

Solid Copy



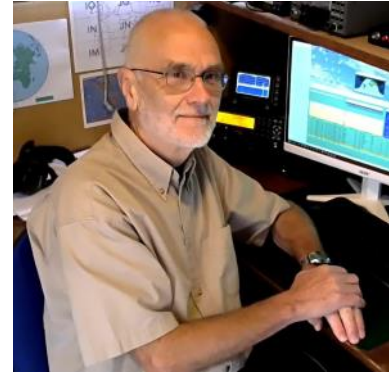
The CW Operators Club Newsletter
October 2023 — Issue 165



Solar conditions are putting on quite a show, on the air and in the air. Photo from Chip N2YO.

President's Message

Having read N3JT's sorry tale of his aborted tour of Scotland in last month's 'News and Notes' I've come to the conclusion that he is jinxed when it comes to trips to this side of the Atlantic Ocean.



(Continued on page 2)

CWops "CWT" 1 hour 'tests
Every Wednesday at 1300z and 1900z
Every Thursday at 0300z and 0700z
Exchange: name/number (members)
name/SPC (non-members)
Avoid DX Pileups!

CWO Mini-club callsign web site:
<http://cwomc.org>

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 "and up"

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In April last year he and Nina treated themselves to a tour of Ireland to enjoy the delights of the land of Guinness and Oscar Wilde. His group spent the final 2 days in Dublin and I had bought a ferry ticket from Holyhead to spend a few hours there and finally get to meet CWops #1 and Nina. Having a slight head cold in the preceding week I ran a Covid test the day before and found the dreaded black line so disappointingly I had to cancel. I've attempted trips across the Irish Sea on a handful of occasions in previous years and something has always happened to scupper the plans so this was to be yet another in a long line of failed attempts – this is clearly my jinx! But back to Jim. Shortly after my having to cancel he messaged to say that he had also tested positive during a group testing session prior to the flight back to the US! Worse was that Nina was negative so would be flying back home while Jim had to stay back in Dublin. We stayed in WhatsApp contact and it didn't sound so bad; he wasn't shackled to the radiator in his hotel room and was able to go out and even managed some CWT QSOs at a nearby museum radio shack I gather. He got back home after a few days where most of the rest of his travel companions were now going down with Covid including, I recall, Nina. I wonder if Jim, in his all too brief stay in Scotland, was quoted that line from Robert Burns which goes *"The best-laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley"*?

A note by our editor N9EEE about the recent E51D RIB Dxpediton to Penrhyn Atoll in the North Cook Islands was something else that drew my attention. As someone who has never even 'done remote' (and have mixed opinions on it if I'm honest) I share his curiosity about this new RIB system. Seems the original idea was for a skeleton set up crew to go ashore to install the RIB with minimal impact and for the main group of ops to operate from the 'mother ship' just offshore. I suppose remote is remote whether 100m offshore or thousands of miles to another continent and like Dick I'd be fascinated to hear the story from some of our members who operated the call from home. It must have been interesting and very challenging. When I work a DXpediton I find myself empathising with the operator struggling with a pile up on a mosquito infested tropical island or an ice covered rock in the South Atlantic; the idea that they may be sitting in the comfort of their own shack (even just across town?!) does sound a bit strange but probably something I'll have to get used to. I'm probably always going to be a *"Just a boy and his radio"* type of bloke to quote Hans K0HB.

A couple of days ago I was sitting in my local club chatting to GWØKRL and discovered he is about to take over the 'How We Were' column in Solid Copy – welcome to the *Solid Copy* crew lan! He wanted to kick off his reign with an early feature of myself and I'm still not sure how he knew I'd never been included in the column previously, but I haven't. The problem is a photo; I know I have a solitary early-ish picture of myself which was taken by a local newspaper but where was another matter. So the good news for lan is that I've discovered it in the bowels of a rarely accessed drawer and it's good quality unlike the subject. It will be coming to your screens any time now..

Now a shout out for the 'Giving Back' program. The idea behind this is that members get on air anywhere in the world around 7pm local time to provide an opportunity for Academy students and any other learners to have a QSO in a relaxed atmosphere at less than 20wpm. Many ops at the start of their CW career are self conscious and lacking in confidence but they will know time spent with a GB volunteer will be sympathetic and understanding. The program was set up by

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Rob K6RB who maintains a monthly update in *Solid Copy*. In the table of activators you will notice many unfilled slots, not the least for the UK. I get on each Tuesday with the club call GW2CWO as well as Fridays though the latter often falls foul of weekend commitments. If anyone feels they can donate an hour a week to this worthy cause please contact Rob. In practice there's no reason why anyone can't get on and donate some time to help aspiring CW operators particularly where slots are empty or even if they are filled – simply follow the operating advice under '[Giving Back](#)' in the CW Academy section of the web page. I don't guarantee every QSO will be a deserving learner but many are and will provide a warm feeling of satisfaction from knowing you've helped someone take the next steps.

73, Stew GWØETF, President (CWops #919)

SC

Editor's Notes: Key Fright

Elsewhere in this issue, Enzo provides some insight into the psyche of the CW ragchewer and sage advice for those putting their toe in the water to give it a try. I'd like to build on that by saying "key fright" is as common as "mic fright" keeping well-intentioned operators from getting on the air. It can be a bit scary and paralyzing to send out a CQ and hope someone doesn't reply at twice the speed you sent it. Or you reply to a CQ that feels like the speed and tempo you can handle, but past the usual RST, name and QTH, you freeze up and it becomes a flurry of dits and dahs passing you by. So, to that CWops has you covered in two ways to give you the confidence to get on-the-air safely and enjoyably.

The Giving Back program was created to give CW Academy students and other newer CW ops an opportunity to practice their newfound skill at a speed that will be matched by the operator. And knowing that the GB operator has the patience and understanding to adjust to whatever speed you settle on, forgive whatever mistakes you make, and have you leave the QSO feeling as though you just talked to your best friend. You can see the daily schedule for Giving Back appearing later in this issue of *Solid Copy*.

Looking for a ragchew? You'll find the CWops ".028" watering holes smack in the midst of the informal ragchew segment of the CW portion of 80m, 40m, 30m, 20m, 15m, 10m, and 6m. While I've never worked another CWops member exactly on this frequency, they hover above and below this spot so let this be your starting point for seeking a ragchew and ease on up or down the band in search of a friendly contact. Its quite fun to discover your contact is with another CWops member. And don't forget to exchange CWops numbers.

73, Dick N9EEE, (CWops #3113)

Editor, *Solid Copy* (SolidCopy@cwops.org)



Not this kind of key fright

News and Notes

[Duncan \(Mac\) Fiskin, G3WZD](#)

We regret to report that the following former Member has become a Silent Key:

Ron Smith, N7RD #1551 on 14th September, 2023

A condolence card has been sent on behalf of CWops

After a rather shaky start with only a couple of items, I am delighted with another bumper mailbag of news. My usual thanks to all contributors for another varied selection of topics.. Keep the submissions coming but please don't wait until the monthly call for articles or reminder (deadline for the next issue is 1st November).

Ian, GWOKRL #2896 This shows the problems I have in CWT's or indeed any contest with my Cat control, it sometimes takes more control than I would like!



Wayne, N4FP #1090 My XYL, Marty N4GL # 1644, and I continue to enjoy CWT sessions every week. I have missed 1 session this year due to an overnight in the hospital. Doing okay now. Thanks for all the contacts. For the most part

we are able to minimize interference between us. I run QRP at 13:00, 100 watts at 19:00, and KW at 03:00 when she is in bed. She runs 100 watts. I have been active since 1957 and she was licensed in 1966 while I was in Air Force pilot training. She likes to tell that I taught her CW on our honeymoon after we were married the day I graduated from the Air Force Academy in June 1965. 73, Wayne, N4FP (Fighter Pilot), random call issued by FCC, not my request!



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Ken, JN1THL #161 I went to a friend-owned dentist in September for a routine check-up. He is Shige, JH1GTV, the owner of a big antenna, a 40M 3-ele full size and 10m 6-ele stack etc.

During the treatment, Mr Shige invited me to have lunch with 7J1AAI. While we were having a nice conversation at an Indian restaurant, I found out that Hal is a member of CWops; W1NN #785. I was very surprised.

He told me that he has a remote facility in Ohio and that he has known Dan, WA6URY / 7J1ABD #1176, who has lived in Tokyo for a long time.

It was a very happy event with a pleasant meal and a miraculous CWops encounter.



(L to R) JN1THL, 7J1AAI & JH1GTV

Peter, GM0EUL #1899 A brief note on our holiday operating from Stricken, north of Aberdeen. 32 QSOs, all using my new QMX running about 5 watts to a variety of wire antennas draped over the cottage roof and gutters or supported by a SOTAPole tied to the cottage balcony. I had a 20m quarter wave vertical with elevated radials spread along the balcony safety rails. End fed halfwave on 40m and a couple of semi-random lengths of wire configured as a sort of off-centre fed doublet. I was lucky enough to get a CWT in, but unlucky in conditions on the day with only 4 contacts within a few hundred miles of me. There was also a FOC QSO party during my time there and that was much better. Overall, including the CWT and the FOC contacts I had 32 QSOs, 17 DXCC and the best DX was N4AF, Howie, at 3668 miles, followed by Joe, W1AO

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at 2970 miles. The others were mostly across Europe. Here are some pictures of the bag of QRP equipment, and the cottage we stayed in with the SOTAPole mast on the balcony.



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Peter, W1UU #51 CT7/W1UU (FOC #806) arrived back to his home in Cape Cod, Massachusetts after being active from a small village for nearly 4 months called Casias Martanes, Portugal. My wife, Maria, and I were there from early June through late September supervising the construction of a house we bought from my wife's cousin last year. The good news, from an FOC point of view, was my Xiegu G90 and EFHW antenna were alive and well from the earlier trip! So, I was on the air instantly!

Not everything went to plan, as my wife fell from a ladder and had to be taken to a hospital for damaged wrists. She was hospitalized for 5 days, but we persevered, and added additional time to our return. I used that time to apply for dual citizenship and looked at obtaining a full Portuguese call, but obtaining CT7/W1UU was the easy path, and our FOC community knew who I was! My wife will continue her rehabilitation locally now that we are home.

When the occasion arose, I had quite a number of replies to my CQs. I especially enjoyed the FOC members I have worked over the years, as well as local CTs who found I could "speak" Portuguese on CW, albeit slowly allowing my brain to form sentences! In addition to ham radio, I have been active playing the alto sax in Portuguese bands, and joined a Banda Portuguesa in the neighboring town. Like FOC, Bandas Portuguesas are exceptionally friendly, making our stay with fond memories. Throughout my ham career one finds there is a strong correlation of music and Morse Code.

While the thrill of Ham Radio is to operate from idyllic islands, for me was enjoying the local activities and answering their questions about "Why do you want to climb that olive tree to put up that wire? We have a tool that shakes the branches!". Since additional expectations will be on our return visits, I wish to thank all the FOC members I worked; a great 161 - until the next time!

(News and Notes Editor's Comment: Sorry to hear about Maria's accident; I hope she is fully recovered!)

Josep, EA6BF #3072 I'm enrolled in some projects I would like to share with you.

I'm in the process of installing a remote station in my second QTH, which is near the beach and completely clear to all directions.! Plan is to run a K3 barefoot and a SpiderBeam yagi stuck to the US. RemoteRig boxes to make it run the remote. Rig is K3/0 mini for home control.

Another project and not for a short term is to modify one of my 2 Kenwood TL-922s to make it work together with the K3. I'm am planning the W7RY mod QSK and see if someday I can use it from the remote place, but being there, not remotely.

Also, I want to build a full-size Delta Loop for 40m at home, (and hopefully it will also work in 20-15 and 10m), so I will have separate antennas for my two complete stations at home. That will consist of pair of fully loaded K3's, pair of KPA500's and pair of Panadapters. Filters by VA6AM, triplexers, duplexers, etc...

Recently I have bought a 2nd hand Venus SW-3B QRP rig. I have put all in one of those Pelican boxes and I have it ready to go operate somewhere QRP! Power is ~3w and antenna is an EFHW.

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Here's a pic of my actual station, another K3 and KPA500 are on the way! The one on the left will go to the remote site.



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Finally, a picture of me and Ini, EA6EJ, a few months back in Mallorca.



EA6EJ (L) and EA6BF (R)

Larry, KF6NCX #3183 and his son, Jevon, K6YLH, have been issued the club call WN6P by the FCC. Their club, the William Pope Contest Club, honors their great and generous elmer, Bill Pope, W6TKE, an SK. Larry and Jevon plan to use the new call in this weekend's California QSO Party.

Chip, N2YO #405 On my way back home I saw Northern Lights for the first time in my life!



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Stew, GW0ETF #919 My local club has started a '10m Challenge' to run October through to end of December. It can be any mode but has to be a home brew antenna with the intention of persuading members that you don't have to spend big bucks and have a maker's logo on everything.

I have a wire dipole up at about 8m and have been having great fun with some surprising results. I've also been ticking off new CWops members and even a rare ATNO yesterday in the form of Pakistan. The other day the dog nearly got my dinner as I couldn't get away from North American callers. All CW naturally and I may not beat the FT8ers but who will have more fun and sense of achievement?

