

The KeyNote



Newsletter of the Americas Chapter, FISTS CW Club—The International Morse Preservation Society
Issue #2, 2019

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"When you've worked a FISTS, you've worked a friend."

INFORMATION PAGE

When you have a question about FISTS, go to the source for the correct answer. Posting a question on a chat room or e-mail reflector may yield the answer, but your best bet is to ask a FISTS volunteer or look in the reference issue. Several volunteer contacts and/or e-mail addresses have changed from the last reference issue of *The Key-Note*. Please make note of the following listings.

When e-mailing a volunteer please put FISTS in the title of your e-mail. This will help the volunteer recognize that your e-mail is important and not spam.

Awards and Certificates

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, awards@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

Club Call, KNØWCW

Cody Codianni, KC2LSD, kc2lsd@fistsna.org
413 Martin Court, Leonardo, NJ 07737-1317

Membership Questions; Renewals; Call Changes; Name, Mailing, and E-mail Address Changes

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, membership@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

FISTS Store Manager

Joe Falcone, N8TI, fistsstore@fistsna.org
9880 Musch Road, Brighton, MI 48116

Activities Manager

Dave Bamford, W2DAB, w2dab@fistsna.org
444 East 75th Street 16F, New York, NY 10021

Website Changes (including getting your personal or club web page linked)

Dennis Franklin, K6DF, webmaster@fistsna.org
4658 Capitan Dr., Fremont, CA 94536-5448

Club Presentation Packets

Joe Spencer, KK5NA, kk5na@kk5na.com
3618 Montridge Ct., Arlington, TX 76016-4821

Code Buddy Volunteers and Buddies

<http://www.fistsna.org/codebuddy.html>

FISTS Sprints

Cody Codianni, KC2LSD, kc2lsd@fistsna.org
413 Martin Court, Leonardo, NJ 07737-1317

Get Your Feet Wet Activity Day/G3ZQS Memorial Straight Key Contest

Karl Zuk, N2KZ, feetwetlogs@fistsna.org,
g3zqslogs@fistsna.org
15 Flintlock Ridge Rd., Katonah, NY 10536-2510

The KeyNote Newsletter

Bryan Bergeron, NU1N, keynote@fistsna.org

The KeyNote

The Newsletter of the Americas Chapter of FISTS

Issue #2, 2019

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Send articles to:

keynote@fistsna.org

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www.marycronindesign.com

From the Editor

The Joys of Key Restoration and Maintenance

by Bryan Bergeron, NU1N

I'm of the belief that a passion for CW communications can't be expressed in the abstract, but requires the master of at least one piece of hardware. Whether you choose to use a bug or straight key or some other device, you have to bond with it. Of course, there's the emotional bond, to the extent that you can appreciate a quality instrument, and then there's the physical bond that reflects your ability to train your peripheral nervous system such that your key becomes an extension of your body.

Assuming you're like me, you're somewhere on your path of the 10,000 hours of keying required to become a true master of the straight key. However, you can facilitate and deepen the emotional bond from day one, through thoughtful maintenance and, if necessary, restoration of your key(s).

Maintenance, which I love almost as much as using a key for a QSO, is part of life. After all, accidents happen. Metals oxidize. Insulation becomes brittle and ineffective. Paint chips and peels. In short, time marches on.

So, what's involved in a typical maintenance routine? First, there's preventative maintenance. I make a habit of guarding against major damage by keeping my keys under Plexiglas covers. I've had one key saved from a book falling from a bookshelf simply because it was protected with a cover.

Then there's the mechanical maintenance. On non-sealed bearings, I use various types of synthetic grease. The more load bearing the joint, the thicker the grease. I use Moebius synthetic watchmakers grease, which comes in an infinite variety of viscosities. I rationalize the expense because I also work on mechanical watches. But you can also use a general purpose silicone grease with great results.

Then there's the cosmetic finish on the metal. Once a week, I give every key that's seen some action a good rubdown with a microfiber cloth. Next, on bare metal, such as the brass arm on my Kent K-1 key, I use a second cloth to apply a thin coat of TufGlide dry lubricant and protectant. Unlike WD-40, TufGlide doesn't attract dust.

For coated metals, such as the finish on Schurr keys, I use Renaissance Wax. It goes on clear and clean, doesn't yellow, and can be easily



Maintenance.

(continued on page 4)

From the Editor (continued)

removed. It's also universal, in that it's a great protectant for Plexiglas and other acrylic surfaces as well. By this I mean it protects the plastic from everyday scratches.

In my experience, the most problematic restoration area is the fragile plastic paddles made of acrylic, especially paddles out of manufacture, such as those from Schurr. As long as you have all the parts from an improperly shipped or handled paddle, you're in luck. A few drops of WeldOn 4 is all you need to bond the parts of a shattered paddle. The break may still be visible, but the paddle can be stronger than the original.

Vibroplex, the longest lived ham radio company, maintains a parts supply for even their oldest models. Replacing a paddle or spring is simply a matter of identifying the make and model of your key. Other manufactures seem less concerned about the lifespan of their keys and keyers. For example, Bencher makes great keys, but if you ever break one of the plastic paddles, then you're out of luck if you want to restore the key to original condition. Bencher uses rivets instead of screws or nuts and bolts to attach their plastic paddles. Still, restoration with machined paddles and machine screws is possible. I could go on, but you get the idea. Given a bit on ingenuity, restoration of just about any key ever produced is possible.

So, what's your maintenance program? Have you ever thought about restoring one of those ancient keys available on eBay? Please let me and your fellow readers know your maintenance and restoration tips.

73s,

Bryan, NU1N

Americas Chapter, President's Message

by Joe Falcone, N8TI

Every time I turn on the radio, I call CQ on a FISTS frequency, usually 7.058 or 3.558. When I did that back in the summer of 2018, it was very rare to have a QSO with a FISTS member. Lately, however, the activity around those frequencies has dramatically increased. FISTS now are giving our frequencies a chance, regularly calling and answering CQ's on our frequencies.

If I had to say what I would ask FISTS members to do, it would be to send out a CQ on the FISTS frequencies at least once during each of that member's radio sessions. Not only will you be giving other FISTS members the chance to practice their CW with a fellow FISTS, but you will get the chance to meet and learn about those members. For example, just a few days ago I had a QSO with Angel, N4SNI in Maryland. I called CQ on 7.058 and he came back to me. His signal was 339. We had a good 20 minute QSO and he was solid copy through all of it. The amazing thing is that he was running 5 watts into an indoor loop in his apartment! Here is a person who is undaunted by antenna restrictions and power output limitations. Using an indoor loop and 5 watts, he is on the air and making QSO's, while a lot of us are sitting around watching TV and playing on the internet. Angel is actually operating CW and enjoying his hobby, even though most people in his situation would have packed their radios away to wait for a better opportunity.

