



Solid Copy

The International CWops Newsletter

July

2013

Issue No. 42



Editor's New Paddle

CWops "CWT"

10, 24 July 2013

Start times: 13Z, 19Z, 03Z (11,25 July)

1-hour each session

Exchange: name/number (members)
name/SPC (non-members)

CWA Days

3, 17 July 2013: 1300Z, 1900Z, 0300Z(+1)

CWops "neighborhood"

Look for CWops on 1.818, 3.528, 7.028, 10.118,
14.028, 18.078, 21.028, 24.908, 28.028, 50.098

CWops Officers and Directors

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President: Rob Brownstein, [K6RB](#)

Vice President: Art Suberbielle, [KZ5D](#)

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Editor/Publisher: Rick Tavan, [N6XI](#)

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President's Message

I wish all of you a happy, healthy and fun July. There will be a lull in popular contests for the next couple of months. Because

stations in the northern hemisphere far outnumber those stations south of the equator, contest season tends to begin in northern hemisphere Fall and continue through Winter and Spring. That's why our members in southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand have to work on bringing new operators to ham radio. Maybe there will be a more equitable distribution of popular contests, if you do ☺.

Coming up this month is Canada's RAC contest and the IARU contest. Both are often well attended. I'm planning to play a bit in both of them. But, in the absence of popular contests during July and August, many of us take advantage of the opportunity to work on antennas and stations before the Fall onrush. So, if you're planning to do some climbing and fixing, please be very careful. And, if you are going to messing around in an area of high-voltage, be aware and be safe.

We're seeing a nice uptick in membership these days, and it is tracking well with the increasing participation in our CWTs. Under John's (K1ESE) management, we're seeing a big upswing in QTX reporting. Keep it up, John, you're doing great.

The next big item is our annual CW Open. This is a very unique contest because it is actually three contests over a 24-hour period, each one taking only 4 hours. Each contest is separately scored and awarded. And, scores are aggregated from multiple sessions to establish an aggregate-score set of trophies and plaques. I took the glass trophy to Dayton and many booth visitors said things like "this is absolutely the nicest trophy in ham contesting." I think so, too.

Our third running of CW Open will be on Saturday, August 31, at 0000Z, 1200Z and 2000Z. This is a change. Before, we started at 1200Z and had the last session Sunday at 0400Z. Now, CW Open begins on Saturday at 0000Z and ends on Saturday at 2359Z. Instead of 8 hours between all three starts, we now have a 12 hour break between sessions 1 and 2. We believe there will be more participation this year, and the new times will help in that regard, too. The 0000Z start time is great for JAs where it is morning and the high bands are good. North American stations should find a lot of JAs on 10, 15 and 20 during that first session. It's also a good time for east coast stations to work EUs on 40 and 80, and for EUs to move to higher bands and work each other before the session ends. We believe the new timing will create a more equitable contest. But, unless you all take part, we'll never know.

Finally, the CW Academy April/May semester is over and we're gearing up for the September/October semester. I'm pleased to report we have a committed group of advisors to handle our 50 signups for the upcoming semester. And, I'm close to having another 50 signups for our January/February 2014 semester. This program just keeps growing and should be a source of pride to the advisors and CWops members whose active and financial support makes it all possible.

Later in this issue, I'll have a report about CW Academy and a new tool that I'm hoping will be brewing very soon. So, stay tuned. Remember, every month we have two days of CWT sessions, with 3 sessions per day. If you've never tried CWT, you owe it to yourself to give it a shot. All month, every month, your ragchew QSOs (any QSO that lasts longer than 20 minutes) count as points to your monthly total. And, on August 31, you have a chance to win a coveted glass trophy in CW Open, but more important, you'll have a lot of fun in one of the friendliest contests of the year.⁷³,

Rob, K6RB

From the Editor – Reply from a “Lid” (Not!)



Alex PA1FOX is not yet a member of CWops, but he reads *Solid Copy* and the following email from him made my day:

“Just today the new newsletter for June has been put online. I would like to react on your interesting article in this newsletter. Although I am not a member, I enjoy reading the monthly newsletter of CWops as each time a lot of enthusiasm jumps out of it.

“This time, the part of 'Work some lids' attracted my attention. I try not to be a lid, but to the experienced operator my sending must really sound 'liddish'. Of course there's a reason for it and since I'm a re-entrant of CW getting my feet wet again it is not unusual. As long as I do the very best I can to improve, I must be on the right way.