Duncan, G3WZD #1979 Amazing how time goes by so fast; September arrived and it was already time for the annual sailing vacation, again with my usual crew consisting of Annie, my partner, and two of her girlfriends, Debs and Judith. The destination this year was Greece and the Northern Ionian Islands of Corfu, Paxos, Erikousa and Othonoi, and with a similar boat to last year's Croatian odyssey; [Pelor](#), a bareboat-chartered Beneteau Oceanis 40.

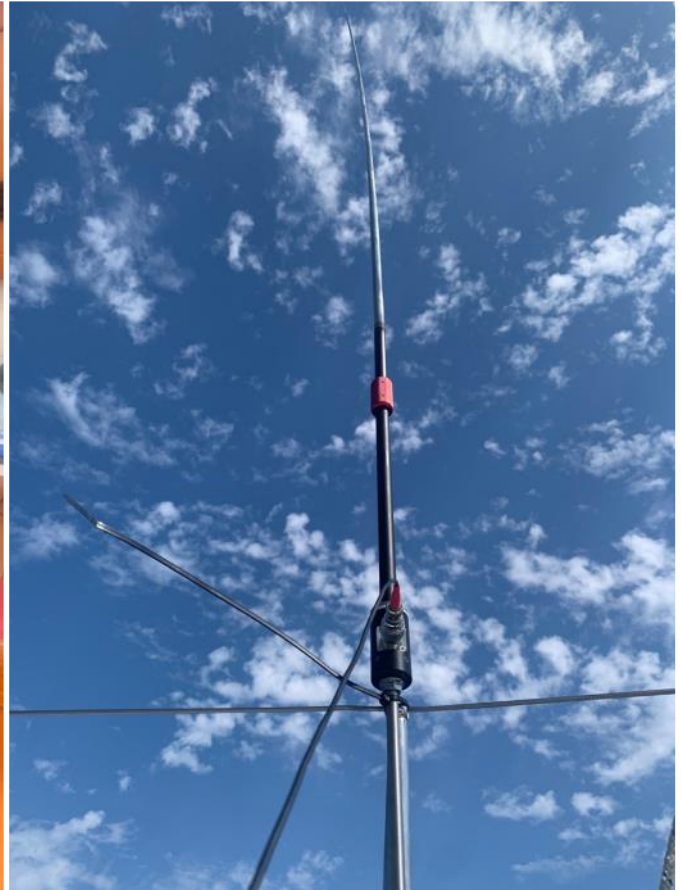
I was determined that amateur radio would feature again and was looking forward to operating as SV8/G3WZD/MM with my IC-705. However, having prepared my homebrew Rybakov (see September [News and Notes](#) for details), I was disappointed to find that the collapsed length was too long for the checked hold bag, and certainly exceeded the permitted dimensions for the cabin bag. Oh well, Plan B was to use the [JNC MC-750](#) which neatly fitted inside the hold bag. Being a tuned whip, there was no need to pack an ATU; a distinct advantage, but I did take a micro VNA to fine tune the antenna adjustment.

The antenna was quickly deployed to a life-line stanchion by a couple of cable ties and earthing was a 50cm copper bar over the side of the boat. The gear performed admirably.



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Unfortunately, the sailing schedule and associated social activities (mostly swimming, eating and enjoying the excellent Greek beer and wine!) precluded any CWT operation, but I did have fun with some nice contacts on 20M and 15M.

Until the next News and Notes - dit dit. Morse code. Learn it once, use it forever.

73, Duncan, G3WZD
(CWops #1979)



How We Were

Ian Capon, GWØKRL, CWops #2896



I first became interested in radio aged 16 when my father bought me an old Russian multi-band radio from a junk sale. Then in 1981 aged 19, I discovered CB radio (forgive me). But luckily I met Ken G2BVM (sk) who mentored me and gave me the push to do both the exam and pass my 12 wpm Morse test. My best memory is working Ken for my first QSO on 80m CW in 1989.

That's me. Now, how about you? Send me your flashback photo and brief paragraph so we can help you retell that moment in time that you never forgot.

73, Ian GWØKRL

How We Were is a flashback to a time in our amateur radio journey when we were novices in our early days of learning, experimenting, exploring, or just plain hamming it up. If you have a picture to share accompanied by a very brief paragraph setting the scene, please forward it to our new manager, [Ian Capon](#), GWØKRL.

Tokyo Ham Fair 2023

[Ken Tanuma](#), JN1THL CWops #161

The Tokyo Ham Fair was held on August 19 and 20 this year. The number of visitors was 43,000, which is a significant increase over last year. The JARL (Japan Amateur Radio League) is expected to undergo a major change, especially with the election of a new JARL President. Mr. Morita Koji, [JA5SUD](#), newly elected President, is an internationally-minded and experienced DXer. I am sure that this will have a positive effect on CWops.

At the Tokyo Ham Fair, we promoted the CWTs, CW Open, and Giving Back programs, as well as recruit new members to join CWops. Looking to future success in the CW Open from Japan, we also recruited new participants to join our two teams we formed this year.

Our booth was busy with visitors and activities. Many CW enthusiasts from Japan, Thailand, Korea, China, Indonesia, Philippine, and Qatar visited the CWops booth. Champ, E21EIC, (CWops #264), his wife JayCie, E20NKB, and Bun, E25KAE, (CWops #3284) visited the show, stopped by our booth, and brought CWops some beautiful stickers. A delight and attraction to our CWops display was Bouvet Island DXpeditioner Adrian, KO8SCA, (CWops #2408).



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Planning for future growth of CWops in Japan, we asked our visitors what they thought of CWops. Many of them said that CWops is too high for them. I strongly felt that we need to clear up the misunderstanding on this point. Additional obstacles raised included lack of English proficiency, the CWT speed is too fast, and many CWops members are viewed as world-famous people. They are anxious if they will be accepted by CWops high-skill members. Also, in my opinion, there are many Japanese CW code lovers in Japan, and they are not interested in standard CW and DX QSO. I would like to analyze this point carefully and we will promote it in the future.

We thank the CWops board members for their support for CWops participation in 2023 exhibition.

SC

Where in Blazes Am I?

[Fred "Skip" Jensen](#), K6DGW (CWops #142)

Morse code is more or less universally thought of as a means of communications, first by wires strung on poles, often along railroad tracks, and then by ships using the newly developed "wireless." One of the earlier uses of wireless afloat was to obtain the time at the Prime Meridian. Finding one's position was critical to being able to navigate from one port to another of course. Latitude is fairly easy and can be determined without help by measuring the angle between the sun when it is highest (local noon) and the horizon and doing a little arithmetic. Longitude is another matter.

The Earth rotates 15 degrees of longitude every hour. If you know the difference between your local time and the time at some reference longitude with a little arithmetic you can determine your coordinates. The problem is knowing the time at the reference. In the early days of wireless, clocks were not very accurate aboard a rolling, and pitching ship. But, call a coastal wireless station, send INT QTR, and the operator would give you the time at zero longitude. His clock, being stationary, was much more accurate, and time was passed between the stations via (what else?) the telegraph and radiotelegraph.

Aviation complicated things. Early aircraft were limited in the weight they could carry and electronics of the day were still fairly primitive and heavy. More importantly, piloting an aircraft requires a great deal more attention to flying than operating a radio. Pilots don't really have much time for fussing with sextants, wireless QTR's, and arithmetic. Moreover, answering the question, "What direction should I fly to get to my destination?" in addition to "Where am I?" is a two-fer for the pilot. To provide directional guidance to pilots led to a navigation system that was ultimately deployed world wide, and required only an AM receiver in the aircraft. It [communication] depended on Morse code, of course.

Imagine it's 1951, you're 11 years old, living in south central Los Angeles, with a neighbor friend

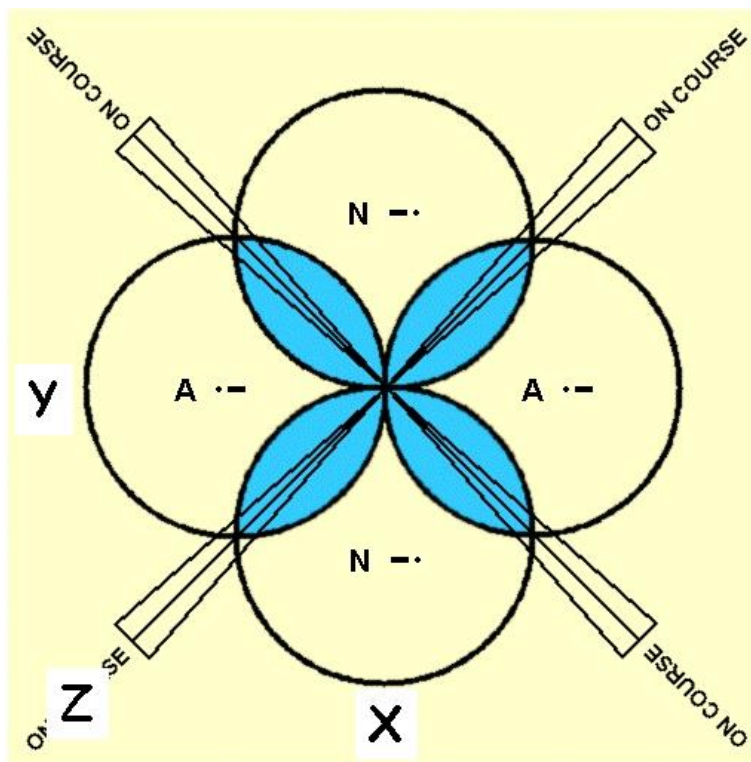
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Paul who is also 11. The latest issue of Popular Science had an article explaining how to make a radio receiver out of lead from a pencil, a razor blade (preferably a little rusty), some wire for a coil, a handful of gum wrappers, and headphones. I already had a pair of headphones. We wound the coil on an empty paper towel tube with wire we had scrounged out of a scrapped television set in the trash behind the repair shop, and it worked! We could hear the local radio station, weak but audible.

Figuring that a bigger coil would increase the volume, we dumped the oatmeal into a bowl - Mom wasn't real happy with that - and wound a new coil on the cardboard oatmeal box. Alas, the station did not get louder. In fact, it disappeared and all we heard was a very weak tone. By this time, we had met Art, W6RMK, who lived a couple of blocks away, and we showed him our creation. He explained that the bigger coil just tuned the receiver to a lower frequency and the tone we were hearing was from the "Four-Course Radio Range" not too far away in Inglewood CA. Aircraft used it to line up and land at what would eventually become LAX. This accounted for the fact that we saw a lot of airplanes over our houses as we were nearly on the centerline of its then one runway.



So, what's a Four-Course Radio Range? It comprises 5 towers as vertical antennas, 4 arranged in a square with the 5th in the center. Two opposite towers are fed by the transmitter, phased to make a figure eight pattern, and keyed with a tone sending a Morse "A" at about 5 wpm. The other two create a figure eight pattern at a right angle to the first two and are keyed to send "N", with the same tone at about 5 wpm. If you are at the position denoted by the "X" in the diagram,

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you will hear a very distinct "N." Conversely, at "Y," you will hear an "A." If you are at position "Z," or any of the other 3 marked "ON COURSE" the two characters will overlap with equal signal strength and you'll hear a steady tone. That steady tone is quite sensitive. Drift just a bit to one side or the other and you'll start hearing the beginnings of an "A" or "N."

Every radio range was assigned a call sign, usually 3 letters but sometimes other combinations, and about every 20 or 30 seconds, the "As" and "Ns" stopped and the call sign was transmitted on the center tower only. The "As" and "Ns" then resumed. Vertical antennas do not radiate much straight up so as the pilot flew over the radio range, the signal strength would decrease dramatically - "cone of silence," a technical term of the day - and the pilot would know he was directly over the range, and on course toward the end of the runway. That's the "two-fer," not only "Where am I," but also which direction to fly.

This is pretty cool if you think about it a bit. Other than initially putting the receiver on the right frequency, it was navigation totally by ear; maybe the first non-communications head copy? The pilot could concentrate on flying the airplane, avoid collisions and crashes, stay on course, and prepare for landing, all while just listening. It was so cool in fact that ranges began cropping up all over the place. With two receivers, the pilot could put one on the next range's frequency and the second on the one following that, and fly from range to range, sort of like a leapfrog.



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They worked so well that they stayed around for multiple decades until finally replaced by the Visual Omni Range (VOR) operating in the VHF aeronautical band. Some ranges persisted in some parts of the world well into the 60s and maybe longer. The photo (preceding page) shows a Four Course Range in the NE corner of Thailand in about 1965. I took the photo looking south from a small Agency base in Laos across the Mekong River, and from the stage of the river, I'll guess it was maybe late April/early May. I'm pretty sure that this range was used for an approach to the Thai airport at Udorn to the west.