I hope that our frequencies will continue to be the place where hams looking for a friendly ragchew will get together. Remember, nobody will be upset if your speed is slow, you are new to CW or are rusty. Personally, my CW speed is

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President's Message (continued)

only about 15 wpm. I am not on the air enough to build up a higher speed, so I just plod along with my straight key enjoying myself and meeting new friends along the way. So, every time you turn on your radio, move to a FISTS frequency and send out a CQ. Help make our frequencies crowded again.

Outstanding Achievement Award

At the CW Ops Club banquet on May 1, 2019, the FISTS CW Club received an award "In recognition of its outstanding achievement in advancing the art of CW."

Larry Fridley, KA8HFN, represented and accepted the award on behalf of all members of the four FISTS CW Club chapters (Europe, Americas, Down-Under, and East Asia). The presentation is shown in the photo below.



Riki Kline, K7NJ CW Ops Award Committee Chairman (left), presenting the plaque to Americas Chapter Director Larry Fridley, KA8HFN .

We need articles and reviews for *The KeyNote!*

NOTE: Image files need to be high resolution JPGs or 300 dpi TIF files at least 5" wide.

Send your Word or text files to keynote@fistsna.org

We Have a New Activities Manager!

Welcome Dave Bramford, W2DAB! Dave will be responsible for the following:

1. Receive and check member logs for each activity.
2. Write quarterly activity reports and send to *The KeyNote* editor for each issue of the newsletter.
3. Work with the Webmaster to keep information about chapter activities updated on the chapter website.
4. Add new activities and improve or modify current chapter activities to encourage member participation.

Dave can be contacted at w2dab@fistsna.org.

WELCOME NEW FISTS AMERICAS CHAPTER MEMBERS

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C	Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
K7CPY	19125	DENNIS	MT	W5WTH	19169	PAT	TX
KD2EPM	19126	DOMINIC	NJ	KE4ILG	19170	MIKE	NC
W1LEM	19127	LEMUEL	MA	KN4FLN	19171	HAYDEN	TN
N4NYK	19128	DOUG	SC	KK6UQX	19172	ALVIN	CA
KA9OUT	19129	AL	IN	KQ5H	19173	GEORGE	AR
WU0Q	19130	LANCE	NE	NN3E	19174	KEVIN	MD
KC3IVN	19131	JOHN	PA	K6ZGW	19175	BARRY	CA
AJ7F	19133	TIMOTHY	WA	W4FHJ	19176	GENE	SC
WB5UPS	19134	RON	TX	N1ZJD	19177	MICHAEL	ME
WX1J	19135	SCOTT	MI	W6ASA	19178	MICHAEL	CA
K0IV	19136	STAN	CO	K4KBL	19179	GERMANO	GA
KG5SW	19137	SKIP	TX	KD4KEN	19180	KENDALL	NC
CM8NMN	19138	NOEL	MATOS	W1ND	19181	GLEN	ME
KA0TZX	19139	BRUCE	CT	KI7BJS	19182	WILLIAM	ID
KD4KPR	19140	RONALD	TN	AB2ZU	19183	NATHAN	NY
WB5CTS	19141	STEPHEN	OK	NG5E	19184	DAVID	TX
WB2FQL	19142	GARY	NY	KC3KJQ	19185	RICHARD	MD
N2YKG	19143	JOHN	FL	KB9B	19186	STEVEN	IN
KM6VOV	19144	STEVEN	CA	W8SC	19187	STEVEN	SC
KM6VOW	19145	LIGIA	CA	WB5JEO	19188	GERALD	TX
KG0EW	19146	DAVID	CO	W4BZM	19189	MIKE	FL
KN4IRZ	19147	SHELIA	NC	KF8O	19190	RON	OH
N4DPM	19148	RICH	FL	AA7DX	19191	DICK	NV
WA4JNP	19149	NOEL	AL	W4CMG	19192	CATHY	TN
VE5LEN	19150	LEN	SK	N4HOE	19193	HAL	FL
KB8HOC	19151	RYAN	OH	WA7BFN	19194	ROLLIN	WA
WB9JPH	19152	JOHN	WI	KC9YL	19195	ANNE	WI
W7JRD	19153	JAMES	ID	AE8AT	19196	STEVE	OH
KE8JWB	19154	RANDALL	MI	N4JW	19197	JOE	TN
AG5QX	19155	MIKE	TX	WT4AG	19198	JOHN	GA
KC9THF	19156	DONNA	WI	KQ7L	19199	JOEL	TX
W0RD	19157	DANIEL	OR	KB8EMD	19200	LARRY	OH
W1FYL	19158	JOE	FL	KE0FXN	19201	JOE	MN
WD4FFP	19159	DEWEY	NC	W4WHF	19202	HARRY	VA
WB4PM	19160	PATRICK	GA	VE3FWF	19203	BERNIE	ON
KN4SGY	19161	COLEY	FL	KN4PZE	19204	LOUIS	SC
WA4YIR	19162	AL	GA	K7NO	19205	DEAN	AZ
KD9MER	19163	ZACHARY	IN	N7ARZ	19206	RICHARD	WA
W0ODJ	19164	JOSHUA	MO	WG8F	19207	PATRICK	FL
K4ING	19165	FRANK	TN	NT8N	19208	CHARLES	OH
N3TJB	19166	TODD	DE	KI6LNY	19209	BOB	CA
KR7F	19167	DRAKE	WA	VE3MVM	19210	MARY	ON
KE4UZL	19168	LAWRENCE	FL	KN4TBY	19211	AMBER	KY

(continued on page 7)

New Members (continued)

