

The KeyNote



Newsletter of the Americas Chapter, FISTS CW Club—The International Morse Preservation Society
Issue 1, 2026

Downsizing

Bryan Bergeron

Digging out of another snow storm in the North East, I'm looking forward to the day we move south and at least semi-retire. But such a move is going to require some sacrifice—specifically reducing my shack from a room filled with vintage and new communications and testing gear to perhaps half of a desk in my home office.

Downsizing a ham radio station is, on the surface, a technical, non-emotional exercise. Antennas are evaluated in dB and feet, amplifiers in watts and amperes, shelving in square inches. A smaller home imposes constraints that are neither negotiable nor sentimental. Towers come down. Coax runs shorten. The amplifier that once loafed at legal limit may be replaced by a modest 100-watt transceiver and a stealth antenna capable of surviving a HOA inspection. We tell ourselves that propagation does not care about square footage, and that good operating technique will always matter more than hardware. All of that is true.

What is not easily reduced is the Morse key. As CW operators, our keys are not accessories. They are instruments, and over decades they become extensions of the hand and nervous system. A straight key that carried your first tentative CQ. A Vibroplex that chattered through late-night contests. A paddle whose bearings you adjusted before every Field Day, its feel as familiar as a favorite pen. Each one holds

embedded memories. Sweepstakes exchanges sent at 35 wpm during a winter storm. The first DXpedition busted through pileups. The quiet, steady rhythm of a summer evening net. Metal and Bakelite accumulate history in ways that resist inventory spreadsheets.

Letting go of a key is about identity. A key is a record of hours spent listening, learning, and reaching beyond the horizon with nothing more than a few watts and disciplined timing. Downsizing forces us to ask what we truly need to remain active on the air. Perhaps the answer is not to keep them all, but to choose the one that best represents the operator you have become. The station may shrink, but the skill endures. In the end, CW lives in our ears and fists, not in the drawer full of keys.

73, Bryan, NU1N

Table of Contents

Downsizing	1
Information Page	2
Americas Chapter, President's Message	3
FISTS Awards	4
Welcome New FISTS Members	5
Silent Keys	5

"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 email 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 email addresses have changed from the last reference issue of *The KeyNote*. Please make note of the following listings.

When emailing a volunteer please put the word FISTS in the title of your email. This will help the volunteer recognize that your email is important and not spam.

Awards and Certificates

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

Club Call, KN0WCW

“Vacant”

If interested email to:

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org

Membership Questions; Renewals; Call Changes; Name, Mailing, and Email Address Changes

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

FISTS Store Manager

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org
9880 Musch Road, Brighton, MI 48116-8215

Activities Manager

“Vacant”

If interested email to:

Joe Falcone, N8TI, store@fistsna.org

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

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

Code Buddy Volunteers and Buddies

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

The KeyNote Newsletter

Bryan Bergeron, NU1N, keynote@fistsna.org

What's Your Story?

We need articles and reviews for *The KeyNote!*

Do you have a story to tell? Members would love to hear how you got interested in ham radio. Did someone mentor you as a child? Did you learn it in the service? What is an interesting experience you had using Morse Code? What is your favorite key/rig? Do you have an interesting QSO you'd like to tell members about? Or photos to share?

NOTE: Image files need to be high resolution JPGs (at least 1000 pixels wide).

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

The KeyNote

The Newsletter of the Americas Chapter of FISTS

Issue 1, 2026

Copyright © 2026, FISTS CW Club



Send articles to:

keynote@fistsna.org

Production: Sandra Lindemann

President's message

By Joe Falcone, N8TI

“They jammed our signals—He used Morse Code in Lasers” is the name of a audio science fiction story on YouTube. It was published by “SCIFI-HFY2.” It is a good story and worth listening to because it shows how people (or AI’s) who write science fiction still understand the necessity of Morse Code. The title of the story gives you the plot of the story, so I will not go into it, but I felt it was important to mention that our use of Morse Code is still considered by many to be a skill worth having.

The continued use of CW Morse Code reminds me of how mechanical watches are making a big comeback. Once again, if you go on YouTube, you will see hundreds of videos where people are talking about mechanical watches and how they are so interesting and desirable. As you may know, a quartz watch with a \$5 movement, either made in Japan or Switzerland, will keep time better than a Rolex. In fact, a high end quartz watch movement, like the Seiko 9F will have a accuracy of .8 seconds per month. This is about 60 times better than the best Swiss mechanical watches. Rolex’s best watch has a daily precision of –2 to +2 seconds per day. The Seiko 9F can be found in a \$1,500 watch, while a Rolex’s least expensive chronograph watch is \$15,000 (Rolex Daytona).