The Prime Meridian (0° longitude currently runs from pole to pole through the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England; Britannia ruled the waves, I guess but it wasn't always so. In fact, there was a time when there were multiple meridians used as 0° longitude by multiple countries, usually through their capitol or some landmark. France used the "Paris Meridian," about 2.4° E of Greenwich, for several years before changing to Greenwich. There is a story, very likely apocryphal, that "PARIS" [50 dot times] became the Morse code standard word for speed determination as a "thank you" for their ultimate acceptance of Greenwich, but that's all another story."

sc

Ragchewing, aka "The Magic Side of CW"

[Enzo, MØKTZ](#) (CWops #3206)

"Sometimes I ask a friend if they won't consider letting me nominate them for membership in our club. I am sad when some say that they aren't testers and wouldn't fit in. Of course the club is not like that." -- John N7HCN

This comment, shared by John in a private email, made me think a lot about the external image of CWops. Indeed, article 7 of our Club bylaws says:

7. All forms of CW interest and purpose are welcome, including code practice, ragchewing, contesting, traffic-handling, emergency communications, etc., and all kinds of sending methods, including side-swipers, straight keys, bugs, electronic keyers, keyboards, and the like are acceptable.

And our website further clarifies this intention by stating that we "Celebrate the unique art form of Morse Code" by supporting learning, the art of conversation, contesting, award chasing, and by recognizing excellence. But there is a general feeling that associates CWops strongly with contesting alone. Well, the reason is probably obvious: CWT is a very successful weekly event that fills the band with plenty of signals and entuses CWops members and non-members alike. Similarly, CW Open has become a major fixture in the yearly contesting calendar, seeing the participation of hundreds of operators. Both of these events are "contests" in a general sense, i.e., periods of activity during which participants try to collect the largest possible number of contacts adhering to a prescribed QTC format.

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But there is obviously more than that to our Club. There is a lot of support for learning CW, thanks to the efforts of the CW Academy advisors -most advisors are CWops members. There is award-chasing, with a line-up of different awards that can be collected by members (the scoring is made super-easy by the excellent web tool by Fabian DJ5CW!). And there is also the art of conversational CW, commonly referred to as "ragchewing," which is the point of this article.

I am sure you already know that CWops has a yearly activity dedicated to conversational CW, whereby participants report on a monthly basis the number of QSOs lasting more than 20 minutes (QTX) or more than 10 minutes (MQTX). But the point is not just to accumulate QSOs, but rather to exchange more than the bare minimum information to call it a valid

contact (RST and NAME) and to engage in on-air discussions with fellow CW lovers. And I am sure you are aware of the "Giving Back" programme, whereby experienced CWops members schedule a weekly slot of on-air activity to encourage newcomers to try out a standard QSO. You can find more details about QTX and Giving Back in the monthly columns dedicated to them in *Solid Copy*.

I am also sure that the vast majority of CWops members have not had a conversational CW recently, and some might not have had a "long" conversation over CW ever. We, the QTX bunch, argue that you might be missing out on a mesmerizing and most entertaining aspect of our hobby, and we hope that this article will enthuse you to give it a try. In this article, we provide a collection of "impressions" about ragchewing, with the aim of conveying at least part of the feeling associated with this aspect of the hobby. Then, we discuss a few common misconceptions and obstacles that would normally keep people away from conversational CW, and we provide a few practical tips on how each of them can be overcome.

Connecting minds through the ionosphere

So, what is so special about ragchewing? Well, in a sense, there is nothing special to it, at all. Conversational CW is just what it implies: a chat between two human beings, carried over CW instead of speech. On the surface, it is not much different from an in-person chat with a friend, from a discussion over the phone, or from a synchronous Internet chat (but yes, it is different from a forum or a reflector, since it is "synchronous"). At the end of the day, you are just exchanging thoughts in real-time with another person. On the other hand, ragchewing differs from other synchronous ways of communication in three important ways. First, because, pretty much like any other ham radio activity, it does not need any third-party infrastructure to take place, unlike the phone network or the Internet. Nevertheless, it allows to cover immense distances, thanks to

Examples of Common Words as Abbreviations

ABT: about **AGN:** again **BTU:** back to you **C:** yes/affirmative (especially after a question like "QRL?" or "QRU?") **CFM:** confirm/confirmed **CPI/CPY:** copy **DE:** from **DR:** dear **ES:** and **FER:** for **FB:** OK (Fine Business) **FM:** from (used in a sentence) **GUD/GD:** Good **HR/ERE:** here **HV:** have **HW?:** how do you copy? **LIL:** little (rare?) **MNI:** many (as in "MNI TNX") **N:** no/negative **NIL:** nothing/no copy **NR:** number/near **NW:** now **OC:** of course/old chap **PLSD:** pleased **PSE:** please **R:** yes/received **RPRT:** report **RPT:** repeat (as in "PSE RPT NAME?") **SIG:** signal **SN:** soon **SRI:** sorry **TMW:** tomorrow **TNX/TKS/TU:** Thanks/Thank You **U:** you **UFB/VFB:** Very good (Uber-FB/Very-FB) **UR:** you are/your **VY:** very **WUD/WD:** would **WID:** with **WL:** well/will

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the help of ionospheric propagation. Third, CW is quite an unique way of encoding words; a mode that can be enjoyed only when our brain releases any tension and we "let it flow."

These might seem rather minor differences, but this is probably what makes conversational CW magic and special to some of us; you are using your own equipment to have a discussion with a person thousands of miles away, using a mode that speaks your heart and your mind, all the way through. After you have been in conversational CW for a while, and you have overcome the few obstacles you find at the beginning of the journey (we talk about them further down), you might start appreciating ragchewing as the closest thing to telepathy that humanity has been able to conceive. While you are in a long conversational QSO, you often forget that there is a key, a rig, a headset, and an antenna through which the dits and dahs that compose each single character travel to and fro. You have just the impression (which is indeed very real and concrete, especially over longer, informal chats) that your thoughts are transferred to the brain of the correspondent, and theirs just pop up in yours.

Most ragchewers describe this as a most intimate and relaxing experience:

"Being transparent, sharing your heart with another human being, eyes closed, fingers and thumb on the paddles, the ionosphere bringing minds in touch, thinking not about the gear or the fist or the bands, just the other person and the slight hesitation while they think or the rush when they are enthusiastic. Romantic notions? Maybe. But could kings of old have any greater power? We can't ignore this thing, it's bigger than Samuel F. Morse ever imagined. It is no longer a job, but an art, a language, and a culture." -- John N7HCN

And there is indeed a culture of CW ragchewing, as well as many sub-cultures. A virtue that all ragchewers have in common is patience. They say that ragchewers are "those hams who have nothing special to say, and still have plenty of time to say it," which is only partially true. When you are into ragchewing, you don't measure your activity or satisfaction by the number of QSOs in your log. You are not in a rush to accumulate points. You don't need another multiplier to make it to the top ten. Actually, there is no top-ten, as there is no ranking. And there is virtually no externally set time limit to the duration of your on-air activity, apart from the grumpy looks of your spouse who wants you to shut the bloody thing off and dash to the grocery shop. In a sense, ragchewers are the sloths of ham radio.

This almost automatically means that ragchewers are generally very understanding and accommodating with newcomers. Since there is no push to finish the QSO ASAP, or to go through a pile-up in an efficient manner, a ragchewer will usually go out of their way to make the correspondent feel comfortable. During a conversation, you will have plenty of time (and ways) to notice if

Examples of Salutations and Greetings

BCNU: be seeing you **CU:** see you **CUL:** see you later **CW FE:** CW forever **GA:** Good Afternoon / Go Ahead **GE:** Good Evening **GL:** Good Luck **GM:** Good Morning **GN:** good night **HLO:** Hello **HPE:** hope (as in "HPE CU AGN SN") **44:** best wishes (used by Flora and Fauna/SOTA/POTA activators) **72:** best wishes (used by QRP ops, meaning also "we do more with less") **73:** best regards **77:** long live CW **88:** hugs and kisses (mainly used among/to/by YLs)

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your correspondent is struggling understanding what you said, being it due to QRM or speed mismatch. And since the point is actually to have a meaningful conversation, there is normally no need for either party to ask for QRS during a ragchew; the two fellows will simply adjust their keying to a speed that makes the conversation possible and amenable for both, under the ongoing conditions. But don't be fooled by the "sloth" side of the affair. Many ragchewers also enjoy high-speed telegraphy. So it is not at all uncommon for regular fellows that you have worked many times in the past and know you well, to QRQ to the limit you set last time, and take it from there. This is really where the "telepathy effect" starts to become real and concrete.

Examples of Weather, Rig and Antenna

3-EL/4-EL: 3-element/4-element **Beam:** directional antenna **ANT:** antenna **CLDY:** cloudy **CONDX:** conditions (e.g., propagation) **EFHW:** end-fed half-wavelength **EFRW:** end-fed-random-wire **GP:** ground-plane (antenna) **INV V:** inverted-Vee **INV L:** inverted-L **LW:** long-wire **OCF:** off-center-fed dipole **PWR:** power **RIG:** equipment (e.g., transceiver/antenna) **RNY:** rainy **RW:** random-wire **SNY:** sunny **STN:** station **TRX/TCVR/XCVR:** transceiver **TX:** transmit/transmitter **VERT:** vertical **W:** watts **Yagi:** style of directional antenna

Another special thing about CW ragchewing is that these simple chats often result in enriching discoveries and new friendships. You might start noticing that you have lots of things in common with the people you chat with on air. You will have the chance of hearing about a particular antenna or transceiver that your pal has been experimenting with, and you might want to give it a try. But, more often than not, a contact might open unexpected windows on unexpected worlds (usually outside of amateur radio) that you may not knew existed. As when I found out that one of my correspondents was into amateur restoration of antique steam locomotives, or when in a casual QSO I discovered that Morris Dancing was a thing (and a quite popular one). Or when I realized that another frequent correspondent was living in a tiny village in the midst of the forest, in Northern Sweden, which seems to have come straight out of a fairy tale.

When you are into ragchewing, you will also start recognizing the "fist" of your on-air buddies. In fact, the vast majority of ragchewers do not send code with a keyboard. This means that no two ragchewers will sound exactly the same on air. We enjoy using straight keys, paddles, sideswipers, and bugs, and sometimes we employ several or all of them in the same QSO, as each QSO normally consists of several QTCs on each side. Even when using paddles and an electronic keyer, which guarantee a perfect 3:1 ratio of dahs versus dits, the code you produce still has a unique character. Such a character or fingerprint is given by the rhythm of spaces between characters and words, by the way we start each sentence, by the set of abbreviations we use, and by our specific manner of pausing and taking a breath. All these things make our fists "recognizable," even if we strive for a perfect 3:1 CW with perfect spacing. These are the things that make our CW unique. It is not uncommon to say to a frequent contact "happy to hear again your voice", as indeed we do recognise the CW voice of our fellows on air, exactly as you recognize a familiar voice in a crowd. It has happened many times to me to guess that a certain operator was behind the key of a special event callsign, and I was indeed right, as their voice (even when immersed in a perfect 3:1 code) was unmistakably recognizable.

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Speaking of ragchewing sub-cultures, we know that it is often considered rude to BK into an ongoing QSO, except for very serious reasons. Indeed, you should be a lightning bolt to BK into an ongoing CWT QSO, but still, you got my point HI. Well, if you are listening to a ragchew among European stations, you might quite often hear other stations breaking-in, and a three - or four-party round-table QSO has started. This normally happens among hams who know each other very well, or belong to the same Club/Group. I have seen this happening a lot among a bunch of QRQ German stations, but this is considered absolutely normal among Italian ragchewers as well. And believe me, this is a quite entertaining and vibrant kind of activity. Some of these round-robin QSOs can even last for a couple of hours, with a dozen or more stations signing in and out, and participating to the ongoing discussion. It is like entering a pub and having a chat with the four pals you find at the bar. You take turns in saying something about the current state of affairs, and then another buddy chimes in with their comments. Then two new pals arrive and join the lot with their own trusted pint on hand, while one of the others has to go to pick their daughter from her weekly rugby training, and signs off. Only, all of this is happening in CW, among people who are hundreds of miles apart from each other. Yet, they are enjoying themselves, creating and consolidating friendships.

Oddly enough, ragchewing can be a fantastic way for shy and introverted people to get out of their shell. After all, you are chatting of lighthearted and basically useless stuff, with people you have never ever met in person, and whom you might not ever meet in your life. It might seem odd at first, but then you realize that CW conversations are extremely good at making you feel comfortable, and the more you ragchew, the more you crave for it.

Finally, I would like to dispel another widespread myth about ragchewing: it is not, and does not necessarily have to be, an exclusive activity. There are many operators who have a strong preference for ragchewing over other CW activities, but there are many more to whom ragchewing is just part of the enjoyment they get from CW, as they are also keen contesters and successful DX chasers. There is nothing like "ragchewer once, ragchewer forever!!!" Ragchewing has its own pace and its own ways, as contesting and chasing do. You might prefer one or the other (or all of them together) depending on your character or inclination, or simply due to the contingency of your life. As much as one can be more talkative at times, and more meditative at other times, the nice thing about ragchewing is that you will not miss anything vital by not engaging into a longer CW chat for a while, or for years. There is no unique DX entity to chase. There is no important trophy to win. There is just thousands of human beings looking for a chat and a connection. And the joy of making that happen over CW.

