OM	8	731	0	0	1173	1904
10) N4QI	29	1039	367	0	497	1903
11) AC4MC	5	769	933	0	0	1702
12) KG4IGC	6	254	156	0	972	1382
13) KZ3P	8	0	1331	0	0	1331
14) KS4YX	4	122	0	0	718	840
15) KD4S	4	395	142	0	236	773
16) NE4EA	5	271	159	0	0	430
17) NJ4Z	2	253	100	0	0	353
18) KM4RK	3	0	100	0	0	100
19) KB1QU	1	0	57	0	0	57
20) WA2BCK	1	0	26	0	0	26
21) N2OG	1	12	0	0	0	12

2023 INDIVIDUAL MODE STANDINGS							
CALL	CW QSO'S	CALL	SSB QSO'S	CALL	DIGITAL QSO'S	CALL	RTTY QSO'S
K4FT	3251	K3DNE	3742	N4IQ		N4IQ	1272
N4XL	2396	NU4E	2300	K7OM		K7OM	1173
WN4AFP	2380	K4QQG	2069	KG4IGC		KG4IGC	972
KY4ID	2268	N4XL	1472	KS4YX		KS4YX	718
N4IQ	1087	KZ3P	1331	N4QI		N4QI	497
N4QI	1039	AC4MC	933	K4QQG		K4QQG	259
AC4MC	769	WN4AFP	698	KD4S		KD4S	236
K7OM	731	N4QI	367	K4FT		K4FT	182
NU4E	500	K4FT	229	K3DNE		K3DNE	102
KD4S	395	NE4EA	159				
NE4EA	271	KG4IGC	156				
KG4IGC	254	KD4S	142				
NJ4Z	253	NJ4Z	100				
K3DNE	135	KM4RK	100				
KS4YX	122	KB1QU	57				
N2OG	12	WA2BCK	26				

## 3830 Activity:

ARRLDX CW				
02/20/23	AC4MC	SOUAB	HP	488,037
02/20/23	K3DNE	SOSB15	HP	22,275
02/20/23	K7OM	SOAB	HP	150,152
02/20/23	KB1QU	SOAB	HP	122,262
02/20/23	KD4S	SOUAB	HP	87,696
02/20/23	KG4IGC	SOSB10	LP	45,144
02/20/23	KS4YX	M/S	QRP	19,032
02/20/23	KY4ID	SOSB40	LP	50,787
02/20/23	N4QI	SOAB	LP	119,448
02/20/23	N4XL	SOUAB	LP	2,431,629



02/20/23	NJ4Z	SOAB	HP	117,645
02/20/23	NN4SS	SOAB	HP	370,872
02/20/23	WN4AFP	SOSB40	LP	68,943
<b>ARRLDX SSB</b>				
03/05/23	K3DNE	SOUAB	HP	2,227,560
03/07/23	K4FT	SOUSB10	LP	6,156
03/06/23	K4QQG	SOUAB	HP	617,826
03/06/23	KD4S	SOUAB	HP	18,924
03/06/23	KM4WPR	M/S	LP	58,590
	(NE4EA,@KM4WPR)			
03/16/23	KY4ID	M/S	LP	1,320
03/06/23	KZ3P	SOAB	HP	344,400
03/05/23	N1SUZ	SOAB	LP	27,141
03/06/23	N4QI	SOAB	LP	18,444
03/06/23	N4XL	SOUAB	LP	1,327,854
03/05/23	NU4E	SOUAB	HP	2,656,596
03/08/23	WN4AFP	SOUSB40	LP	2,250
<b>CQ160 SSB</b>				
02/26/23	K3DNE	Single Op Assisted	HP	10,764
02/27/23	K4FT	Single Op Assisted	LP	3,360
02/27/23	NU4E	Single Op Assisted	HP	8,436
<b>IdQP</b>				
03/13/23	K4QQG	SOABSSB	HP	66
03/14/23	KZ3P	SOABSSB	HP	40
03/13/23	N4QI	SOABMixed	LP	28
03/13/23	WN4AFP	SOABMixed	LP	420
<b>NA Sprint RTTY</b>				
03/12/23	N4IQ	Single Op	HP	4,323
<b>NAQP RTTY</b>				
02/26/23	K7OM	Single Op	LP	17,325
02/26/23	KG4IGC	Single Op	LP	37,127
02/26/23	KS4YX	Single Op	LP	27,615
02/26/23	N3FR	Single Op	LP	74,798
02/26/23	N4QI	Single Op	LP	4,876
<b>NCCC RY-Sprint</b>				

