



TALES FROM THE SWAMP

May 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 – Frank, KG4IGC

SFCG Webpage: swampfoxcontestgroup.com

AA4VT – Welcome!



Please Welcome Dave AA4VT to the Swamp Fox Contest Group! Dave came to SFCG via our February W1AW/4 SC VOTA activation. Dave lives in Charleston and was first licensed in 1973 at the age of 14 and has upgraded several times with different calls and now holds an Extra Class License. He's been contesting since 2016 and has gone on several contest DXpeditions to Jamaica, St. Kitts and Bermuda for the CQWW SSB contests with friends. Due to Covid, they didn't travel and ended up multi-op'ing the 2020 CQ WW SSB and 2021 CQ WPX SSB from his shack here in SC with W4GE, NZ4CW and N4ZYM. Dave states he primarily works SSB

contests but is working on getting his CW speed back up to participate in CW contests. His station: Flex 6600, K3S, KPA1500, Acom 2000A, Optibeam 40/30 2 element Yagis, two SteppIR 3 elements beams for 20-6M, 80m Inverted L and 160m shunt fed on a 72 foot crank-up tiltover tower on his 1/4 acre lot. Check out his QRZ.com page for photos and more info. Dave is presently working with John W7WV to upgrade John's station in Fort Mill with two 100 foot towers and putting together a multi-two contest station and would love to have more operators join them starting with the CQWW phone contest in October!

Dave: Welcome to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!
73 Ed K3DNE

Editor's Note: If you look closely at the picture of his great shack, you will see another U.S. Navy veteran has joined the group. Hope Dave tells us a little bit more about that.

W4GE – Welcome!

Please welcome Rick W4GE to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!



Rick lives in Mount Pleasant and was prompted to apply for SFCG membership from our recent W1AW/4 SC VOTA activation and our 3830 scores. He has been a ham since 1962 and as his call implies - he did work for GE as an electrical engineer in Syracuse, NY for 3 years!

Rick (along with our most recent member AA4VT with others) have contest multi-op'd

from several DX locations (Jamaica, Bermuda, St. Kitts) in recent CQ WW DX SSB events. Rick's home station is impressive and includes two updated Elecraft K3s, P3s, KPA500 and KPA1500 amplifiers, a KAT500 tuner, and an Acom 1500 amp going into a XMatch tuner. The W4GE antenna farm: A DX Engineering 1/4 wave 80m vertical with 1600 ft. of radial ground wire that works well on 160, 80, 60 and 30m; On 160m the 80m vertical is bottom loaded with a Balun Design 4:1 balun (50:12 ohms) and then through a 4" diameter, flat wound loading coil that allows about a 60kHz BW around 1850 kHz; a K4KIO Hex beam at 35 feet (11m); and a 40m vertical with 2 elevated radials over a salt water marsh. Receiving antennas are a Pixel magnetic receiving loop used mainly for noise cancelling via a DXE NCC-2, and three pennants directed to the NE/NW/SW.

Rick works all modes and contests and states his favorite is WPX RTTY. Please check out Rick's QRZ page for photos and more info - especially about the contest DXpeditions.

Rick: Welcome to SFCG - your membership marks a club milestone as you are our 51'st member - a club membership high!

73 Ed K3DNE

W7WZ – Welcome!

Please welcome John W7WZ to SFCG!



John is an Extra, is an ARRL life member and lives in Fort Mill. He's a former ARRL Section Manager (San Diego) as WR6J. Former member of the San Diego DX club, Willamette Valley DX club and multi-multi operator at W7RM, NQ4I and Multi-2 op at AA4VT. He is busy building a multi-op contest station at his Fort Mill QTH with the assistance of SFCG member AA4VT and others. I had the opportunity to recently tour John's station and it's very impressive! His station consists of two identical operating stations with Elecraft K3's, Acom 2000 amps, P3 panadaptors and assorted accessories and is very automated. He also has a FT1000D and a TenTec Orion. In addition, he has a great collection of Collins gear in a separate room. The W7WZ antenna farm includes two 100 foot Rohn 45 towers, stacked (presently two but another on the way) Force 12 C31XR's (one at 100 feet, the other on a ring rotor part way up that tower). Also on that tower is a 160m inverted-v. The 2nd tower holds a Force 12 - 240N 2 element 40m yagi (soon to be a 3 element) and a Force 12 WARC 7. For 80m John has a wire loop in a diamond configuration, a ground mounted 40m vertical and Hi-Z receive antennas. John states that he's slowly working toward honor roll, with 314 confirmed and 8 band DXCC completed. Please check out the W7WZ QRZ.com page for more info and pics!

