Contest Gazette

Florida Contest Group

Volume 31, Issue 2

May 2024

From the President's Corner

Chris Plumblee, W4WF, FCG President

Happy summer! If you're in Florida, you've likely been "enjoying" warm temperatures and bright sunshine for quite some time. Hopefully you don't have too much antenna work to do outside this summer, and hopefully you can dodge thunderstorms and get it taken care of quickly.

Speaking of dodging thunderstorms, the ham radio world just convened on central Ohio for the Dayton Hamvention. Look elsewhere in the issue for a Dayton recap, and thanks to K1TO for joining me on the trip.

We just finished the WPX CW Contest. I operated M/2 as NI4W at N4WW this year (as in most years). Conditions seemed better than average; 20m was open all night and 15m had a big EU sunrise opening in the middle of the night locally. We finished with about 18M, about 2% down from K9CT for 2nd in M/2. It will be up to the log checkers to sort out who gets the silver medal - everyone in the category is looking up at K1LZ.

Next on my contest calendar is Field Day. Look at the reflector for a compilation of FCG Field Day plans so you can say hello and OJ to fellow club members who may be hiding behind unfamiliar callsigns.

After FD, I'm traveling to K8AZ in Ohio for the IARU RadioSport contest in July. If you've never tried it, RadioSport is a great time. Similar to WPX CW, it's a summertime contest, so the high bands are good in the afternoon and evening (and often 20m doesn't close for the entire contest). Late morning and mid-day are the slow times, and are the best time to sleep if you're tired. There are many HQ stations on from common DXCC countries as well as some rarer countries (I recall working HS0AC from Thailand in the past, for example). The HQ stations replace, to some extent, DXCC multipliers, which are not in the rules of this contest. Everyone can work everyone and it's mixed mode, so no matter what you like, this contest has something for you.

I also had occasion when I was at Dayton to chat with M0DXR, who is heading up the WRTC 2026 committee. The FCG has committed to raise money and sponsor the NA#3 tent, which is the tent that covers our qualifying area. In the next few days, look for a revision to our Square store to allow you to donate to the WRTC tent cause with your credit card. The club will be matching donations received up to the first $1,500.

As we hunker down for the summer, please be mindful of the temperature if you're out working in your yard or on your tower and antennas, and wear your sunscreen (your dermatologist will thank you). I'm looking forward to seeing some of you in Melbourne in just a few months.

Inside this issue:

The Contest Gazette is the newsletter of the Florida Contest Group (FCG). The Gazette is published quarterly and notifications for input and publication will be on the FCG reflector. Please send input to the editor, Marty Brown, N4GL, n4gl.marty@gmail.com.

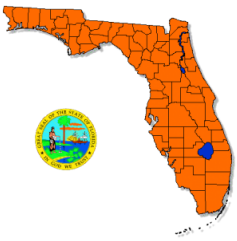
All submissions are subject to editing prior to publication.

K1TO Updates

Dan Street, K1TO, Vice President, Florida QSO Party

FQP 2024

- - 2024's FQP had many highlights: Over 1100 logs, representing over 160,000 QSOs. The logs are only behind the COVID years of 2020 when everyone stayed home and 2021 when almost everyone stayed home. QSOs are likely a similar pattern. Crunching the logs received produced another 100+ folks to approach at the deadline with decent results.
- - We also approached the new hams with KQ4 calls. It was intriguing that phone was dominant and N1MM logging was not.
- - A Zoom call increased the FL participation, as did the POTA overlap. Zoom usage will be expanded for 2025 for sure.
- - The 1x1 word of the year was KEYS. Three calls covered each letter, so 12 1x1s were on. 983 preliminary sweeps were seen and checking the logs will alter this slightly upward.
- - Certificates are now available to anyone who swept the 1x1s from 2012-2023.
- - Sunspot cycle 25 is high, but again we suffered propagation setbacks that especially affected 10M. Most had given up on this band, but one 1x1 host said JAs were peaking 20 over S9 on 10M in the last few hours! (Curiously, there are no calls for adding 80M - hi)
- Thanks to all who supported the 2024 event! Already enthusiastically planning the 2025 FQP, including a reduced log deadline.



Dayton 2024

Huge thanks to FCG President Chris W4WF who rented/drove all weekend despite staying at a different nearby hotel.

A full FCG table at the Contest Dinner was dominated by orange shirts, but I didn't get the memo and wore something else. Friday morning was wet, so I/we heard that the fairgrounds were muddy and thus avoided it. Saturday, we had a productive few hours at the fest, hitting most of the cherry-picked destinations, but somehow not connecting with Ray N9JA at Icom who has been the Grand Prize sponsor at our Orlando Contest Dinner. Tons of familiar and a few new faces. People are my main reason for going, not equipment, so the evenings are more important than the booths to me. Made progress with FQP mobiling and logs, future Orlando Dinner speakers, 6M grids, etc.

Will likely become a regular again.

WX4G/P40J SK

Somewhat shocking to me was the sudden decline of WX4G/P40J, a past FCG Treasurer. His doctor gave a somewhat encouraging report, but ultimately the colon cancer that had spread to the liver wasn't "fixable".

I met Bob over 30 years ago on Aruba in 1993. He was a CW man and made a ton of contacts.

I got a kick out of how Bob loved QSOs and didn't care about mults at all while his older brother Larry N6AR was just the opposite with a high mult and Qs were secondary.

Randy W8HO moved in across the street from Bob and erected a house and 190' tower, but fortunately didn't do much contesting.

Bob went to V4 in more recent years and stayed at the same house I did, operating from there.

RIP Bob.

ICOM 60th Anniversary

Sponsoring the FCG Contest Dinner
Grand Prize 2023 & 2024

A Tribute to George Wagner, K5KG

Chris Plumblee W4WF, Fred Kleber NP2X

If you've been around the FCG for any length of time, you've no doubt interacted with K5KG. George has been an officer of the FCG for more than 20 years, since the early 2000's (the exact date is lost to history). While he's served as VP, he's done jobs as varied as handling the swap tables at the Melbourne Hamfest, soliciting and collecting prizes for the Orlando Contest Dinner, helping with setup and teardown at the Contest Dinner, babysitting the roster and the ARRL's eligibility list, managing the reflector and the transition from our Mailman reflector to groups.io, and interfacing with the treasurer to ensure that we collected dues from everyone so that our roster was as complete as possible. Through it all, George worked without complaint and with great enthusiasm to make the club better.