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C	Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
KF6FJU	19212	CHARLES	CA	N6LRA	19304	LAURA	CA
WB4KKI	19213	KARL	AL	WM7WM	19305	WESLEY	PA
KB5RX	19214	SAMUEL	NM	N0MPM	19306	MIKE	IA
KB5ZSG	19215	BARBARA	NM	K4YK	19307	JOHN	GA
W9PFK	19216	PATRICK	MN	K4CAB	19308	DEWEY	VA
WC7CT	19217	RICHARD	FL	AD7GB	19309	MARK	AZ
K6MCO	19218	MICHAEL	CA	AG7CC	19310	CLIFFORD	ID
KG7DC	19219	JON	OR	KC1IVH	19311	WILLIAM	RI
KG5YEJ	19220	ROGER	TX	AG3I	19312	MARTY	PA
VY1JA	19221	JAY	YT	AG1C	19313	LARRY	MA
WL7CPS	19222	RONALD	AK	KA2YRA	19314	STEVE	NY
VP9KF	19223	PAUL	NC	KC3AVY	19315	ABBY	PA
AG7GP	19224	AMY	OR	KC1LBL	19316	PAUL	MA
WD4CFN	19225	STEVE	TN	N8GZ	19317	DAVID	OH
NF8H	19226	PAT	AR	VE3AXT	19318	PAUL	ON
KD6WYH	19227	TONY	CA	W6QEY	19319	DONALD	CA
AG7SM	19228	DAVID	WA	W4AMR	19320	MIKE	KY
AB8SV	19229	CHAD	OH	WT8P	19321	JIM	WA
KC5YPU	19230	KELLY	TX	N2IH	19322	ROGER	AZ
N1ECE	19231	DON	CT	WH6DQU	19323	JOHN	HI
AA3P	19232	STAN	IN	WX4D	19324	RANDOLPH	MD
KF0MM	19233	LARRY	FL	K3IRV	19325	IRV	NC
KF5LAP	19234	JAMES	TX	WA5LXS	19326	DENNIS	TX
KE7EX	19235	MATT	VA	VE3EIB	19327	NICK	ON
N4UWS	19236	FRANCIS	GA	K9CPO	19328	NATE	WI
W4DDT	19237	LYNN	VA	K3UZ	19329	WILLIAM	PA
KI5CKQ	19238	JUSTIN	LA	KI0A	19330	MELISSA	IA
N1NPK	19239	BRADLEY	ME	WM2Q	19331	MICHAEL	NY
W4FKM	19240	CLAUDE	TN	KD9KMF	19332	GENE	IN
AD4CW	19241	MARC	TN	WU6P	19333	NIANFENG	CA
KJ6LDN	19242	NICHOLAS	CA				
KT4RH	19243	STEVE	TN				
WZ6K	19244	RICH	CA				
NN6B	19245	JOE	CA				
W0JRM	19246	ROB	IA				
KC3JDJ	19247	ERNEST	PA				
KE8LIJ	19248	HAROLD	WV				
KC8WH	19249	MICHAEL	OH				
KF4LIS	19300	DAVID	FL				
W3AVP	19301	ALEX	PA				
WA4PAM	19302	FRANK	FL				
K9PIX	19303	NEIL	IL				

Feb. 1, 2019 to Mar. 15, 2019

FISTS AWARDS

By Dennis K6DF

Congratulations to all who earned operating awards from February 1, 2019 to March 15, 2019.

New members Amy AG7GP and Dennis WA5LXS each earned their FISTS Club Patch for making their first 10-minute QSO with a FISTS member on one of the club calling frequencies.

All New Members! Get on the air and make your first 10-minute QSO with a FISTS member to earn your free FISTS Club Patch!

FISTS award certificates are sent out to all current club members free of charge, so I urge all of our new members get on the air and start making contacts. The easiest way to track your FISTS award QSOs is to use “Log Converter”, the “FREE” FISTS awards tracking and logging program. The author of Log Converter, Graham G3ZOD, is constantly making updates and improvements to the program. This FREE software will track your FISTS awards automatically and allow you to send in your award logs to the FISTS Awards Manager at the click of a button! You can also use this program for general logging as well. The best thing about it is...it’s FREE! Log Converter is available for download on the FISTS web site. Look for the download link on the Americas Chapter main web page just below the “Welcome New Members” list.

Be sure to check the Americas Chapter web pages for up-to-date awards information and how to apply for them:

<http://www.fistsna.org/awards.html>

If you have any award questions or suggestions, send e-mail to me at: awards@fistsna.org

I wish you good DX during 2019.

73, Dennis K6DF ..._. _____ (30)

FISTS AWARDS ISSUED: Feb 1, 2019 - Mar 15, 2019

Century Award: G4LDD

Silver Award: G0XAH, SV2BBK, MI0WWB

Diamond Award: PA3HEN

Spectrum Award: NP3K

Spectrum Sticker: NP3K (40 Mtr)

Perpetual Prefix Award: NP3K

WAS Award: NP3K

Prefix 50,100, & 150 Stickers: NP3K

Millionaire Award: ON7ZH, DL3HR, M0DHP

2 Million Award: SV2BBK, MI0WWB

3 Million Award: NP3K, G3YJQ

6 Million Award: G0ILN, F6JOE

RCC Award: G4LRG, M0UZE

RCC Sticker: G4RHR (2 Mtr), M0UZE (80 Mtr)

My Back-Door Entry Into CW

By Joe Falletta, W6UDO

Like so many, I came to ham radio via listening to Shortwave Broadcast. I was fascinated by all those broadcast stations from all over the world late at night in the early 1960s...Voice of America, the BBC, Radio Havana, Radio Peking, all illuminated by the “wonder-glow of tubes” from my old radio. From time to time I’d stumble into the ham bands and listen to guys chatting about anything and everything: their stations, the weather, their jobs, and families. Then there was Morse Code; I’d heard of it, but had no idea what they were saying.

In 1966 I found a class to learn what was needed to get a ham radio license at the Lockheed Employees Recreation Club in Burbank, CA. My dad worked for Lockheed Aircraft Co. and got my buddy and me in. This was no Learn-it-all-in-one-day like they have now; this class was one night a week and lasted for months. We had, Gasp! homework and tests. We learned Morse Code, drew schematics, and learned electronics theory and math...without calculators. When we graduated, we had to go to the FCC Field Office in downtown Los Angeles to take the sending and receiving Morse tests at 5 wpm for the Novice license and the written exams.

But I have to admit that when it came to CW I was a late bloomer. I wasn’t all that interested in operating Morse, so I opted for the Technician license, which allowed me to operate VHF voice and had no code requirement. I bought a used Heathkit “Two-er” and a few crystals and was on the air.

That was fine until a few years later when my buddy talked me into working up our code speed together and studying for the Advanced Class ticket. I passed the 13 wpm sending and receiving test, but more than that, I had an

epiphany: CW was fun! I bought a Ten-Tec PM-2, threw up a 20-meter dipole, and became a CW op!

That began a 50-year love affair with CW I continue to have to this day. Some 15 years ago I recalled the fascination I felt as I watched my ol’ Elmer, Bill, W6DDB (SK) as he used a Bug at 26LS, the Lockheed Amateur Radio Club. I found one I could afford on eBay, practiced with it for about a month off the air, and switched over from my straight key. I have two Vibroplex Bugs from the 1940s I use now, both fitted with extra weights so I can QRS when asked.

My favorite activity on the air is ragchewing at almost any speed up to around 25 wpm. If you hear me in there, give me a shout!

EARLY CONTACT

by Gary W. Harrold, WA5TED

I earned my Novice ticket at the age of 16 in 1965. A bit over a year later, I had my General call sign WA5TED and left CW behind, I thought forever. When I retired nearly six years ago, I set a goal of regaining the CW abilities of my youth. Alas, I am still working on that goal, and will continue to do so, although it seemed much easier when I was young.