By any measure of common sense then, it would appear that nobody would purchase a mechanical watch. Why go through the trouble of winding it when it ran down or having it

serviced every five years or so? That would be true, if the sole purpose of the watch would be to keep time under normal conditions. However, when people explain why they want a mechanical watch, more than a few people say, “I don’t want to worry about my watch battery dying,” or “I want something that I know will last.” Most of the time, the reason is “mechanical watches are just so cool.” People like the idea that their watch uses the same technology that has been used for 200 years and it is not technology that is “plug and play.”

The use of CW Morse Code is very similar to the use of mechanical watches. We know it will work and also know that not every person just off the street can operate it. It takes some additional skill and understanding to use CW Morse Code. In order to make our contacts we often have to do something more than just yell into a microphone louder than the next guy. Maybe we transmit a little off frequency so we sound different. Maybe we key the dashes a little differently to stand out from the crowd. Maybe it is just that we use a sort of “short-hand” that is unique to Morse Code operators. A simple “?” can mean so much when there is a pileup if it is sent out at the exact time and speed when the Morse Code operators can “sense” who the station is that the question is directed to.

Finally, the word “gentleman” or “lady” is what describes the vast majority of Morse Code operators. Patient, respectful, being understanding and helpful are all words that describe

(continued on page 6)

FISTS AWARDS

By Dennis K6DF

Congratulations to all who earned operating awards from Nov 16, 2025 to Feb 16, 2026.

Award certificates are available, from the Members Area of the Americas Chapter website, for members to download to their own computer for printing. A list of awards issued to your call/member-number is available in the Members Area. FISTS members may log into the Members Area from the following web page:

<https://fistsna.org/memlogon.php>

New Members can earn a free FISTS Club Key Patch during the first year of their membership for making their first 10-minute CW QSO with any FISTS member on any band. Be sure to get on the air and make your first 10-minute QSO with a FISTS member to earn your free KEY Patch!

New Member Patches Earned:

KQ3Q Lidiette—QSO with NJ8L
KB0ROW Robert—QSO with W5WWW

We have a list of new members shown elsewhere in this issue of the *Keynote*. Please listen for them on the bands and help them to earn their FISTS Key Patch!

Award certificates are available free to all club members, in PDF format, so get out your favorite key and get on the air. You can also use the free “Log Converter” program to track your club awards, it’s also a good general logging program as well. The author of Log Converter, Graham G3ZOD, is constantly providing updates and improvements to the program. **This program was last updated on Jan 7, 2026 to version 4.9.3. If you are using a version older than this please update your program as older versions will not**

work properly due to recent server updates. 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! The best thing about it is ... it’s FREE! Log Converter is available for download on the Americas Chapter web site. Look for the download link on the main web page just below the “Welcome New Members” list.

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

<https://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 2026.
73, Dennis K6DF ..._. _____ (30)