In addition to his work on behalf of the club, George traveled extensively and could always be counted on to put in a big score in FQP. For many years, he worked hard to set up a mobile station in his vehicle and operated with VE7ZO, where they perfected he tactic of moving multipliers from 20m CW to 14.151 for the SSB multiplier. Other than the K4OJ mobile M/M, they were the only entry that I'm aware of to break 1M points in FQP thanks to their enormous multiplier total. After he stopped operating mobile, George hosted many 1x1 operations from his FB station in SAR, and most recently tried his hand at expedition operation from MON from a permanently-berthed, retired US Coast Guard Cutter in Key West.

As an operator, George is equally comfortable on CW and SSB, though his primary interest is whatever mode where there is a contest that weekend. George has traveled extensively, both for ham radio and with his lovely XYL, Kay. Most of their recreational travel has a ham radio component, including when Kay drove and George operated in the backseat for a marathon road trip to the Rockies a few years ago. George has traveled for contests a great deal, to all corners of the globe, from Oceania (KH6, VK/ZL, E5) to the Caribbean (J7, VP2M, KP2) to Europe (TF, OH0), and those are just in the last few years!

So, let me extend my kudos to George on his retirement from the FCG, and wish him great success going forward in future endeavors as he uses the considerable time that he's freed up to spend time with friends and family, travel more extensively, and put more QSOs in the log!

Behind every successful man is a successful woman. George's XYL Kay is a key player in ensuring the success of the annual FCG banquet. For many years she has managed the prepping of the tabletop snacks & promotional items, but this pales to the management of the fabulous banquet buffet. She masterfully gathers a team of friendly food servers (club members and XYLs) and orchestrates the feeding of the masses with ease.

Her previous educational background allows her to diplomatically explain to the guy with his HT hanging off his belt, and half his butt crack showing, that he can't have 3 scoops of his favorite main dish, or 8 chocolate chip cookies. She handles catering challenges with a smile and aims to create an enjoyable experience for all. Oh yes, she does all this in addition to managing George!!"

FQP 24 Wrap-up from AA4TI

Steve Morton, AA4TI

During the running of the 2023 FQP, I had many visits from Mr. Murphy and was determined that FQP 24 would be different. For the most part, I was successful. During 2023, high winds caused me issues with my tripod blowing over. I studied the tripod and mast setup and determined that guying was not really the issue…the real problem was that the base of the mast was sliding sideways on the ground which allowed the mast to act as a big lever which would cause the tripod to fall over. The solution was actually quite simple. I bought a pet screw in anchor, placed it at the base of the mast, and used electrical tape to attach the mast to the anchor. This worked quite well.

Additionally, during 2023, I had all kinds of RF issues which caused a number of computer glitches. So, this year, I added lots more toroids to all of my cables and decided to ground the generator better.

Finally, on Friday before the FQP, I gave everything a dry run and had no issues whatsoever.

I started out my Expedition operation at the Hil/Pol county line. Typically, I travel to the county line prior to the FQP to make sure that I can actually set up and operate exactly on the county line. I know that there are a lot of County Hunters that are chasing the USACA award, so I make very certain to follow the MARAC rules to the letter. I use Google Maps, Randy Majors County line maps and Google street view, but until you actually visit the county line you can't be sure what might await you. This year, Hil/Pol was a new county line for me, and due to time constraints, I did not pre-visit the county line…

Obviously, I should have made the visit prior to the FQP. When I arrived at the county line, I discovered that there was a small sign located on a tree that said "No Trespassing – This property is designated as a Florida Agricultural Chemical Production facility and trespassing is a Felony under Fl Statute…" So, I decided that I would find a nearby spot on the county line to operate. Fortunately, I did not have to waste a lot of time, and found a spot on the State Right of Way where I could set up. The only real issue was the incredible amount of trucks passing by on their way into and out of the Chemical plant. Things went smoothly and I finished my time in Hil/Pol without further incident.

Next, was Mte/Har county line. I have a spot where I operate from every year that is located on private property. The owner has been gracious and allowed me to operate that from several years, and this year was not different. Once I got set up, I immediately had a number of issues. First, my iPhone (which I use only for navigation using the GPS feature) gave me a warning as soon as I attempted to make my first contact. The warning said something about lightning detection, and I immediately assumed that it was an RF issue of some sort. Being a new iPhone user, I did not expect this warning, nor did I actually understand it. I later figured out that the iPhone was just giving me a warning that it had detected moisture in the "Lightning Connector". Apparently, while traveling from Hil/Pol to Mte/Har I was running the cars' AC unit, and had the window open which allowed some moisture to condense at the charge cable (Lightning cable) since I have the phone mag mounted over one of the AC dash vents.

My second issue at Mte/Har occurred at precisely the same time. My logging program refused to record the band/frequency/mode. I tried everything that I could think of, and nothing seemed to work. So, I proceeded to hand log all times/frequencies/modes manually and figured that I would fix the computer log later. After running Mte/Har, I tried fixing the computer again before moving on to the Sar/Des line. Eventually, after a lot of frustration, I looked at the Hex codes for rig control and something did not look right. It was then that I remembered that the N3FJP logging program has a error in it and to run the Icom 7300, you have to manually make a code change. Of course, I did not have any of the settings written down, so I had to get on line to find out what the numbers were. After looking at several You Tube videos, I finally found one where the video mentioned in passing that you had to change one number manually from 64 to 94…problem solved, but at least 30 – 45 minutes was lost. Why the computer went Rogue was a mystery until I got home on Sunday evening and started breaking down the station. As it turned out, the metal bottom plate on the lap top had

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come off, and briefly shorted something out when I hit a bump while I was in transit.

The move to Sar/Des went well. Last year, I ran this county line first – it is close to a watermelon farm and the packing plant is very close. I had to contend with honey bees since the processing plant throws away broken water melons quite close to where I like to set up shop. And, I did get stung while operating here. This year, I ran this line last, and did not expect problems with honey bees. I did not anticipate the hoard of mosquitoes and other assorted bugs that showed up at dusk. At 10pm, I shut down for the evening and proceeded to take down the antenna system and pack up the generator. I didn't arrive home until 11:30pm, and had to make a quite turn around the next morning at 5:30am to be ready on the Lee/Hen county line at 8:00am.

I stayed on the Lee/Hen county line for about 4 hours, and business got very slow toward the end of my time here. When I tried 15 meter SSB, I only made a few contacts, and one of the contacts told me that 15 meter SSB was a wasteland. I should have stuck it out longer, because I discovered after the contest that a lot of 15 meter SSB contacts were made by others.