Q Codes for Ragchewing

QRL: busy, frequency in use? **QRM:** man-made interference **QRN:** noise **QRP:** power output 5w and less **QRPP:** power output less than 1 w **QRO:** increased output power **QRQ:** faster keying speed **QRS:** slower keying speed **QRT:** end of on-air operation **QRV:** I am/are you ready **QRZ:** who is calling me **QSB:** variable propagation/signal fading **QSK:** semi or full break-in **QSL:** message received **QSO:** contact, conversation **QSY:** change frequency **QTH:** (home) location **QTX:** CWops term for lengthy ragchew

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Sorry Sir, I can't ragchew today because...

...excuses, excuses. We know all very well that you might face some initial obstacles which could restrain you from fully enjoying ragchewing on the bands. The good news is that those difficulties are not insurmountable, and in any case you are not alone; every single operator who has found themselves into ragchewing has been there. We have all felt the fear of not knowing who was going to reply to our CQ call, and what kind of chat we would have found ourselves into. We were scared of not being "good enough" and wary of making a mess out of it. I have collected below several "hints" about overcoming these obstacles, and some concrete suggestions about dispelling misconceptions about ragchewing. The contributions come from the whole QTX gang, in no specific order.

I am scared of calling CQ.

"I used to be a little shy about calling CQ, but the big advantage is that the person who responds can hear me. When I answer a CQ, I don't know how well the other op can hear me or how long conditions will allow us to continue chatting."

Indeed, many operators are scared of calling CQ for a standard or conversational QSO, as they don't know what awaits them. This might be especially true if you are just starting to explore conversational CW. In that case, making a sked with a code buddy is a great way to get started. First off, you already know the person at the other end of the QSO, which removes part of the tension. Second, you might agree in advance on some topic for each QSO, so that you know already what the chat will be about, more or less, and you could even scribble down a couple of points to cover during the QSO.

I don't think I am good enough.

A regular QTX participant offered:

"That fear is still an issue for me. Sometimes my lack of confidence makes me wonder whether the other op really did have to walk the dog or feed the cat when going QRT! Having a sked with a friend increases my confidence that he or she will forgive my mistakes."

Well, as we said before, this preoccupation is pointless, as ragchewers are a welcoming and supporting bunch. No correspondent is there to judge your sending or to count how many mistakes you have done so far. Just relax and take it easy. It is a conversation, and the correspondent has been in your shoes already. They know how you feel, because they felt more or less exactly the same during their first longer QSOs. They will do the best they can to support you, either by adjusting their speed to yours or by agreeing to as many requests for repeats as needed. The point is to have an amenable chat. If you happen to find a colleague who is less patient and less supportive than that, just pass some minimal information, give them a courteous 73, and spin the dial.

I don't know how to start a chat, I don't know what to say, and I don't want to chat with a stranger!

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Another big conundrum. How would you start to get off the standard QSO script? The easy answer is, you can talk of almost anything, really. Let's go through a few suggestions from QTX folks:

"Here is an idea for how a beginner can break into ragchewing, which has worked for many beginners. Several clubs have special activities focused on beginners, and on going beyond the usual rubberstamp QSO. For instance, the Straight Key Century Club (SKCC) has what it calls the Weekend Sprint-athon, once a month. It's like an ultra-slow-speed contest, but is very casual and informal. To the point that those QSOs often get into the ragchewing side of things."

"It can work well to ask the other op a question about his/her QTH, for example, "are you near the ocean?" Or, if I have visited that area, I might tell them about my experience."

"When I am in ragchew mode, QTH is often a springboard for conversation. I live in the Lake Country area of Waukesha County in Southeastern Wisconsin, in a town called Pewaukee. That's a lot to get across in CW, so of course I don't. But if I'm on 40m, there's a likelihood of familiarity with the name of my town or they immediately equate it to Lake Country where we have nearly a dozen large recreational lakes. And then that inevitably leads to fond memories of water skiing shows, landing a muskie, sailing competitions, hiking the Ice Age Trail, or many other memories. On the other end of the key, I often know their small town or city where I've traveled on business or might know someone there and ask questions about what they like about their area. And then that springboards into some other "rabbit hole" in the conversation. You never know where it will lead."

I don't know if the correspondent wants a longer QSO.

"There are a few ways I signal to the other op that I am up for a ragchew. When reporting my weather, I might say something conversational instead of the temperature. For example, 'warm today es looks like spring is finally here.' Or, when telling them about my antenna, I might say "2 ele yagi-used to be 3 elements but the wind took down the director". Or, when talking about rig, you might add some information about your key, which is something that normally remains outside a "standard" QSO. At that point, the correspondent might be in a conversational mood, and they could get it from there. In that case, they might come up with a comment about their local WX or a little story about their own homebrew key. And you are in a ragchew already. Otherwise, they might get to the finals and 73, and you would be off to look for another QSO. In either case, you lose nothing at all by having made the attempt.

I don't know how to end a conversation without sounding rude.

Well, you normally have this problem even when trying to put an end to an in-person conversation. The simplest reason for that is that you don't have much more to say. At that point, you could really tell the correspondent something like "WELL JIM, I REALLY NEED A STRETCH AND A CUP OF COFFEE NOW. QRU? BK". They would normally reply with something along the lines of "FB Tom, CFM QRU = MNI TNX FER THE NICE QSO..." and get into their finals. Over a longer chat you might use a polite way out, as in "OK DAVID, I WONT KEEP YOU LONGER. TNX FOR THIS VY FB QSO..." and go to the final 73. More often than not, you might really have a good excuse to terminate the conversation, like in the prosaic (but true!) "SRI BUT THE XYL IS YELLING AT ME, AS

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DINNER IS READY = GOTTA RUN = TNX FOR QSO..." or in "SRI JANE, REALLY NEED TO MAKE A MOVE NOW AS I HAVE TO GO TO WORK SOON = TKS FER THIS QSO...." and so on.

Anyway, you might want to take into account that the "finals" in a ragchewing QSO might be quite "lengthy" and allow some time for them. After having declared their intention to drive the QSO to an end, your correspondent will normally thank you several times, and send all sort of greetings and best wishes. These are normally heartfelt and sincere, as when you are wishing farewell to a good friend.

I am not confident with head-copying

Some operators are scared of not knowing what kind of information the correspondent is about to send. But head-copy is indeed the only way to fully appreciate ragchewing.

"The biggest thing that holds me back is worrying if I am not copying everything. Getting comfortable with that is vital. Otherwise I won't push my copy limit. Having a place where I can find partners to practice ragchewing with who are in the same boat I am has been tremendously helpful." (Send that 10 times, really fast -backwards!)

"I'm sure head-copying is the way to go. Many hams have told me not to worry about getting every bit of info in a QSO. They say that if you keep at it, you'll get the gist of what is being said, and that is the important thing."

"One way to practice head-copying text is to use the LCWO site's "convert text to CW" feature. You can paste in some text and then send it to yourself at whatever speed."

Many CW lovers have used this trick (or a the related software called "ebook2cw", still by the same Fabian DJ5CW) to translate and "read" in CW their preferred classic books. This is a terrific way to improve your head-copying skills. Not just in terms of the percentage of text that you can read without issues, but, more importantly, to practice the ability of "letting it go", i.e., trying to keep our brains away from the details and concentrated on the overall meaning of the message being sent, without becoming too much frustrated about having missed bits and pieces here and there. After all, if under marginal conditions you hear some "XYL.... CHORES... GARDEN... SRI MUST GO" and you miss the rest, you know already what is going on there, right?

I cannot send/receive at high speeds.

Many operators who are confident contesting at 30 wpm+ are ready to admit that they would have a hard time copying a conversation at even much slower speeds. There is no reason at all to be ashamed about that. Contesting at higher speed is a different beast, and it is somehow facilitated by the fact that we already know the structure of the QTC (usually RST followed by a number), so our brain can fill in the blanks with that template more easily. Receiving the description of what our correspondent sees out of their window in that moment, or a rant about the amount of weed they had to pull out of their front garden over the weekend, or an excuse for having to end the QSO due to the postman ringing at the door with a delivery that was long overdue, well, that is a completely different business.

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The reality is that conversations might, but do not necessarily have to, happen at high speeds. In fact, any speed at which you are comfortable is good for a ragchew. Many QTX participants have suggested that their ragchews normally happen at any speed between 18 and 25 wpm, which seem to cover a large portion of the activity on the bands anyway. Learning to send/receive at those speeds should not be a problem for any CWops member, as this level of skill is required for Club nomination and sponsorship. In any case, ragchewers are normally more than happy to QRS (slow down) if they notice that you are sending at a slower speed, or if you explicitly ask for "QRS PSE" during one of your overs. The point of ragchewing is to have a pleasant conversation, not to show-off. What matters are the things you say, not how quickly you get to the point.

Having said that, I must confess that there is a totally new level of pleasure in CW conversations happening at 30-35 wpm or more. When speed increases, the whole business becomes just a matter of letting the discussion flow. There is little time to think about what to say next, and there is no time at all to focus on the exact movements you need to do in order to send each of the letters of a word like "COINCIDENTALLY." Your brain knows, and your fingers will do their job. You just think to the next word, and it gets sent over as if you were speaking or typing. Words are short at explaining this kind of experience in full. You should try it yourself. Another good reason to keep improving our CW skills HI.

It is not possible to ragchew at QRP power levels, is it?

"QRP operators have to deploy a more strategic plan to their on-air operating than LP or HP stations. I find it very difficult to call CQ and get a response when operating QRP. And I usually look for S9+ signals to reply to knowing I likely have a lesser signal and want to make it easier for the other op not to succumb to too much impact from QSB. I dunno, maybe I'm overthinking it".

Well, it is true that ragchewing can get slightly more difficult at QRP (5W or less) power levels, as QSB and QRM might chop away part of a QSO. But that's not much more difficult than having a longer chat at 100W. Many ragchewers (including myself) operate routinely, primarily, or exclusively QRP. And they manage to have long discussions with likely-minded fellows. There is no magic there; if propagation allows, the difference between a 100W signal and a 5W one is 13dB, or about 2 S-points. So if a station puts a 100w signal and is received at S9+10dB (not unusual, at all), the same station would still be audible at slightly less than S9 if they put out a 5W signal. Many of us would have a hard time telling the difference between the two of them. OK, that's the theory, but in practice, how many chance do I have to have nice ragchews if I am running QRP?

Well, the main ingredient here is knowing your stuff, and in particular, being able to read the current propagation conditions. It is true that calling stronger stations is an easier way of getting into longer chats. But I have had many 30-min-plus QRQ (30 wpm+) ragchews at 500mW (yes, I mean half a watt here) on both sides. It surely does not happen everyday, but it happens much more frequently than not, and definitely almost every day at 5W. Obviously, I can only dream of having a ragchew from my QTH in London with a station in Montana on 10m at night during sunspot minima. Even if I were running full legal power into a Yagi, the odds would be close to null. Knowing what the propagation conditions are, and which bands will probably bring your signal where, is absolutely fundamental at any power levels, and moreso at QRP. The price to pay for

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ignorance is frustration. But the more time you spend on the bands, the more you understand what are the best time slots to talk to certain areas in a reliable manner. It just boils down to practice and experience.

I have no time.

Really? Think again. You might not have enough time to make a dozen 30-minute QSOs a day (been there). But again, ragchewing is not about the sheer number of QSOs. You might get a lot of satisfaction from just one or two friendly chats on the air a day. After all, if it's the amount of code sent and received that gives you pleasure, the fact that such an amount of code is scattered across a sequence of super-short exchanges or split between two longer chats with your air-waves pals does not require a different amount of on-air time.

But I can't just get on air and go chatty. I need a motivation for that.

Fair enough. It is undeniable that for some operators the challenge of going up a ladder and reclaiming a trophy is an integral part of their operating practice. Well, you do have plenty of trophies and awards that recognize ragchewing activity. The CWops QTX/MQTX initiative actually provides several levels of perpetual and annual awards to chase. Other Clubs and CW-focused organizations have similar activities with associated awards. Notable examples include the Straight Key Century Club SKCC with its many ragchewing challenges and awards, and the mythical "Marathon" (get 100 ragchewing contacts with other members, each lasting for at least one hour (good luck with that!); the EU CW Club (EuCW) and its Snakes and Ladders activity (work stations in 5min+ QSOs each month, collect grid squares and discover whether any of your squares was a snake (lose points) or a ladder (gain them); and many more.

Wrapping up: you can (and you should) give it a try

I really hope that this short article has convinced you to give a stab to conversational CW, as it is a fun, rewarding, and absolutely mesmerizing aspect of our hobby. Just get yourself comfy, brew a cuppa, sit in the shack, spin the dial, and get ready for a fantastic trip. I would like to thank all the folks who participate monthly to the QTX/MQTX activity; many of them have contributed much of the text you have read, and in particular Kat KK6CN, Christine K0ALT, Larry, KF6NCX, John N7HCN and Dick N9EEE. Special thanks go to Dick N9EEE for his continuous encouragement, and to John N7HCN, for several interesting email exchanges and for his previous "Ragchewing 101," a great resource on ragchewing which appeared in [Solid Copy April 2019](#). Go and read it now!

I will leave you with a thought offered by John N7HCN, which I believe summarizes the fantastic world of conversational CW:

"I'm going to give to ragchewing all the years I have left, and when I sign off I hope another op or two will have discovered the strange miracle of QRQ head copy and may QSP all of this to a few in the next generation."

