

# K9YA Telegraph



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of the YAGi

A HAMMY HOLIDAY STORY  
BY J. MURRAY

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

# K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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## 13 Colonies Special Event

Celebrate Independence Day on the Air

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

With winter's frigid furies playing just outside the shack window, it's time to recall the balmy days of July. Specifically, those balmy days around America's Independence Day—the Fourth of July and the annual 13 Colonies special event. A

ham radio happening that offers some of the best summertime ham radio fun and hosts some of the most courteous operators on our bands.

The 13 Colonies special event was inaugurated 2009 and spans Independence Week (dates vary year-to-year). I first participated in 2010 and worked a grand total of one station. Participating every year since, my worked number steadily increased to this year and my first clean sweep—all 13 colonies and bonus station, WM3PEN. Unfortunately, I did not hear U.K. bonus station GB13COL located in Durham, England, but there's always next year and the possibility of more compliant propagation.

July 5, with the event nearing its close, I needed Virginia and New York for a clean sweep. Thanks to CW Fun (<http://www.cwfun.org/funspots/us13/frames.html>), I saw their ops were spotted working the 20-meter phone band. Though normally a very devoted brass pounder, this was no time to remain a purist. I spun the dial into the 20-meter phone sub-band, hesitantly took microphone in hand, quickly reacquainted myself with the FT-1000MP's SSB controls, ginned up my "big boy" voice and pressed the PTT. I scored the colonies needed and proved that not all celebratory Independence Day fireworks are dazzling, noisy affairs experienced in parks and town squares.

### The 13 Colonies Story

Ken Villon, KU2US, originator and ongoing spark behind the 13 Colonies special event kindly shared the event's story with the *K9YA Telegraph*.

*In 2008 I realized that there were not many special events on the air lasting over one day, except the Route 66 and ARRL Sweepstakes, which I enjoyed working very much! I liked the challenge and the thrill of the hunt. I decided that I would love to start an event based on those principles, but what? when? and how! The event had to be something everyone could relate to, where all could participate. Then it hit me! "13 Colonies." An event tailor-made for the 4th of July! It all fell into place! A patriotic theme, held within a patriotic holiday week, pertaining to our Independence, multiple stations (states), the thrill of the hunt and, best of all, operators were celebrating! It could not have been timed any better!*

*We started with one OP from each state in 2009, and did over 12,000 QSOs in a four-day period, which shocked me! I designed a certificate and offered it with only one contact with a Colony state to qualify. One thing I think is quite unique, is that I made sure that every year's certificate had a Revolutionary War-era theme, but DIFFERENT, not boring, but attractive. As of this writing, we have morphed into a huge worldwide*

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# On Being W9BRD's Daughter

*Ham Tales and Treasures*

**Amanda Newkirk, ex-WN9PMC**



Rod and Amanda Newkirk

For as long as I can remember, my father's WWII army jacket hung in a hallowed place in his ham radio shack. In one of its front pockets rested two ancient tickets, circa 1940s, to a game at the old Chicago Stadium. The jacket had never been covered in plastic, but was still pristine: immaculate, pressed, looking like he'd only recently taken it off and casually put it on its hanger after another day in the Signal Corps in

the Philippines; or more likely, looking exactly as it had that day in 1945 when, with what must have been unimaginable relief, he was able to hang it up forever.

## Signal Corps

Reticent for many years about his experience as a Signal Corps staff sergeant in World War II, he began to open up about it when I grew a little older. I never knew what would prompt him to share such potent, personal and closely guarded memories with his daughter, but these conversations were always precious to me. I would find myself holding my breath, soaking in every word. It might be late on a Christmas night when my partner Karen and I would find ourselves alone with him at the kitchen table over a little wine or coffee, the bacchanalia being over and the old townhouse dreaming in the hush. Or yet perhaps, a rainy Sunday night when I might just catch him, pensive, coming up the basement stairway from his shack lost in thought: seeing me, he would brighten and the coffee and conversation would flow. I will never forget those times.