John: Welcome to the Swamp Fox Contest Group!

73,
Ed K3DNE



AD3I – Welcome Back!

We are glad to have past SFCG member Vicki AD3I return to the group. Vicki is a YCARS member and very active in Ham radio and has enjoyed contesting. Please check out her QRZ web page for a rundown of her interests. In her application Vicki wrote *“Basic contest preferences? Voice. Tell us about yourself. Your interests, your contesting experiences, favorite mode, antennas, or whatever else you would like to share with the club: Love Parks on the Air, Special Events, working with the youth, state QSO parties”*

Contest Tips:

From N4XL

- Summertime brings thunderstorms and their accompanying static crashes. QRN is often S7 or higher on the low bands. CW speed demons like WN4AFP and KY4ID love to fly along at 35+ WPM, but their dits are so short in duration they can easily get lost in the noise. I took a lesson from some great 160 ops. I've found when the bands are noisy by slowing down from my comparatively piddlin' 30 - 32 wpm to around 26 WPM that I usually have fewer requests for repeats and therefore actually improve my overall rate.
- Sometimes when S&P I find myself and another station moving up the band together. We frequently come upon a Running station at the same time. The other guy usually has the stronger station, and he beats me out time after time. My solution is to either jump to the top of the band and start down or jump up a few KC's and get ahead of him.
- When choosing a Run frequency in domestic or WPX contests be aware of frequency boundaries for General and lower licensed operators. You'll sometimes be happy to get a clear frequency at 21.272 MHz, but you should have looked for one above 21.275 so you could also snag the General class ops. In DX contests know what frequencies DX operators are allowed to use.
- Never, never, never trust a spot. Always, always, always verify the call and report. Especially with those rarer mults you were excited to get. You may not get another chance to work anyone else from that location and if you're wrong about their call the log checkers will not only remove the q from your log but will also penalize you two or three times the points the q was worth. Although not as critical to your score you should verify the exchange for every q even if you know W4XYZ is in AL because you just worked her on another band. You might have copied it wrong the first time (or blindly accepted the Call History file's fill).
- CQ WPX is coming up the end of May. The exchange uses serial numbers. We've Got Your Number (But is it right?) by Tim Shoop N3QE is an article in the March 2023 issue of CQ magazine. It talks about tips to help copy serial number exchanges correctly. One problem that crops up with S&P ops happens if you weren't positive you copied the number correctly, but the Runner has already moved on and won't respond to your request for a fill. I used to listen to the number sent to the next station and subtract one. Initially in my contesting career I wasn't aware that might not work. A well-known

contest rule is to copy what is sent rather than accepting what a spot or Call History file tells you it should be. N3QE describes in his article why that also applies to serial numbers.

“You may notice some apparent irregularities in serial numbers while you are waiting in a pileup to get through to a prolific station during the busiest hours of the contest. He may give the 1210 to one caller, then the number 1212 to the next caller. Is he skipping numbers? No, but he is using advanced single operator Two Radio (SO2R) techniques to work stations on a second band. He gave the intervening number 1211 to a station on a different band.

A follow-on from this is that you can't assume that because the previous station was given 1212, that your QSO number will be 1213. “Listening ahead” to get the first couple digits is fine, but be completely prepared to copy a serial number that may be one or two higher than the most direct numeric increment.

Another odd pattern you may notice is that you work a loud station a few hours in on the first night on a low band and he gives you the serial number 312. The next morning you work the same station on a high band, and he gives you the number 65. Should you try to get a correction to the previous night's serial number, as it appears to be out of sequence? No, you just worked a Multi-Two or Multi-Multi station that uses independent serial number sequences on each band, each band starting with 1.”

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

For any contest entry
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know your rig's capabilities and know how to use them. Knowing how to quickly go split can often earn one a QSO while others are fumbling to remember where the VFO B button is.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your radio has 2nd Receiver capability, use the 2nd RX to Search and Pounce (S/P) in other portions of the band where you are not CQ'ing. Also try tuning both RX's at the same time while you're doing S/P. Start at the bottom of the band with one VFO and the top of the band with the other. This takes some practice, but you'll find your S/P rates will improve once you get the hang of it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider “thinking out of the box” for an entry. For example, K8MR fights the SS “Sunday blues” by dividing the contest into 5 or 6 hour operating periods at up to 4 different stations. He is always “fresh meat” at each stop and always aspires to have a total score for his multiple entries to be better than the #1 S/O score.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For single RX operators, search and pounce from the bottom of a band to the top. The lower portion of any band is often where you'll find easier to work, bigger signals. “Big Gun” stations know this and try to stay in the lower half of band segments. Use this knowledge to either make easy Q's, or avoid butting heads with the “big boys.”