Joining FISTS was and still is a good idea to help me achieve my goal. I enjoy reading our magazine and it occurred to me that my story might bring back a few memories and certainly a chuckle! Not long after getting my license I managed to pull together a BC-348 receiver and converted an ARC-5 transmitter for service on 80 M. A galvanized steel wire dipole strung just high enough you couldn’t touch it and I was off to the races! I don’t remember my first contact but there is one that sticks in my memory. At

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Early Contact (continued)

a blazing 5 WPM, and not doing well at that, I called CQ and got a response. All went well until I tried to copy his QTH. OCONO what? Send again! Send again! After several attempts the band changed, or he gave up, and I lost the contact.

Some time later I got a QSL card. It was from OCONOMOWOC, Wisconsin. Unfortunately, when I entered the service two years later, all of my log books and QSO cards were misplaced. Recently thinking about that contact I looked and there are 73 call signs listed for Oconomowoc. I took a chance and looked for the oldest calls with email addresses and sent several inquiries just in case someone might remember the other side of that aborted QSO. I've had no luck yet, but I know will eventually achieve my CW proficiency goal.

WA5TED. Retired, Amateur Radio Active

How I Got Into CW and Ham Radio

by Bill A. Wilson, W5VDM

Growing up, my mother and father had a radio that covered shortwave. I talked them in to letting me order a Hallicrafters S-38C and I listened to shrimp boats in the Gulf and then I listened to CW and learned Morse Code. After high school, I joined the Air Force. At basic training, I was given a very basic code test and they decided I would make a good airborne radio operator, so I was shipped to radio school at Keesler AFB in Mississippi.

In radio school, we were taught CW to 16 wpm also voice procedures. I was then sent to France to be a radio operator on Fairchild C-119

(Flying Boxcar) cargo planes. As it turned out, all communications were HF voice AM, sending position reports and operations normal to our ground station in England. CW was for backup only, but we were required to maintain 16 wpm qualification. This went on for eight years. During my Air Force time, I obtained my amateur call K5BJZ.

After discharge, I operated AM and then SSB on the 80 and 40 meter bands with no interest in CW. Fast forward to 2001 and retirement. I discovered I would need a triple heart bypass and then I was tested for hearing impairment because I could not hear SSB very well. I thought, well, I need to relearn Morse Code or get out of ham radio. So, I joined the old Oklahoma slow-speed training net. Sadly, the net is QRT. They helped me a lot.

Today, I do some ragchewing but mostly CW contesting, low-impact style, like field day and state QSO parties. I still use a pencil and paper like we were taught in air force radio school in 1956. I use an Icom 718 with a narrow CW filter and MFJ-564 paddles. The antenna is an end-fed wire 20 feet high. I mostly monitor 7.0120 for slow speed ops. I do turn the power down to 5 watts on occasion.

In closing, I love to read about allied agents who dropped into Europe and coast watchers in the Pacific during WWII. They all risked their lives to get info by radio back to their HQs.



My Bugs

by Carl W. Hickman, N5XE

I received my Novice ticket (KA5DAV) in November 1978, at the age of 15. My first rig was a Heathkit HW-7 that I borrowed from my Elmer W5EXX (SK). I picked up the code quickly and still love CW after more than 40 years.

I took my Novice code test by copying code being sent from a Vibroplex “bug”, and I have been intrigued by the bug ever since. I am no expert on “bugs”, but I do enjoy collecting various makes and models. Check out my pictures and bug descriptions in this article.

My station currently consists of a Yaesu FT-2000 and an FT-990, with a Cushcraft A3S tri-band Yagi at 45 feet, inverted vee antennas for 30, 17, and 12 meters, and an 80-M full-wave horizontal loop that I use for 80/40 meters. I use an inverted “L” for 160-M operation. For 6 meters, I use a PAR OA-50 Omniangle antenna. I also operate 2-meter and 440 MHz FM.

I always wanted a corner operating desk, but could never find anything I liked. I designed the desk and had a friend at work (who is a fantastic wood craftsman) build the main desk. I built the shelves on top of the desk, then stained and varnished the whole thing. It is built out of solid oak and oak plywood, and should last a lifetime.

I was born and raised in Sulphur, Oklahoma, which is located 75 miles south of Oklahoma City. Sulphur is home to the Chickasaw National Recreation Area (formally Platt National Park). Follow this link to see what the Sulphur area looks like: <http://www.nps.gov/chic/index.htm> I enjoy CW ragchewing, dabbling in contests, and occasionally chasing DX. I have over 285 DX countries confirmed and hold 5-band WAS, all with 100 watts or less (I’ve never owned an amplifier). You may also find me operating on the digital modes, with my favorite being RTTY.



1978 Vibroplex “Original Deluxe”

This was my first bug. I found it on eBay and purchased it from a guy in California. It was missing one of the weights, so I had my dad machine a heavier weight for this bug. I wanted a 1978 because this was the year I got my first ham license (at age 15). This bug has a solid feel and is fun to use.

Vibroplex 100th Anniversary “Original”

I bought this bug directly from Vibroplex when they were located in Alabama. The black base with gold trim is absolutely stunning, and the chrome parts against the black background really set this bug apart from the rest.

2010 Vibroplex “Blue Racer”

I purchased this bug new from Vibroplex after their move to Tennessee. This bug is, in my opinion, the prettiest of the bunch. A pretty blue base is offset by red finger pieces, and chrome adjustments. It is a fun bug to use—however, because of the smaller base, it tends to slide around on the table during use. To compensate for this movement, I use a piece of thin rubber “jar opener” material under the bug’s feet.

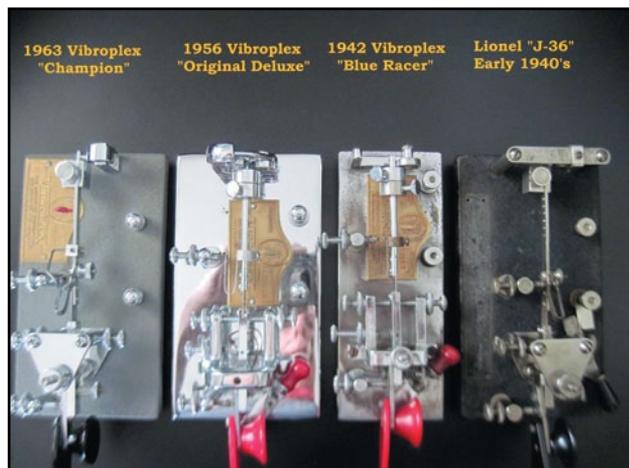
(continued on page 12)

My Bugs (continued)

Les Logan Speed-X (1937-1947)

I found this key at a hamfest in Ardmore, OK in October 2012. The guy I bought it from didn't know much about it, except that it supposedly had belonged to a judge from Seiling, OK. After further research and help from Mike, AC5P, and Mary, AD5QV, I believe this bug belonged to Dan Angle, W5NDJ (SK). According to Mary, he was a city judge for the Town of Seiling, and was a TV repairman.

