

K9YA Telegraph

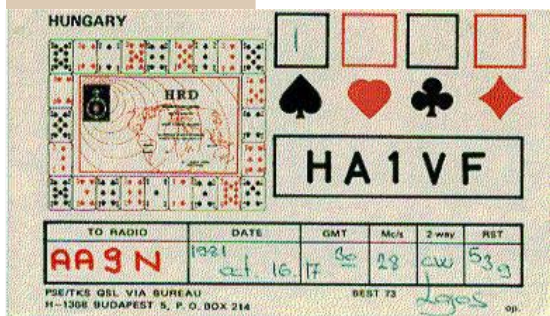
Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

Volume 1, Issue 9, September 2004

Of Hungarian Castles, Rummy in the Ether, Other Oddities and Collectibles

Or, An Evening Spent Riffling Through Old QSLs

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Series.” Never heard of it? Well, it and other, obscure awards once graced QSL cards, especially those from the old Soviet bloc of nations.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO . . . ?

The Hungarian Castle Series: collect 12 different coupons (a section of the QSL card was meant to be clipped and included with the application) for the Bronze Diploma, 24 coupons for the Silver Diploma and 36 coupons for the Gold Diploma.

The Hungarian Rummy Diploma: “Game of Rummy in the Ether.” For collecting a variety of playing cards and hands pictured on QSL cards, the bronze, silver and gold diplomas may be earned.

But it wasn’t just awards, in the finest spirit of Amateur Radio as international goodwill ambassador, some cards simply expressed the flavor of their countries. To wit.

HUNGRY?

Speaking of Hungary, this card from Enrique, EA5NL, of Valencia, Spain should pique your hunger. It pictures a platter of paella, a tossed salad and a flacon of wine. Should you be sufficiently industrious,

and can read Spanish, the recipe for the tasty viands are right on the QSL. The card, printed by the national olive oil combine, was “pressed” into service for Ham Radio purposes.

TOPICALS, ANYONE?

Philatelists are familiar with the hobby specialty of collecting topical, that is, postage stamps picturing a specific subject: flowers, locomotives, dogs, authors, even Amateur Radio.

*“Whatever
happened to all
those old
computer punch
cards?”*

There are QSL topical I especially enjoy receiving — aircraft and naval vessels. Here’s a card from Ian, G3MNS, a member of the Royal Air Force Amateur Radio Society with a beautifully detailed drawing of a WW2 Lancaster bomber. For lovers of both vintage aircraft and literature, the card

from Pat, F5DQU, tenders homage to French author and pilot, Antoine De Saint-Exupery (*The Little Prince*) by depicting the elegant biplane he flew while carrying the mail in South America and described in his book, *Courrier Sud (Southern Mail)*.

/MM

Topical within a topical: ships pictured on cards received from /MM QSOs. Case in point; Eugen, UR3IDD/MM, in the Gulf of Guinea, aboard the “Socol.” Another? Kuni, JA1JDX/MM, QTH, English Channel, vessel unnamed.

RECYCLING

The answer to the unasked question, “Whatever happened to all those old computer punch cards?”

CONTINUED - SEE RUMMY ON PAGE 9

CW Touch Keyer

Sumner Eagerman, WA1JOS



Photo by
Cassie Jean Eagerman

Sumner Eagerman
WA1JOS

I've been an amateur radio operator for about 38 years, and through the years I've worked CW, SSB and tinkered in a few other modes as well. I can't remember all the circuits and gadgets I've built that enhanced my enthusiasm for the hobby. Some were successful, while others not so exciting. But beyond all, I always wanted the perfect

paddle.

Like most of us baby boomers, my first introduction to sending code was via an old straight key. In fact, that was the only method, at the time, the FCC would accept when taking the exam in the FCC office. I moved on to the Vibroplex designed paddles and eventually into an electronic keyer using a Bencher paddle. I've enjoyed the Bencher paddle for almost 20 years, but never found it the ideal paddle for me. I found myself adjusting the contact gaps closer and closer to reduce paddle travel and clicking noise, to a point where the paddle was falsing. It was time to move on to something new.

Along came the Heathkit SA 5010 which offered a touch paddle with a complete electronic keyer. To me it seemed ideal. No moving paddles and no clicking sounds. The Heathkit unit worked well but I found two very disturbing flaws that should have been remedied during the initial design.