“Your article really attracted my attention as it directly addresses why I quit using CW 23 years ago, when I had just learned it and passed the exam. The approach of experienced CW hams towards newcomers and rookies is of very great importance. For most hams learning CW is a big effort; for me it still is. Appreciation for that effort, instead of disapproval, does wonders. And these wonders will help lids improve their skills and to unlid themselves.

“Having been in the wrong corner, I know very well what it felt like and it really motivates to mentor new upcoming hams. I am not expert, but as long as I am 'ahead' of other newcomers I do my best to inspire them and give them positive energy. In return, their enthusiasm motivates me again.”

Thanks for the kind words, Alex. You are not a “lid.” No one with your motivation to learn deserves that label. A primary mission of CWops is to help people like you to learn and improve their CW. Keep up the good work on yours. Check out the CWops frequencies and grab some QSOs with us. Check out CW Academy. And try some contests, one of the best ways to increase your code speed and proficiency. We look forward to the day when you join us as a full member. Meanwhile, enjoy *Solid Copy* and tell your friends!

We have a solid issue this month. In addition to all the regular columns, check out AE6Y Andy's story of perseverance on [Field Day with the Saratoga \(CA\) Amateur Radio Association](#). Kate Hutton K6HTN presents a good discussion of [traffic handling](#), on CW of course. The highly successful [CW Open](#) competition will continue this year. See the [announcement](#) in this issue.

Finally, please check out my shiny, new paddle in the Page 1 photo. It is a ZN-8 from N3ZN Keys and it is a work of art. This is my first experience with low mass levers and handles and I really like it. The difference from all my heavier paddles is amazing! You may recall that I justified “yet another paddle purchase” by noting the lack of space between my keyboard and an adjacent shelf support in my valley station. Well, the ZN-8 certainly fixes that problem, fitting in with room to spare. And the HexKey it replaced found a welcome home in the more spacious mountain station. But this little ZN Key may well become my all-time favorite!

73,

Rick N6XI



CW Academy – Changes Afoot

by Rob Brownstein K6RB and Will Baber WJ9B

As mentioned in an earlier issue, CW Academy now has two managers. Rob K6RB will manage Level 1, and Will WJ9B will manage Levels 2 and 3. We're getting much better at rapidly confirming receipt of new student signups and at organizing the list into manageable groups.

Our next semester – September/October – already has more than 50 students and a waiting list. Our Jan/Feb 2014 semester has a current queue of close to 50, too. So, our goal of training 150 students per year is very much on track, and with the addition of more advisors, we'll be in a great position to increase our student load.

Level 1 remains an exclusively online course. Students are given an 8-week/16-session syllabus of exercises, which they practice daily for at least 30 minutes, and meet with advisors twice per week for copy and sending assessments and recommendations. A new tool that will really increase the effectiveness of this program is in the early stages of development. But, unlike virtually every other tool (G4FON, LCWO, etc.), this one has NO typing. It is all done using mouse/cursor or touch-screen control, and it's designed to get students from zero Morse to at least 15 wpm – both copying and sending – within that 8-week semester window. We'll tell you more about it as it develops. We'd love to have it ready by September, but more realistically, it will be ready by January 2014.

Level 2 and 3 make use of both online and on-air practice exercises. Because each student has slightly different aspirations and capabilities at the outset, these programs tend to be more tailored than Level 1. In general, Level 2 and 3 students are trying to improve their Morse skills either to be better at high-speed head copying, or to advance their contesting skills. Fortunately there are several really good freeware programs that help improve contesting skills. And, the recent messages on our listserv about text-to-CW tools and Morse books offer a way to help improve head copying and ragchew QSO skills.

Daniel Yaari, 4X1FC, recently sent Jim (N3JT) a reprint of a QST op-ed piece written by Vic Clark back in 1982. The essence of it was that licensing authorities are eliminating the requirement for Morse but we should not see it as Morse being obsolete. Vic went on to describe the advantages of Morse operating, and it sounded very much like the way K6RB and N3JT began the book *Morse Operating for Amateur Radio*. If anything, Vic's points are now even stronger. So, our efforts to help hams gain Morse skills have real, tangible benefits for them. And, the satisfaction one gets from teaching Morse is a great return on our investments in time.

Once again, then, we invite anyone of our members who is interested in helping other hams improve their CW skills to email us (k6rb@baymoon.com) and let us know. From day one, CW Academy has been advisor (not student) limited. We are getting better at what we do, and can help new advisors come up to speed very quickly.

Contesting the Old Way – Or, Who Says You Can't Go Home Again? A Field Day Tale

by Andy Faber, AE6Y, CW Ops #38

Like many CW Ops members, I like to do CW contests with full computer integration with the radios, so the computer sends as much of the CW as possible. This is the story of traveling back in time to those great pre-computer days of hand sending and paper logging (well, not quite paper logging, but almost) . . .