FISTS AWARDS ISSUED: Nov 16, 2025–Feb 16, 2026

Basic Century Award: G0UBE, G4DRS, K5JX

Silver Century Award: G4DRS, K5JX

Gold Century Award: G4DRS, K5JX

Perpetual Prefix Award: G4DRS, K5JX

Prefix 50, 100, & 150 Award: K5JX

Millionaire Award: G4KKU, F5IJO, G4DRS, K5JX

2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Million Award: G4DRS, K5JX

3 Million Award: G0DJA, G4DRS, K5JX

9 Million Award: DL5CL, G4DRS, K5JX

20 Million Award: VA4ADM

21 Million Award: G4MLW, VA4ADM

22, 23, 24, 25 Million Award: VA4ADM

Spectrum 40m Award: G0DJA

Spectrum 30m Award: VA4ADM

Spectrum 17m Award: VA4ADM

WELCOME NEW FISTS AMERICAS CHAPTER MEMBERS

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C	Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
VA3WNO	23099	Oshan	ON	AC4WB	23240	William	FL
WA8GMY	23201	Curt	KY	W8TMB	23241	Terry	MI
AE1MV	23202	Marc	NY	KB0KSA	23242	John	MO
K4WJN	23203	Bill	VA	KJ5IVB	23243	William	LA
N2DIG	23204	George	NJ	K6NZH	23244	George	CA
KJ5MJM	23205	Kathy	TX	PY3QN	23245	Henrique	RS
XE2GRC	23206	Cesar	DX	WA6PKB	23246	Leonard	CA
N7NLN	23207	George	AZ	W8ZRB	23247	Mark	SC
W4AWI	23208	Raul	FL	AI3A	23248	Alan	CA
WA1TSJ	23209	Daniel	TX	KT5EE	23249	Jonathan	TX
WB0IQK	23210	Mark	OH	WB9VTB	23250	Dave	IN
KI4VDU	23211	Doug	GA	K6ERA	23251	Geoff	CA
WH6GNK	23212	Derrick	HI	KE4SU	23252	Bill	GA
KF8EPS	23213	Vincent	MI	WB2O	23253	Gregory	OK
KB3FW	23214	Harve	SC	WG3K	23254	Eric	MD
N5JST	23215	Dane	OK	WB2BLJ	23255	Mike	FL
VE1AJ	23216	Stuart	NS	W2JJW	23256	James	NJ
KJ7JFN	23217	James	OR	K8OIP	23257	Scott	NM
KF0VSQ	23218	Matthew	MO	K0RX	23258	David	IA
WI3E	23219	Mark	PA	NT9L	23259	John	CO
KJ5JAR	23220	Pedro	TX	LW9EKA	23260	Juan Carlos	DX
KG5AJL	23221	Byron	TX	VE6SV	23261	Gordon	AB
KC5RCT	23222	Randall	AR				
AJ6GI	23223	Jaime	CA				
KO6CDX	23224	Kevin	CA				
W5EES	23225	Pat	AR				
AD6TW	23226	Thomas	CA				
AE2YG	23227	Samuel	NY				
KN2D	23228	Ken	FL				
KQ4EIC	23229	Ethan	FL				
WA6FQJ	23230	Tony	CA				
AA6C	23231	Josh	WA				
N4ZDL	23232	William	VA				
KF8ECA	23233	Dan	OH				
W6EO	23234	Lorin	CA				
K5JX	23235	Rene	TX				
KJ5DVQ	23236	William	TX				
KD2ZIW	23237	Richard	NJ				
KA5I	23238	Joseph	AR				
KM7DMK	23239	Michael	AZ				

Silent Key List

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
K2SB	1462	Steve	NJ
N8JIW	1515	Donald	OH
NA9A	1566	Joe	IL
NK8V	2302	Robert	MI
WA4TOJ	3224	Marvin	VA
W5XU	3521	David	LA
W5OW	3188	Beverly	NM
AA0NR	1704	Rick	KS
NO8V	4794	John	MI
N4PF	5855	Mike	KY
N2AU	7822	Arthur	NY

(continued on page 6)

President's message (continued)

Morse Code operators. Every moment you are working CW is enjoyable, whether you are making the contact or not.

The amount of new operators who are learning Morse Code is amazing. And, it seems that once Morse Code proficiency is achieved, the operators do not go back to other modes of communication.

Radio communication should have faded out once the internet and cell phones became embedded in our society. But, clearly it has not. The total number of Amateur Radio licensees has increased from 650,000 in 2007 to over 750,000 today. These are people who are using radio as a form of communication.

I believe that the number of CW operators have increased also compared to 20 years ago. This is the result of several things, perhaps the most being the interest in Parks on the Air and Summits on the Air. But, the fact that Morse Code is not something that "has" to be learned to obtain a license probably has a lot to do with it. People don't like being told what to do, but enjoy learning new skills if it is their own idea.

Summer is coming and the bands will get a little noisy, but get on early in the morning and you will find a lot of CW activity.

Joe Falcone, N8TI

Silent Key List (continued)

Call	FISTS#	First Name	S/P/C
W1TCJ	9154	Fred	CT
W4BQP	9298	Jim	NC
KB0LFS	1555	Roscoe	IA
N5PHT	10181	Gary	IA
K4CHT	11560	John	TN
K0WA	11664	Lee	KS
K9DUR	11964	Ray	IN
WA2BHS	12809	Everett	TN
AE0G	12874	Larry	NE
AE6ZF	13078	Dan	CA
NJ8L	21878	Vern	OH

Get More Involved in FISTS-NA!

1. If you are a new ham, it is a great way to practice your Morse Code. You can get on the air, meet other club members, and have some fun!
2. Submit an article, or articles, for the newsletter. We welcome all articles, photos, and experience levels. You don't have to be the great American novelist! Articles are lightly edited for typos and grammar.
3. Earn a free FISTS Club Key Patch when you make your first 10-minute CW QSO with any FISTS member on any band.
4. Volunteer! We are currently in need of an Activities Manager.
5. Submit suggestions about how FISTS-NA can be more relevant in 2026 and beyond