I moved on to the Cha/Gla county line, get set up and started operating. Business was fairly good, but once again, after a couple hours, contacts began to dry up. And, I didn't bother with 15 meter SSB, which was a big mistake in strategy.

Anyway, at around 4:30pm, I wasn't making many contacts, and I was pretty well whooped, so I called it a day, packed up and was home by 6:30pm.

All in all, it was a decent showing, but my mult count was much lower than in previous years, and consequently my score suffered. The bottom line was 1831 qso's, 97 mults and score of 656,108. The official final score will likely be quite a bit lower since many folks improperly log county line contacts, or miss the second county during the exchange.

It was an exhausting FQP, as always, but still great fun!

White Family Memorial Fund

Chris Plumblee, W4WF, FCG President

Upon W1YL's sad passing, the FCG officers decided that a tangible way to remember Ellen and her vital contributions to ham radio generally and to the FCG specifically would be to create a White Family Memorial Fund, to be administered by the FCG. We considered calling it the Ellen White Memorial Fund, but Ellen was so inextricably linked with Bob and Jim, and the White family is so inextricably linked with the FCG, that it just seemed right to honor and remember the entire White family with this effort.

The White Family Memorial Fund is a separate fund within the FCG Treasury. Funds will be used for extraordinary contributions that advance amateur radio contesting. Contributions can be made at https://floridacontestgroup.square.site, via PayPal to Payments@floridacontestgroup.org, or via check (made out to the FCG with White Memorial Fund in the memo line) mailed to

Taylor Plumblee KI4GHK

4719 Fontana Street

Orlando, FL 32807

Contributions to the White Family Memorial Fund made after March 1, 2023 are tax deductible. Your contributions will not be used for general FCG expenses. Rather, they will be used for extraordinary contributions to organizations, individuals, or campaigns that are, in the judgment of the FCG officers, working to advance amateur radio and contesting in a way that honors the memory of W1YL, W1CW, and K4OJ.

The K4OJ Multi-Multi Mobile
The installation behind the operation

Chris Blake, NX4N

This article describes the installation approach and tasks required to make the K4OJ/m stations work. Though brief it hopefully will give you some insight into the process.

I've always prioritized station design, installation and testing in this order:

1. **Safety**
2. **Functionality and Performance**
3. **Reliability, Repeatability and Reproducibility**
4. **Ergonomics**

It is important to adhere to this order to ensure that the team is, simply, safe and having fun. Engineers are well known for endless 'polishing the apple' of their designs - given this is a hobby I try to apply some good principles in a practical way - i.e. perfection is the enemy of 'good enough'.. My design, build and test approach to each priority reflects this.

Safety:

An example of safety considerations is identifying where the airbags are and avoiding placement of potential 'projectiles' such as radios, laptops or paddles. I also try to strap down as much equipment as possible, but it is not 100% feasible in temporary installations. Whatever doesn't need to be touched (ex: RFI resistant AC power strips are placed under the seats.

Accidents can cause big problems with this much humanity and equipment. One way I mitigate safety risks is to ensure that there is - at all times - a dedicated driver. Generally that is me since I am most familiar with my own vehicle, creating/driving the same FQP routes for the past 12 years and ensuring that prior to FQP I have a complete vehicle inspection performed by a certified mechanic. Everything is in good working condition. Likewise I ensure there are no undue driver distractions - I do not listen to the radios other than the pile ups that crackle out of the operators' headphones (which is fun to listen to!). The driver's seat and immediate area is clear of any ham radio encroachment.

Functionality:

This is where the fun begins; I *love* building the stations! I usually start in February in the early morning while it is still cool. You will often find me in my driveway listening to Brazilian samba and bossa nova (love that smooth style) while working on the vehicle.. Most of us know well what it takes to put together an HF contest station (including a mobile station) and it is generally a similar task for the K4OJ mobile...to a point. Installing multiple stations comes with many additional obstacles including:

a) The vehicle is a poor source of clean, stable DC power for multiple RF stations including radios, laptops and powered accessories. I use a Honda sine wave AC generator for this very reason - it's been a solid source of reliable power for 10 years now with a small noise profile and it's stingy on gas usage.

b) The antennas are all vertically polarized and within 1-4 ft of one another, electrically short, with compromised counterpoises and very poor paths to mother earth ground - but must play nicely with each other *at the same time*. There are interactions of several different kinds with such installation since more than one antenna is used simultaneously. Such interactions include swr's, stray RF paths entering the gear in the cabin, ground differences between antennas and stations, and much more. I start my installation with some antenna basics:

- Mechanical integrity compromises of the antennas and the stations also can exist and must be addressed. For example, every year I start my FQP build with a low, medium and highway-speed mechanical test with an observation vehicle looking for antenna resonant motion, touching of antennas (bad!) and mounting platform instability. These must be tested under different driving conditions, like what happens to the antennas and mounts during a hard stop?

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- Then electrical testing ensues. With no station installed, I perform what I call a 'SWR stability test'. You can sit in the driveway and have all your SWR's look FB. But that's not how you will use them - Antennas swaying in the wind will affect their own and each other's SWR's - I've seen 40m SWR's sway from 1.1 to over 3 during such tests. Hint: The likely source of such variation is usually an insufficient RF ground connection to the vehicle roof. You can get away with much of this with a single station but with multiple ones it becomes a bigger factor...

c) Station build out and radio/pc/accessories/antenna integration is a step by step process. Cable management is often overlooked but of significant importance. Each of the 4 ham bands in FQP is color coded - and every single cable has a colored zip tie on each end from ac and dc power, to keyboard/mouse/paddle/usb, and of course all coax cables. This is very tedious at first but the payoff comes later when you have a problem and you have to sort through seemingly miles of cables to get to the one you want for connection, disconnection and replacement.

d) Station build starts with AC cables, then DC cables, controls cables (paddle, USB, amp relay, etc) and finally RF cables. I have a specific cable count for connection to each radio to ensure I haven't overlooked a needed cable - and each station can be different. It does help to have identical radios so the connectors are all identical (remember color coding will keep you from plugging a cable to the wrong radio - in my case, blue has always been 40m, orange 20m, yellow 15m and green 10m). Even the antennas and their mounts have matching color bands.

e) Finally, it's time to install radios; this is another tedious process to ensure each is secure and in the right place for easy access to the operator. I won't detail this further but the old saying, 'measure twice, cut once' applies!

f) TESTING: I start with the RF - does a radio and dc power supply powered with AC mains power drive its antenna(s) properly? Good SWR? Any RF-related operational issues with the radio? Don't forget the receiver - any vehicle noise or whine that raises the Rx noise floor? Then add a keyer or mic, pc and other station accessories and continue testing for functionality hiccups - is everything playing nice in the sandbox together? If not I stop integration on that station until the issue is resolved or mitigated. Switch over to the vehicle/generator power and repeat these tests. Rinse and Repeat as you add a staton, and the next...