First, the paddles were made to be removable for easy storage and when installed, slip into the unit via a metal-to-metal pressure fit design. I found the pressure fit over time became loose due to the metal clip

expanding which allowed the paddles to move slightly from side to side.

Secondly, if left for a long period of time, the metal contacts oxidized and required cleaning. Ultimately, this was not my ideal paddle.

Over the years I saw and read about many new paddle designs ranging into the hundreds of dollars, but never felt inclined to spend my hard earned money on another paddle that just wasn't perfect for me.

Then, one day surfing the Internet, I stumbled upon a simple circuit design for a touch paddle. It sparked my interest and I had to build it. Twenty dollars, and a few weeks later, I had a touch keyer. Well, sort of; its performance, at most, was moderate. I think I built at least ten different touch paddle designs, found on

the Web or in Ham magazines during the years that followed. Although a few worked fairly well, I never could get past the need for, or look of, a serpentine printed circuit board as a paddle.

My station equipment was always state-of-the-art and the look of my paddle had to match. This led me in one

direction — design and build my own touch paddle that was truly touch (a light touch), had absolutely no movement, looked modern and included a basic electronic keyer.

Without going into great detail, I approached my touch keyer design differently than others posted on the Web or found in magazines.

The first obstacle was to find a way to have a functional paddle that was non-serpentine or required any special gadget. The paddle had to be clean and professional looking, yet highly functional. After month or two of designing and redesigning I found my solution. Another month passed refining the touch paddle design and improving on its performance until I could sit back and say, "This is it. It works flawlessly."

*"... selected a
CW-active ham to
run beta tests..."*



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CONTINUED - SEE TOUCH KEYS ON PAGE 9

Over and Out in a Blaze of Glory

Dick Fiddles While His Rig Burns

Dick Sylvan, W9CBT

It was 1948, I was 17-years-old, had my ham license for about a year, been working CW and decided it was time to get on the air with AM phone. Not having anything to work that mode, I shopped around to find something affordable to build. I didn't have much money, but I did find a 10-meter AM phone kit advertised in QST magazine for \$15.00. I sent in my money and a couple of weeks later it arrived. It was just a pile of parts and was what I would call an "open face" design — just a chassis, no cabinet — so most everything was out in the open. I had to wind my own air-wound coils. I thought it looked like a neat little rig with its loctal-type tubes: 7N7 Crystal oscillator and doubler, 7C5 in the final, modulated by a 7C5 and, of course, was crystal-controlled. It was so inexpensively made, it used fiberboard tubes that slipped over the tuning capacitors as knobs. Power was from a selenium rectifier power supply; which was a real inexpensive way to go. That was the whole works.

I completed building the transmitter kit and immediately put it on the air. Power output was around 10 watts, but in 1948 wave propagation on 10-meters was terrific. I had a National NC-173 receiver to pair with the little kit. I hooked a 10-meter halfwave dipole to the rig and immediately made some phone contacts on the west coast. I was thrilled to join the "big guns" operating on phone and made many contacts all over the U.S. with that rig. I eventually worked about 20 countries on phone until one fateful day.

In QSO with a west coast station, happily chatting away, when, POP! — a capacitor let go with a loud bang and some smoke. I carried on: when you're 17-years-old you don't worry too much about things like that. After a couple of minutes flames crept out from openings in the chassis. I then realized the QSO could not go on much longer. The rig was still operating

though — amazing! The flames and smoke increased to where I realized I better terminate the QSO or burn the house down. I calmly said, "Sorry OM, but the rig is on fire and I have to get the thing out of the house immediately!" I signed off, yanked the AC plug, disconnected the antenna, carefully grabbed the burning rig with a couple of rags and ran through the house with it blazing away. My mother saw me running through the house with the blazing rig and was terror-stricken. I ran out of the house, got the garden hose and soaked the fiery chassis with water.