The Speed-X bugs weren't assigned serial numbers, so it's rather difficult to find out much information on this key. Sources on the internet indicate that the Speed-X was made by the Les Logan Company (San Francisco, CA) from 1937 until 1947, at which time the Speed-X line was sold to the E. F. Johnson Company in Waseca, Minnesota. This bug is really fast but simple to adjust.



1963 Vibroplex "Champion"

I had always wanted a "1963" bug - the same year that I was born. In January 2013, just a week before my 50th birthday, I found this bug on eBay and made the purchase. Coincidentally, my son was looking at this very same bug to purchase for

my birthday, which really makes this bug special to me. It is in excellent condition, and came with the original box. It was used very little, if at all, and looks almost brand new. After a few initial adjustments, I put this bug to work right after I received it.

1956 Vibroplex "Original Deluxe"

I obtained this bug in March of 2015. It was in need of a good cleaning and polishing. I had to completely disassemble it to remove all the dust and grime that had collected over the years. After I reassembled and adjusted the bug, I found that its action is very fast. As a result, I have to slow this bug down with an alligator clip on the end of the pendulum arm.

1942 (or 1943) Vibroplex "Blue Racer Deluxe"

NOTE: The Elwood list indicates SN:122,536 as the last in 1942, then shows 123,537 as the first SN in 1943. I do not know if this is a typo and the SN for 1943 should start with 122,537 or if 1,000 numbers were skipped. This "Blue Racer" has a SN in this missing 1,000 number range.

For whatever reason, I wanted an older "Racer" with a "U" damper. No real reason—except that I wanted one! In May 2016, I found one on eBay that I could afford. It was in pretty bad shape, with years of neglect. I cleaned it up, but was unable to get the rust off the chrome base. After a good cleaning, I re-assembled the bug and tried it out. The speed of this bug is very fast...so much so that I have to use additional weights to work this bug.

1940's Lionel J-36

Another eBay find, this bug was mistakenly advertised as a Vibroplex. Instead, it's actually a J-36 made by Lionel. It is missing its label (which apparently is not uncommon), so there is no way

(continued on page 13)

My Bugs (continued)

of knowing the year it was built. It does have the customary orange military inspection stamp on the underside of the base, so I suspect it was built sometime in the early 1940's. After a good cleaning, this bug works perfectly. The bug is of the same design as the Vibroplex Lightning, but Lionel used a rounded finger piece on their design.

1956 Vibroplex "Zephyr"



Seems like most of the bugs I purchase need a good cleaning before using. This '56 "Zephyr" was no exception. After cleaning and re-assembly, I put this bug on the air to see how she would play. The action of this bug reminds me somewhat of the "Champion" I have. In fact, there seems to be very little difference between the two bugs, except for the narrower base on the "Zephyr". I purchased this bug off of eBay in January 2016.

1937 Vibroplex "Lightning" Bug

Newly purchased, December 2018. I gave this bug a good cleaning, reassembled it, and put it on the air for the first time in January 2019. This bug came from Minnesota from a lady who said it belonged to her grandfather. He worked for the railroad in the yards in St. Paul, (unknown

railroad line, although the bug's case has a Burlington Route Zephyr decal affixed to it) in the late 1930's and early 40's. He enlisted in the Navy after the start of WWII. It is unknown if he used the bug anytime after going into the service. It appears this bug was stored in its original case for many years. Here is a "BEFORE" cleaning and an "AFTER" cleaning picture:



Bug before cleaning.



Bug after cleaning.

(continued on page 14)

My Bugs (continued)

1956 Vibroplex "Presentation" Bug

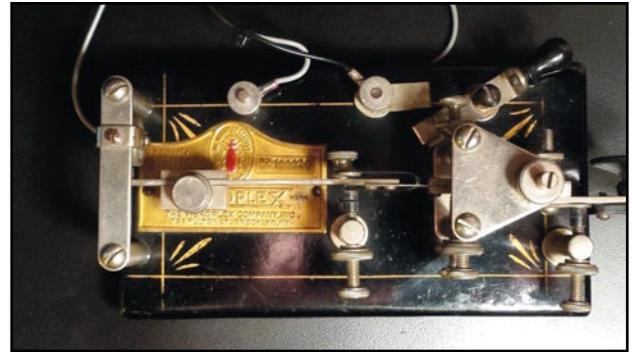
I had been wanting a "Presentation" bug for quite a while, before finding one on eBay at a reasonable price. I obtained this one in April 2019. It cleaned up nicely, and is really a pleasure to use. I showed a picture of this bug to a friend, and he described it's looks as "stunning". I think that pretty well sums it up.



1956 Vibroplex "Presentation" Bug.

1928 Vibroplex "Lightning" Bug

At over 90 years of age, this is the oldest bug in my collection. I acquired this bug in April 2015 from a guy in Oregon. This antique bug supposedly came from a railroad museum in McHenry, North Dakota. It is in excellent shape, and even has most of the gold pin striping in place. I am honored to have this piece of telegraph history in my collection. The action of this bug is slow and easy. It has quickly become my favorite of all my bugs. If only it could tell of its history...



1928 Vibroplex "Lightning" Bug.

You Have a Story to Tell!

How did you get into ham radios? When did you learn Morse Code and how? What was an interesting event that you experienced using Morse Code? Do you have some unusual equipment you want to tell members about?

We want to hear your story, but if you are a shy author, you may find an article written by Dale Halloway, K4EQ, in a previous issue can help you put that story together. The link to that article can be found on our web site Home page <https://www.fistsna.org> under "Old KeyNotes."

Don't be shy. Tell us your story!

My First (Club) Field Day

by Joe Falletta, W6UDO

I enjoy operating Field Day...from my home QTH, that is.

I'm not really what you'd call a serious contester; I enjoy handing out points and seeing how well my stealth operation is getting out, honing my operating and especially my CW skills, all in between the various chores of the weekend. When conditions and the honey-do list are favorable I've been known to pull down 100 QSOs or more; then there are the lean years I'll make maybe a dozen.

I'd showed up at the club Field Day site a few years ago hoping to learn enough to be comfortable enough to be able to operate and actually do some good for the club. As it was turning out, though, I spent the morning in eyeball QSOs with friends I'd only met before on the club two-meter repeater.

The afternoon, though, I was standing outside the 20 meter CW trailer listening when a ham told me to come in and help out. "No pressure," he said, noticing the look of trepidation that appeared out of nowhere.