Then it's time for:

g) Let's play RFI Jeopardy! This is usually where the RF and antenna compromises show themselves. One station is a relative cinch, but with each added station the problems multiply many times over. Resolving interstation interference is the single hardest obstacle in a multi-station mobile setup to overcome. I have spent easily more than 1000 hours both with my teammates and on my own fighting the RFI. There is no way to model this interaction; it is brute force, empirical trial by error testing. I have blown up a K3 front end and many more have cried for mercy.

After 10 years, this FQP was the first where it was fully acceptable to my ears for contesting. Typical QRM from another station was limited to S0-S3 depending on the offender band(s) and victim band. Often we have nil interaction until a 2nd station starts transmitting as well - weird stuff! There were many early years when it was just u-g-l-y and my brave operator/soldiers left their ears and sanity on the battlefield while making thousands of QSOs.. I have really appreciated my operator's willingness to work as a team by QRX when someone is digging a QRP from the noise, etc.- Human Technology is still superior!

There is *way* too much material in the do's and don'ts to detail here but I recommend the following *wonderful* website to all ops thinking of going mobile of any kind: http://k0bg.com

Alan's website addresses nearly every aspect of mobile ham radio. Even very experienced mobile and expedition ops should examine this site in detail - you will learn a lot..

Performance of a mobile contest station is a mirage - ignore the drive for perfection..

'Mobile performance' is an oxymoron; for example, mobile antennas are compromised and plus/minus a dB or two there's not much to do about it. Radio-

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wise, when having 2-4 stations/antennas colocated it is important to have clean transmitters and robust receivers (Blocking dynamic range). You also need radios that are small, lightweight and easy to operate while bouncing down the road. In my opinion the Elecraft K3 and K3S punch above their weight class in all the categories. They are the only radios I use, or perhaps a KX3 if space is tight. There are other radios and we've used them over the years, but RFI plays such a big factor that I stick with these radios. Instead of maximizing performance, focus on:

Reliability:

If a team has a single mobile station that is *well-tested in advance*, there usually is only a minimal amount of issues. RFI to both radio and pc, and stable power are usually the weak points that should be tested and mitigated in advance.

With each station addition you add an additional layer of reliability issues. The impact is lost time - if one staton has an unresolved issue that is significant, then we must pull over and triage and repair/replace it. But what about the other stations? They will also be impacted greatly each minute of delay before the next county. Experience says that after about 30 minutes in a county you can hear the 'crickets' responding to your CQ's. With a M/3 setup, *two* other stations are impacted while you repair the first. Tick, tock, tick, tock...

I approach station reliability in a couple of different ways. The first is the installation design. I am a fan of simplicity - if you can key the radio directly via USB port then why add a WinKey. A paddle is used with a separate cable to the radio. I do not utilize headphone audio devices like splitters, amps, external equalizers, speakers, etc - in fact we tried and found a defective splitter cable on our 15m station this year. Into the trash it went. Each piece of hardware and software and associated cables adds complexity that can affect reliability. My setups do not use the latest technology; for example, the laptops are older Lenovo Thinkpad T530's - nothing fancy but I have had zero RFI into the stations or into the pc's. And I never network the laptops in such a high RFI environment.

The next step is to test for Reliability; that involves hours of day and night testing in different weather conditions. First is driveway testing; once that is proved very stable then it's on to the all-important road testing. In 2022 AJ and I found an intermittent coax cable - into the trash it went. I now only buy high quality american-made 100% shielded coax. The foreign stuff - at least for this critical reliability need - is not worth the money savings. I imagine our tower climbers out there feel the same.

A final set of tests involve R&R - Repeatability and Reproducibility. Repeatability means a single operator can use their station over and over again - and the testing is just that. Reproducibility means that different operators can sit down at that same station and still produce the same reliable results as the first operator. That brings us to our last section:

Even with Reliability measures in place, equipment (especially mechanical, pc and RFI related) can happen. I have three words that cover it all - Spares, Spares, Spares. I have an entire station of spare equipment, cables, connectors and antennas along for the ride, along with the tools needed for swapping them out. This is often how the US military does. There is time *after the contest* for debugging.

One final comment - each operator is responsible for observing their station and to bring any anomaly to the attention of the station engineer (me). They are also responsible for making quick fixes that can be done in place; for example, adding a ferrite choke to a radio or accessory. I keep an in-cabin operators' toolbox with simple items and tools for quick solutions with no road stops.

Ergonomics:

When operators sit at their station, and sometimes the other stations, for 10 hours/day during FQP, they must be able to use those stations comfortably. Attention must be paid to natural sitting, typing, reading and cw sending body positions. Even a slight head turn that must be maintained for hours will make for a stiff neck and a grumpy operator. Butts must be comfy with no 'saddle sores', and so on. Each part of the body must be examined for the functions that must perform. Even just reaching for a water bottle must not compromise the body's relaxed position. Last year, Red K0LUZ joked, "Can I get

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carpal tunnel syndrome after just 6 hours?". While our team busted out laughing there is an element of truth. The individual operator's needs must be addressed to maximize their comfort and in return they will give their best effort.

Left handed, eyesight, ingress and egress from the vehicle, etc all must be addressed. My teams typically have lap trays with backlit keyboards, paddles placed near armrests, pc monitors at eye level directly in front, etc. - every station is designed, built and then human-tested repeatedly to ensure comfort. over long periods of time. Even the vehicle I chose (Toyota Sequoia) is know for a smooth ride; and I chose cloth seats which I feel breath and support the body better than leather.

In the end, we end up with a safe, functional, reliable and ergonomic ride for a comfortable ride so my VFB operators can focus on the fun of our famous FQP pileups. I encourage you to please consider trying a mobile or expedition effort in next year's FQP - it is a wild ride you will not forget! A single station is *easy* to pull together and if you take a bit of time to pre-test it you should be able to hit the road and have loads of fun. If you have any questions or need some guidance I'd be happy to provide it. Some fun photos are shown below.