03/10/23	N4IQ	Single Op	LP	462
<b>NCQP</b>				
02/27/23	K4FT	SO CW	LP	4,620
02/27/23	K4QQG	SO SSB	HP	4,392
02/28/23	KG4IGC	SO CW	QRP	3,393
02/27/23	KZ3P	SO SSB	HP	11,016
02/26/23	N4QI	SO CW	LP	969
02/27/23	WN4AFP	SO Mixed	LP	2,340
<b>OkQP</b>				
03/13/23	K4QQG	SOABSSB	HP	395
03/14/23	KZ3P	SOABSSB	HP	18
03/13/23	N1SUZ	SOABSSB	LP	384
03/13/23	N4QI	SOABMixed	LP	975
03/13/23	WN4AFP	SOABMixed	LP	21,900
<b>REF SSB</b>				
03/03/23	N4QI	SOAB	LP	243
<b>SA10</b>				
03/14/23	K4QQG	SO SSB	HP	14
03/14/23	KZ3P	SO SSB	HP	969
03/13/23	N4QI	SO Mixed	LP	2,530
<b>SCQP</b>				
02/26/23	K3DNE	Single Op FixedSSB	HP	262,970
02/26/23	K4QQG	Single Op FixedSSB	HP	213,560
02/26/23	KD4S	Single Op FixedMixed	HP	65,666
02/26/23	KG4IGC	Single Op FixedSSB	LP	30,100
02/27/23	KZ3P	Single Op FixedSSB	HP	192,180
03/05/23	N1SUZ	Single Op FixedSSB	LP	121,088
02/26/23	N4QI	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	12,810
02/27/23	NE4EA	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	34,790
02/26/23	WN4AFP	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	258,620
02/26/23	WW4SF/GRWD(N4XL,WW4SF)	Single Op FixedMixed	LP	188,514
02/27/23	WW4SF/HAMP(WW4SF,@K4FT)	Single Op FixedCW	LP	107,300

<b>TBDC</b>				
03/13/23	K7OM	Single Op	HP	120
<b>WIQP</b>				
03/14/23	K4QQG	SO Fixed	HP	989
03/13/23	KZ3P	SO Fixed	HP	660
03/13/23	N1SUZ	Rookie SO	LP	9,300
03/13/23	N4QI	SO Fixed	LP	13,110
03/13/23	WN4AFP	SO Fixed	LP	35,810
<b>YBDX RTTY</b>				
03/12/23	KG4IGC	Single Op	LP	7,396

## DXpeditions:

This month starts a new section to Tales From The Swamp. John NJ4Z prepares a monthly list of DXpeditions for the YCARS newsletter and is graciously providing it to me for monthly publication too. Their newsletter comes out at the beginning of the month and ours in the middle of the month so I'm afraid some of the information is outdated, but there is plenty of opportunities for you to snag juicy DX with the time remaining in the month. Thank you, John. NOTE: The last entry says 3/34 – 3/31. Obviously it should read 3/24.

CALLSIGN	LOCATION	DATES
T88UW	Palau, South Pacific	3/1
3B7M	St. Brandon Islands, Indian Ocean	3/1-3/5
JD1BOI / JD1BON	Chichi Jima Island, Japan	3/1 – 3/5
5J01EA / 5K0VT	Providencia/ San Andreas Providencia, C.A.	3/1 – 3/5
J8NY	St. Vincent Island (Caribbean)	3/1 – 3/7
FG4KH	Guadeloupe	3/1 – 3/8
ZS7ANF	Antarctica	3/1 – 3/9
HD8M	Santa Cruz Island – Galapagos Is.	3/1 – 3/11
HR5/F2JD	Honduras, Central America	3/1 – 3/13
C5C	The Gambia, Africa	3/1 – 3/14
TR8CR	Gabon, Africa	3/1 – 3/15
FT4YM	Antarctica	3/1 – 3/14
FT8WW	Crozet Island, Africa	3/1 – 3/24
VP2MDX	Montserrat, Caribbean	3/1 – 3/27
6W7/ON4AT	Warang Senegal, Africa	3/1 – 3/31
RI1ANC / RI30ANT	Antarctica	3/1 – 3/31
H44MS	Solomon Islands, South Pacific	3/1 – 3/31
VK0AW	Antarctica	3/1 – 3/31
VK9WW	Willis Island	3/1 – 3/31
FH4VVK	Mayotte Island (Fr.) Africa Indian Ocean	3/1 – 3/31
VP5/N9EAJ	Turks and Caicos, Caribbean	3/7 – 3/21
DU1/SP5APW	Palawan Island, Philippines	3/13 – 3/17
VK9NT	Norfolk Island Oceania	3/15 – 3/28
CY0S	Sable Island	3/20 – 3-29
TO70FM / EA1BP	Martinique, Caribbean	3/21 – 3/28
VP2MEI	Montserrat, Caribbean	3/23 – 3/31
TO1Q	Guadeloupe	3/34 – 3/31