I went in and watched as Fred was sending, receiving, and typing at the computer keyboard. "Here, have a seat," he told me, pulling out the empty chair next to him without missing a keystroke. Already, I felt the butterflies starting to dance in my stomach; the most I can multi-task is drinking a cup of coffee while carrying on a conversation...with one person. I listened and watched for a while as Fred copied, sent, and typed, all while explaining to me what all the F keys did on the computer keyboard.

"F1 (tap tap tap) sends CQ FD and our call. F2 (tap tap) sends his call AFTER I've typed it into the log, with 5nn, and (tap tap tap) our

section. F3 send Tnx, 73 (tap, tap). It's easy!" For everything else, he used the iambic paddle next to the keyboard.

I was even more awed than I was before; the butterflies had invited their friends over.

At one point, Fred was having trouble copying a station thru the QRM. He asked me if I'd copied his section.

"I think it was San Diego," I said.

"That was us," he replied.

"Oh."

The butterflies were throwing a party now. And when I'm nervous, my CW comprehension drops off considerably; my sending sounds like I'm running QLF (sending with my left foot). This was not the time for Fred to be inviting me to take over the helm. Fortunately, he didn't.

Unfortunately, to make this more embarrassing, Tom happened to be in the trailer with us filming Field Day activity for the club's posterity. I still don't know if that part made the final cut or wound up on the cutting room floor. I do remember wondering what the odds were, looking and sounding like a complete Lid AND having it filmed. All the while I tried to have a good laugh at myself along with everyone else while I felt my face turning beet red.

"Ah, is it hot in here or is it just me?"

That was it for me and Field Day with the club...any club!

To be honest, most of this was pressure I'd already put on myself. This club puts on a very professional Field Day operation (if I may use that adjective to describe an "Amateur" Radio event). It's all completely off the commercial power grid using generators and solar power on all the ham bands up into microwave, a large sign erected close to a major highway. They have a GOTA station, invite the press and government officials,

(continued on page 16)

My First (Club) Field Day (continued)

and even set up on a vacant lot next to a Sheriff's substation. I wanted to be as professional as they were! That wasn't going happen, especially on my first visit to the site.

On the other hand, everyone I ran into that day was very friendly and supportive, and told me to just have fun with it.

"No pressure!"

Well, yeah, maybe next time.

My Journey Into CW

By Dennis L. Green, KB8CS

I began my journey to CW by joining a group of frustrated CBers working on HAM tickets in the mid 1970's. I was attracted by their using HAM protocols on CB sideband to have orderly discussion in a large group. I was the last to start and the first with a license, and my first license was a General, not Novice. As an engineer, I did some research and heeded the warnings about the proper way to learn code. I bought one of those courses on cassette that took me through the alphabet, shortest to longest letters, numbers and punctuation. The most important part of learning code is to learn it by the rhythm. If you learn by memorizing dots and dashes, you will hit the wall at 10 WPM or less. The reason the General test was set at 13 WPM is that you cannot count at that rate. Credible courses all teach characters at 13 and only expand the spacing between them.

I initially thought that code was too difficult and required some special talent until a mentor pointed out that everyone recognizes the opening of Beethoven's Fifth, dit, dit, dit, dah. "V" is Roman numeral 5, and that's the sound of a

Morse Code V. I didn't have to count longs and shorts—I recognize the rhythm at any speed. After going as far as the tape course could take me, I then bought an MFJ trainer and listened to random groups. I pushed the character speed past 13 before completely closing the gap. By the time I was listening to the test at 13 WPM and standard spacing, it sounded slow and strange because it was spelling out actual words. I went back to the trainer and aced my Extra test, but I never learned to enjoy CW. I never learned the secret of copying behind or remembering it in my head, so the speed writing became too much work, not to mention that my penmanship never recovered from learning to write at 20 WPM.

What I describe is known as the "Armstrong" method and is backed by research as to its effectiveness. All of the instructors in our local club followed it. I suppose one could learn by sending as well as receiving, but the essential warning is that learning characters at less than 13 will create a wall for most people, and most fail to get over it. My group of friends conform to that prediction. Most took years to make General or gave up. I had my General in about five months from when I put that tape in the player. I hope my experience helps you to plan your move to your next level of code proficiency.

73, KB8CS

Note

Old issues of the *KeyNote* newsletters were generously donated to the club by Paul Carreiro, N6EV #1470, and are being made available in PDF format for downloading from the Newsletter web page at <https://fistsna.org>.

WANTED: FIST Key Ideas

It's been a while since FIST commissioned a key specifically for FIST members. If we were to commission another key, then what would you want? Straight? Iambic? Oversized brass or miniature gold plated? Something light enough to take on trips or something heavy enough to keep your field day card table from blowing away in a storm? And what would you be willing to pay for a FIST key? \$50? \$100? \$300? Please send me your thoughts so that we can gauge interest and decide if it's time for a new FIST key.

Editor

New FIST Contest: On-Air Spelling Bee

My biggest impediment to sending faster CW isn't using lack of fine-motor skills or a cheap or improperly tuned key. No, my problem is between my ears. For some reason, I can't seem to spell at higher CW speeds. I can only guess at the underlying neurological etiology of my problem—one that I'm certain I share with at least several readers. Whatever the cause, I am sure that my spelling can be improved with practice. Sure, regular QSOs with more than the stereotypical exchanges will probably do the trick over several months, but what I need is periodic practice focused expressly on spelling. What I need is to regularly engage in an on-air spelling bee. I'm not sure how the contest would be structured or how it would be scored, but I'll leave that to contest organizers.

So what do you think? Is your spelling going down the tubes on CW? Would you take part in an on-air spelling bee? Can you think of a better way to insure spelling competence?

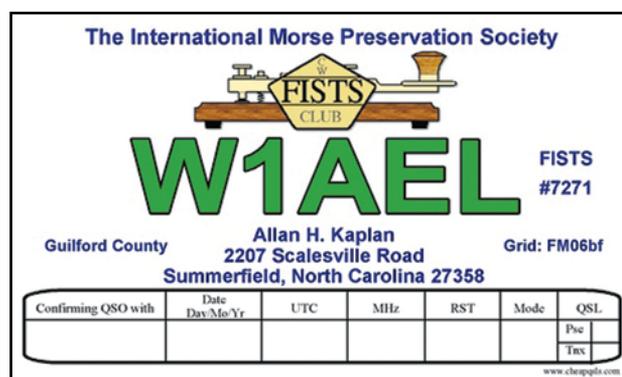
Editor

FISTS QSL Cards

If you would like to show the world that you are a FISTS member, Hal, K6RE, the owner of *Cheap QSLs*, www.cheapqsls.com, offers a nice-looking QSL with the FISTS logo.

