

# TENNESSEE CONTEST GROUP

Where Radio is a Contact Sport



## News and Events — May 2024

### TCG BRUNCH @ K4RO APRIL 20

Thanks to everyone who made it to the TCG brunch gathering at K4RO on April 20. It was a really fine afternoon. Nothing beats hanging out with a bunch of contesters. It seems that we always have something to talk about, something to learn from each other, and something (well, a *lot* of things) to laugh about. It just doesn't get much better than that in my book. Thanks for bringing the great food and drink. Our next two hangout opportunities will be in Dayton next weekend, then Lebanon in August.



Back Row: WV4P, NR4L, K4HWS, N8UM, AD4EB.

Middle: WA4JA, K3IE, WF7T, W4KW

Sitting: K4RO, N4MCC, W4CMG, WA4VGZ

## HAMVENTION 2024

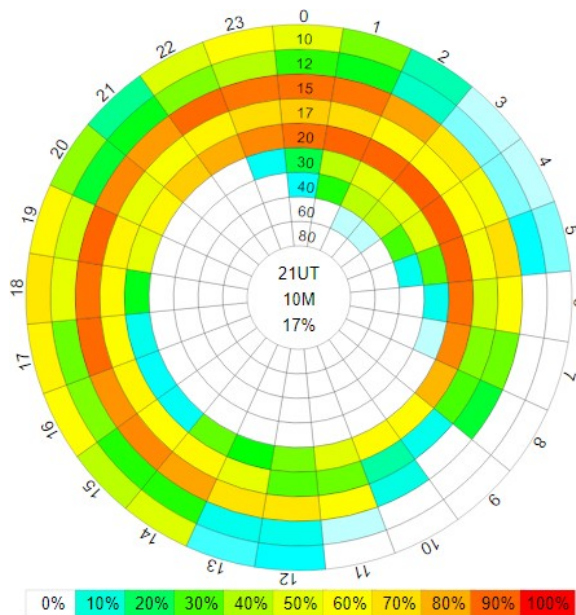
There has been much good discussion on the TCG email reflector about the upcoming Dayton Hamvention. A few rooms at the Hope hotel became available last week, but were snatched up quickly. There were still a few seats left for Contest University, but the Contest Dinner appears to be sold out (as of May 9.) Don't forget to check out the contest web sites for Hamvention: [contestdinner.com](http://contestdinner.com) and [contestsupersuite.com](http://contestsupersuite.com). Also note that TCG's own WV4P will be giving a talk Thursday night at the RTTY Dinner at the Hope hotel. I look forward to seeing many of you in Ohio next week!

## WPX CW CONTEST JUST AROUND THE CORNER

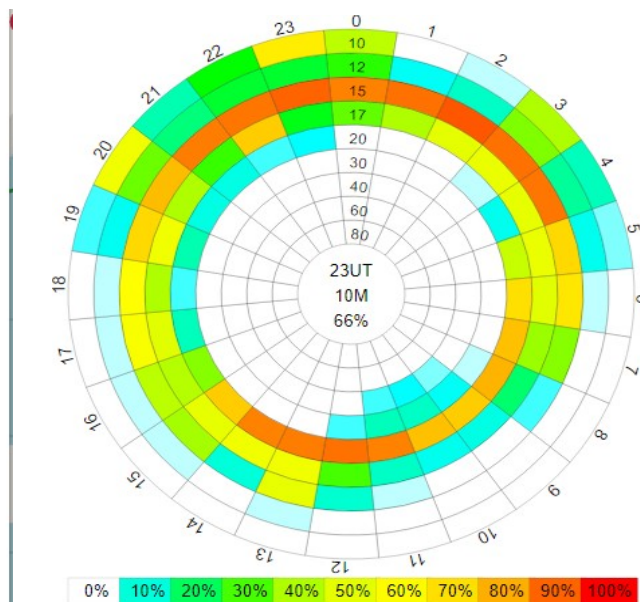
The CQ WPX CW Contest is coming up at the end of this month. There is sufficient solar flux this year to almost guarantee that 15 meters will be open. If we are lucky, 10 meters might also show some signs of life. Better 10 meter conditions are usually experienced during March for the WPX SSB event, which is closer to the equinox. Of course, anything is possible with the crazy flux numbers that we've seen lately (so much for the predicted return of a "Maunder minimum" for the current solar cycle.)

