



TCG News and Events — May 2023

DAYTON (XENIA) 2023

Three of your current TCG officers, plus our past president and other members, just returned from another event-filled weekend at the Dayton (now Xenia) Ohio Hamvention. This was a special year for TCG, as our club had its first inductee into the CQ-Contest Hall of Fame. Your president did his best to represent TCG proudly. I am grateful for all of the support and guidance from the group for 30 years. My apologies if I left anyone out, but I couldn't read the entire roster aloud at the contest dinner talk. It was quite an emotional weekend, marred by the terrible loss of DL6RAI on the eve of his induction to the Hall Of Fame. May Ben rest in peace, and his family and friends heal through their grief. Below is a photo taken by K2UA, shortly after the contest dinner. Yes, K4ZW is that much taller than K4RO. The plaque on the right was hand made by K0EJ, with transformer copper from the W1ZM station. Thank you Ted, W3TB for the very kind introduction, along with my old friend Ward, N0AX.



[Editor’s note — I had meant to publish the following article last month. My apologies to W4CMG for not including it in the previous newsletter. Thanks Cathy for sharing your insights with us.]

ARRL DX CW CONTEST – Just 100 Watts and a Wire... by Cathy, W4CMG

In any contest, I operate CW only, Low Power, Assisted, of course, because I need all the help I can get!

- Rig: Yaesu FT857-D, no amp
- Power: 100 Watts
- Antenna: G5RV pointing Northeast/Southwest, up 35 feet. G5RVs don’t move.

As part of my growth in the contesting world, and as a CW operator, I set a goal for myself to double the previous score from the major (ARRL, CQ, etc.) contests. The ARRL DX Contest presented a definite challenge given my existing equipment, since W/VE stations may only contact DX stations in that contest. No stateside/VE multipliers in this one!

| 2022 | | | | | 2023 | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Class: SOUAB LP | | | | | Class: SOUAB LP | | | | |
| QTH: Tennessee | | | | | QTH: Tennessee | | | | |
| Operating Time (hrs): 13 | | | | | Operating Time (hrs): 18:16 | | | | |
| Band | QSOs | Mults | | | Band | QSOs | Mults | | |
| 160 | | | | | 160 | | | | |
| 80 | 36 | 22 | | | 80 | 40 | 28 | | |
| 40 | 90 | 39 | | | 40 | 101 | 42 | | |
| 20 | 32 | 24 | | | 20 | 127 | 55 | | |
| 15 | 42 | 26 | | | 15 | 81 | 40 | | |
| 10 | | | | | 10 | 102 | 42 | | |
| Total: | 206 | 115 | Total Score | 71,070 | Total: | 451 | 207 | Total Score | 280,071 |

A new *personal best* for me, with a few lessons learned for the next time:

- Calling CQ didn’t work – my small signals got dwarfed under all the power-stations. After some periodic attempts at calling CQ on different bands (aka lost time), I gave up that concept and stuck with S&P.
- S&P was the way to go! I could listen, and any DX station that called CQ was fair game!
- I wasn’t married to a specific band. 10M was HOT – from “0” in 2022 to “102” in 2023.
- I made a lot of “new best friends”... those stations I worked on more than one band, including a few in all 5 bands. I don’t have a good 160M antenna, so didn’t waste my time.
- Over the past year, I have learned a lot about the timing when to hit which band. When it got slow, I moved to the next one, tuned, and kept going, circling back periodically in case conditions changed.
- BIC – Butt In Chair – was important! More hours, with breaks strategically placed when the bands started to fade. Sleep is overrated, though I am sure I lost some good Q’s between 08:30 UTC and 15:30 UTC. Next time – more sleep the night before, and more coffee!
- Daily practice with higher speed and getting on the air daily to participate in anything with a CW mode has made my copy and send speeds much faster than the 15 - 18 WPM I was at in 2022.
- I call CQ, even when I think it might be a stretch... no such thing as a bad idea! It didn’t work for this one, but I see a lot of promise for many other contests.

My biggest lesson - I need a good antenna on a hilltop with no trees - not likely to happen in this lifetime, but it sure is nice to dream. It’s going to be a big stretch to double this year’s scores next year.