If you order color cards, you have the choice of your call sign in Red, Blue, Green, or Black ink. For his color cards, he uses 110-pound index card stock. These are printed on one side only, so you can use them as a postcard and save a little postage. Unfortunately, there is no discount for FISTS members other than his normal low pricing. There may be other printers who have their own version of the FISTS logo. If you know of them, please refer them to us.

Here is a sample of Hal's work:



(Article repeated from Issue #1, 2019)

Q-Signals

By Bryan Bergeron, NU1N

CW Communications has always been about efficiency—in bandwidth and in sheer volume of data transmitted. This had practical implications for customers, who paid by the character. For example, it became common practice—much to the consternation of the Western Union and others that offered telegram services—for customers to use standard numeric codes to stand for words or entire sentences, such as “happy birthday son” or “best belated wishes to the bride and groom”, and so on. But more importantly, from the operator’s perspective, were dozens of three letter codes developed to make their lives easier. The most common of these Q-signals are listed below. Admittedly, I use only a handful of Q-signals—QTH, QRM, QRP, QSB, QRZ, QRN, QRS, QSL and QSY—partially because I don’t have a list in front of me for easy reference. With this issue of *The KeyNote* nearby, I no longer have that excuse.

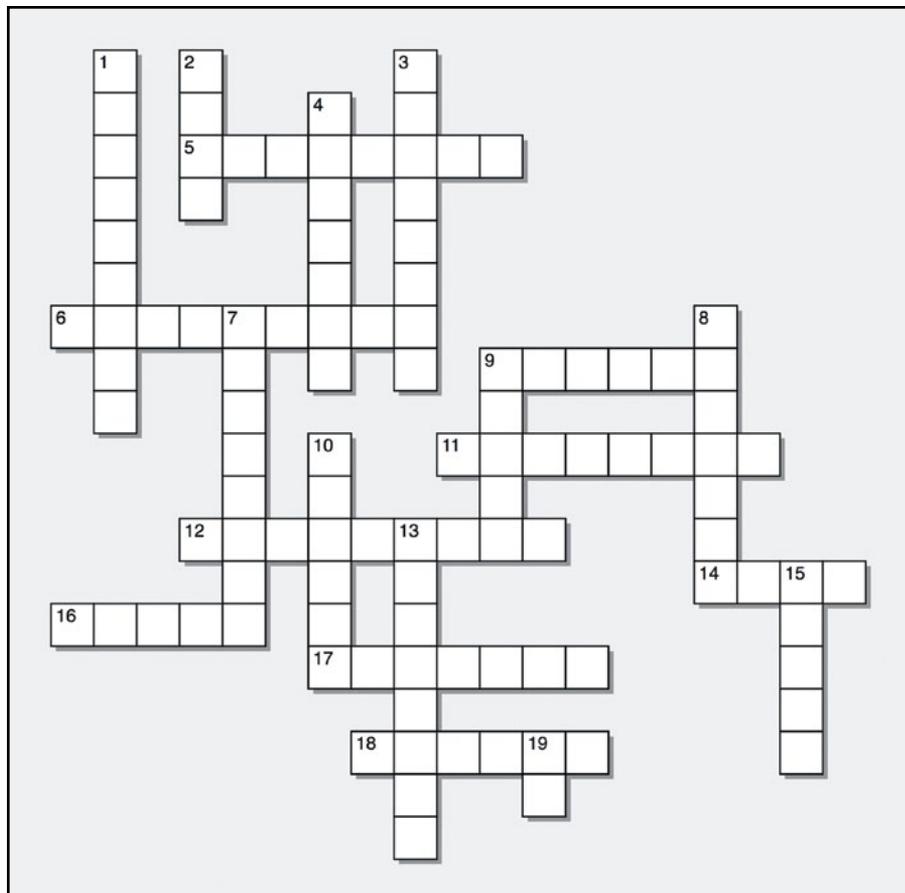
(Article repeated from Issue #1, 2019)

Signal	Question/Answer
QRL	Are you/I am busy
QRM	Are you/I am being interfered with
QRN	Are you/I am troubled by static
QRO	Must I/increase power
QRP	Must I/decrease power
QRQ	Must I/send faster
QRS	Must I/send more slowly
QRT	Must I/stop transmission
QRU	Have you anything for me/nothing for you
QRV	Are you/I am ready
QRX	When will you/I will call again
QRZ	By whom am I being called
QSB	Does the strength of my signals vary/ your signal varies
QSD	Is my keying correct/your keying is incorrect
QSL	Can you acknowledge/I am acknowledging receipt
QSP	Will you relay to .../I will relay to
QSV	Shall I send a series of Vs/ Send a series of Vs
QSX	Will you listen for/I will listen for... call sign on MHz
QSY	Shall I/change to MHz
QSZ	Shall I/send each word or group twice
QTH	What is your position (location)
QTR	What is the exact time



MISCELLANEOUS

Just for fun, test your knowledge of CW in this puzzle. Answers are below. If you would like to see more of these puzzles, let us know!



ACROSS:

- 5) Wave antenna or drink.
- 6) Non conductor.
- 9) A popular half-wave antenna.
- 11) Type of oscillator.
- 12) A Morse key manufacturer.
- 14) Type of beam.
- 16) Balanced to unbalanced device.
- 17) An 807 is a beam ____
- 18) Club call.

DOWN

- 1) 14.058 is a FISTS calling ____
- 2) Valve
- 3) FISTS club has four of them.
- 4) A newsletter.
- 7) QTH
- 8) A basic FISTS award.
- 9) A one-way device.
- 10) FISTS four hour event.
- 13) A rare metal award.
- 15) FISTS founder.
- 19) Mode A1

ACROSS: (5) Beverage, (6) Insulator, (9) Dipole, (12) Vibroplex, (14) Yagi, (16) Balun, (17) Tetrode, (18) KN0WCW (13) Platinum, (15) G3ZQS, (19) CW
DOWN: (1) Frequency, (2) Tube, (3) Chapters, (4) KEYNOTE, (7) Location, (8) Century, (9) Diode, (10) Sprint,

SPRINT INFORMATION

FISTS Sprints are a great way to meet other FISTS members, collect FISTS numbers, and have a lot of fun. We hope to work you in the next FISTS SPRINT.

OBJECTIVE:

To exchange specified information with as many FISTS members as possible using Morse Code only, and within the time frame stipulated.

PARTICIPANTS:

Any properly licensed amateur radio operator, FISTS member or non-member is invited to take part in the contest. At least one of the two stations in each QSO must be a FISTS member.

DATE AND TIME:

SPRING SLOW SPEED SPRINT—runs from 1700 UTC to 2100 UTC on May 4, 2019.

SPRING UNLIMITED SPRINT—runs from 1700 UTC to 2100 UTC on May 11, 2019.

SUMMER SLOW SPEED SPRINT—runs from 0000 UTC to 0400 UTC on July 6, 2019.