VE9AA Tip of the Week

For newer contesters not sure what bands to be on when or just to see how so n' so pulled off that FB score? (or was so n' so SO2R, SO2V, 2BSIQ?) [CQ WW - Public Logs](#) CQWW makes all logs (except check logs I think) available after a period of time.

I won't say I have looked at a lot of them, but a couple years ago I wanted to put in a really good effort so I looked up a couple big VE2 and VE3 scores and reviewed who did what when and it assisted me in making my band change plans. Maybe it will for you, too?

From the Reflector:

- So... We now have another growth pain. Don't let your spell checker run amok when typing the calls of N4IQ, N4QI, NJ4F and NJ4Z. I've been away from the multi for a while, but I also have to keep NQ4I straight too when I talk and write Bob and Dave's call signs.
- During the MIQP Bob KZ3P discovered the summer noise is back. He wrote "NOT MUCH HERE. S9 noise on 40m ans S9+ on 80m." Reckon we all need to keep that in mind when making our contest plans.
- Ed K3DNE noted that one of the two teams from the SFCG that entered the Jan 2023 NAQP SSB placed 8th of 54. Congratulations K3DNE, N4XL, WW4SF (KG4IGC), WN4AFP, and K4QQG. AC4MC, NU4E, K4FT, and N4QI added a second SFCG team to the list to help spread the word South Carolina is becoming less rare. I've begun to hear a comment now and then that people are noticing the increased activity from our state.
- It's good to see Ted K7OM posting his scores again. Keep it up Ted. Now we've got to get Dave NJ4F back on the air and to switch from his mower seat to operating chair.
- New members John W7WZ and Dave AA4VT are building an impressive Multi-Two station just south of Charlotte in Ft. Mill, SC. Several SFCG members took them up on their offer to join their team. Standby for some great scores coming from John's QTH.
- It isn't the Christmas season, but the ghosts of SFCG Past have come out this month. Ed WB4HRL has moved to his new QTH and is back on the air and has been participating in CWT's. He also spent some time on RTTY in the BARTG event. And as noted above, Vicki AD3I has returned to our skulk of Foxes. We're glad to have both of you active with us again.
- We'd better keep our eye on new member Rick W4GE. When he read he is our 51st member he responded "Proud to be your 51st member. Does this mean I qualify for a 1/2 CC Plaque of some sort?" Anyone that hungry for plaques will be soon be giving Dave WN4AFP a run for the SFCG member having the most wall paper. We'd better be on our toes and be thinking about ways to up our game.
- Don't count Dave WN4AFP out though. He placed third in the US for the New England QSO Party. Frank KG4IGC wants to see him be #1 next year.

- Bob KZ3P shared a photo of his 1st Place HP Phone Out-of-State plaque for the 2023 NCQP. Great job Bob!
- Burton KY4ID threw out what is arguably the best catch of the month with his placement in the 2022 CQWW CW LP Rookie Overlay category. #1 World, #1 North America, #1 United States. Fantastic job Burton!!
- In answer to a question from Frank, Ed K3DNE reminded everyone the SFCG sponsors two plaques. One is the ARRL DX SSB Single Op-Unlimited Low Power for W/VE. The other has been the CQ WPX SSB. Specifically it is for the USA-Tribander/Single-Element Overlay category and is called the Tom Francis, W1TEF Memorial by Swamp Fox Contest Group Plaque.
- Ed K3DNE reminded everyone about the ARRL survey running this month. If you haven't taken it the link is <https://www.arrl.org/take-dues-survey>
- I have to admit I am impressed with the number of contests George N4QI enters. He is always posting something, and often he ends up with a very respectable score from his indoor antenna.
- Bob AC4MC is moving – and giving away a lot of equipment. I hope you have saved some things for the new QTH Bob. Let us know if you need help from the group.
- We are extremely saddened to hear member Marc N4UFP has an aggressive brain tumor. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Marc is an exceptional person who has given selflessly to helping South Carolina Hams for many years.

ARRL Article: Experience the Wonders of Solar Cycle 25's Solar Maximum

Scott N2OG enjoyed the May 2023 QST article by Frank Donovan W3LPL about Solar Cycle 25 and provided a copy of it. I've attached it to the emailing of this newsletter for the enjoyment of those who do not receive QST as it is very interesting to those of us trying to understand the mysteries of Space Weather. Regardless of your position towards the ARRL, QST is a valuable resource for technical information, and I encourage all of you to subscribe.