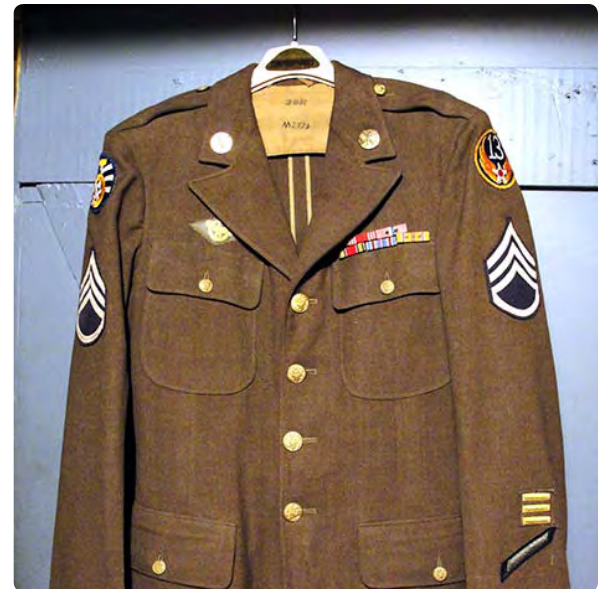
One late Christmas Eve night in the early 1980s or so my father fell to musing, hunching over his coffee cup on the beat-up but friendly old kitchen table. His eyes half shut and squinting, he seemed to be conjuring up ghosts from his experience in World

War II as he talked. What he talked about was what it was like to be headed home on a transport from overseas, getting nearer and nearer to the port of San Francisco after so much time away—and also, to be going home when so many others had not made it back. Enrapt, we listened as he told us of his feelings when the Golden Gate bridge was spotted at last by the returning men, and he talked about what he felt when he sailed under that great bridge and back home to America once again. I can remember the look in his eyes as he talked, trying to illustrate the event with his hands, steadying his emotions with occasional pulls on his trusty pipe—companion of many adventures. I look at that pipe, stilled now. How I wish it could talk! But his return under that bridge seemed to him at once a miracle and yet a strange déjà vu—for he had sailed out two years before under the same lovely bridge—heading to war and with no guarantee of coming home again.

## Home Sweet Home

He also swore to himself that he had had enough traveling to last his entire life, so when he stepped back on American soil he vowed never to leave it again, and this held true for the next fifty years or so. He was devoted to his *National Geographic Magazine*, to which he held a lifetime subscription.

*"I look at that pipe, stilled now."*



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He read every issue, contentedly, in his favorite armchair. And he always said that this was the best and only way he would ever travel again, in the safety and the beauty of those glossy printed pages; from the comfort and security of his own home. I believed him.

After the war my father reunited with his best friend Philip Simmons (W9VES, W3VES, W1ZDP) from the old neighborhood—Phil having served in the Navy; Phil also being a ham.

### Halcyon Days

I like to think these must have been idyllic days... such an immense and exhilarating relief from the anxiety of war. By and by my dad, with his technical training, eventually wandered east and took a job with the American Radio Relay League, but not before his handsome face had caught the eye of his best buddy Phil's beautiful sister. My dad was equally smitten. One thing led to another and my dad found himself, in 1952, married to sweetheart Carol Louise Simmons, roosting long enough in Hartford to have their first child and also long enough for my artistically gifted father to paint an infamous family heirloom: a mysterious abstract canvas entitled, "A Certain Semblance of Sadness at the Wedding of the Wet Noodles." My dad was a man of many talents.

It wouldn't be too long before Rodney, husband and father (three more babies to come!), decided he needed a bigger paycheck to take the best care of his young wife and burgeoning family. So, eventually, they returned to the city they loved and where both had been born. That meant Chicago, city of many rooftops and future antenna escapades galore. My mother slowly learned the ropes of being an amateur radio operator's wife—not to mention having the distinction of being married to the new editor of *QST*'s column "How's DX?", who went on to write the column for more than thirty years.

My dad, God bless him, would often use the chaotic but comfortable family uproar around him for inspiration and energy for this endeavor. He now worked for the Illinois State Police as a dispatcher, alternating three different work shifts, each a month long. Working the midnight-to-8 am shift combined with writing his beloved yet exacting column for *QST* was quite challenging to say the least. My dad had a deadline he had to meet for *QST* each month come hell or high water, and he was often forced during this shift to catch his sleep during the

daytime hours. With a brood of four Newkirkings filled with the outrageously normal exuberance of kid-dom, it was next to impossible to keep home decibel levels snooze-worthy for extended lengths of time. Before long one or more of us would inevitably and tragically cause the dreaded event of Waking Up Dad. This meant that we had caused enough uproar for my father to actually get up from his bed on the second floor and Come Down the Stairs, menace in his sleepy but glaring eyes. This struck horror in us. Heads were going to roll! as my Uncle Phil used to say. My poor dad—those night shifts, when he had to work them, were tough going for us all.

A ham radio operator's child is surrounded by things that seem perfectly normal to her until she discovers, for example, that she is likely the only little girl in quite a radius who has, and knows all the words to, a 45 rpm recording called "CQ Serenade." It began: "dah dit dah dit, dah dah dit dah!..." This was my world, and there was much more pipe smoke-infused beloved paraphernalia and artifacts in it.