For Field Day, I enjoy helping out the Saratoga Amateur Radio Association, a great group of 30 or so hams in the heart of the Silicon Valley that set up each year at a State Park site On Skyline Blvd. at an elevation of about 2,700 feet with an Eastern exposure. This is in the South San Francisco Bay area, on the ridge between San Jose and Santa Cruz. Great for radio, but the weather can be a bit wild – last year I froze my you-know-what off as the temperature dipped into the 40s in the evening. (I remember holding my hands on the heat shield on top of the Mark V to try to keep my fingers nimble enough to send CW and type). Led by Dave Ritchie W6DR, they do a great job of setting up, and are always happy to have guest operators, particularly for the CW station.

This year I operated about 4 1/2 hours CW on Saturday and 2 hours on SSB. Then I was supposed to return from home at 1400Z to man the CW tent for the last four hours of the contest. (And by the way, two hours of phone in the madhouse of Field Day, without a voice keyer, just made me thank my lucky stars that SARA needed CW ops, not phone ops!)

So -- I dutifully show up at the appointed hour, 0700 local time, bearing some pastries and Starbucks coffee frappuccinos for the guys, but to my surprise, the CW tent is empty of life, and the radio is turned off. There's a note on the table left during the night (at 0330 local time I later found out) saying "This radio is dead!" Apparently the night ops had given up after a half-hour of trying to get it working and gone to bed in frustration. That's easy to do when problems attack you at that hour, and you are cold and tired.

But the trusty Honda 2000 generator is still chugging along quietly outside, so I can't resist turning on the radio and fiddling with various cables, etc. The radio has some kind of continuously keyed tone, but otherwise seems to work. After messing around a while, I decide that there is, of all things, something wrong with the Y-connector that plugs into the Key jack on the back of the FT1000MP Mark V. The two inputs to the Y are from the computer for CW keying and from a Logikey K-5 keyer, used for hand sending with a Vibroplex paddle. Dave had gone to bed and no one else who might understand the setup was awake, so I reconfigured a bit to allow CW to be sent

from the keyer and the paddle, just not from the computer. Hey, it's Field Day, we should be able to improvise.

Meanwhile, the radio was no longer hooked up to the computer at all, so I had to try to recall how to change bands on Writelog (ALT-F1, F2) and eventually stumbled on the right band settings. The auxiliary keyboard on the table that was hooked to the USB port on the laptop (which had been placed on top of the radio -- I know that doesn't seem like a good idea, but that's how it's always done there) didn't work either. But I pulled the laptop down onto the table, on the theory that I can just use its built-in keyboard.

OK, let's try out the laptop, should work. Call a CQ and get an answer. Who's that: K3JO, let's type it in. What??? Writelog thinks I typed 2316. What's going on? Oh no! -- this is a laptop without a separate numeric keyboard, and it must be in numeric mode. The numbers are in blue on the letter keys, and there is a blue Fn key. Let's press that and see what happens. Miraculously, I then get K3JO as desired. The Fn key isn't physically stuck, but it won't cycle on and off. So the bottom line is that to use the keyboard I have to hold the Fn key while I type (unless it's entirely a "left-hand" call that doesn't need any of the keys that have the dual function). This is doable, but not easy.

Next step is to check out the messages on the Logikey K-5. This is a very sophisticated device, sold by Idiom Press (W9KNI and son), which fortunately I know how to use, since I have one myself, though for the last few years it's been supplanted by a K1EL WinKeyer. The leftmost button sends "CQ FD DE K6SA K6SA K." Not too bad, but the DE surely isn't necessary, even for FD operators. And why would you possibly end a contest CQ with a K? OK, not too hard to change. Just hold in a button until it beeps, then send the message to the keyer with the paddle. Button 2 has a Sweepstakes exchange -- ignore it! Button 3 sends "K6SA" alone. Change it to "K6SA FD." Buttons 4, 5, and 6 send "SCV", "2A" and "TU." All are useful. In honor of Field Day, I'm tempted to make a button say "Please Copy 2A SCV," just in case a real purist like N6TV or K6RB calls, but I resist the temptation.

So this is now like pre-computer CW contesting. Just have to send a CQ and type in the call, then send it by hand along with buttons 5 and 4, or send the whole exchange by hand for good practice. Let's try it out. Works OK, as long as I remember to hold in the Fn key. The hard part, it turns out, isn't the hand sending, which is actually fun in a throw-back kind of way; it's remembering to hold down the Fn key while logging. Temporary letups on the key pressure lead to repeated delays to correct the call entered. Heck, if W2GD could do the entire 2012 CQWW from P40W and make over 6,000 contacts sending by hand, surely I can do a little hand sending on Field Day!