1st year - 2014 FQP (4 stations), L-R: NX4N, W4LT, N4KM, N4BP, K0LUZ

10th year - 2024 FQP (3 stations), L-R: NX4N, W4WF, N4KM and NK4O):

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FCG Frequent Contester Awards Program

2024 Approved Contests

Stan Zawrotny, K4SBZ

Your Log Submission is Indispensable			Contest Schedule				Modes						*Revised 12/27/23*
			Start		Finish								
Contest	Type	Pts	Date	Time	Date	Time	C	S	R	F	D	Bands	Duration
June													
Tisza Cup CW Contest	DX	5	1-Jun	1200Z	2-Jun	1159Z	C					160-10	24
Kentucky QSO Party	QSO	7	1-Jun	1300Z	2-Jun	0100Z	C	S	R		D	160-2	12
ARRL Inter. Digital Contest	Maj	10	1-Jun	1800Z	2-Jun	2400Z					D	160-6	30
VK Shires Contest	DX	5	8-Jun	0600Z	9-Jun	0600Z	C	S				160-10	24
Portugal Day Contest	DX	5	8-Jun	1200Z	9-Jun	1159Z	C	S				80-10	24
GACW WWSA CW DX Contest	DX	5	8-Jun	1500Z	9-Jun	1500Z	C					80-10	24
ARRL VHF Contest June	Maj	10	8-Jun	1800Z	10-Jun	0300Z	C	S	R		D	VU	33
All Asian DX Contest, CW	DX	5	15-Jun	0000Z	16-Jun	2400Z	C					160-10	48
Stew Perry Topband Challenge Summer	Maj	10	15-Jun	1500Z	16-Jun	1500Z	C					160	24
West Virginia QSO Party	QSO	7	15-Jun	1600Z	16-Jun	0400Z	C	S	R		D	80-10	12
His Maj. King of Spain Contest, SSB	DX	5	22-Jun	1200Z	23-Jun	1200Z		S				160-10	24
Ukrainian DX DIGI Contest	DX	5	22-Jun	1200Z	23-Jun	1200Z			R		D	80-10	24
July													
RAC Canada Day Contest	DX	5	1-Jul	0000Z	1-Jul	2359Z	C	S				160-2	24
Venezuelan Ind. Day Contest	DX	5	6-Jul	0000Z	6-Jul	2359Z	C	S			P	160-10	24
Marconi Memorial HF Contest	DX	5	6-Jul	1400Z	7-Jul	1400Z	C					160-10	24
IARU HF World Championship	Maj	10	13-Jul	1200Z	14-Jul	1200Z	C	S				160-10	24

NR4DL—A Nautical First for the Florida QSO Party

George Wagner, K5KG

My first hint of doing the Florida QSO Party aboard a ship was when I received a call from Tom Small, K4NMR, who suggested the possibility of operating from a Coast Guard vessel docked in Key West, Florida. Not only would this be a unique opportunity for the FQP, but it would be in **notoriously rare Monroe County**.

Being a retired Coast Guard Radioman, Tom had learned of the USCGC INGHAM, a retired Coast Guard cutter that is privately owned by Bill Verge, a retired Coast Guard officer and a ham (KK4INP). The INGHAM is docked at the Truman Waterfront Park and open to the public as a museum ship. Tom contacted Bill and found him to be in favor of the FQP idea, although he was not acquainted with ham radio contesting. At that juncture, Bill had little idea of what time and effort would be needed to support this activity aboard the INGHAM. Thus began a long journey to the 2024 FQP.

What followed was a coordinated team effort over two weekends by Bill, Tom, George, K5KG (FOC 2122), Dick, K2ZR (FOC 1694), and Bob, WB2AMN.

In addition to the weekend work sessions, extensive antenna work was done by Bob during the intervening weeks during which he tested many of the ship's antennas. Bob ran VSWR measurements and RBN tests on two thirty-five feet verticals and a horizontal Vee mounted high in the rigging. He also tested Bill's G5RV antenna. All these antennas proved to be suitable for the FQP on 40m through 10m.

To maintain our FQP category as an Expedition, we chose to not use the ship's antennas. Rather, we used our own antennas which Bob then installed, along with help from Dick. A 40m OCF (40m to 10m) and 15m & 10m dipoles were raised up into the ship's rigging and 40m & 20m ham sticks were mounted on an upper deck. RBN testing looked good on these antennas, and during the contest we felt that the antennas were performing well. **Keep in mind that our platform was a 327 ft ship's steel hull immersed in sea water! You cannot get a better ground plane.**

About the USCGC INGHAM

In preparation for this article, Bill offered these comments about the INGHAM's history. "It was built as a Coast Guard cutter in 1936 and always served as a Coast Guard cutter. It served under the Navy Department during WWII like the Marines. It was always manned by Coast Guardsmen and a Coast Guard Captain. After the war it was transferred back to the TREASURY DEPARTMENT where it had served since construction." Bill added that over 5,000 coastguardsmen had served on her. The INGHAM's complete history can be found on her web page: https://www.uscgcingham.org/

The INGHAM has a formidable radio shack on board and many HF antennas. Bill chose to not use the INGHAM's radio shack for his ham station, NR4DL. Instead, he equipped the Deck Officer's office as his ham shack. It was in this room where we set up two FQP stations.

The INGHAM's radio call sign is NRDL and has been since she was commissioned eighty-eight years ago on June 6, 1936. Following suit, Bill licensed INGHAM's amateur radio call sign as NR4DL, the call sign we used in the FQP. (Tom had worked the INGHAM as NRDL many times during his days as a Coast Guard Radioman. This was a journey back in time for Tom!)

Two 100w stations were set up using an Elecraft K3 and an Icom 756ProIII. Each station was equipped with a bandpass filter, antenna switches, headset/mic, keyer paddle and a laptop. N1MM+ was used for logging and our two laptops were networked together for the multi-operator setup. As expected, we experienced inter-station interference on 40m & 20m, but we handled that with band and mode changes as needed. Operator duties during the two ten-hour sessions were Tom & Bob on the Icom 746ProIII, and Dick & George on the Elecraft K3. During the contest, we did not experience any equipment or network failures, other than a puzzling shutdown of the Elecraft K3, which was quickly resolved with a reboot.

Results were far from spectacular but given the overall poor band conditions that plagued everyone, we were pleased with 1531 QSOs and 142 multipliers. CW / SSB QSOs were 68% / 32%. Our claimed score landed us in first place in the Expedition, low power category.

We want to give special thanks to Bill, KK4INP for welcoming us aboard the INGHAM. Bill is an active ham, but not a contester, so this was a new experience for him. Also, a special thanks to Bob, WB2AMN who did a terrific job installing and testing the antennas. This was Bob's first contest, but after a brief training session by Tom, Bob was off and running his first pileup, and never looked back! It was clear that Bob had caught the contest bug, HI.