*"Sorry OM, but
the rig is on fire..."*

After it cooled down, I examined the remains and declared it a total loss. I decided it was safer to stay on CW. I got a huge kick out the whole thing and the incident still amuses me every time I think about it. After that experience, I decided to stay away from selenium AC/DC power supplies. I think I was licensed for around 20 years before I went back to operating phone. One thing for sure, no one could say it wasn't a "hot" rig. ■

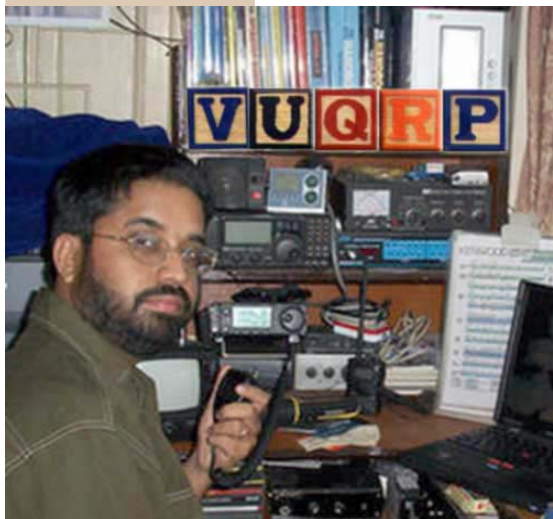


Artist's Rendering



VUQRP Group

Jyoti P. Chakravartty, VU3BG



*Jyoti P. Chakravartty
VU3BG*

VUQRP is group of Ham Radio enthusiasts from the Indian subcontinent and DX countries who strive to promote QRP and other Ham Radio activities. Since its inception on May 6, 2004, the VUQRP group has grown to 70 members worldwide.

VUQRP does not have, nor will have, any officers, rather a core

body working to achieve our collective vision. The group was formed, by me, after communications with OM, Rahul, VU3WJM and OM, Sandeep, VU2MUE. None of us wanted to simply form “another org,” rather, to do something practical and constructive to promote Ham Radio activities in India.

The group aims to make available the following equipment within 18 months.

1. SB20 HF high-performance dual-bander
2. Low cost SSB HF rig using TA7358 IC
3. Frequency counter with antenna analyzer
4. Power supply
5. Digital interface
6. Digital RF power meter
7. Morse reader

VU3BG and VU3WJM are working toward getting the first batch ready; while VU3WJM heads kit-building R&D and VU3BGI looks after the administrative side of VUQRP.

In India there are more than 14,000 Ham Radio operators; very few have access to, or can afford commercial equipment; many have no equipment at all. VUQRP aims to produce essential Ham Radio

equipment at very affordable prices from locally procured components.

VUQRP GROUP KIT

We are in the process of getting a VUQRP kit together and making it available to members, most likely including the following items:

1. VUQRP log book
2. Indian Amateur Radio Rule Book
3. VUQRP logo sticker
4. VUQRP logo pin/badge.
5. VUQRP group certificate.
6. VUQRP QSL card

Please be advised these materials will be available to all who join the group. A small contribution or price has been decided which will be announced at a later date. We welcome your suggestions and comments.

For now, we have decided there will be no fixed, paid subscription, however, an annual contribution would be appreciated toward project R&D and toward the group's administrative expenses.

VUQRP is a non-profit group and will plough back any income, if generated, toward the VUQRP kits' R&D.

VUQRP JOURNAL

In future, we propose to publish a bi-annual VUQRP journal in PDF.

DXPEDITION/HAM HOLIDAY

VUQRP plans to organize an annual meeting of like-minded hams from around India at a holiday spot. This is not another Hamfest, but a relaxed holiday with a Ham Radio theme. Perhaps a special kit building project, and operations from the venue with a special call sign. Suggestions?

VUQRP WEB SITE

We look forward to launching our own Web site.



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A QSO With CRØOK

Rod Newkirk, W9BRD/VA3ZBB

“Roger Touhy, come out with your hands up!” These words over a roaring loudspeaker startled my grandmother in her north side apartment in the wee hours of a 1940s morning. The notorious escaped gangster was put back in the slammer but he wasn’t talking. Newsmen clamored for interviews but Roger remained silent and sullen. Chicago Tribune editor George Schreiber, W9YIX, assigned reporter Weldon Whisler, W9GAS, the task of getting some red hot copy. They remembered something about Touhy’s past. W9GAS was no CW hotshot but he knew enough landwire Morse to whistle “73 OM” outside the hoodlum’s jail cell. He scored a resounding scoop. Roger Touhy was a former telegrapher. He was ready to talk to someone, but needed a friendly “K.” ■

In 2002 Rod joined the pantheon of legendary Hams when he was inducted into *CQ Amateur Radio* magazine’s CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame. The Amateur Radio Hall of Fame honors those, Amateurs and non-Amateurs, who have “significantly affected the course of Amateur Radio” and Hams whose professional activities “had a significant impact on their professions or on world affairs.”