Come to the magic side of CW. We have cookies. 72/73



How To Grow CWops

[Jim Talens](#), N3JT (CWops #1)

You may have noticed that we have had a slowdown of new nominees for CWops membership. But just listening on the HF bands reveals MANY active and good CW operators.

If every current CWops member would nominate just ONE new operator to CWops membership annually, we would have several hundred new members every year. The contacts can be anything you like, meaning ragchews, contest exchanges, etc. If you believe the operator is capable of 25 wpm and you have the station in your log twice within the last 12 months, go ahead and ask him/her if there might be an interest in becoming a CWops member. You can offer whatever reasons for joining you like, but my own pitch is something like this:

"Hi (name)

"Thanks for the recent QSO, at least our second within the last year. You are obviously a very accomplished CW operator so I'd like to invite you to join the CW Operators' Club (CWops). It is an international organization that encourages the growth of CW by its CW Academy (free online classes for getting to 25 wpm), support of CW awards club, camaraderie through its *Solid Copy* monthly newsletter, and on-air activities. Take a look at www.cwops.org. I would be honored to nominate you, but would do so only if you are interested. You then would need 3 more sponsors, each of whom has worked you twice at 25+ wpm within the last year. (That's easily accomplished!)

"I hope you'll join the 3200 other CW operators who are CWops members! Joining CWops is a vote for the future of CW.

"73, Jim N3JT"

Join!
us!



NORTH AMERICAN CW WEEKEND

June 7 - 9, 2024

As in the past, the Weekend is primarily aimed at those amateur radio operators with a particular interest in Morse code (CW) operation - FOC, CWOPS, SKCC, FISTS - but anyone with an interest in Morse code communication is welcome.

After two years of cancellations due to COVID restrictions, we had good get-togethers in 2022 and 2023. We are delighted to welcome regulars back, and look forward to meeting some new players.

With the recent increased concerns about an upturn of Covid-19, we are asking participants to be vaccinated and to use good sense with respect to any recommendations about COVID in force at the time of the weekend. At this point, masks are not required.

There is a nominal registration of \$25 per couple or \$15 per single person. This will help defray costs and fees. Any excess will be donated to the CWOPS Scholarship fund. Please send your check, made out to:

Don Lynch W4ZYT
1517 West Little Neck Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23452-4717

QUESTIONS/INQUIRIES:

Email any questions to Don at: w4zyt.don@gmail.com

Event Summary:

North American CW Room Block

Start Date: Thursday, June 6, 2024

End Date: Monday, June 10, 2024

Last Day to Book: Friday, May 12, 2024

Hotel:

Fairview Park Marriott (This is the usual for the past several years)

[3111 Fairview Park Drive](#)

[Falls Church, VA 22042](#)

Phone: 703-849-9400

Reservations: 800-507-8235 (Event is: "North American CW Weekend")

Rate: \$ 119.00 plus taxes/night (Friday/Saturday)

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Here is a reservation link. If you have problems with this link, please call the number above. [Book your group rate for North American CW Room Block](#)

Here is the program:

There will be a hospitality suite between 1800-2400 ET on Friday and Saturday with refreshments and snacks available, plus plenty of collegiality and good conversation.

Pizza - Friday Evening (6/7) at 1800

Italian Oven

[6852 Old Dominion Dr.](#)

[McLean, VA 22101.](#)

Salad, beverage (non-alcoholic), unlimited pizza. Dress casual. Individual checks

Brunch - Saturday (6/8) from 0900 to 1200

Home of Nina Lane and Jim Talens (K4NML and N3JT)

[6017 Woodley Road](#)

[McLean, VA 22101](#)

Phone 703-241-1144

Dinner - Saturday Evening (6/8) from 1800 until...

Metro 29 Diner

[4711 Lee Highway](#)

[Arlington, VA 22207](#)

703-528-2454

Don't be put off by the "Diner" moniker. Take a look at the menu at their website at <https://metro29diner.com/>. This is an informal place with a class kitchen and a full selection of meal options which should suit every taste. Cocktails, beer, and wine available. Dress casual. Individual checks.

We are looking forward to a nice weekend and good participation. Please stay safe and well, drive carefully, and come prepared for a good time.

Vy 73,

Don W4ZYT



New Members

[Trung Nguyen, W6TN](#)

With great pleasure we welcome the following new members to CWops:

<u>CWops</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>CWops</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>CWops</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>Name</u>
3410	EI7LC	Eamo	3413	AE5EZ*	Roger	3416	W8XAL*	Dave
3411	N3RA*	Scott	3414	WB4AJL	Dave	3417	W0ABE*	Fin
3412	KQ4DAP*	Cainan	3415	W2RAL*	Ron	3418	N5FZ*	Paul

* Lifetime member

As of October 7, 2023:

Need Sponsors: ZS2M/ZS6DX, NI9F

For more details about nominees and up-to-date status, check the ["Members only"](#) page on the website. For information about joining CWops, check the ["Membership"](#) page on the website.

Notes: If you have updated your personal info, e.g., new QTH, new callsign, or additional callsign, please send it to membership@cwops.org so I can add it to the roster. Vice versa, if your callsign becomes inactive I can remove it, too. Then the roster will be accurate and current for our usage.

73, Trung W6TN (CWops #1707) Membership Manager

SC

Did your **CALL SIGN** change recently?

Did you move to a **NEW ADDRESS** or change your **NAME** ?

Congratulations!

Help us keep our **DATABASE UP-TO-DATE**

Click [HERE](#) to update your contact information.

Giving Back Update

[Rob Brownstein, K6RB](#) (CWops #3)

CWops' Giving Back (GB) program is meant to provide on-air QSO experience and practice for anyone who wants it. It was initially intended as a way for our CW Academy students to get some on-air experience. We all know that when there is activity on the bands, these days, it's usually a DXpedition pileup or a contest. Today's CW aspirants have had little chance to work others who are skilled at CW, operate at moderate speed, and are committed to helping. That's the mission of Giving Back. The GB volunteers get on the air at approximately 7 PM local time and seek out CQers, or call CQ, and engage in routine QSOs including some conversational tidbits. The operators' schedule appears on the next page.

Here are the September results (GB hosts are shown in **bold**):

AA0YY	KN4CQB	KE8TBN	AF4PX	W8HOM	WBØGAZ	K4UFB	K5OGX
	KK7EHJ	N5JO	KB8CR	W2UO	K4AXF	W7AEH	
E25JRP	HSØZNO	HS3OY	HSØDJU	E27DPX	HS4QKN	E24ZST (2)	VK6DW
	HSØGWL	E22FEQ (2)					
GW2CWO	PA3EPA	MØMCL	MØCUT	DL5ANE	G1SCT/P	EA4CA	PA2MT
	I2ZZU	OM2AM	UR7VB	SP1NQU	UD3B	RW3AG	GØAOE
	G4HWK						
JJ1FXF	JF5XPJ	JA4IJ	JE7ZFE	JF1EPL	JG1BGT(5)	JI1DRW	JJØSFV
	JL1RAP	JN1MET	JQ3FRX	JS2OVO	VK2NNW	JM4AOA	7J2ACT
	7N1OEX	JA4IJ	JA9DAB	JF5XPJ(3)	JG1BGT(4)	JI7KNV	JI8PLY
	JJØSFV(2)	JM4RRC(3)	JM8QBM	JM8QGN	JN1FAO(2)	JQ3FRX	JQ6DGR
	JR2FBM	JS2OVO	JS6ULK	WU6P			
JO1DGE	JAØSFE	JA2GET	JA4IJ	JE6WGA	JE6XFK	JE7RMT	JF5XPJ(2)
	JG1BGT(12)	JG5POO/5	JH8CBH	JI7KNV	JI8PLY	JJØIQS/3	JJØSFV
	JK1MVC	JK1SFP	JL1RAP(3)	JM4RRC(7)	JN1FAO(2)	JQ3FRX	JR2AWS
	JR2FBM						
K6RB	WD8LIC (2)	VA7JC	KG4CNZ	WB5YUZ	NE5E (2)	KØCDJ	
K7NJ	W1ENO	K2MGR	NE5A	N9FGC	AB8DY	KE6ORA	VA3FN
	AA7TJ	KB6QHO	VE1VEI	KFØQS	KD8ZM	W7PAU	W7FY
	W5WTH	WB5PZH	KA1BSZ	AC5O	K4JJW	K1YS	NG9D
K8UDH	N9OL	WA7LRZ	K9QEW	WØUH			
W2XS	WB5DRG	W3ZRW	K9TLJ	KA9OUT	K4EJQ		
W5DT	WB2SMK	W4DAN	W3JRR	VE2GIF	VA3DGA	KAØOUT	
7N2XZB	JR2FBM(3)	JQ3FRX(3)	JF5XPJ(2)	JG1BGT(7)	JK1QYL	JJ1VNV	JN1FAO
	JL1RAP	JK1MVC	7N1OEX	JM4RRC	JJØSFV		

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Giving Back Update

[Rob Brownstein](#), K6RB (CWops #3)

Giving Back Operating Schedule - 7 PM Local											
October - April: 40m & 80m May - September: 40m & 20m											
Frequencies: 14.035 - 14.039, 7.035 - 7.039, 3.535 - 3.539 MHz											
UTC+9	UTC+7	UTC+3	UTC+2	UTC+1	UTC/BST	UTC-1	EST UTC-4	CST UTC-5	MST UTC-6	PST UTC-7	Hawaii UTC-9
MON											
JO1DGE							W2XS	AAØYY			
TUE											
JR1WYW	E25JRP		SV2BBK		GW2CWO		WE5P	K8UDH	K7NJ	W7ZDX	
7N2XZB										K6RB	
WED											
JM4AOA											
THURS											
JJ1VNV			SV2BBK				KV8Q	N5OT	K7NJ	W7ZDX	
FRI											
JR1WYW			SV2BBK		GW2CWO		N2GSL	AAØYY		K6RB	
SAT											
JJ1FXF											
JM4AOA											
SUN											
JJ1FXF							W5DT			K6RB	
JM4AOA											



CW Academy

[Bob Carter, WR7Q](#) and [Roland Smith, K7OJL](#)

Most colleges and universities have a method of some kind to qualify applicants. They may use standardized tests, educational history, something else, or a combination of methods. For several years CW Academy relied on the advisor to decide if the student was qualified to be in the class.



As a result, advisors had to spend a significant amount of time contacting each assigned student, determining if the student will take the class, and qualifying the student for the class.

CW Academy began automating the student registration process leading up to the January / February 2020 semester. This process has been updated several times since then to make it much less burdensome for the advisor and for the student.

One of the first upgrades was to automatically verify whether the student still wanted the class. That resulted in advisors spending far less time in the “student chase” before the semester started.

Another significant upgrade was introduced in the spring of 2022. The registration system began asking the student to do a Morse code self-assessment during the sign-up. The purpose of the self-assessment was to guide the student into the most appropriate class level.

Many students think their Morse code skills are better than they really are and often signed up for classes beyond their capability. When that happens, the whole class is affected as the class can only progress as fast as the least-capable student.

With that upgrade, the student would indicate what class level they were interested in taking: Beginner, Fundamental, Intermediate, or Advanced. The student was then given a Morse code audio clip. After listening to the clip, the student would then indicate how well the clip was understood.

A catalog of twenty Morse code audio clips was compiled for each of the four class levels. The audio clips were tailored for the class level. For instance, a prospective Beginner student may be given a Morse code clip “let it go now” played with a character speed of 15 wpm and a Farnsworth timing of 6 wpm. A prospective Intermediate level student might be given an audio clip “take it from me” played with a character speed of 25wpm with Farnsworth timing of 12 wpm. The audio clip could only be played once. The program kept track of which clips a student had previously been served so that the student would never be given the same audio clip more than once.

For example, a student applying for an Intermediate Level class would see something like that shown on the next page.

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Student Self Assessment for an Intermediate Level Class

This is a Morse code self assessment to help **you** determine the right level class for you. Play the following audio clip which contains a short phrase in Morse code. The clip will play only once. Then indicate how much of the audio clip you understood and press 'Submit'

▶ 0:00 / 0:19

Less than half More than 50% but less than 90% More than 90%

BE SURE TO SELECT ONE OF THE THREE OPTIONS BEFORE CLICKING SUBMIT

Submit

The student played the clip and then selected one of three options listed underneath the audio clip. If the student scored himself at 50% or higher, the student was given the option to take the next higher-level assessment. On the other hand, if the assessment was less than half, the student could try the assessment again or continue the sign-up process.

This self-assessment process has reduced the number of students dropping out because they were in the wrong class or staying in and frustrating everyone else.

We next added the ability for advisors to have their students do an end-of-semester self-assessment. The advisor could select which students would get the invitation to do an end-of-semester self-assessment, which would be one of several factors the advisor might use to determine whether the student was promotable or not.

The issue, although somewhat mitigated, remained where students were ignoring the assessment recommendations or being overly generous with their ability to copy the audio Morse code clip. After a lot of discussion, including discussions with CW Academy long-time advisors, we have begun to implement a significantly improved refinement to the self-assessment process.

At the beginning of the sign-up process the registration program will check for a recent self-evaluation. If one is found and the results are satisfactory, the student can continue signing up. Otherwise, the student is directed to the self-assessment.