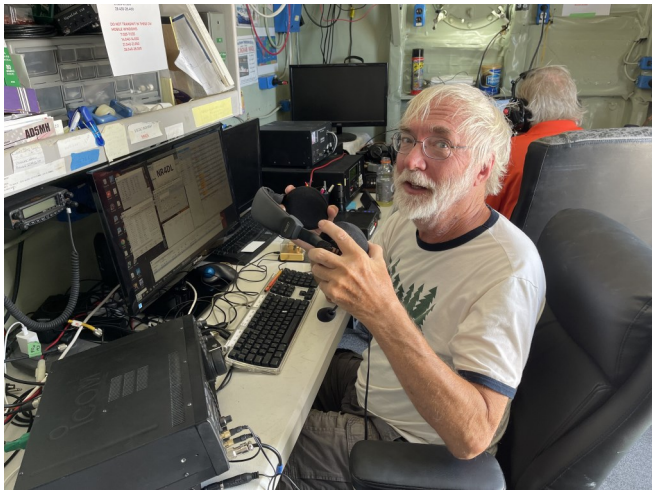
During our set up, we called upon two very skilled individuals for assistance. They are Lu, W4LT and John, K3CT on the N1MM+ developer team. Lu spent a great deal of time getting our two computers networked. Without his help, we may not have pulled this off. John spent an evening helping us with connecting Bill's IC7610 to N1MM+, and we thank him greatly for that assistance. Lastly, thanks to Jack, K1KNQ for the loan of his ham sticks.

Kudos to Dick, K2ZR for joining our team as an operator and arranging a visit from Mandy Miles, a reporter with Keys Express, Key West's local newspaper. Mandy was given her first glimpse of a ham radio event, which she then wrote up and published along with several photos of our activities in the Keys Weekly newspaper.

From K5KG Key West MM0 DL3YM K2ZR.

CGC INGHAM FQP MAY 2024

BOB WB2AMN, TOM K4NMR, DICK K2ZR,BILL KK4INP, GEORGE K5KG - Photo *Mandy Miles/Keys Weekly*



BOB WB2AMN 2024 FQP

TOM K4NMR NR4DL FQP, Photo *Mandy Miles/Keys Weekly*

BOB WB2AMN TOP DICK K2ZR BELOW FQP ANTENNAS

DICK K2ZR, BILL KK4INP

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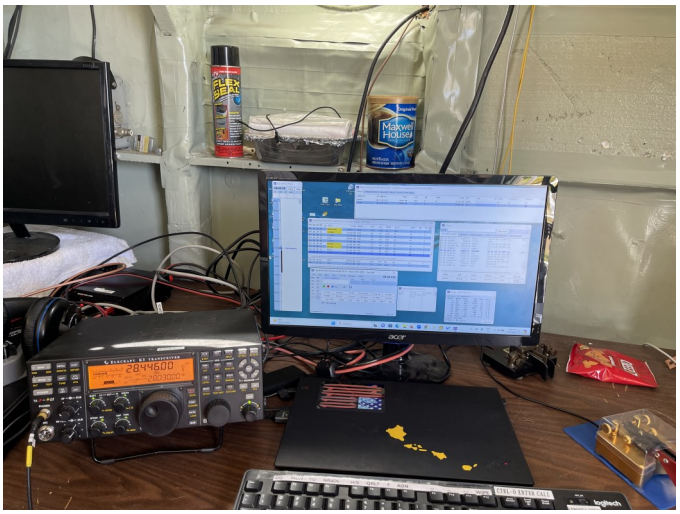


NR4DL STN 2024

TOM K4NMR NR4DL 2024 FQP, Photo *Mandy Miles/Keys Weekly*

CGC INGHAM AT SUNSET

DICK K2ZR BILL KK4INP MANDY

The Land
Touring the K2DM/K4ZDM Super Station

Marty Brown, N4GL

Located nine miles from their home In The Villages, FL, George Briggs K2DM and Karen Erickson K4ZDM have built a little bit of Ham Radio Heaven on 2.4 acres in Wildwood. George, who is president of The Villages Amateur Radio Club (TVARC), recently hosted a group of clubmates at The Land. TVARC members Pete K2PS and Tom K3WT are leading a group interested in forming a club contesting group. The OM, Wayne N4FP, and I were invited to join the discussion. Of course, I imposed on George to let me do this article.

When George and Karen married in 2018, Karen immediately took an interest in Ham Radio. This prompted them to look for a place that could accommodate a superstation. George envisioned a place where they could operate a contest with Yagi's, full-length dipoles, multiple transceivers, and amplifiers that would MAKE CONTACTS and offer some competition in the contesting world. The property they found became "The Land" and has been a ham radio haven for George, Karen, and a few of their contesting friends.

I asked George to describe a contesting setup from the operating positions:

The original setup included two complete stations, each with an Elecraft K3 transceiver and an SPE Expert 1.3K-FA amplifier. Networked HP Ultra-slim desktops running N1MM+ were used for logging. Karen owned (a family joke) a set of high-power bandpass filters that were used on the main station. The original antenna setup was a Bencher Skyhawk yagi (purchased used from NN7CW) at 60 feet on tower #1, a Cushcraft A3 with the 40M add-on at 45 feet on tower #2, and a Cushcraft XM-240 at 60 feet on tower #3. A 160M flat-top dipole at 60 feet and two 80M inverted Vees at 60 feet.

At present there is one complete station with an Elecraft K4 transceiver and an SPE Expert 1.3K-FA amplifier. Same HP computer and N1MM+ for logging. The bandpass filters were sold. The interest in multi-op contesting had waned. Recently, the antenna configuration was changed (thanks to KC1XX). Now the Skyhawk is mounted at 68 feet on the same mast as the XM-240 at 60 feet on tower #1, and a Cushcraft A3 is at 60 feet on tower #3. There is nothing on tower #2. We plan to install a 6M yagi there soon.

K2DM and K4ZDM operating CQWW DX SSB in 2019

Briggs Family Matters

K2DM was first licensed in 1960 under the influence of his older brother Jeff K1ZM/VY2ZM, who is a noted contester and literally wrote the book on 160 meter contesting, DXing on the Edge: The Thrill of 160 Meters. By the time their younger brother Peter, K3ZM, got licensed in the 70s, the Briggs brothers became a force to be reckoned with. For more details on George's accomplishments, check out his ***QRZ*** page.