The original citation read: Newkirk, Rod, W9BRD/VA3ZBB: *QST* ‘How’s DX’ editor, 1948-78; credited with first use of term “Elmer” for a Ham who helps others.

According to the ARRL’s Senior News Editor Rick Lindquist, N1RL: “The term ‘Elmer’—meaning someone who provides personal guidance and assistance to would-be Hams — first appeared in *QST* in a March 1971 ‘How’s DX’ column by Rod Newkirk, W9BRD (now also VA3ZBB). Newkirk called them ‘the unsung fathers of Amateur Radio.’ While he probably was not trying to coin a term at the time, here’s how Newkirk introduced ‘Elmer’ in his column and, as it turned out, to the rest of the Amateur Radio world:

‘Too frequently one hears a sad story in this little nutshell: ‘Oh, I almost got a ticket, too, but Elmer, W9XYZ, moved away and I kind of lost interest.’” Newkirk went on to say, “We need those Elmers. All the Elmers, including the Ham who took the most time and trouble to give you a push toward your license, are the birds who keep this great game young and fresh.”



Rod Newkirk,
W9BRD, and XYL,
Betty, VE3ZBB

MORSE TIPS & QUIPS



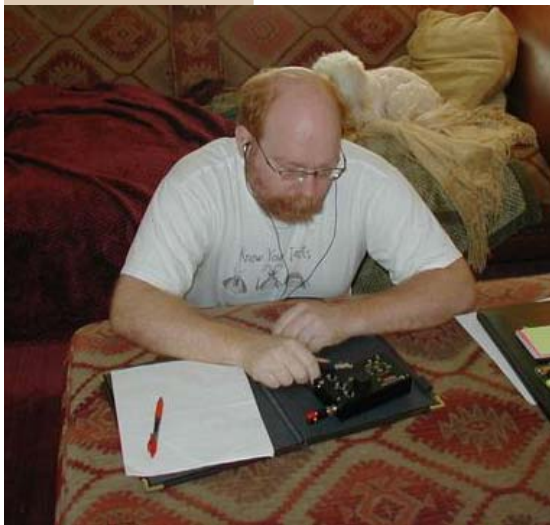
"IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START
LEARNING THE MORSE CODE!"



Rod Newkirk's 1948 QSL Card

First QSO

David Toepfer, KB3IPE



David Toepfer,
KB3IPE

The story of my first QSO was recently brought back to life because of a letter I decided to write my elmer. Not long ago, I re-joined the ranks of active Amateur Radio operators, made what was my second QSO after 20 years and wanted to thank him. So, I wrote this and sent it to him on 26 July 2004 via snail mail:

Tony,

You may not remember me. My name is David Toepfer. Around 1984 I met you at STARS in Hamburg, New York. You helped me make my first Novice contact at your shack on your Kenwood 599 twins. I was KA2TUE at the time. I never was able to scrounge up enough money, as a kid, for a rig of my own, so I never got another contact in my log book. But, such is life. Shame, I lost all of the info for that one contact I did make.

I have recently re-licensed, first as a Tech and then as a General, I'm now KB3IPE. I have been mostly interested in QRP, and have been able to finally get a rig of my own, an Elecraft KX-1 which I built myself from a kit and just made my second QSO on. I have been sticking with CW which I can send plenty fast enough. I am still working on head-copy faster than 8-wpm, but I'll get there. If I can some day copy 30-wpm that would be just a fine goal for me.

I was thinking to myself, recently, as I was reading some e-mail lists, how many people have fond memories of their elmers. At first I thought, what a shame, I did

not have one, but then I realized, you are my elmer. I just wanted to thank you for helping me as a Novice. Thank you for fostering a spark of interest in Ham Radio that has stayed with me to this day.

In the time in between, I grew up; went to college — three times — long story; and work as an operations engineer at an Internet service provider here in Maryland. I hope all is well with you in your life. Hope to hear you on the air.

73,

David, KB3IPE

I was saddened to read a letter from the president of STARS who helped me find Tony in the first place:

Subject: [STARS] Silent Key

I regret to inform you of the passing of WA2ZFU, Tony, on 30 July 2004, at his home in Michigan.

“It would have been nice to talk to Tony again.”