K0EJ has again prepared some useful propagation forecasts using the VOACAP program. The wheels show which band to be on at what time. DX contest veterans know that these types of patterns (Europe in the morning, Asia in the afternoon) recur year after year. Newcomers to DX contesting should pay special attention to these perennial propagation patterns. K0EJ prepared these forecasts assuming 100W and 3L Yagi antennas at 50' for 10/15/20 and dipoles at 50' for 40/80 for both ends. Mark states:

*Charts assume 100W and 3L@50' for 20/15/10M and dipoles for 40/80 on both ends. Current forecast is for SFI=135-140 and A=10-12. Notice we are transitioning to more summertime conditions. 20/15 open somewhere pretty much around the clock, 10M to EU via F-hop degraded due to ionospheric thinning but there may be multi-hop Es that VOACAP does not predict. 15M will probably be the best daytime band with 20M at nite. JA openings both morning and evening along with good over-the-pole conditions assuming reasonable K-index values. DX openings will be shorter on 80/40M due to increased daylight. Work DX there while you can, remembering QSO points there are doubled. Many thanks to K0EJ for preparing and sharing these propagation forecasts.*

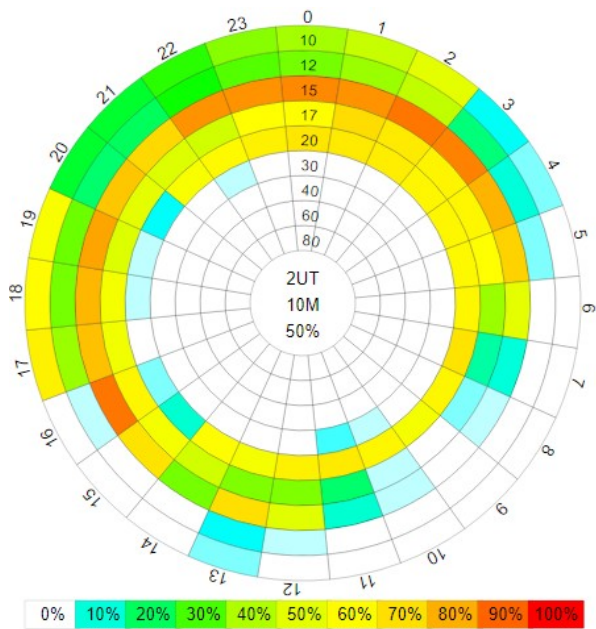


EUROPE

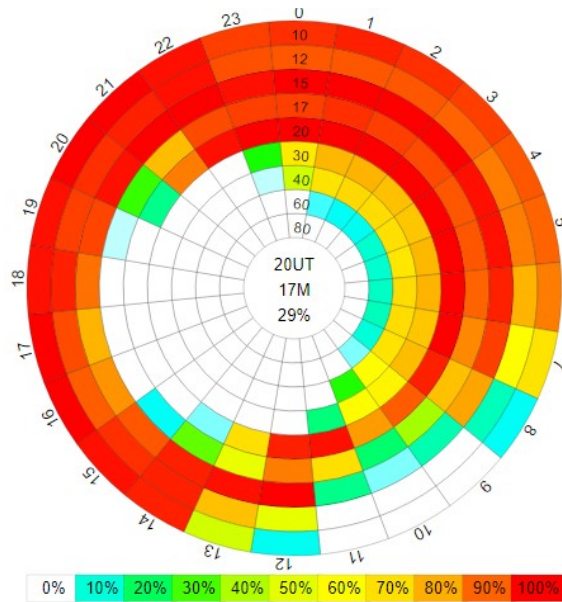


ASIA





UA9



SOUTH AMERICA

### FLORIDA QSO PARTY

Jim AD4EB once again put in a super-human effort in the popular Florida QSO Party. While Jim's trusted pilot (and XYL) Melody KI4HVV drove a thousand+ miles, Jim made over 3500 QSOs in 20 hours of operating time, running 100 watts from the back of their Kia van! This is truly an incredible accomplishment, on so many levels. See his 3830 write up for more details. Jim would like to add the following, regarding the TCG stations worked:

*I want to thank all the TCG members that took the time to work us in the 2024 FQP. Unfortunately, 40m was not in very good shape, so most of my time was spent on 20m. I did jump down to 40m occasionally to work the closer in states like TN, but in hindsight probably should have done it more often. Below is a list of the TCG stations worked, including the number of times worked:*