General SFCG Info for Newer Members

By Kevan N4XL

I've been asked or heard questions from people about various SFCG things so thought I'd mention a few items of general interest. The SFCG is growing and we've a lot of new people who might not have heard these before.

- There is a list of scores at the end of our newsletter. It is generated from the 3830 Contest Score Rumors website at <https://www.3830scores.com/> . In addition to sending your log to the contest organizers themselves, please submit a score summary to 3830 – be sure to choose the Swamp Fox Contest Group as the club. WA7BNM created a 3830 feature called Activity Trackers (a link is at the top of the 3830 web page). I pull the newsletter scores list using that.

- We encourage intergroup competition using the SFOTA contest score tracker available at <http://www.sfota.com/index.pl>. It is a third place to enter your contest scores. Plaques are awarded each year for various categories. New members should be automatically added, but if you have not received information of how to log in please contact Dave WN4AFP either directly or via a Reflector post. On the SFOTA page you will find a Member Login button on the top right and a Current Contests list on the left. If you participated in a contest that is not shown on the list, feel free to add it. We have had some duplicates before so please be aware someone else might have created it using a slightly different name than you were expecting. Look the list of names over closely before creating a new one. By doing that you will also get a feel for what common formats used are. A couple of times we have had an issue where two people logged into SFOTA at the same time, did not find their contest listed, and both simultaneously created a new contest with slightly different names. Hey, stuff happens. Don't worry too much about it. We ask that scores be entered to SFOTA the week after the contest. Don't think anything has changed, so will say after a week the contest is closed and you can't add your score after that.

- Frank KG4IGC has done a great job with the SFCG website. Some useful things you will find there are the link to the SOFTA page, a Resources page with contesting info and links to useful programs, and copies of past newsletters. Contact Frank if you would like to add something to our library. Your input is wanted to keep it up to date and useful for all.
<https://www.swampfoxcontestgroup.com/>

- Kevan N4XL is the group's Secretary. He has a list of all SFCG members. We decided at our last SFCG annual meeting he would maintain a listing of members willing to share their contact information. If you would like to speak with someone directly, instead of using the reflector, ask Kevan for their information. NOTE: Kevan is delinquent in gathering a list of who is willing to share information. Expect him to reach out to everyone shortly.

- Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a unique name like "Kevan" (note the A in his name). For example, we have several members named Dave. We early on developed a method of Reflector etiquette to help people understand who is being addressed or discussed. The format Dave AFP (or WN4AFP), Dave NJ4F, Dave AA4VT, is helpful to eliminate confusion. Some use Or just use their call sign. Some use "ID" for KY4ID. It also helps to reference the message, or at least the subject, of what you are responding too. Not everyone follows each individual email. Some get a daily or weekly summary. If you simply respond to someone asking a question or make a comment like "That's right. I do that too.", then someone reading that a few days later might not have a clue what in the heck you are talking about, or in some instances even who they are talking to.

- We have contesters of all experience levels. Please don't be shy about asking questions. We were all clueless at one time and won't make fun of you. Heck, for that matter, none of us knows everything. I love to quote the response N5KO gave to a question asked about contesting knowledge. Some think he sounds like a know-it-all, but it is a truth any very accomplished person understands, be they a ham radio operator, race car driver, golfer, hunter, or... whatever. Us more experienced folk don't generally like to mention things we think are basic as some people feel insulted if we do. They think we believe they don't know it. As a result, the beginner loses out on advice they could use because it isn't ever said. (That is the major reason I give long winded answers about things most people already know. It's for the newer people.) Here is the question asked, and the first part of the answer given. It was written way back in 1996:

> If I were in your class, what would I appreciate about your ability or technique? Or in other words, what would another highly accomplished contester know about your skills that I miss

because I'm just an awed "apprentice"? (If you're too modest to talk about yourself, apply the question to your personal contesting "hero", the guy you vow to beat this year.)

In my view, this is one of the true dilemmas of radio contesting. You, as the hypothetical "apprentice," do not have the knowledge or experience to be able to appreciate the skills I have developed that make me the hypothetical "major league tester." And similarly, I take for granted many of the fundamental skills that are necessary for you to advance to the next level.

-N5KO

Southpaws

From CWOPS post #58877

FWIW: A number of years ago a survey was taken on the then only Elecraft list about sending habits of hams. Caveats to the results were:

- A. Respondents were self-selected
- B. About 235 people responded

Despite the statistical caveats:

1. About 20% of respondents said they were left-handed. The WW average is about 11-12% for males, 10-11% for females. Identical twins are nearly always one right, one left, [see Tyler & Taylor Rogers] and even fraternal twins tend that way.
2. A large majority of the south-paws said they learned to paddle north so they could write left-handed in the log and notebooks.
3. None of the north-paws learned to paddle south for any reason.