Among such items was a pipe-smoking ashtray, quite odd-looking but soothingly familiar to me, emblazoned with the upraised letters "National ARRL Convention, Milwaukee Wis, Sept 4 5 6, 1948" upon its circular rim. This, along with his pipe, was my dad's constant companion since, to my child's mind, the dim ages of the beginning of time. We also owned two decks of playing cards, a gift from ARRL given long ago to my father and most likely to its entire staff. One deck, its backs in saucy red, was printed with the ARRL QSL cards of twenty four hams, my father being one of them. Minuscule but legible, these were in tiny neat rows. Two of the little QSLs were obscured by the *QST* logo placed on the upper left corner of each card. (A facsimile of an actual cover of *QST* magazine, month and year unknown? Perhaps.)

Interestingly, my dad's W9BRD was the oddity among them—every single other one of them being a



Ashtray from National ARRL Convention, 1948

### "CQ Serenade"

CONTINUED - W9BRD'S DAUGHTER ON PAGE 7



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# A Wintry “Bug” for Christmas

Ted Holland, WB3AVD



The “Snowman” Bug—  
Completed and Ready for Action

I must confess that my reputation as a “Christmas person” is a little tarnished: shopping, crowds, the endless barrage of advertising—these just aren’t for me! Thus after a few years of making sure everyone around me understood as much, I felt a little “reputation management” might be in order! Perhaps a Christmas Key would demonstrate that I’m not really a total Scrooge. Hence, the “Snowman.”

The thought of piling-up pieces of metal to represent a snowman came readily enough to mind (you know... bigger circles at the bottom, smaller ones at the top), and the idea that a vertical “bug” might afford an appropriate mechanical format followed.

Most operators (at least in my age group!) will recognize what I mean by a “bug”; not a straight key or an iambic paddle, but rather the semi-automatic or Vibroplex®-style key wherein a vibrating or oscillating pendulum is used to form the dits, with the dahs being formed by manually closing a contact. If you’ve ever used one—be it a Vibroplex®, a Speed-X®, a Dow, or any of many similar configurations—you’ve almost certainly used the “bug” in its horizontal format. The vertical bug—such as the very rare Vibroplex® “Wire Chief”—is an extremely scarce design; very few models, as far as I can tell, having been built over the last century. Thus our snowman vertical has the immediate interest of mechanical novelty!

I began the snowman by taking three different diameters of aluminum pipe to my desktop lathe, and turning them on both the inside and outside to get smooth surfaces on each, after which ½” wide slabs were cut from each pipe, stacked up, and bolted together to form the body of the snowman (see photo). A “bug” requires some weight in order to work well, given that

you more-or-less slap the paddle from side-to-side to get the pendulum moving to form the dits, but you still want the key itself to sit in place without moving; hence they are inevitably built on a heavy piece of metal. Our snowman’s hollow circles afford little in the way of weight to anchor the key, so I elected to build him on a rock base. A trip to a local trophy shop yielded a round piece of white marble which I thought might afford the necessary weight, and with some cutting oil and a hardware store cobalt drill bit, I found I could easily drill the marble base so that the bottommost ring of the snowman could be attached to it with several small screws.

The yoke—a ring of brass—was next attached with screws to the snowman’s waist, this holds a small axle called the arbor (running from rear to front) upon which the pendulum assembly (the long thin assembly mounted vertically in front of the snowman’s body) swings from side to side. The middle section of the pendulum assembly is composed of a spring, to which the top section—consisting of a rod with weights and a dot contact—is attached. When a bug is keyed, the bottom section is knocked against a fulcrum, which causes the top section—attached only by a spring—to vibrate quickly back and forth...this is the motion which the dot contact “picks up” to form the dits. (See photos)

Let’s have a closer look at our snowman’s spring, as there’s an innovation here I think you will find interesting! In every bug I’ve examined or used, a piece of spring leaf is soldered between the bottom of

*“I’m not really a  
total Scrooge.”*



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the pendulum and the rod which holds the weights at top. This mainspring is fixed in place and affords no adjustability—the speed of the key can only be changed by shifting the number or position of the weights on the weight rod.