Well, I run out the remaining 3 1/2 hours or so at a reasonable rate for FD (maybe 70-90 per hour). Dave eventually wakes up and we reboot the computer, which has no effect on the Fn key problem, but at least allows use of the auxiliary keyboard, so I can stop concentrating on that darn Fn key. And I eventually get used to the complex series of motions necessary to send by hand/keyer while logging on the computer. I apologize to anyone who had to endure some inaccurate hand sending and unusual delays while the confused operator figured out the precise sequence of button and key pushes needed to make this all work! But, hey, isn't FD all about making do with less than optimum

radio setups? And besides, didn't I go back in time last New Year's Eve for SKN with an old bug?
Who says you need all these new-fangled devices to have fun on CW??

Traffic Matters

by Kate Hutton K6HTN

I recently participated in an amateur radio booth at a Science Expo, held at a local high school in conjunction with a robot competition, which was great fun. The booth featured literature, a Cubesat, and a 40 meter GOTA station for the students to talk on. My part was to try to convince all comers that amateur radio could be useful when their cell phones might not be working, due to a disaster. We also offered a radiogram service, and even got a few takers. The messages went out by packet WinLink into NTS Digital. Among the other banners, we had one advertising the National Traffic System (NTS).

One of the more interesting encounters was with an amateur astronomer whom I know, but did not associate with amateur radio. His eyes were wide when he said, "I didn't know you still existed!" and went on to explain that he had been a TCC operator at the age of 16 and through college at Caltech. I hear this sort of thing quite often from long-time hams; either they had no interaction with the National Traffic System, or they cut their CW teeth there. In past decades, NTS is where the best CW operators were found, to hear them tell it, at least.

If you are not familiar with the NTS, let's just say that it is a system of nets ("traffic nets") designed to relay telegram-like messages called radiograms through the U.S. and Canada. For the high school students, we called them "text messages." The TCC, or Transcontinental Corps, operators are the ones whose job it is to pass traffic over the long-haul circuits. For my astronomer friend, his TCC activity was clearly a fond memory.

In the past, NTS was a primary public service activity, a way for hams to "give back" for the use of the frequencies. Now that role is primarily filled by various "emcomm" groups that concentrate on VHF and UHF communications. The CW traffic nets constitute a bit of a fossil, although, in the worst of disaster and ionospheric conditions, we might still possess valuable skills and infrastructure.

I am a relatively new ham myself, less than five years. I got involved with the NTS specifically to learn code skills. Once I got bored with W1AW code practice, I sought out traffic nets for copy practice that was a bit more challenging. Eventually I got up the nerve to write messages and check into the "slow nets." The rest, as they say, is history.

By the time I got into CW Academy, I was intent upon increasing my speed and head copy enough to survive in the Pacific Area Net, which generally goes about 25 WPM, and where I would be interacting directly with the TCC ops. My instructor, bless his heart, tried hard to talk me out of the NTS and into contesting. It didn't work. I do participate in contests sometimes, but I didn't give up the NTS. The reason I didn't give it up is that I am still learning by leaps and bounds. My speed is better, my fist is getting better, and my comprehension is better. I've learned bundles about propagation and about the sun. Unlike most ham radio activities, in a traffic net, you need to talk

with particular operators at particular locations (even if through a relay), at particular times, rather than to whoever happens to be audible.

That some CWops members are better and more experienced than I am is a good assumption. I'm not saying that you will learn as much as I have, because you already know it. But if you want something different, a change of pace from sending that contest exchange over and over again, let me invite you to an NTS traffic net.

Our daily routine traffic is not particularly inspiring (happy birthday, renew your ham license, welcome to amateur radio, you have QSL cards at the Bureau, etc.) in itself, but you will end up connecting with seriously competent "co-workers" and make some new friends. Some of them you may already know.

The CW arm of the NTS could really use some new blood, particularly from skilled operators like the ones in CWops.

How does one find an appropriate traffic net? I imagine that most of you who frequent 40 and 80 meters have a fair idea of their habits. The Area nets, in particular, should be obvious with their several parallel QSY "threads" going at once. Contact your ARRL Section Traffic Manager to find out your local details. You can also go directly to <http://www.arrl.org/nts>. Note, however, that the Net Directory Search is out of date and can be somewhat difficult. If all else fails, your Area Chair (listed on the site) would welcome your email.

QNI QTC ?