With acknowledgement that not everything one finds on the Internet is true, there is some indication that technically inclined people such as engineers [and hams] show a somewhat higher likelihood of being left-handed. I have been part of several engineering teams of 6-10 or so where all, or in one case all but one, of us were left-handed. My airborne communications team in SE Asia had 25 members including me. 11 of us were left-handed. Of course, for every anecdotal item purporting to be evidence of something, there is at least one anecdote refuting that.

If you believe that the majority should make all the rules for everyone, you should try being left-handed for a couple of months. 😊

73,
Fred ["Skip"] K6DGW - CWops #142
Sparks NV DM09dn
Washoe County

Observations by the Editor:

- Solid Copy is the newsletter of the CW OPS group. A short article from Frank NF8M appeared in the April 2023 issue. Frank made a base for portable vertical use out of Unistrut. He mounted some standard 3/8-24 antenna mounts and bolts for connecting radial wires. A great idea for you POTA and SOTA ops – or portable State QSO party operators. I've seen Unistrut at my local Lowe's store.



- Am I the only one who finds ARRL's Contest Update to be pretty boring these last few months? It's getting so I fight the impulse to hit delete without even looking at it.
- Not many Contest Sponsors issue them, but several of us have been sharing our Log Check Reports (LCR's) when they are made available. People are generally reluctant to talk about their mistakes, but I find LCR's helpful to motivate myself. Putting the information out there for all to see adds a bit more pressure to perform well. Whether or not you make yours public it is instructive to analyze yours whenever you have the opportunity.
- The RSGB Groups.io reflector talked about JIS Phillips headed screws starting with post #70794. Bob G3REP noted a regular Phillips screwdriver has a sharper point than JIS screws do which increases the risk of stripping the screw head. I had noticed that some Phillips screws did not like my screwdrivers and had assumed it to be poor quality control from foreign suppliers. Bob mentioned JIS Phillips head screws have a dimple punched in them for easier identification. See the dimple in the picture below. I'll start keeping my eyes open for them so I can treat them with more respect in the hopes of avoiding stripping the head slots. In the thread Martyn M0TEB mentioned he has recently found a new type of Torx fasteners appearing too. They have a five pointed star instead of the normal six points. I wish people would just agree on a standard and stop "improving" things.



N1MM+ Tips:

- It's been said many times before, but do not let Windows put any N1MM files on OneDrive. You will likely soon have a corrupted database file if you do. It seems like every week I run across at least one person asking for help on some reflector or another where that ended up being the cause of their problem.
- In their user manual Appendices, the N1MM team has listed some software they think people might find useful. Included is information on programs providing multiplier maps, mirrored log backups, recording QSO's with QSOrder, 2Tone RTTY operation, CCUser cluster filtering, and AutoHotKey scripting. They also suggest a program for converting audio sample rate and bit resolution which is sometimes needed to address timing issues when wav files are recorded
- The N1MM Appendices also include information on commonly used filter commands for various types of DX Clusters.
- I don't, but if you use AutoHotKey for automation you might have had problems with it not starting correctly with N1MM. The following change was made in the April 25, 2023 N1MM update. "AutoHotKey: If AHK 2.X is installed, start the AHK version 2 executable. If there are script or program issues, un-install AHK 2.X and restart our program. (Coded by K3CT)"
- Many people have had various problems with newer Yaesu radios like the FT991 and FTDX101. Some of those issues are because Yaesu made changes in how their newer radios handle control commands and how they communicate with other devices. N1MM is not the only product having issues with Yaesu because of those improvements. If you are having problems, you should let the N1MM team know exactly what is wrong. It is also a good idea to not assume your problem will remain forever broken. Check periodically to see if an update has fixed your issue – regardless of if you told them about it or not. Someone else might have told them about the issue. Sometimes problems are Yaesu code related and sometimes are simply an oversight or mistake by the N1MM team. An example of a Yaesu update fix is a correction made for the FT991 made on April 18th. I recall reflector posts about problems with the FT991 not interfacing correctly. The change summary for release Version 1.0.9870 includes "FT991 & FT991A: Send mode before frequency. (KE8NLE & N7CKJ) (Coded by K3CT)". Release 1.0.9826 on March 7, 2023 included "Fixed Config, Other tab, "Mute mic on supported radios" for FTDX10, FTDX101 and FT710. (Coded by N2IC)". Ed K3DNE will tell you that sometimes their "fix" makes it better for some, but worse for you. He found that out with the January 31st release of Version 1.0.9802 which included "Fix FTDX101 SO2V behavior (K8JMX) (Coded by N2IC)".
- N1MM allows sending CAT commands to your radio. Placing the command {CAT1ASC AB} into N1MM tells the radio to perform a particular function. Each radio has its own commands. I don't know what "AB" tells that particular radio to do, but it would be something like turning

the preamp on, activating split mode, or setting a particular filter bandwidth. Not everything, but most buttons and menu items have a software command associated with it.