Karen K4ZDM added her name and callsign to the popular "***Worked All Briggs***" award when she and George married in 2018:

- Brother Jeff K1ZM/VY2ZM and his XYL Miriam N1QV/VY2NA
- Brother Peter K3ZM and his wife Margaret K4ZMA
- Jeff's son Patrick KK6ZM
- George K2DM and his wife Karen K4ZDM

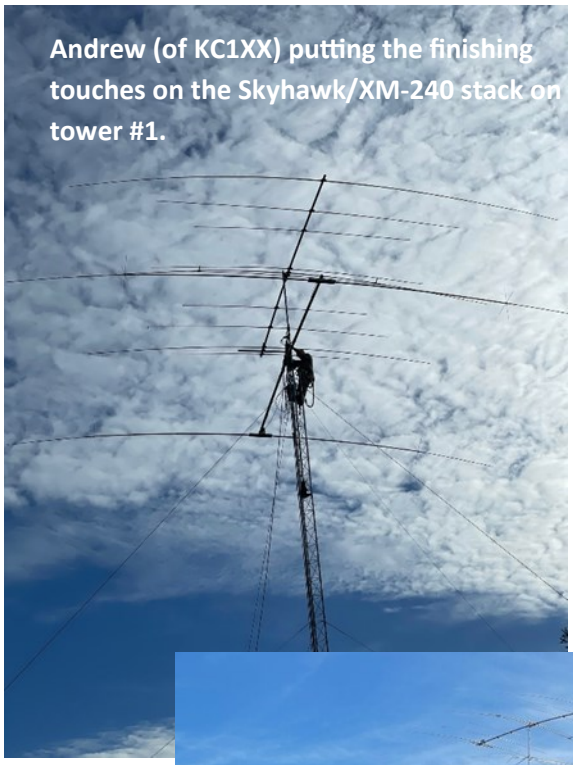
Continued on next

Operators who have spent substantial time at The Land:

- N0SMX
- K3ZGA (SK)
- AL7BA (before he moved back to Dayton)
- ND8L (operates frequently these days)
- W2TR
- W3US

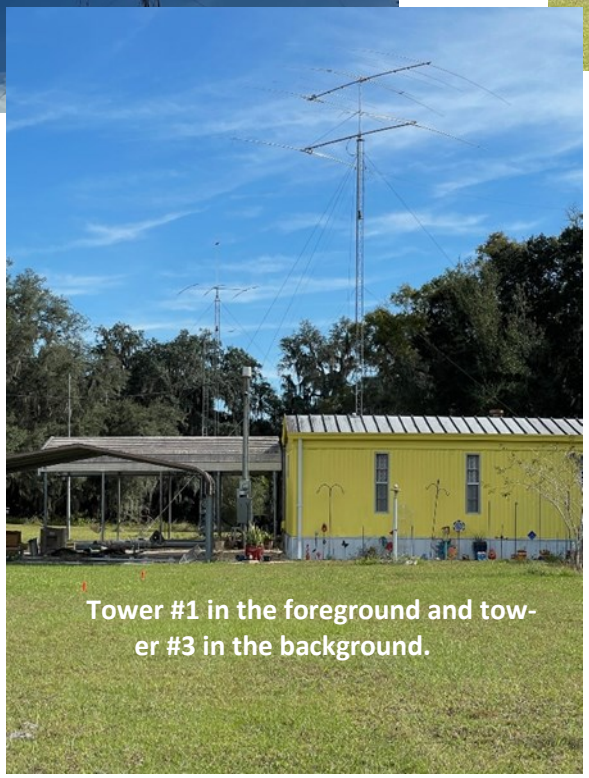
Other guest ops:

- NV1U (SK)
- AD4J
- N4GL
- N4FP
- K1ZM



Andrew (of KC1XX) putting the finishing touches on the Skyhawk/XM-240 stack on tower #1.

Foreground: tower #2, 45 feet, currently empty. Background: tower #3 with a Cushcraft A3 at 60 feet.



Tower #1 in the foreground and tower #3 in the background.

Tower #1, 60 feet, with the Skyhawk and XM-240.

2024 Dayton Recap

Chris Plumblee, W4WF

No place is as wonderful as central Ohio in the springtime for the Dayton/Xenia Hamvention! This is the fourth visit to the Greene County Fairgrounds for the hamfest proper (moved from Hara Arena in 2019, cancelled in 2020 and 2021) and the third year that the contesters' hotel and Contest University moved to the Hope Hotel & Conference Center outside the Wright-Patterson AFB gates. After bad weather in 2019, including torrential rains and some really bad mud at the fairgrounds site, DARA had a few years of good weather, but their streak ended this year with rain overnight on Thursday and for the first few hours on Friday. Anyone who rushed to the hamfest on Friday morning got a soaking and got to enjoy close quarters with everyone else in the sheltered exhibit halls. By Friday afternoon, the weather moved out and for the rest of the weekend the rain stayed away. There was some residual mud to deal with, but nothing worse than usual in the flea market.

The usual complaints about the hamfest abounded…lots of stuff in the flea market has been making the rounds and appears to be the same boatanchors that have been going to Dayton since the 1970's or 1980's, just changing whose table it sits on. The prices on many items didn't seem to be anything to write home about either. One big advantage that the Fairgrounds has over Hara is the food…I heard really good things about the various food truck offerings, and when I was there on Saturday at lunchtime the lines seemed to be very long.

The exhibitors were crowded as usual. I believe Flex had a new radio that they were teasing, and there were the usual crowds at the Elecraft, Yaesu, and Icom booths as well. I was pleased to see a fair amount of traffic at the WRTC 2026 booth, and got a chance to chat with M0DXR for a bit on Saturday. I dropped in at the Antenna Forum on Friday and got to hear the back end of K2AV's talk about the FCP (Folded CounterPoise), a small-footprint alternative to a large radial field over an inverted-L antenna. On Saturday, K1DG moderated the Contest Forum. I enjoyed the presentation from KD4D and W9RE about their trip to VP2V for the 10m contest, where they set the LP M/S world record with 2-element

vertical arrays on the beach and a small inverted V for the other directions. The Contest Antiques Roadshow segment by K2UA was also very enjoyable, and perfectly encapsulated the decades of antiques that might more charitably be called debris that litters many of our shacks. There was a nice Florida connection that went un-remarked upon, as one of the items that was "appraised" was a WB4VVF Accu-Keyer that belonged to K4VX for many years. WB4VVF was from Central Florida, and N4WW has been a devotee of the Accu-Memory since they became available in the 1970's. He upgraded to the Accu-Memory in the 1980's, and that has been his keyer of choice through a number of iterations of transceiver and the advent of computer logging.