- K3IE (34)
- K4AMC (14)
- W0AG (14)
- W4NZ (14)
- N9TF (8)
- K4RO (6)
- NS4X (5)
- AC6ZM (4)
- KA4OTB (4)
- N8UM (4)
- K4DR (3)
- WD4CFN (3)
- K0EJ (2)
- W3TB (2)
- W6UB (2)
- K4VIG (1)
- KE0L (1)

## **MFJ IS CLOSING ITS DOORS AFTER 52 YEARS**

Everyone has likely heard the news of MFJ closing it's doors. For those who somehow might have missed this rather seismic event in the ham radio universe, read below. KL7RA declared long ago that there was not a single ham shack in the world that did not contain at least one MFJ product. I concur.

*April 25, 2024*

*Dear Fellow Hams and Friends,*

*It is with a sad heart as I write this letter.*

*As many of you have heard by now, MFJ is ceasing its on-site production in Starkville, Mississippi on May 17, 2024. This is also the same for our sister companies' Ameritron, Hygain, Cushcraft, Mirage and Vecronics.*

*Times have changed since I started this business 52 years ago. Our product line grew and grew and prospered. Covid changed everything in businesses including ours. It was the hardest hit that we have ever had and we never fully recovered.*

*I turned 80 this year. I had never really considered retirement but life is so short and my time with my family is so precious.*

*I want to thank all of our employees who have helped build this company with me over the years. We have many employees who have made MFJ their career for 10, 20, 30, 40 and more years.*

*We are going to continue to sell MFJ products past May 17, 2024. We have a lot of stock on hand. We will continue to offer repair service work for out-of-warranty and in-warranty units for the foreseeable future.*

*Finally, a special thanks to all of our customers and our dealers who have made MFJ a worldwide name and a profitable business for so many years. You all are so much appreciated.*

*Sincerely Yours, 73s*

*Martin F. Jue, K5FLU*

### **K3JWI SK**

Gary, K4VIG passes along the news of another fallen TCG member. “It is with deep sadness that I share that Ken George, K3JWI died this past Thursday. His widow, Lee, wanted me to share with the TVDXA club this news. Obviously their plans are not made yet, but possibly a memorial service will be held at a later date. Please keep Lee and their family in your thoughts and prayers. Ken was an integral part of the Tennessee Valley DX Association and will be dearly missed.” Ken’s obituary may be found here: <https://www.chattanooga.com/2024/5/6/486900/Kenneth-Robert-George.aspx>



### **WRTC TENT SPONSORSHIP**

As you may have read elsewhere, WRTC-2026 is looking for contest clubs to sponsor operator tents. A WRTC tent sponsorship involves a non-trivial amount of funding, in excess of a thousand dollars. Many TCG members would like to sponsor a tent collectively as a club. If you would like to contribute to TCG WRTC-2026 tent sponsorship, you may send a check to K0EJ, or use the TCG PayPal address:

[<tcgtreasury53@gmail.com>](mailto:tcgtreasury53@gmail.com)

Be sure to memo your check or PayPal transaction with “WRTC-2026 tent contribution.” Thanks for your support of WRTC-2026.

## W4CMG REMOTE FROM ARIZONA

*This month's feature story is from W4CMG, who devised a way to keep her CW chops polished while on the road for Red Cross training in Arizona. In addition to her CW and contesting prowess, W4CMG has personally invested over 2900 hours as a Red Cross volunteer. Cathy's contributions to her many communities go far beyond ham radio, and we salute her spirit of dedication to service. —Ed.*

From a hotel room at a conference in Phoenix, remoting into the home station in Nashville, TN, it was a great experience that started from an unexpected source. I had an hour+ CW QSO with Tom, K4AEN after the 0700 CWTs in late March. We chatted about a lot, including an upcoming cruise that I was headed for in April. I complained about not being able to bring our rig onto the cruise ship = CW Withdrawal! The next morning, Tom sent some information about his remote operations that he uses – from a coffee shop and anywhere else on the road – and that he plans to bring on his future cruise, using RemoteTX.net software (<https://remotetx.net/>) a remote keyer (<https://ai7r.net/remote-keyer/>) and a portable key.