Unfortunately, you can only send one command line at a time from N1MM. Most people think you can only have one radio command per command line, but Steve N2IC found you can send more than one command using a single command line by using the semicolon character. An example of how to send four commands at once is {CAT1ASC AB;ST1;SF03;FR00;}. Note the final semicolon after FR00.

- A common problem causing frustration with N1MM users isn't N1MM's fault at all. Rather it is brought to us by those helpful programmers at Microsoft who write Windows functionality code at the level of benefitting most users. Users who are often computer illiterate and rely on programmers to write apps requiring no need for anything other than the ability to plug something in and then push play. Understandably, the vast majority of those people want to plug in their headset and then magically hear audio come out of it. They don't want to navigate to Settings>Choose your input/output device. They want to plug in their thumb drive and instantly be able to access its files without having to use Windows Explorer to first determine the drive letter that Windows assigned the device. I admit that I normally want my computer to work that way too – unless it involves things in the Ham Shack. Making things happen as the majority wishes unfortunately hurts people like us who dearly want N1MM and our ham shacks to stay stable and work just as it did during last week's contest regardless of what we used it for in between contests.
 - Audio. N1MM has an audio configuration section where you tell it what device to use for playback and recording. Problems frequently arise if you use the Windows Default device for either of those paths because when something using audio is connected or removed from your computer the default device used by Windows automatically changes to it. Thus, the devices you carefully selected last contest in the N1MM audio setup screen probably will no longer be valid. It is best to specify N1MM audio paths that are not Default paths. But telling N1MM what to use isn't the only thing you can do. Dig deeper into Windows' and you will find you can assign a specific audio path to use whenever a particular program is opened. That tells Windows to use it instead of the default path it would normally choose. You can assign specific devices for use in Windows 10 under System>Sound>Advanced Sound Options>App volume and device preferences. The description for that is "Customize app volumes and the speakers or devices they use."
 - COM ports. Those little beasties are the cause of several problems and require periodic review.
 - Every time you plug a device into a USB port on your computer Windows:
 - Checks to see if a driver exists for it and loads one if needed. Sometimes the loaded drivers are outdated and generate errors. Sometimes the driver has existed in your computer for a long time but Windows updates have created conflicts with the older driver.

- The device/driver will sometimes assign a specific COM Port number to itself even if that COM port number is already in existence. And since drivers are loaded at computer startup the computer may be presented with a conflict because calls to that COM port may invoke the driver for an unattached device rather than the one you just plugged in.
 - USB ports create a Windows Registry entry describing what device was plugged in and into which USB port. Every device you plug into a port has its own listing, and that information remains in the Windows Registry even after you remove the device. If you move a device from one port to another it may now present a conflict whereas it worked perfectly.
- By default, when you look to see what COM ports are being used Windows only shows you active ports. Devices previously attached by not active still remain in the Windows Registry but are “hidden”. These hidden ports can be identified and removed. Many people make it a habit to delete those hidden ports because they often cause computer glitches. Ideally, you should remove the drivers assigned to those COM ports at the same time you remove the hidden COM port assignments, but that too can create problems. The driver you remove may be needed by other similar devices for them to function properly. For example: You have a device using an FTDI chip plugged into COM7. You look at COM6 and find an active device there along with a hidden COM6 device – and that hidden device uses an FTDI driver. If you remove the hidden device and choose to also remove the FTDI chip driver at the same time, the next time you start Windows it won't find the FTDI driver needed by the device you have plugged into COM7 so the device stops working. Result? You get a headache trying to figure out what happened.
 - Speaking of FTDI drivers, for years counterfeit FTDI chips were being made. They used genuine FTDI drivers. FTDI is a company, and they grew tired of being ripped off by counterfeiters. They tweaked their driver so it could not be used by the counterfeit chips. When you update your FTDI drivers, or Windows does an update and automatically changes the driver, you might all of a sudden find your device stopped working and blame either Windows or N1MM. It might not be their fault. It might be that unknown to you the device has a counterfeit chip inside. I don't blame FTDI, N1MM, or Microsoft for that. It's likely the device manufacturers were fooled by the counterfeiter's or they were trying to gain a few bucks more profit by using knockoff parts.
 - Another default behavior of Windows is it shuts down inactive COM ports. In the middle of a contest it might see you haven't accessed a particular device

and will turn off its COM port rendering it useless. You have to open each COM port and tell it not to do that.