The student is given a set of questions in Morse code. After each question the program displays five possible answers. The student selects what the student copied from the possible answers and continues to the next question. After all questions have been answered, the score is calculated and stored in the database. If the score is high enough, the student is given the opportunity to take the next-higher assessment.

The sign-up program uses the information from the assessment to make a recommendation to the student as to which level is most appropriate.

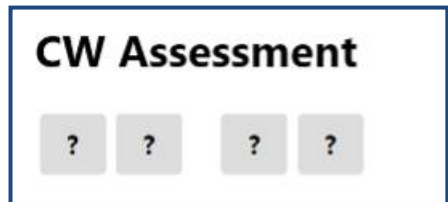
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The parameters for the assessment are as follows:

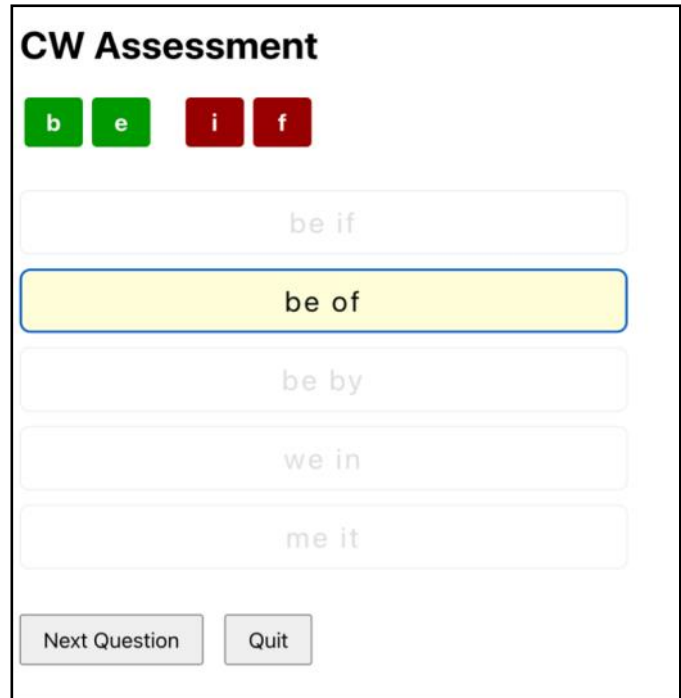
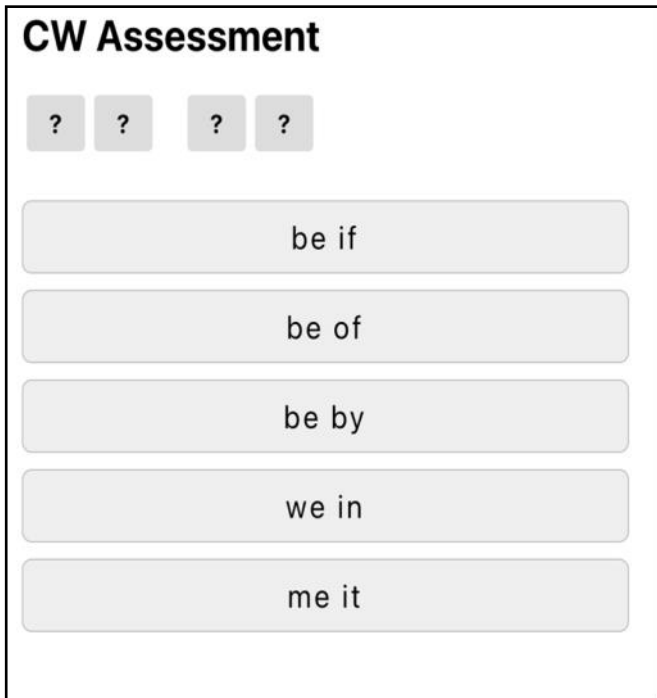
Level	Character Speed	Farnsworth Speed	Number of Questions	Words per Question	Characters per Word
Beginner	15 wpm	4 wpm	5	2	<=2
Fundamental	25 wpm	6 wpm	5	2	<=2
Intermediate	25 wpm	10 wpm	5	2	<=3
Advanced	25 wpm	20 wpm	5	2	<=4

If a student requested a Fundamental Level class, the display would look like that on the right, and the code will be heard.



Each question mark lights up as the Morse code is played. Then the multiple choice answers are displayed (lower left).

The student can then select the answer from the choices. The program will then show what was sent, what the student selected, and what words were incorrect, if any (lower right).



After all questions have been answered, the score is calculated as the percentage of correct words. The information is stored in the database and will be available to the advisor when the student is assigned to the advisor's class.

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Next will be making the assessment process available for advisors to use for evaluating their students during and at the end of the semester. The advisor will be able to set the 'difficulty' parameters, send the students a link, and see the assessment results.

73, Roland K7OJL

sc

CWops Tests (CWTs)

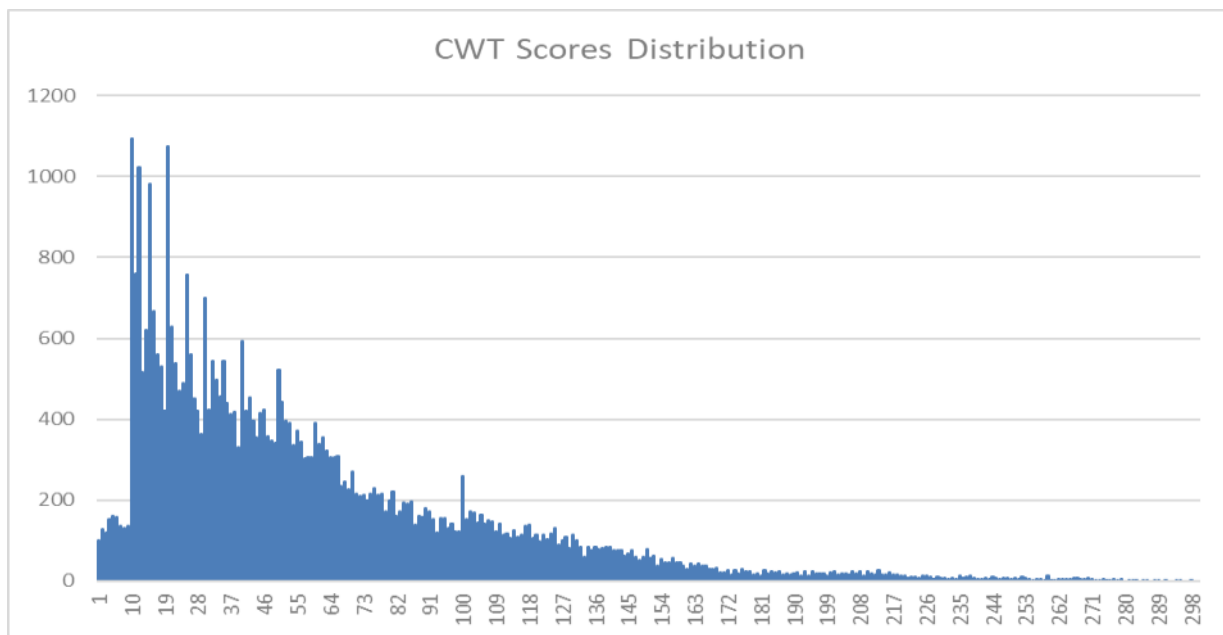
[Rich Ferch, VE3KI](#)

We are now three-fourths of the way through the year, with 156 CWT sessions completed out of 204.

There are two members, K4PQC and N4BP, who have reported scores in every single CWT session so far this year. Two others, KO4VW and G3LDI, have missed only one or two sessions. Anyone with more than 102 CWT sessions to their credit has had to be up in the middle of the night for at least some of their sessions, suggesting an impressive level of dedication to the CWTs.

At this point, there are already 24 members who have reached the gold medal qualifying level. With three more months to go, there will be many more joining them before the end of the year.

In last month's column I reported a few numbers related to the distribution of reported scores, noting that the median score reported is 45 QSOs, while the mode (the most frequently reported score) is 10 QSOs. This month I have followed up on this by delving more deeply into the distribution of scores. A plot of this distribution for this year as of the beginning of October looks like this:



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The most common score, as mentioned above, is 10 QSOs, but scores of 12, 15 and 20 QSOs are recorded almost as often. As might be expected, there is a fairly regular decline from the awards threshold at 10 QSOs (the minimum number in North America and Europe for counting a score towards participation awards), out to an extended tail in the upper part of the distribution.

There are slightly elevated regions at 60-66 QSOs and 100-110 QSOs, suggesting that 60 and 100 are threshold goals, i.e. people prefer to achieve a score slightly above the goal rather than one slightly lower, and perhaps make some extra effort to try to position themselves on the favored upper side of the threshold.

There are also some very sharp peaks and valleys reflecting the psychological phenomenon of round number bias. In addition to the previously-mentioned peaks at 10, 12, 15 and 20 QSOs, there are also significant peaks at exactly 25, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 and 100 contacts. It appears as if quite a few participants are setting round number targets for the number of contacts to make in a session and stopping as soon as those targets are reached. There are also sharp dips in the numbers at 13, 19, 29 and 39. The first of these is a well-known “unlucky” number, but as for the others, it seems that some people are reluctant to stop just one QSO below a round number, preferring to carry on until the round number is reached.

Above the magic score of 100 QSOs, there is little if any evidence for the round number bias seen at lower scores. Perhaps the majority of people making these higher scores are simply trying to make as large a score as they can, without much regard for particular round numbers, whereas at lower numbers, people have more time to reflect and decide whether and when to stop before the end of the hour.

Many of us no doubt set some kind of goal for each CWT. If you do, is that goal a threshold (your objective is to meet or exceed the threshold, and perhaps even to exceed it by as much as possible)? Or is it a target (your objective is to hit the target, with much less motivation for carrying on once that is achieved)? Both seem to be at play in the distribution as seen above.

Enjoy the CWTs and keep those reported scores coming! **73, Rich, VE3KI**

SPEED	XST	DAY	TIME (UTC)	EXCHANGE	SPONSOR LINK
20 - 25	MST	Monday	1300 -	Name and QSO serial	International CW
20 - 25	MST	Monday	1900 -	Name and QSO serial	International CW
20 - 25	MST	Tuesday	0300 -	Name and QSO serial	International CW
25+ wpm	CWT	Wednes-	1300 -	Name and CWops #	CWops
25+ wpm	CWT	Wednes-	1900 -	Name and CWops #	CWops
25+ wpm	CWT	Thursdav	0300 -	Name and CWops #	CWops
25+ wpm	CWT	Thursdav	0700 -	Name and CWops #	CWops
< 20 wpm	SST	Fridav	2000 -	Name and S/P/C	K1USN
< 20 wpm	SST	Monday	0000 -	Name and S/P/C	K1USN



CWops Member Awards

[Bill Gilliland, WØTG](#)

Monthly Update

During September, additional members submitted logs and the number of active participants in the awards program increased to 237 participants. The QSO totals and rankings for the first week of October 2023 have the same familiar calls in the top six positions with **KR2Q** remaining in first place and leading second place **AA3B** by **217** QSOs. The changes in the top ten rankings this month have **N5ZO** moving into eighth place followed by **N5TJ** and **KY4GS** in ninth and tenth place. The top ten this month are **KR2Q, AA3B, K3WW, N5RZ, KG9X, K7QA, NA8V, N5ZO, N5TJ** and **KY4GS**. The separation between first place and tenth place is **538** QSOs.

The number of members who have contacted CWops members in 100 or more DXCC entities remained at **70** this month. The number of participants who have accomplished CWops WAS grew to **202** this month with the addition of **9A1AA** and **K9CPO**. You can see complete rankings for all award categories at <https://cwops.telegraphy.de/scores>.

CWops Award Tools Participation

The Top 100 ACA scores reported in *Solid Copy* represent active participants only, meaning you must have submitted a log in the current year. Since ACA scores reset to zero at the beginning of each year, active participants are those shown with a non-zero ACA score.

At the end of 2022, we had 289 active participants in the Member Awards Program. As of October 5, 2023, we have 237 active participants. If you have not yet submitted any logs for 2023, please do so soon, and we can include your score among the participants.

Inactive participants previously achieved scores in categories other than ACA that are not shown in the Searchable and Sortable Scores Table. To see rankings and scores for both active and inactive participants please use the Score Overview Table where inactive participants are listed with ACA scores of zero, but their scores in other categories are listed at the highest level that was previously submitted.

You can see the final 2022 scores or final scores for any other year by going to the Score Overview Table and selecting the desired year from the "Final scores:" list at the top of the page. All scores categories on the page will then show the final scores and standings for the end of the selected year.

The Searchable and Sortable Table can graph your current year's ACA scores by date and allows you to compare your progression to that of others. Check the Plot button for the calls you wish to see plotted and they will all appear on the same graph.

The CWops Award Tools [website](#) main page provides a means of printing your CWT Participation Certificate. You may request a downloadable certificate by clicking the "CWT certificate download" selection at the top of the page. View this webpage for more information about [CWT Participation Awards](#).