The highlight of Dayton is always the time spent with fellow contesters. Dan and I coordinated our travel this year, and we met in Cincinnati and drove up to Dayton together on Thursday night and drove back on Sunday afternoon. I highly recommend the trip if you have the disposable income and time off work. It can be somewhat difficult to get hotel reservations at the Hope in the initial pileup, but often if you check back a few weeks before the hamfest, often there have been cancellations, and you can grab a room with relatively little drama.

If you need help planning your trip to Dayton in 2025, please send an email to the reflector. I can help with advice and guidance, though I'm not a travel agent and don't have any special insight into flights or hotels. There's something for everyone at Dayton…whatever aspect of the hobby you're passionate about, whether it's HF contesting, VHF, POTA, remote operation, emergency communications, or any number of other alternatives, there's a great opportunity to talk shop at Dayton, and I can't recommend it enough.

Inovato Quardra—HamClock

Bert Garcia, N8MM

Photo 1 – HamClock display.

The Inovato Quadra is a tiny computer that runs the HamClock software on your monitor or TV. It displays a world map with day/night shading, DX spots, sunspot numbers, clock, and numerous other items of ham radio interest. The Quadra measures about 4" x 4" x 3/4". If you order the bundle for $59 plus shipping (https://inovato.com), you get everything you need to run the HamClock – Quadra, stand, cooling fan, wireless mini keyboard with touchpad, 4-port USB hub, HDMI cable, USB wall wart, and USB power cable. The Quadra has built-in wifi, so you don't need the optional Bluetooth/wifi dongle. If you use your own USB keyboard and mouse, you can save $10 by eliminating the mini keyboard. Your monitor or TV should display 1080p or higher resolution.

Photo 2 – Inovato bundle.

Photo 3 – Front view.

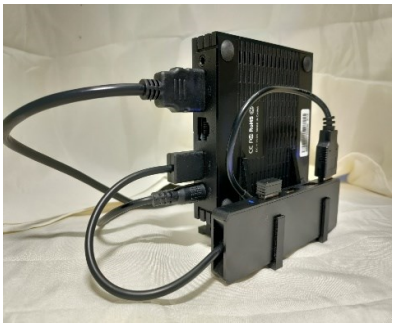


Photo 4 – Rear view.

The built-in setup routine is quick and easy, but from there on you will need to watch a lot of YouTube videos to gain full advantage of all the features. It's not a Geochron, but it's pretty neat!

Field Day 2024

A.J. Stockton, NK4O

What a fantastic turnout for the Florida QSO party! It's likely to end up as one of the top three in terms of participation. So, what's the next step? Preparation to grow the 2025 FQP begins now for those interested.

One of the best ways to introduce someone to contesting is through Field Day! I know some may argue that Field Day is an operating event, not a contest. However, it's where many hams gain firsthand experience and develop a passion for it.

I still recall my days as a Novice, participating in Field Day with the Mid-Mizzou ham club under the leadership of Tom Hammond (sk) N0SS. That club was incredibly organized! It was always a competition among club members to secure slots on the schedule and rotate between CW or SSB stations. As Novices, we were usually assigned to the band that wasn't in use, often with poor propagation conditions. All we could do was hope for a chance to run the dupe sheet if someone didn't show up for the CW/SSB stations. The MAIN CW tent boasted a portable tower and a beam, contrasting with our simple dipole. Oh, the memories! I just couldn't wait to upgrade my license to fully participate.

Fast forward to a few years ago, when I moved my daughter to DC during Field Day weekend. I discovered that the Pentagon ARC was operating in the parking lot at Reagan Airport. They didn't have a CW operator, but they welcomed me to join. There were some new hams present, attracted by the potential of making contacts with CW despite challenging band conditions.

The following year, a friend who had also become a new ham, moved to Lake City and joined a club. He invited me to help at their Field Day event as they lacked a CW operator. It proved to be both educational and enjoyable. Interestingly, it caught the attention of an FT8 operator who later began learning CW. The next year, I operated with that contest club from a different location for Field Day, and that FT8 operator was now proficient in CW, and running!

So, where am I going with this? If you're able, consider attending your local club's next meeting and inquire about their plans for Field Day! You can help with the SSB, FT8, and/or CW stations. You can mentor potential future contesters and demonstrate the ropes.

How many future FQP participants and potentially new FCG members could be attending this year's Field Day events? The only way to find out is by us showing up.

Editor's Note: Field Day is an excellent opportunity for your group to reach within your community and spread the word about Amateur Radio. For complete details on Field Day you can download the ARRL 2024 Field Day Packet.

Summer Hamfests

06/22/2024—Dade City Lodge Pre-Field Day Hamfest, Dade City FL

07/26/2024 - 07/27/2024—Milton Ham Fest, Milton, FL

08/17,2024—08/18/2024 Huntsville Hamfest 2024, Huntsville AL

08/24/2024—TarcFest, Tampa FL

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The Florida Contest Group

"I love contesting. There is something about the camaraderie, discipline and knowledge contesting demands that fits me; it doesn't fit everyone . . . but it sure fits me." – Jim White, K4OJ (SK)

The Florida Contest Group (FCG), an ARRL affiliated club, is Florida's amateur radio contest club. Its members share a common interest in the sport of amateur radio contesting. FCG members have a wide range of contesting experience, from beginners to World Champions. They willingly share their knowledge and skills to promote ham radio contesting in Florida. Members, who number in excess of 400, range from Jacksonville to South Florida. FCG has a "Panhandle" division for those contesters living in the Florida Panhandle who are outside the ARRL's 250 mile "club circle". Additionally, the FCG has members in states outside of Florida and in several DXCC Entities.

The Florida Contest Group supports and encourages all types of contesting, from HF to light, all modes, power classes and skill levels.

FCG Shirts

If you would like to purchase an FCG shirt, you may contact Joyce Ann at Stitchin' Waves in Sarasota. Joyce Ann has both Orange and White FCG shirts and FCG hats if you are interested. She embroiders the FCG Shirts with the FCG Logo and First Names and Call Signs. Hats are embroidered with the Call Sign.

Stitchin' Waves
Joyce Ann Wright
ja@stitchinwaves.com

(Phone orders not accepted)

To place an order, send an email to Joyce Ann, and provide the following information:

- Identify yourself as an FCG member
- First and Last Name
- Call Sign
- Mailing Address (not a PO Box)
- Size of shirt
- Color: Orange or White