SUMMER UNLIMITED SPRINT—runs from 0000 UTC to 0400 UTC on July 13, 2019.

BANDS:

Operation is limited to the following amateur bands: 3.5, 7, 14, 21, and 28 MHz amateur bands. Look for other participants around the FISTS frequencies: 3558, 7058, 14058, 21058, and 28058 kHz.

Work stations only once per band.

ENTRY CLASSES:

There are three entry classes: Club, QRO, and QRP.

QRO: Over 5 watts–100 watts output power. 100 watts is the maximum output power allowed.

QRP: 5 watts output power or less.

Club: (regardless of power).

Entry class **MUST** be shown on logs to be considered for entry in a particular class, or will be assumed QRO. An entry must be ONE class only, no combination of classes is allowed.

EXCHANGE:

The following information must be exchanged by both stations to count as a valid contest QSO:

FISTS members: RST, U.S. state/Canadian province/DXCC country, first name, FISTS number.

Non-FISTS members: RST, U.S. state/Canadian province/DXCC country, first name, output power.

DX COUNTRY STATUS:

U.S. states and Canadian provinces are those states and provinces that are contiguous and found within the North American continent. DX are those entities listed in the current ARRL DXCC publication, other than the above.

MULTIPLIERS:

Each U.S. state and Canadian province counts as 1 multiplier. Count each only once, no matter how many times worked. Each DXCC entity counts as 1 multiplier. Count each only once, no matter how many times worked.

SCORING:

Each QSO with a FISTS member: 5 QSO points.
Each QSO with a non-FISTS member: 2 QSO points.
Final score is total QSO points times multipliers.

CERTIFICATES:

Certificates will be awarded to the first, second, and third place finishers in each Entry Class.

LOG SUBMISSIONS:

All log entries must be received within 30 days after the Sprint to be considered valid. Logs not sent to the proper address will not be considered for entry. The logs will be spot checked for accuracy and correct scoring procedures.

All logs **MUST** contain the following information to be considered for entry: Your name and call sign. Club name if entry is for a club. Your FISTS number if a member. Entry class. Your claimed score. List of claimed multipliers. The entry form is the best way to record this information.

ELECTRONIC LOGS:

We accept electronic logs in standard Cabrillo format or ASCII text files. If you're not sure about your format, please contact me before the contest entry deadline. E-logs are sent to kc21sd@fistsna.org ONLY.

PAPER LOGS:

Send log and forms to: FISTS Sprint Log, c/o Dave Bamford, W2DAB, 444 East 75th Street 16F, New York, NY 10021.

FISTS SPRINT ENTRY FORM

Entry Class: QRO _____ QRP _____ CLUB _____

SCORING: _____ QSO points X _____ multipliers = _____ Final Score

CLUB Name _____ FISTS Club # _____

Name _____ Call Sign _____ FISTS # _____

Address (Street, City, State, Zip Code) _____

E-mail Address (optional) _____

MULTIPLIER CHECK-OFF LIST

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	VE	DX
CT	NY	DE	AL	AR	CA	AZ	MI	IL	CO	NB	NF/LB
MA	NJ	MD	FL	LA		ID	OH	IN	IA	NS	NT
ME		PA	GA	MS		MT	WV	WI	KS	PE	YK
NH			KY	NM		NV			MN	QC	BC
RI			NC	OK		OR			MO	ON	
VT			SC	TX		UT			NE	MB	
			TN			WA			ND	SK	
			VA			WY			SD	AB	

Please enclose paper logs, photos, comments, ideas, etc., with your entry and mail promptly to:

FISTS Sprint Logs

Dave Bamford, W2DAB
444 East 75th Street 16F
New York, NY 10021

I HAVE OBSERVED ALL FISTS SPRINT COMPETITION RULES AS WELL AS ALL REGULATIONS FOR AMATEUR RADIO IN MY COUNTRY. MY REPORT IS CORRECT AND TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE. I AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THE DECISIONS OF THE FISTS AWARDS COMMITTEE.

Date _____ Signature _____ Call Sign _____

Comments:

TO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR FISTS MEMBERSHIP

If you live in North, South or Central America, you may join the Americas Chapter of FISTS. Membership is open to all people interested in Morse Code, irrespective of their ability.

FISTS numbers are not reassigned, so if you had a number in the past and renew your membership, you will retain the same membership number.

Please Note: Changes to Americas Chapter Membership Dues.

1. A “one time” extension of two FREE years membership has been added to all expired memberships from Jan. 1, 2017 to Aug. 15, 2018, due to no *KeyNote* newsletters being produced during that time frame. This two-year extension started on Aug. 15, 2018.
2. All paid memberships as of Aug. 15, 2018 will receive a “one-time” FREE extension of two years membership.
3. Any previous members with lapsed dues (not included in item 1 or 2 above), who wish to renew their membership, will receive a one-time, two-year FREE extension of membership, with down-loaded newsletters.

4. If you wish to join FISTS as a “new Member,” you will receive a FREE one time, two-year complementary membership with down-loaded newsletters.
5. If you are 80 years old and over, you will receive a FREE “Life Time” membership.

Offers 1, 2, 3, and 4 above expire on Aug. 15, 2020.

To take advantage of these offers, send an e-mail with your call, name, address, and telephone number to: Dennis K6DF, FISTS Membership Manager at membership@fistsna.org.

DO NOT SEND ANY DUES PAYMENTS!



FISTS CW CLUB Membership Application/Renewal



For North, Central, and South America including all territories and islands.

Call Sign _____ NEW Member or Renewal, Enter FISTS # _____

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ ZIP+4 _____ Phone _____

Rig (optional) _____

Other Club Affiliations (Optional—ARRL, RSGB, etc.) _____

A User Name and Password will be sent to the e-mail address you provide below to give you access to current On-Line Newsletters as well as Member Only Areas of the FISTS CW Club web site.

E-Mail _____

Regular Membership—**On-Line** Newsletters*

Family Membership—Please provide the Name, Call, and FISTS # of the member.

Name _____ Call _____ FISTS # _____

Under Age 18-FREE Membership—Birthdate Required mm/yyyy _____

Over Age 80-FREE Membership—Birthdate Required mm/yyyy _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Send application to:
FISTS CW CLUB
c/o Dennis Franklin, K6DF
4658 Capitan Dr.
Fremont, CA 94536 USA

*E-Mail required
01/01/2018

Americas Chapter, FISTS CW Club
3000 Town Center, Suite 2370
Southfield, MI 48075
www.fistsna.org

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #229
ANN ARBOR, MI 48103

You Can Find Your Renewal Date On the Following Web Page:

<http://www.fistsna.org/expdate.php>

Send in your stories and photos for *The KeyNote!*

keynote@fistsna.org

When you've worked a FISTS, you've worked a friend.