- Windows updates can give another problem. Remember those wonderful Microsoft programmers mentioned earlier? They try to be helpful and sometimes put code into an update that renumbers your COM ports and reassigns audio paths. I usually thank them for their hard well-meaning work with an array of four letter words. It is a good idea to test your station a few days before a contest. Once things are working correctly tell Windows not to do an update until the contest is over. Those helpful programmers did put a genuinely useful option to help with that. You can click the icon in the Windows Update menu that says, "Pause updates for 7 days".
- A great informational source on many of the problems mentioned above, and others, is a Contest University presentation by N6TV called Everything You Need to Know About USB and Serial Interfaces. You can find it at <https://www.contestuniversity.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/N6TV-Everything-You-Want-to-Know-About-USB-Serial-Interfaces-2022.pdf>

Upcoming Contests:

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

SFOTA Current Leaderboard:

May-15-2023

Current Leaderboard

2023 OVERALL STANDINGS

CALL	Contests	CW QSO'S	SSB QSO'S	DIGITAL QSO'S	RTTY QSO'S	TOTAL QSO'S
1) K3DNE	8	135	5851	16	102	6104
2) K4FT	64	4740	229	0	182	5151
3) WN4AFP	53	3421	1543	0	0	4964
4) K4QQG	22	0	3636	0	259	3895
5) N4XL	3	2396	1472	0	0	3868
6) N4IQ	11	1774	0	0	1272	3046
7) KG4IGC	12	428	762	0	1711	2901
8) NU4E	4	500	2375	0	0	2875
9) N4QI	58	1677	497	0	531	2705
10) K7OM	14	840	0	0	1830	2670
11) KZ3P	27	0	2635	0	0	2635
12) KY4ID	19	2387	0	0	0	2387
13) AC4MC	5	769	933	0	0	1702
14) NJ4Z	4	267	968	0	0	1235
15) WB4HRL	18	679	73	0	262	1014
16) KS4YX	4	122	0	0	718	840
17) KD4S	4	395	142	0	236	773
18) NE4EA	6	271	477	0	0	748
19) KG9V	1	0	465	0	0	465
20) N2OG	2	12	293	0	0	305
21) KM4RK	3	0	100	0	0	100
22) WA2BCK	2	0	63	0	0	63
23) KB1QU	1	0	57	0	0	57

2023 INDIVIDUAL MODE STANDINGS

CALL	CW QSO'S	CALL	SSB QSO'S	CALL	DIGITAL QSO'S	CALL	RTTY QSO'S
K4FT	4740	K3DNE	5851	K3DNE	16	K7OM	1830
WN4AFP	3421	K4QQG	3636			KG4IGC	1711
N4XL	2396	KZ3P	2635			N4IQ	1272
KY4ID	2387	NU4E	2375			KS4YX	718
N4IQ	1774	WN4AFP	1543			N4QI	531
N4QI	1677	N4XL	1472			WB4HRL	262
K7OM	840	NJ4Z	968			K4QQG	259
AC4MC	769	AC4MC	933			KD4S	236
WB4HRL	679	KG4IGC	762			K4FT	182
NU4E	500	N4QI	497			K3DNE	102
KG4IGC	428	NE4EA	477				
KD4S	395	KG9V	465				
NE4EA	271	N2OG	293				
NJ4Z	267	K4FT	229				
K3DNE	135	KD4S	142				
KS4YX	122	KM4RK	100				
N2OG	12	WB4HRL	73				
		WA2BCK	63				
		KB1QU	57				

3830 Activity:

Contest	Call	Class	Power	Score
50SprngSprnt				
05/14/23	NU4E	Single Op	HP	600
7QP				
05/08/23	K4FT	SOCW	LP	15,408
05/08/23	K4QQG	SOSSB	HP	288
05/08/23	KZ3P	SOSSB	HP	1,536
05/07/23	N4QI	SOCW	LP	90
05/08/23	WB4HRL	SOMixed	HP	7,105
05/08/23	WN4AFP	SOMixed	LP	5,100
ARI				
05/08/23	KZ3P	SO SSB	HP	318
05/07/23	N4QI	SO Mixed	LP	747
BARTG 75				
04/25/23	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	462
CPQP				
05/14/23	KZ3P	Single Op	HP	270
05/14/23	N4QI	Single Op	LP	63
05/14/23	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	350
CQ-M				
05/14/23	KZ3P	SOSB/20SSB	HP	513
CQMM DX				
04/17/23	K4FT	SOAB	LP	7,986
04/18/23	K7OM	SOAB	HP	17,136
04/17/23	KG4IGC	SOAB	LP	35,420
04/17/23	N4QI	SOAB	LP	22,419
04/16/23	WN4AFP	SOAB	LP	456
DeQP				
05/08/23	K4FT	Single Op	LP	360
05/08/23	KZ3P	Single Op	HP	40
05/08/23	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	20
05/08/23	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	540