Get Ready for the Third Annual *CW Open* Event



- **Date:** August 31 2013
- **Times:** **Session 1:** 0000Z-0359Z; **Session 2:** 1200Z-1559Z and **Session 3:** 2000Z to 2359Z
- **Bands:** 160 – 10 meters (no WARC), CW only
- **Rules:** Work anyone, anywhere ONCE per band per session.
- **Exchange:** ‘serial number’ and ‘first name’ (e.g. 42 Joe)
- **Scoring:** 1 point per valid QSO; 1 multiplier for each call sign worked – ONLY one time per session
- **Logging:** Supported on N1MM, WriteLog, SD, Skookum, and many others
(see www.cwops.org/cwopen.html)
- **Awards:** Each session is scored and awarded as a single contest; aggregate session scores are counted toward aggregate-score awards, too
- **Teams:** Teams of up to 10 operators can be registered, before August 31, for a team competition
- **Categories:** Single operator categories only – SOHP, SOLP and SOQRP. HP is more than 100w up to legal limit of operator’s country; LP is more than 5 watts up to 100 watts; and QRP is 5 watts or less.
- **Assisted:** Operators may use spotting, RBN. No self spotting. No multiop.
- **Logs:** Separate logs must be submitted for each session of operation. Counts start over at 1 for each session.

CWT Continues without Printed Word

Sorry nothing this month. Death in the family plus other challenges have me discombobulated.
[Condolences, Hank. – Ed.]

We all hope our signals, keying, and fists are topnotch. Do you know how you sound to others on the air? For 26-27 June CWTs, I recorded all my QSOs over all three sessions. If you would like to hear your signal at W6SX, email w6sx@arrl.net, and I will send you short MP3 files of your contacts.

CW Exuberantly,

Hank W6SX

CWT Manager

From the VP – ACA/CMA Scores



<u>Call</u>	<u>ACA</u>	<u>CMA</u>
KZ5D	395	2722
K6RB*	357	2002
VE3KI*	355	2004
SM6CNN	333	2269
F6HKA*	318	1528
N5RR	317	2576
DL8PG*	290	1131
W1RM*	282	2496
NN6T*	279	928
EA8OM/DJ1OJ*	253	1712
AA3B	211	3392
W1UU	209	1244
W9ILY	188	1320
N2UU*	177	1616

AD1C*	169	928
WX7SJ	129	261
K6DGW*	127	979
PA7RA*	124	891
EA1WX	114	1206
W5ASP*	51	418
W4VQ*		1177

* = updated data

73, *Art*, KZ5D

The Annual Competition Award (ACA) is based on the number of members worked each calendar year. You get one point per member worked, once per year. It resets to zero at the beginning of each year. The Cumulative Member Award (CMA) is based on how many members you've worked since January 3, 2010 on each band and continues to grow in perpetuity. The CWops Award Manager (CAM) software, available at no cost, will help you keep track of your ACA and CMA totals.

From the Secretary – New Members



With great pleasure we welcome the following new members:

1183	KN5O	Ted
1184	W4VIC	Vic
1185	WC3O	Robert
1186	W7GB	Donald
1187	KI0I	Mark
1188	KD4OS*	Emmett
1189	WA8HSB*	John

* = Life Member

73,

Jim, N3JT

Current Nominees

Need Sponsors: SM2LIY, VA2FDT, W4UM, WB6BEE

Invitations Extended: KA3QLF, N5WE, OM0CS, SM5CSS

For more details about nominees and status, check the “members only” on the Website: www.cwops.org

For information about joining CWops, check the Website under “membership.”

QTX Report

Enjoying the Art of Conversational CW

QTX is a program for members who enjoy casual CW QSOs. Anytime you have a QSO that goes over 20 minutes, jot down the call sign of the other station, and before the 5th of the next month, go to the website QTX page in the Members Only section and put in your total.

Here are the May QTX totals:

<u>Call</u>	<u>May 2013</u>
N6TT	63
NN6T	49
AA5SR	48
K5LY	41
N5IR	23
K4AHO	21
WA3NZR	18
N1ZX	16
N4SR	12
K0DTJ	9

K6RQT	9
K8QI	8
KE6OIO	7
N5RR	6
JE1TRV	5
K6RB	3
N3IQ	3
K5KV	3
G4CPA	3
W5JQ	2
HB9CVQ	2
W4VQ	2
K6HTN	1

We had 23 submissions this month. N6TT, NN6T, AA5SR, N5IR, K4AHO have all accumulated over 100 QTX points this calendar year. More details will follow in the August Solid Copy.

Thank you to all for your participation. We are keeping the CW bands active.

73,

John K1ESE, CWops #792

QTX - The Art of Conversational CW

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