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About the CWops Member Awards Program

Several operating awards are available for contacting CWops members. These include Annual Competition Award (ACA) recognizing the total number of CWops members contacted in a single year, Cumulative Membership Award (CMA) recognizing the total number of members contacted on each amateur band since January 3, 2010, CWops WAS Award for contacting members in all 50 states, CWops DXCC Award for contacting members in countries on the ARRL DXCC list, CWops WAE Award for contacting members in Europe, and CWops WAZ Award for contacting members in each of the 40 CQ zones. All contacts must be via CW and between current CWops members. To qualify for these awards, you must submit your logs via the tool at the CWops Award Tools [website](#). You can also print out your awards certificates at that same website.

A set of tools for managing your awards status is provided on the CWops Award Tools website and if you regularly upload your logs your awards will be automatically tracked for you. To view complete data for all currently active participants and see where you and others rank among active participants in the awards program, use the [online tools](#). For more details on the tools provided, see the August 2021 *Solid Copy* article.

Please Join Us!

Fabian, DJ5CW, who created the website and the tools, made it extremely easy to participate in the awards program. If you are not among the CWops members who are currently participating, please join us! It adds a lot of friendly competition and fun to your operating.

More Information

View our website for more information on the [CWops Awards Program](#). Send your feedback, questions or comments to cwopscam@w0tg.com.

Online listing of the current [Top 100](#) for all award categories.

Current ACA Top 100 as of October 5, 2023:

Rank	Call	ACA	CMA	DX	WAS	WAE	WAZ	Rank	Call	ACA	CMA	DX	WAS	WAE	WAZ
1	KR2Q	1813	8671	172	50	59	37	13	OM2VL	1206	6716	101	50	44	33
2	AA3B	1596	13343	132	50	49	38	14	K1VUT	1158	5910	81	50	41	26
3	K3WW	1513	10543	135	50	50	38	15	AA2IL	1149	3237	75	50	29	27
4	N5RZ	1489	9320	129	50	47	37	16	W1RM	1146	8953	219	50	62	38
5	KG9X	1397	6724	101	50	43	31	17	K9WX	1123	5663	110	50	44	33
6	K7QA	1321	6642	90	50	39	31	18	K3WJV	1110	7628	118	50	49	32
7	NA8V	1316	8525	113	50	47	35	19	DL6KVA	1094	7561	195	50	66	38
8	N5ZO	1314	9122	114	50	47	35	19	K1DJ	1094	5306	114	50	46	31
9	N5TJ	1306	4661	88	50	43	31	20	W0UO	1091	4534	74	50	39	27
10	KY4GS	1275	3517	72	50	35	24	21	VK2GR	1076	3183	83	50	41	31
11	KC7V	1267	6307	94	50	38	33	22	K3JT	1066	6038	104	50	46	31
12	N7US	1237	6627	117	50	45	34	23	K4WW	1056	5561	85	50	39	29

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Rank	Call	ACA	CMA	DX	WAS	WAE	WAZ	Rank	Call	ACA	CMA	DX	WAS	WAE	WAZ
24	W8FN	1055	4683	76	50	38	24	65	K4TZ	756	3026	43	50	20	16
25	VE3TM	1046	4378	97	50	46	29	65	NA4J	756	3913	78	50	37	24
26	K3QP	1043	3609	82	50	40	26	66	K3PP	737	5700	109	50	45	31
27	KO4VW	1029	2937	64	50	34	24	67	SM0HEV	736	2964	116	50	50	35
28	WT9U	1025	6098	103	50	41	30	68	N2UU	735	5542	112	50	46	31
29	N5AW	1024	6461	104	50	48	34	69	N1DC	730	5218	91	50	40	26
30	AA5JF	1006	4562	98	50	44	31	70	KM4FO	724	3294	48	50	19	18
31	K6NR	1002	5258	71	50	35	29	71	KY0Q	723	3309	68	50	31	28
32	9A1AA	994	4924	127	50	52	38	72	W4WF	717	5066	97	50	44	32
33	NJ3K	991	4087	80	50	41	28	73	N2EIM	714	941	46	48	30	18
34	WS7L	988	3630	67	50	30	28	74	AF4T	713	3291	75	50	38	28
35	WN7S	973	4838	81	50	39	27	75	VE3KIU	693	1904	42	49	28	18
36	CO8NMN	966	4826	77	50	36	25	76	KC4WQ	679	3646	62	50	29	25
37	N5KD	965	3116	94	50	43	33	77	K1RF	676	1637	44	50	27	15
38	KW7Q	947	2526	78	50	36	30	78	K5VG	668	1280	48	48	27	16
39	VE3KI	945	7646	144	50	53	37	79	EA3FZT	664	2746	82	50	45	30
40	SM6CUK	935	5295	160	50	57	38	80	M0RYB	660	2732	88	49	47	29
41	K0WA	932	3114	48	50	24	19	80	VE3MV	660	3926	89	50	41	27
42	W0VX	923	6257	131	50	46	37	81	OK1RR	651	4164	150	50	52	38
43	WT3K	918	4842	87	50	42	28	82	F6HKA	646	7512	203	50	58	38
44	WA4JUK	916	4304	87	50	42	27	83	W2CDO	645	3048	68	50	38	24
45	KK0U	912	3014	60	50	32	23	84	DJ5CW	642	3541	104	48	54	35
46	DF7TV	883	3429	111	50	50	34	85	W0GAS	641	2474	49	50	22	22
47	KW1X	863	1660	48	50	29	17	86	W0TG	633	3454	70	50	31	26
48	OZ3SM	857	3464	108	49	51	36	87	VE7KW	631	2199	37	50	18	19
49	EA6BF	852	2771	82	50	43	30	87	W1UU	631	4621	115	50	41	33
50	W9ILY	851	6538	136	50	45	37	88	K0TC	626	3366	64	50	29	22
51	KV8Q	844	3280	70	50	35	23	89	G4PVM	614	3108	108	50	50	34
51	N9UNX	844	1824	30	50	17	12	90	W3WHK	612	3337	76	50	37	21
52	F5SGI	842	2827	106	50	52	33	91	W8EWH	611	1412	45	50	24	21
52	K1SM	842	4541	133	50	46	37	92	W1AJT	610	4184	98	50	45	33
53	KT5V	840	3727	83	50	33	29	93	N8BJQ	595	7630	133	50	48	39
54	N3CKI	836	2604	57	50	31	18	94	K4GM	591	4138	85	50	37	28
55	W4CMG	832	2407	49	50	24	20	95	G3LHJ	590	1613	64	44	41	20
56	K3ZA	827	2880	55	50	34	21	96	HB9ARF	588	2941	89	48	47	28
57	N5XE	816	3951	82	50	37	31	96	W7LG	588	1450	39	48	27	13
58	AF5J	798	3127	64	50	26	24	97	W2VM	581	2618	64	50	33	20
59	N4CWZ	789	3611	63	50	34	23	98	W9CF	576	1927	30	50	13	17
60	AC6ZM	785	4568	70	50	38	25	99	NJ8J	571	2531	54	50	27	18
60	WU6P	785	2427	44	50	24	20	100	EA4OR	569	3101	90	50	47	31
61	N4FP	774	3129	61	50	33	20								
62	K4PQC	770	1696	46	50	24	20								
63	K8JQ	764	5405	70	50	35	23								
64	W6AYC	759	3953	59	50	27	26								

73, Bill WØTG (CWops #1873)
CWops Operating Awards



QTX Report: Enjoying the Art of Conversational CW

[Enzo](#), MØKTZ

This month I have received many comments about interesting and energizing QSOs. As we know, the point of conversational CW is not to collect points, rather to widen our horizons, meet new fellows who feel the same love for CW, and share with them the most intriguing stories, or just a friendly chat. Nevertheless, it is amazing to see how very experienced operators, who have been in the hobby for years, still get excited for a nice and interesting piece of ragchewing, for a chat that they didn't expect, or for an on-the-air encounter that surprised them in a way or another. This is, after all, part of the "magic" of ragchewing, isn't it?

Speaking of "magic": you might have noticed that this issue of Solid Copy includes an article with title "Ragchewing, a.k.a., The Magic Side of CW". This is a collection of impressions on the fine art of conversational CW, together with a series of concrete suggestions about how newcomers could overcome the usual obstacles that ragchewing might present to them. I would like to thank everyone in the QTX/MQTX gang, as that article is definitely "ours", through and through. First because it contains actual material that you have contributed, by means of personal correspondence, comments, and recommendations. Second, because, as it stands, that article opens a prominent window over the world of ragchewing for both newer and more experienced CWOps members. I really hope that the article will enthrall them to give conversational CW a serious try. I would not be surprised to see a few more friends joining the QTX/MQTX family in the next few months, possibly also thanks to our article. If you hear a new callsign on air this month, please be twice as kind and twice as understanding, as that might be one of the first conversational QSO for your correspondent. Actually, this recommendation is moot, as supportive and encouraging behaviors are the trademark of ragchewers HI.

On my side, nothing special to report, except that I am advising my first CW Academy Advanced class, after having advised Intermediate classes for three semesters in a row. A great ride so far (well, can't speak for the poor students, to be honest), as it is very nice to see the students progressing towards mastering conversational CW at higher speeds and with higher confidence levels. I am truly amazed by the amount of progress humans can make in such a short time frame, thanks to dedication, commitment, and constant practice.

I have had many nice and interesting CW conversations this month, during which I have used more my Vibroplex bug than the electronic keyer. And at the end of the month, I finally acquired from a friend a new/old Lionel J-36. This is a simple, straightforward, no-frills bug, derived from the Vibroplex Lightning model, which was given to military RTOs sent to the front line. It had to be rugged, durable, and dependable, and in fact mine (a 1942 model) has survived almost intact for slightly less than twice my age. As my friend Benny K5KV put it, "man, you've bought four Pounds of history there," and he is probably right. I must admit that this simple, rugged bug is so smooth and pleasant to use that it has almost entirely replaced the Vibroplex Original in the last two weeks.

This month we welcome Paul WA2TAX, and Atsu JS2AHG (CWOps #141), who have submitted their scores for the past few months as well. Just a note for everyone, have a look at the scores

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reported below, and let me know of any omission or error, so than I can fix them.

Please have a look at the soapbox comments below. Some very interesting reports, including the "fun factor" formula by Tom DF7TV, several fellows reporting on the pleasure of chit-chatting using all sorts of mechanical keys, more youngsters joining our ranks, and the appeal by our dear editor Dick N9EEE who is waiting to put more CWOps QTXes in his log: let's help him achieve his goal this month!

Thank you, get on the air, enjoy ragchewing, and keep it fun. I expect your logs by the 5th of November, as usual.

WA2TAX: Most interesting QSO was 39 minutes with an instructor of music at a "prep school" in southern PA. He told me about the school he taught at and explained it was one of the very few schools with a Carillon which he played for the school. A nice morning QSO.

DF7TV: In September I enjoyed 6 QTX QSOs. I would like to thank Gerd, IN3EBZ, Norbert, DJ3TU, Matt, DL1YGH, Gary, KW0J, Ernest, WA4ELW and Pit, DJ4GX. The "fun factor" of a conversational QSO is defined by the expert CW operator Ludwig, DK5KE: Fun factor = [duration/minutes] x [speed/wpm]. So – looong QTX QSOs lighten up the mood!

JS2AHG: QSO with John 9V1VW on 17m band was the best of bests in September. I'm very happy to hear that John likes and still is using the bug key which I presented him when he visited Tokyo few years ago.

AF4PX: Thanks to all my new friends that don't mind letting me get to know them through a good ragchew, and all the repeat QSOs.

YL3JD: This month 90% of the QSOs with homemade cootie, the rest with other mechanical keys. This thing did a better job than I expected HI HI. As usual thanks Jo PI4G for our frequent ragchew.

N9EEE: I'm rediscovering 30m. Had a nice QSO with AAØYY and am looking for other CWops QTXers to put in my log.

VE3WH: I received a QSL card from a local amateur radio operator that I had a 45 minute ragchew with. He lives 60 Kms from my QTH. Why was this so special? Cam is 16 years old and prefers CW.

K9OZ: A two-week vacation cut into my morning ragchews time this month.

KG5IEE: Lots of mini-QTX this month. Many interesting QSOs.

PG4I: Very nice 2-way homebrew cootie QSO with Hanz YL3JD this month. Started participating in the European sideswiper net again on 80 meters which resulted in 3 QTX QSO's. These nets can take about one hour from start to finish!

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N7HCN: Very enjoyable month with fewer skeds so operating was at my whim, and met some new operators as well as fast friends. Looking forward to QTX by the fire on cold evenings!

KB6NU: Worked a lot of POTA in September, and those aren't ragchew Qs. :)

KF6NCX: The most enjoyable QSO was with Dennis, WU6X, who lives less than 100 miles from me. I heard him one morning after he checked into the Pacific Area Radio Guild morning CW net and contacted him by email later. We set up a sked and had a nice 40-meter QSO one morning. I'm looking forward to a repeat with him.

F5IYJ: All QSO made from my 'new' Lionel J-36 (1942 model). It is a real pleasure to chat with folks with this old key. S/N is 27915, if someone has any info about it).

KG5SSB: Not as many contacts as the previous month.

WB4IT: Not QRV much during summer months

AJ1DM: I was very happy to have a QSO with my former student James AB1DQ, which he credits with kick-starting his return to using CW on the air. I'm looking forward to many more Qs with James.