I operated “remote” from my hotel room in Phoenix, AZ over the weekend of April 26-28 while I was attending a Red Cross Program Lead Summit. I transmitted with my Yaesu FT 991-A, using RemoteTX <https://remotetx.net/> to access it from the hotel room. The set up was fairly easy (almost) but requires some extra equipment and a little configuration to get going:  
A Raspberry Pi 3B, 3B+or 4B – must be purchased separately, or repurposed from an existing Pi. This also requires a micro SD card for the initial image for the Pi, then an additional RemoteTX configuration is copied to the micro SD card and installed.



There is a free 30-day subscription available to the RemoteTX software (which I am using), but the cost is very reasonable for a 1-year subscription, which I plan on getting when my free trial expires. To request a subscription, there is an online form that needs to be completed. It will ask if you have a Raspberry Pi available or available soon, since it is needed for the operation, as well as other basic information about you (callsign and home QTH) and your station.

The Remote Control rigs are limited to the following (mine is a Yaesu FT-991A). There were a few settings (literally 3) on the rig that the quick start guide outlined. A quick change that I was able to leave in place (once setting change the VOX Select to Data from the default “Mic” – I didn't change it back since my mic is still in the box it came in anyway.

*NOTE:* Each rig may have it's own settings, and look and feel of the RemoteTX varies by rig, but the instructions are very clear and easy to follow. There are some demos and resources on the RemoteTX website that explain the whole process well.

## Remote Control Radios

Icom 7100 (HF/vhf/uhf)

Icom 7200

Icom 7300

Icom 7300-Scope

Icom 7610

Icom 7610-Scope

Icom 705-Scope (HF Only)

Yaesu FT-991/a (HF/vhf/uhf)

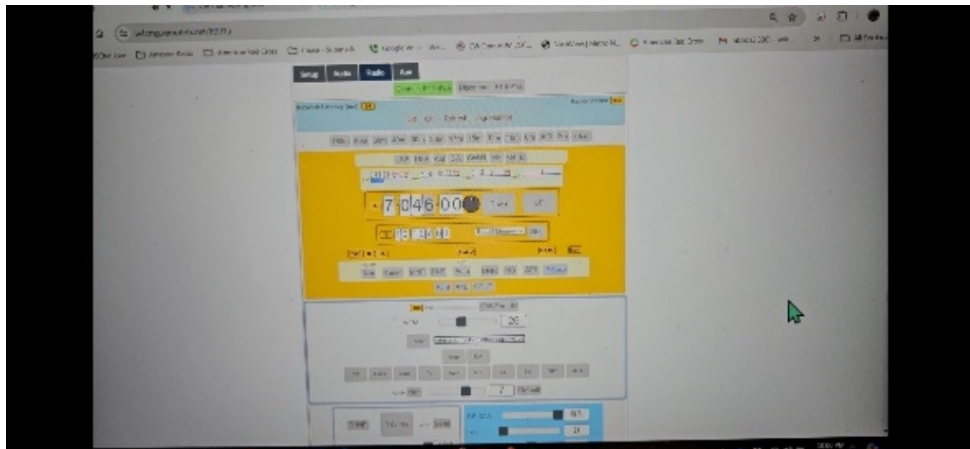
Elecraft KX2, KX3

Elecraft K3/s

Yaesu Rotators

Connecting to the rig is easy once the Raspberry Pi has been loaded with the RemoteTX configuration.

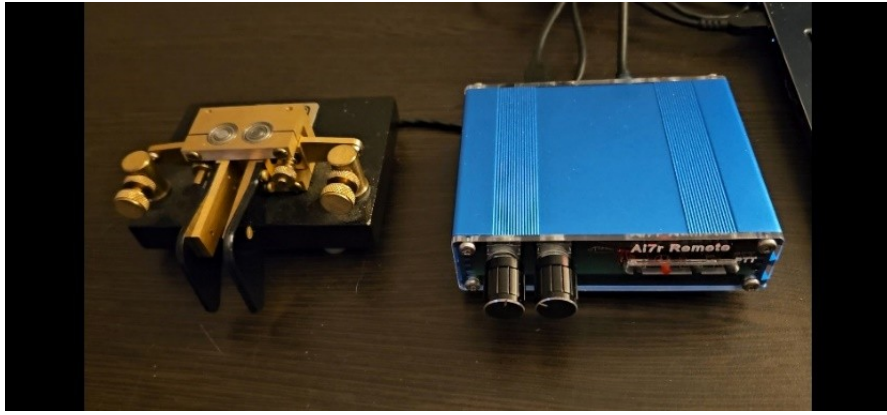
- Leaving your rig off, unplug the USB connector that leads from your rig to your computer, then plug it into the Raspberry Pi. Power up the Pi, THEN turn on the rig.
- Log into the RemoteTX server using the username and password that will be provided to you with your subscription.
- You can transmit either SSB or CW, tune, change bands and frequencies, operate split, set key speed remotely! Below is the screenshot of the RemoteTX screen while I was operating from the Hotel room:



You can use a keyboard only with RemoteTX to transmit, but I wanted the full hands-on experience of using a key to send CW. I used the AI7R remote keyer (<https://ai7r.net/remote-keyer/>) and a Kent twin-lever paddle to send. The Paddle connects to the AI7R Remote Cable using the standard stereo cable, and the AI7R Remote Keyer connects to a computer (in my case), or a tablet or smart phone. I tried using my CWTouchKeyer paddle/oscillator that I had brought in case I didn't have success connecting and wanted to practice. I discovered immediately that since the built-in oscillator gave a side tone, and so did the AI7R Remote Keyer that it was a bit much for my ears to deal with the double sounds, so I switched to the Kent paddles.

There is some latency, so it is important to practice to get the spacing correct when transmitting, either manually with a key, or when typing your exchange, for a clean copy of the exchange. I found it became easier as I gained more experience with the timing.





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I had limited time because I actually had to show up for the meetings, which meant early mornings and late evenings were the only times I had time to get on the air. There is always a way to make time for CW – and we know that sleep is highly overrated 😊!

#### *SUCCESS:*

- Friday night, April 26 – QSOs with Hungary, WI, and France – all confirmed
- Saturday night, April 27 – Short exchange with KC9YL in WI, who says the signals were much better than during the CWTs 😊, and an 8-minute QSO with a friend in GA
- Sunday morning, April 28 (way too early) – 6 FL QSO Party exchanges before the conference, then headed for the airport

Curiously, the TSA agents in Nashville didn't look at the Kent key, cable, and AI7R remote keyer, and an extra touchpaddle with oscillator that I have brought in a separate carryon bag. Maybe it was the Red Cross t-shirt and the Red Cross bag tag that did the trick! When I left Phoenix, similar garb and the same bag tag didn't make an impression. I had to unwrap EVERYTHING, right down to removing the equipment from the bubble wrap. The young lady from TSA seemed more intrigued than concerned and was nice enough to offer more packing tape to secure the bubble wrap back in place after glancing at each piece and hearing what they were used for. Imagine if I had brought a rig and antenna along with everything else!!!

*NOTE:* There is a way to use internet enabled power switches to power up the 12 V power supply and the Raspberry Pi that creates the interface for the K3 – hoping there is something compatible with the FT-991A. There is also an automatic antenna disconnect that can be attached that grounds the antenna when the rig power is off. I need to investigate, but it might be a challenge with the Single antenna 2 operator (and 2 rigs) with an antenna splitter setup that I have. Right now, Jim WA4VGZ still needs to be in the shack to get things connected, but I'm working on it! This is fun stuff that is really portable, and it allows me to get my recommended daily dose of "Vitamin CW"! *Note — There is a brief video of Cathy sending some CW remotely available at the following link:* <https://tinyurl.com/bdedsd9v>

#### **TENNESSEE QSO PARTY 2024**

Thanks to the hard work by W0AG, AD4EB, WF7T and others, the TN QSO Party rules have been revamped for 2024. The contest is now *TEN hours long*, and a new Rover category has been added. Now is a good time to review the TQP rules for 2024, and start planning our operations. The sunspots should provide a boost this year. Let's hope for some good short skip. Here is a direct link to the 2024 TQP rules: <https://tnqp.org/rules/>



## **HOW IT ALL STARTED – Juan Lopez Jr., AC6ZM**

Juan Lopez Jr. (AC6ZM) got started in radio communications in the U.S. Marine Corps. He enlisted in 1981 as field radio operator (MOS 2531). Throughout his 27-year active-duty career, he picked up a few additional skills such as Radio Telegraph Operator (MOS 2533) and Spectrum Manager (MOS 0648). He became skilled in the art of HF Skywave communications and field expedient antennas during worldwide military deployments. Juan was introduced to Amateur Radio while stationed in Camp Pendleton, CA when he joined the Palomar Amateur Radio Club (PARC). He passed the technician plus and was dubbed KE6KNN. Juan received mentoring from Rod Dinkins (AC6V-sk) and Dennis Vernacchia (N6KI). More specifically, N6KI is the culprit for getting Juan interested in HF CW contesting during the 1999 ARRL Field Day event. N6KI assigned him to operate the 15-meter CW station for the entire field day event--yes it was open all night! The SSN was over 200 that month and it was my first introduction to contest logging software--CT by K1EA.