It would have been nice to talk to Tony again. Perhaps he could have told me who my first lost QSO was with. Perhaps I could have had a QSO

with Tony on the air, or even with my first contact again. That would have been nice, but, of course, what would have been best is to have had the chance to get to know Tony again. Even just a bit. I am sure he had friends. Too bad I was not able to be one of them again. Even just for a little while. ■

The K9YA Telegraph invites you to submit your Ham Radio story. What events led you to our service? What path did you follow to earn your license; was it bumpy or smooth? Tell us about your first QSO, whether a half century ago, or last week; was it an exercise in blood, sweat and tears or a romp in the ether. Are you a retread? If so, what brought you back into the fold?

Contact us at k9ya@qsl.net.



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Your Shack

Scott McMullen, NJØE/P

SNAPSHOT: NJØE, PORTABLE QRPp

QTH: Guadalupe Mountains National Park, near the border between Texas and New Mexico.

QTR: January, 2004.

QRV: 40-meter Small Wonder Labs QRPp Rockmite, mounted in Altoids tin, perched on knee. Radio powered by 12V gel cell. RF fed to 40-meter center-fed zepp using 300 ohm TV twinlead and matched with Emtech ZM-1 antenna tuner. Keyer paddle is Whiterook MK-44.

The Rockmite generates only about 500 milliwatts, but that's good enough for QSOs to Arizona and Oregon on 40-meters. CW is without peer for low power, battery powered, portable operation from wilderness locations.

My father was a telegrapher aboard the U.S.S. Alaska CB-1 during the second world war. He helped me learn the radiotelegraph code for my Novice license; the radiotelegraph code remains my favorite mode.

Novice call, WN5RMQ, was issued to me in 1976. In 1978 I upgraded to Amateur Extra Class. First rig was homebrew, utilized a 6146 oscillator, ran about 18 watts input and was paired with a Heathkit Mohawk receiver.

My current station consists of a Ten-Tec Omni VI and various QRP CW kits. For CW sending I use a pair of Bencher paddles or an old Radio Shack straight key.

QRP GEAR COMPLIMENT AT NJØE

- Pixie 2 for 80-meters
- Small Wonder Labs SW40+ for 40-meters

- Small Wonder Labs Rockmite for 40-meters
- Ten-Tec T-KIT 1056 DC Receiver for 40-meters
- Ten-Tec T-KIT 1330 for 30-meters
- Ten-Tec T-KIT 1320 for 20-meters
- Small Wonder Labs Rockmite for 20-meters

I use a Tick3 electronic keyer from Embedded Research, a VE3DNL marker generator from the Fort Smith QRP Group and an Emtech ZM-2 antenna tuner.

These are all relatively inexpensive units I assembled from kits. If you haven't experienced the joy of making QSOs using simple equipment you have assembled yourself, then you owe it to yourself to experience one of the unique pleasures of Amateur Radio.

MEMBERSHIPS

- ARRL Life Member
- Austin QRP Club
- Adventure Radio Society - #1426
- The American QRP Club
- 10-X International Net - #15602
- QRP-L #2495

AWARDS/CERTIFICATES

- Rag Chewers' Club
- Worked All States
- Worked All Continents
- ARRL Certificate of Code Proficiency - 20-wpm



*Scott McMullen,
NJØE/P/QRPp*

The Rag Chewers' Club Award

Available After September 1, 2004



The Society for the Preservation of Amateur Radio (SPAR) is pleased to offer the ever popular Rag Chewers' Club award. This prestigious award is available to all Amateur Radio Operators who submit evidence of having "chewed the rag" using amateur radio.

HISTORY

The Rag Chewers' Club award was offered by the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) for many years. It was initially free of charge and very popular, especially for new Hams. Later the ARRL began charging for the award and

its popularity waned. Finally, in 2004, the ARRL decided to discontinue the award due to lack of interest. In view of the history and goodwill embodied in this most noble of Ham Radio activities, rag chewing, SPAR has reactivated this unique and illustrious award.

BASIS

One of the most popular Ham activities is simply chatting about nothing in particular. In other words, chewing the fat, or in Ham jargon, "rag chewing." Based on this popular activity, it seems only right that rag chewing should be acknowledged as a truly Ham activity. For anyone not familiar with the term, rag chewing isn't just contacting someone. It involves actually conversing, talking and listening for more than a few minutes. Have you ever had a Ham QSO and later wrote the time down in the logbook and wondered "Where did the time go?" Congratulations, you are a bona fide "Rag Chewer!"