72/73, Enzo MØKTZ (CWops # 3206)

Awards and Medals for 2023



Gold – 400 QTX QSOs

Silver Medal – 300 QTX QSOs

Bronze – 200 QTX QSOs

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QTX for September 2023

<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>
VE3WH	57	KY4GS	15	AF4PX	7	JS2AHG	3
WA4IAR	53	K9OZ	15	W9EBE	6	GW0ETF	3
WS1L	44	AA0YY	15	DF7TV	6	YL3JD	2
F5IYJ	31	N1ZX	14	K8UDH	6	WB4IT	2
KC0VKN	23	M0KTZ	12	KG5SSB	5	N9EEE	2
ND4K	21	KG5IEE	12	PG4I	4	W3WHK	1
KB6NU	19	KR2Q	9	WA2TAX	3		
N7HCN	18	AJ1DM	8	KF6NCX	3		

MQTX for September 2023

<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>
WS1L	49	VE3WH	24	WB4IT	11	KF6NCX	3
M0KTZ	36	PG4I	20	AF4PX	9	AJ1DM	3
YL3JD	32	MI0WWB	20	KG5SSB	6	W9EBE	2
KG5IEE	32	DF7TV	17	GW0ETF	6	N9EEE	2
KY4GS	30	N1ZX	15	JS2AHG	5	W3WHK	1
AA0YY	30	KR2Q	13	WA2TAX	4	K8UDH	1
WA4IAR	28	ND4K	12	N7HCN	4		

QTX Totals for 2023

<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>QTX</u>
VE3WH	460	KG5IEE	101	EI7LC	31	NE0S	10
WS1L	355	M0KTZ	96	N1ZX	22	YL3JD	9
KY4GS	299	K5YQF	94	KK6CN	22	W7JRD	9
K9OZ	289	KR2Q	88	W0GAS	20	AF4PX	9
WA4IAR	234	AJ1DM	76	PG4I	20	WT9Q	6
KB6NU	213	N2DA	61	DF7TV	20	WA2TAX	5
F5IYJ	212	KG5SSB	57	K5KXJ	19	AB4PP	4
KC0VKN	210	K0ALT	57	K4AHO	15	WA9ZZ	3
WB4IT	193	K8UDH	57	WA2USA	14	SV2BBK	2
AA0YY	157	N9EEE	50	W8OV	14	N0BM	2
N7HCN	151	W9EBE	43	JS2AHG	13	AB7MP	1
N5IR	144	KF6NCX	42	GW0ETF	13		
ND4K	139	K6DGW	42	W3WHK	12		

MQTX Totals for 2023

<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>	<u>Call</u>	<u>MQTX</u>
KY4GS	390	PG4I	98	N1ZX	33	N9EEE	8
M0KTZ	345	ND4K	76	K5YQF	32	WA2TAX	6
AA0YY	237	SV2BBK	75	N7HCN	30	W3WHK	6
KG5IEE	201	KR2Q	68	K8UDH	25	WT9Q	5
VE3WH	189	W9EBE	66	SV1DAY	20	K4AHO	5
WS1L	179	JS2AHG	63	MI0WWB	20	G3WZD	4
WA4IAR	179	DF7TV	58	W8OV	17	W7JRD	2
WB4IT	172	GW0ETF	55	K6DGW	17	NE0S	2
EI7LC	170	KF6NCX	54	AB7MP	13	K5KXJ	2
YL3JD	169	AJ1DM	42	W0GAS	12	N0BM	1
KG5SSB	106	AF4PX	39	KK6CN	9		



My Story: New Member Biographies

Compiled by [Tim Gennett, K9WX](#) (CWops #1462)

Scott Jones, N3RA #3411

Thanks to N5TJ, K3UA, NA8V, WW3S and IT9VDQ for sponsoring me.

Everything happens for a reason... My best friend growing up happened to get a AM/FM/Cassette radio for his birthday one year. Little did his parents know that it would be the catalyst not only for my ham radio addiction but also my career. I got a call from Ken a couple days later saying "you've got to get over here. I am listening to Radio Kiev." So I bolted next door and that began my love of radio. SWLing & AM DXing is where it started for that 14 year old. It was really cool & fun then and it still is. You can go to school and learn how this stuff all works but to me, radio is still magic and is as exciting as ever.

I got my Novice ticket in December 1977 (WB3KKX). The Sharon High School ARC, WB3CSO, was pretty active back in the day and there were several of us that got licensed at the same time. We all travelled to the Buffalo FCC office to upgrade to General in the summer of 78 and then each summer I went back to upgrade through Extra in 1980.

I was always interested in DXing and got interested in contesting too. I changed my call to WR3G in the late 80's, and then finally to N3RA in the mid/late 90's when we were allowed to pick calls again. I was a very active DXer and contester back in the 70s-90s.

I went to Penn State and operated from K3CR many times. Also operated some VHF contests with W3GNR (WIT team) and eventually was part of the K3UA Big Mountain VHF contests in the 80s. Also thrilled to operate from many other stations including N8IKX, K8CC, KW8N and others.

I spent much of the late 80's through early 00's helping build and operating at K3LR. What a wonderful experience. Tim is the most dedicated and gifted ham I have ever met, and he is one of the best op's there is. We've operated together at his awesome station countless times and also operated 6m together at the W3GNR and K3UA VHF outings too. I am proud to call him a great friend.

I was a charter member of the North Coast Contesters and have been a life member of the ARRL since 1980. Yes, I spent graduation money on a life membership. As a member of the Mercer County ARC, we were very involved in the disaster recovery efforts after the F5 tornado outbreak of May 1985. We also had some serious Field Day efforts in the 90s where we won 2A and 3A. In

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addition to NCC and CWops, I am a member of NCDXF, INDEXA, and FISTS.

Started out with a Heathkit DX60/HR10B with a dipole. Moved up to a TS-520S, then to a TS-930 with a tribander and vertical and eventually a IC-765 with monoband Yagi's, wire antennas and verticals. Currently I am using an IC-7300 and a 160m Carolina Windom that works 160m-6m. I also have a homemade 6m Moxon that I put up last year. Looking to add a HF9V and some rotatable HF stuff too soon.

I was less active for many years as we raised 3 great kids. My two boys have their licenses as well. KD8NZG is my oldest and my youngest is now KE8WHO. I lost all of my QSL card in or around 2004 and still can't locate my electronic logs form the 80s - late 90s. So, I've started over, for the most part, with DXCC, WAS, etc. Enjoy chasing all the awards.

I currently work mostly CW and FT* with some RTTY, and SSB thrown in. You can find me on the bands most days somewhere. Also, made my first Satellite QSO a couple years ago. One of my earliest radio memories was walking up to the attic of W3HV to see him work Oscar 7/8 using his Drake twins. The glowing blue light was so cool. I always wanted to give the Birds a try and did so recently on AO-91, AO-92 (while available) and SO-50. One of these days, I'll upgrade my satellite station too.

I am retired from AT&T but currently work at DXEngineering with a great group of dedicated hams.

Outside of radio, Karen and I like to do stuff outside including travelling, hiking and camping.

Cainan Whelchel, KQ4DAP #3412

I was first licensed in September of 2022, so I am a fairly new ham. Unlike a lot of hams I wasn't really around any ham radio people as a kid. But like others, the pandemic and the following work-from-home transition brought about a desire to explore other hobbies and interests. I took up a painting class, metal working, put more time into woodworking, played games; and when cops started patrolling our neighborhood, got curious enough to try to listen to their comms.



This got me down a rabbit hole of setting up a cheap "scanner" using a SDR dongle and some free software. I was able to listen to the trunked police dispatch, railroad workers, pickup aircraft overhead, and even decode SSTV on HF (with enough wire strung up in the room). Eventually this landed me on ham radio and I got a cheap HT to listen in to other things. Not wanting to let the HT go to waste, and with the encouragement from my Father-in-Law, KO4HRF, I got my technician ticket. Most think that this just gives you VHF/UHF with voice on the 10m band and that's about it, but I was interested in fully utilizing my privileges. Technician allows for CW-only

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operations on 15, 40, and 80 meters. I did just that. I got a Xiegu G90 and hung a homemade 40 meter dipole in my trees and set off. My first CW contact was with member Richard Dervan, N1RBD, (CWops #2983) when he was activating a POTA park here in Georgia.

After that I was hooked on CW and POTA! And I hunted as many POTA activators on CW on 40 meters that I could. I did this until I got mad about not being able to get all the daytime activators on 20m and got my General ticket. From there I wanted to be able to work those fast DX stations and I spent time learning and practicing which is how I landed in the CW Academy.

I want to thank my advisor Serge KK7RR who nominated me and helped push me into the weekly CWT contests. I'd also like to thank those who sponsored me: K5UV, KR2Q, K1EBY, K1VUT, W8OV and K4BAI. And I'd like to thank a local ham and CWops member, Aaron, N4ARY, for helping me out with any of the million questions I have.

Panagiotis Dalianis, SV2SKD #3410

First, I want to thank SM1TDE Eric Wennstrom, 4X6FB Aaron Huber, OK2PAY Lada Prajsner, 4X6GP Victor Rosenthal and SV2BBK Theofanis Mastakas for the nomination and sponsoring my membership in CWops. I consider it a great honor and acknowledgement of my love of CW.

So, I first licensed in 2019 under the SV5SKD callsign (Rhodes island IOTA EU-001) because my father in law SV2DVE threatened me that in order to be in the family I have to have a callsign. (Hi Hi).

But I was already familiar with the magical world of radio waves for almost 17 years because of my job. I am a (MOS 25C) Radio Op Sergeant first class in the Greek Artillery with 17 years of experience and still going strong. I got my callsign but I really didn't use it because I wasn't too interested in being active on 2m and 70cm. I wanted to be where the real action is and hunt and surf in the shortwaves.

In 2021 I was repositioned to Central Macedonia, and my prefix changed to SV2. Six km outside of Katerini city in a small village called Palaio Keramidi (old title in English), I made my first ham radio shack with the help of my father-in-law SV2DVE and the blessings of my XYL SV2LUX.

I borrowed an old Icom 706 MKII and I locked myself up in the basement for 2 days. XYL thought I was in a training exercise till my ammos (food and drinks) needed refill.

SSB and digital modes really didn't give me joy after a while so I jumped into CW through PC. Oh boy that was it. I was hooked!



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But I wanted to become a real CW op so after a bit of Google searching I came across the CWops page and SV2BBK Theofanis Mastakas who helped me all the way to my CW training and guidance. I applied for the CW Academy Beginners Course with the one and only FB op G3WZD, Duncan Fiskien, as my teacher. I got my Certificate at the end of June 2022.

After that I applied for the Intermediate class with a great "strict" teacher and mentor WR7Q Bob Carter. Dive in immediately during the courses in CWT week contests as a CWA with a good sending and copying speed. Ending the course in February 2023.

Still trying to become better in "copying behind" and loving to ragchew with OM ops almost every day.

I really enjoy contesting with my new trusty Icom 7300 on 100w and homemade delta loop antenna on 20m 11m ABG.

As for my personal life, I'm married and I have two kids, a 6 year old daughter and a 2 year old son. Outside of radio, my other hobbies include scuba diving Tec 40, photography, editing videos, Cuban salsa dancing, reading philosophy and love to study the Stoic Epictetus and Diogenes the Cynic.

I am honored to be part of the CWops community and I will be glad to work you soon.

May the bands be with you!



Roger Carver, AE5EZ #3413

I started learning Morse and listening to short wave when I was about 15. Sports, school, raising 3 kids, and a career with General Dynamics / Lockheed Martin as an engineer took over and I gave it a miss for about 50 years. In 2018, a friend on our church security team, KD5JUN, invited me to a DCARA club meeting when I was between knee replacements, and while I was recuperating, I studied for and passed the test for my amateur extra license.



Bonham State Park POTA activation this spring

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Soon after, I bought a 1946 Vibroplex Deluxe No. 6 in a silent auction, and got the bug so to speak. I started studying the code using phone apps. Huge mistake studying dits and dahs instead of the sounds only. Someone mentioned CW Academy as the way to go to correctly learn CW. So in 2020 I signed up for my first Basic Course with N5MM Eric as our advisor. Having barely passed that course, I let work, travel, and impending retirement take over and lapsed into not practicing again.

In 2022, while working on my second career, I signed up for a second round of basic class with Kevin NB7O, Gordon AA7TQ, and Jeremy NJ6Q as advisors, and it was off to the races. Next came a Beginner class with Chris KF7WX, and then back-to-back Intermediate, and Advanced class with Serge KK7RR. Working CWT weekly soon became more of a joy than a chore or assignment.

I am an director/officer for the Lewisville Amateur Radio Association, a mentor for and lifetime member of Denton County Amateur Association, and member of the Lake Area Amateur Radio Klub, and ARES. I volunteer for Denton County Emergency Management.

I enjoy a number of hobbies, and now have a small proto-typing, one or two off machine shop to occupy me when I am not on the key. Long range rifle and RC aircraft and grandchildren take any time left over from the former two hobbies.

My wife, Vicki and I have 6 wonderful grandchildren that we get to see quite often, and enjoy time with family. We always say God first, family, fun, and whatever follows.

SC

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