Juan's military career included being stationed in Okinawa Japan several times where he became a member of the Okinawa Radio Society and issued callsign 7J6CEC. Juan participated in the IOTA program as AS-017 and was introduced headfirst into the world of pileups. Juan had no idea he was supposed to be working split frequency as DX, so it was like operating a mobile in a state QSO party--simplex madness! He was also a member of the Navy-Marine Corps MARS program (callsign NNN0KUV) and frequently participated in the annual Armed Forces Day military-to-amateur cross-band communications test. Other activities throughout his quarter century amateur career included EMCOMM in Los Angeles, CA and Jacksonville, NC; coordinating an ARISS sponsored amateur communications with the ISS for middle school students (joint venture for Japanese & American students); Officer positions in several radio clubs; and license trustee for KN4DUA (Tellico Lake ARC).

Juan took up contesting more seriously after joining TCG about six years ago. He has traveled to join international teams at PJ2T, II9P, and a mini DX-pedition to Bimini Island (C6AZM). Several other locations are now on the bucket list at Turks & Caicos (VP5A), Malta, and Tenerife in the Canary Islands. He is also the Southeast Ambassador for CWops. Juan gives much credit and a special thanks to TCG members Ron (WV4P), Jim (AD4EB), Mark (K0EJ), Ted (W4NZ), Bill (K4OWR-sk), and Bryan (W5MX from KY) for guiding him through his contesting career and answering the endless amateur radio related questions about this, that or the other. Semper Fidelis

## **TCG MAY ZOOM SESSION**

There will be no May TCG Zoom session. Between the Dayton Hamvention and the WPX CW contest, there simply isn't enough time to host a Zoom session. Your TCG officers are currently evaluating whether or not to renew the Zoom license for another year. Zoom session participation has hovered around 10% of the membership, and your officers are starting to run out of ideas (and time) to create new presentations. We were hoping for some more input from the membership, but I suppose that everyone is too busy making QSOs while the solar flux is peaking. I get it. We're contesters, not rag chewers.

## **NEW MEMBERS**

TCG is *very* pleased to welcome Scott Sauvageot, KS3O to our membership this month. Scott and his XYL Wendy are in the process of moving from Maryland over the next year or two, having already purchased property in the great state of Tennessee. We look forward to hearing more operations from KS3O in the future.

## UPCOMING CONTESTS

The following table is a list of the upcoming contests which qualify for the TCG Most Radioactive Award. For more information on the MRA, please refer to [K4TCG.ORG](http://K4TCG.ORG) under the TCG INFO section. Thanks to AD4EB for this list, and to Ted W4NZ for administering the TCG Most Radioactive Award.

- May 4, 2024 7th Call Area QSO Party
- May 4, 2024 ARI International DX Contest
- May 4, 2024 Delaware QSO Party
- May 4, 2024 Indiana QSO Party
- May 4, 2024 New England QSO Party
- May 11, 2024 Canadian Prairies QSO Party
- May 11, 2024 CQ-M International DX Contest
- May 11, 2024 Volta WW RTTY
- May 18, 2024 Arkansas QSO Party
- May 18, 2024 His Maj. King of Spain Contest, CW
- May 25, 2024 CQ WW WPX Contest, CW
  
- June 1, 2024 ARRL International Digital Contest
- June 1, 2024 Kentucky QSO Party
- June 8, 2024 ARRL June VHF Contest
- June 8, 2024 GACW WWSA DX
- June 15, 2024 All Asian DX Contest, CW
- June 15, 2024 Stew Perry Topband Challenge-Jun
- June 15, 2024 West Virginia QSO Party
- June 22, 2024 His Maj. King of Spain Contest, SSB

Safe travels to all who are Dayton bound. Good luck to all who join us in the WPX CW at the end of the month. May the Flux be with us!

73, —Kirk K4RO