MY "RADIO FATHER"

Bert, W4KW asked TCG members to share a little something about themselves. To get the ball rolling, I thought that I would share a little bit of my childhood history, and how I got into radio. I eventually discovered some really great Elmers once I got into the contesting world, but it all started with an unexpected gift from a total stranger. So, without further adieu...

My father Silas Pickering was a newspaper writer and wannabe novelist. His father was an engineer for Union Carbide. Dad later became a reluctant banker, not long after marriage to Carol. Carol was a typical housewife of the period. We were like many other middle-class homes in 1960's Pittsburgh, PA. No one in my immediate family cared about technical knowledge. We didn't have tools around the house. I was considered a bit of a freak, and probably had more than a hint of Asperger's syndrome.

Carol was buried on my 7th birthday in '69. Dad followed her a couple of years later. Both died from cancer. They grew up next to the Union Carbide and Dow Chemical effluent, which poured freely into the Kanawha river in Charleston, WV. This was the era before any environmental regulation, and the communities in places like Charleston and Love Canal paid a big price.

My father remarried one year after Carol died, then he died one year after their marriage. Our new mother Ruth raised Kelly and I on her own after dad was gone, working for the HJ Heinz company for decades. By necessity, we were essentially free-range kids, with little supervision. Ruth did her best to keep us in line. Tougher than nails, that Ruth. She's still alive and kicking in Pittsburgh.

When I was about 5 years old, for some reason I plugged a pair of TV "rabbit ear" antennas into a wall socket. The resulting shock almost killed me. I was hooked on electricity after that experience. Losing my hair when my mother died magnified my freak status. I learned to fend off people early on, as every kid I encountered wanted to touch my bald head in those days. I still could make people laugh though, something that I apparently inherited from Silas.

I used to "fix" neighbor's TV sets. It entailed taking all of the (marked) tubes to the Stop and Go, which had a tube tester. The Stop and Go was within walking distance, and our middle class neighborhood had at least one TV in every house. The tube tester had little sticky sheets with peel-off duplicate numbers -- one for the tube and one for the chassis location. Those helped a lot when the chassis wasn't marked.

Word got around that the weird bald kid who lost his parents could repair TVs. Several more powerful shocks followed, as the neighbors usually had me working on the oldest and most dangerous stuff in their houses. I was doing everything 100% alone, and knew absolutely nothing about safety (or anything else for that matter.) Lots of blown fuses, back before circuit breakers became common.

Some guy (a complete stranger) named Forest Haley was doing some kind of work at the house next door. I guess he heard from Ruth that I was into electronics. When he was finished with his work, he gave me a Heathkit GR-81 regenerative receiver. Eventually I got it working and could tune in stations, which was a miracle in itself.

After hearing WWV and HCJB and figuring out that they were not located in Pittsburgh, I nearly flipped out. I've been a radio freak ever since. It's outlasted everything else that has ever captured my attention. I never saw nor heard from Forest Haley again. Attempts to track him down have been futile. I always remembered his name though. He remains my mysterious radio dad. Thanks Forest Haley, wherever you are.

WPX CW CONTEST

The WPX CW Contest is right around the corner, running May 26-28. Now is the time to get your station ready for this very fun contest. This is a contest where you can really make a lot of QSOs from Tennessee. Everyone counts for points, and DX QSOs count for even more points. Please get on and have fun, while helping your TCG out towards a higher Club score. You do not want to miss this contest, which is bound to experience record activity this year. For more information on the WPX Contests, visit the WPX web site - <http://cqwpix.com>

UPCOMING EVENTS

K4RO will be giving an Introduction to Contesting talk on June 15 at the Nashville Amateur Radio Club. Always nice to see some friendly faces in the audience, in case anyone else feels like attending. Contact K4RO if you need further details.

Please mark your calendars for the Lebanon Hamquest on July 22. TCG is arranging meeting space around lunch time at a nearby restaurant. We hope to have a private room and get to catch up with those who are making the trek for the hamfest. Stay tuned for more details from W4KW in a future newsletter. Now, let's go get everything prepared for the WPX CW contest, and have a blast!

73,

—Kirk K4RO