Contest	Call	Class	Power	Score
FIQP				
04/30/23	K4FT	SOABCW	LP	50,752
05/01/23	K4QQG	SOABSSB	HP	195
05/02/23	KZ3P	SOABSSB	HP	1,798
05/02/23	N4QI	SOABCW	LP	396
04/30/23	WB4HRL	SOAB(A)Mixed	HP	16,065
04/30/23	WN4AFP	SOAB(A)Mixed	LP	16,013
InQP				
05/08/23	K4FT	Single Op	LP	1,400
05/08/23	K4QQG	Single Op	HP	16
05/07/23	KD4S	Single Op	HP	4,644
05/08/23	KZ3P	Single Op	HP	850
05/07/23	N4QI	Single Op	LP	18
05/08/23	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	544
05/08/23	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	2,730
MiQP				
04/17/23	K4FT	Single Op	LP	1,680
04/16/23	KZ3P	Single Op	HP	414
04/17/23	N4QI	Single Op	LP	390
04/16/23	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	950
NDQP				
04/17/23	K4FT	Fixed	LP	1
04/17/23	KZ3P	Out of State	HP	20
04/16/23	WN4AFP	Fixed	LP	4
NeQP				
04/17/23	K4FT	Out of State	LP	192
04/17/23	KZ3P	Out of State	HP	90
04/17/23	N4QI	Fixed	LP	4
04/16/23	WN4AFP	Fixed	LP	288
NewEngQP				
05/08/23	K4FT	Single Op	LP	13,300
05/08/23	K4QQG	Single Op	HP	630
05/10/23	KB1QU	Single Op	HP	2,210
05/08/23	KZ3P	Single Op	HP	2,788
05/08/23	N4QI	Single Op	LP	5,004

Contest	Call	Class	Power	Score
05/08/23	WB4HRL	Single Op	HP	4,224
05/08/23	WN4AFP	Single Op	LP	28,272
OnQP				
04/17/23	K4FT	SO CW	LP	2,444
04/17/23	N4QI	SO Mixed	LP	1,139
04/16/23	WN4AFP	SO Mixed	LP	6,475
QCQP				
04/17/23	N4QI	SO SSB	LP	4
04/16/23	WN4AFP	SO Mixed	LP	40
SPDX RTTY				
04/23/23	K7OM	SOAB	HP	188,720
04/23/23	WB4HRL	SOAB	HP	99,360
Volta RTTY				
05/14/23	K7OM	SOAB	HP	7,845,759
05/14/23	KG4IGC	SOAB	LP	10,755,459
05/14/23	WB4HRL	SOAB	HP	7,893,396

DXpeditions:

Courtesy of John W7WZ

CALLSIGN	LOCATION	DATES
JD81BMH	Chichi Jima	5/1 – 5/4
3D2LYC	Yanuca Island, Fiji	5/1 – 5/4
T30UN	Kirbati, South Pacific (Tarawa)	5/1 – 5/6
8Q7KB	Maldives, Indian Ocean	5/1 – 5/6
H44MS	Solomon Islands, South Pacific	5/1 – 5/7
DX0NE	Spratly Islands, South China Sea	5/1 – 5/9
5X2I	Uganda, Africa	5/1 – 5/10
JG8NQJ/JD1	Marcus Island Tori Shima	5/1 – 5/15
5UA99WS	Niger Africa	5/1 – 5/31
F0/F6BCW	Huahine Island, French Polynesia	5/1 – 5/31
VK0AW	Antarctica	5/1 – 5/31
FH4VVK	Mayotte Island (Fr.) Africa Indian Ocean	5/1 – 5/31
HK0/PY***	San Andres Island (Columbia)	5/2 – 5/19
9X2AW	Uganda, Africa	5/5 – 5/14
T88SM/t88HZ	Koror Island (Palau)	5/11 – 5/17
OJ0/LA****	Market Reef	5/20 – 5/27
J47JA	Saint Kitts Island (Caribbean)	5/23 – 5/31
VP2EAQ / VP2EAR	Anguilla Island (Caribbean)	5/24 – 6/1
JW5E	Svalbard Island (N. Atlantic)	5/26 – 5/28

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73 es QRT de N4XL