To qualify for the Rag Chewers' Club award, you need to submit a report of having had a two-way QSO (not a net) using amateur radio that lasted at least 30 minutes. RCC members are encouraged to invite new Hams of any age or license class to apply for the award. Of course, all the rules and regulations pertaining to the Amateur Radio Service must be followed during any QSO.

OFFICIAL RULES

1. Submit the report of a QSO that lasted at least 30 minutes. Any mode, band is eligible.
2. The awards are numbered in the order issued.
3. The award may carry an endorsement by operating mode for Phone, CW and Digital.
 - Phone (Any voice mode: AM, FM, SSB)
 - CW
 - Digital (Any digital mode: RTTY, PSK31, MFSK, SSTV, Hellschrieber, etc.)
4. Details of the report must include
 - Station contacted
 - Date, time and length of QSO
 - Frequency and mode of QSO
5. Endorsement for additional modes should be requested by submitting a new application. The certificate number will not change, only the listed endorsements will be updated on the new certificate.
6. Recipients of the RCC Award will be listed on the SPAR Web site.

An online application form can be found at the award application Web page. Award applications may also be submitted by email to [awards@spar-hams.org].



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CONTINUED - SEE RCC ON PAGE 9

With the paddles designed, I moved on to selecting a simple, inexpensive keyer chip to complete the touch paddle/keyer project. I chose the Jackson Harbor Press PK3 chip because of its small size, low cost and ease of use. Joining my new paddle design to the keyer chip produced a simple, yet highly effective, turnkey, touch paddle keyer.

I used my crude looking paddle/keyer design on air, for a number of months before I decided it was time to make it look as professional and state-of-the-art as the rest of my station. I chose a black plastic case and gold-plated paddles. Together they produce a crisp, clean and impressive look.

Comments, from on-air contacts, about my new keyer were positive and, in many cases, the contact wanted to know more about building one or where they could buy one.

Before going any further, I built two prototypes and selected a CW-active Ham to run beta tests of the product against some highly acclaimed paddles. The result was exceedingly positive with a few suggestions toward refining the packaging.

As for the electronics and the touch paddle aspect of the design, it met or exceeded the smooth performance, response and non-falsing of any other known and tested, quality paddles.

So, after months of pcb layout, packaging styles and refinements, I've reached a point where I can comfortably say I've produced my ideal paddle/keyer. It meets all my needs as an average CW operator.

The decision to market the product is purely my own. Feedback from contacts and seeing the growth and interest in Ham magazines for newer paddle designs was a strong indication that this touch paddle keyer would be something Hams, like myself, might enjoy building and using.

As I write this article, I'm working on a paddle-only design that can be used for portable or mobile applications, and is less than one-quarter the present size.

Full product details can be found at www.cwtouchkeyer.com

They were recycled into QSLs, of course. I have the proof right here on my desk from Bob, SP8ECV. His card niftily converts an unpunched punch card into a Ham Radio memento.

Rich, SP5RH, extends the punch card concept to its logical conclusion, delineating his call by actually punching out the chads. No "hanging chads" in sight.

SK

Just about the only QSL cards I don't enjoy receiving are those returned by an overseas bureau and stamped, "Silent Key." What could be a more poignant reminder of our own mortality? On the other hand, I was granted the fleeting opportunity to clasp hands with a new friend, sharing a common interest and language, across a vast distance. ■

The award document suitable for printing and framing in the form of an Adobe PDF file will be sent as an attachment via return e-mail. In the case that e-mail attachments are not acceptable, please make a request with the application and other arrangements will be made if feasible.

Real Hams chew rags in all modes! ■

K9YA Code Practice Nets

Fast Net

Every first Wednesday of the month, 7.137 MHz (+/- QRM) at 7:00 P.M. (0000 Z, Thursday). Check in, exchange FISTS numbers or hang around for a chat. The Fast Net is called at 20+ wpm.

Slow Net

Every 2nd, 3rd and 4th Wednesday of the month, 7.137 MHz (+/- QRM) at 7:00 P.M. (0000 Z, Thursday). Check in, exchange FISTS numbers or hang around for a chat. The Slow Net is called at 10-wpm, but speed will be adjusted to that of the slowest operator.

Tell your friends about the

K9YA Telegraph

<http://www.qsl.net/k9ya>