After some experimentation, I've constructed a spring which consists of two pieces of .025 tempered straight music wire, which are soldered into small brass plugs at each end (see photo). On its lower end, this "spring cartridge" (which has a center hole in each end's brass plug) slides over a post which is attached to the lower part of the pendulum, to be secured with set screws. The weight rod at the upper end of the pendulum is similarly attached to the upper brass plug of the spring cartridge. Now for the neat part: a slider which moves up and down on the same post to which the spring cartridge is attached, allows the tension expressed by the music wire springs to be changed, thus changing the speed at which the key operates. Study the photo and this makes sense: when the slider is secured at the top of the post, the springs are in effect very short and vibrate quickly...the key produces fast dits. When the slider is secured at the bottom of the post, the music wire spring is effectively much longer...it oscillates more slowly and thus produces slower dits. And I should note that we still have the usual weight atop the weight rod—this being the snowman's top hat—which can be moved up and down as well, to afford adjustability to the key's speed of operation. Thus our vertical snowman bug affords a significantly wider range of operating speeds than most semiautomatic keys are capable of, due to having two mechanisms (the adjustable spring cartridge in addition to the usual sliding weight) to modulate its speed of operation.

Now for a few details. Notice that I've attached two arms to the snowman. The one on the left (as the snowman faces the operator) has an adjustable screw—the fulcrum—which the pendulum hits to



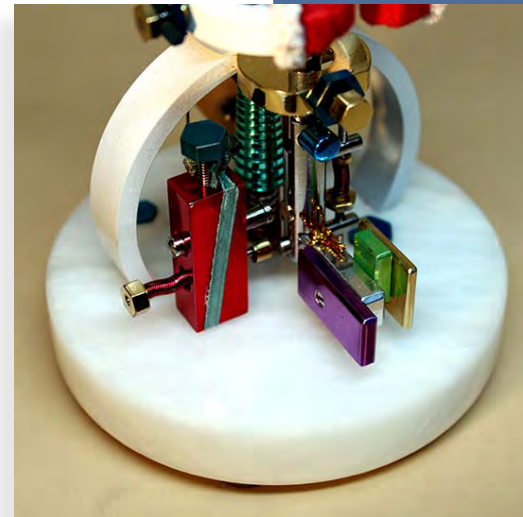
*"...a Merry Christmas to you too!"*

start its oscillations. A spring over this screw returns the pendulum to resting position after it has been keyed. The arm on the right is another adjustable screw which affords a travel limit for the pendulum. In all cases where I've machined a flat lock nut to snub an adjustable screw, a piece of hex rod—cut thin and powder coated blue—is employed; think of these as snowflakes! And to truncate the ends of the arms (which serve no purpose otherwise) appropriately, I've sewed a little red cloth on for mittens...and if you look closely you'll see that the mitten ruffs are pipe stem cleaners!

Now to the snowman's head (see photo). On the left is the adjustable contact against which the oscillating pendulum closes...almost too rapidly to see...to form the dits. On the right is a candy cane; this swings into position to buffer the pendulum and stop its oscillations after keying, when the pendulum returns to its rest position. There's a screw to adjust the length of the buffer (on the candy cane itself), and a screw on the snowman's head which can lock the candy cane into position once set. The finish on the candy cane, by the way, was done using red and white powder coat finishes, masked off and blended a little bit at the edges to give the appearance of peppermint!

Now let's continue our tour down below (see photo). Notice the paddle at the base of the pendulum, projecting at a right angle toward the operator (you!). I couldn't think of anything better than a stack of metal pieces decorated to look like Christmas presents! The red present with a green ribbon on the left side houses two components: an adjustable dash contact (lower screw), and a magnet which can be moved in and out to repel the bottom hinged section of the pendulum, returning it to resting position after swinging it to the left to manually make the dashes.

Finally, viewing the key from the back, we see the two binding posts which allow for connection of the key to your radio (only two wires are required, as this is a "manual"—not a "paddle"—input). One input is the



Close up View of the "Snowman" at its Base



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CONTINUED - A WINTRY "BUG" FOR CHRISTMAS ON PAGE 8

# The Gift of the Yagi

Episode One

Jeff Murray, K1NSS



**D**ashiell Hammutt was your basic lucky kid. Not Richie Rich lucky, but like many of us growing up in the nineteen fifties and sixties, lucky enough to be blessed with free meals, medical and dental care, presentable clothing and a warm bed and bath. Kept blissfully ignorant of his parents' adult problems, Dash! worried about little more than his ham radio hobby, The Bomb, and what pathetic Christmas tree his

father would drag home *this* year. In other words, Dash was burdened with your basic lucky kid's typically full paper plate.

If Dash had not exactly outgrown *that* particular Yuletide embarrassment, he nevertheless devised a workaround. When his family moved from New Jersey to the upstate New York suburb of Heaviside, he vowed that his new friends would never see his family Christmas tree.

Sickness. Pestilence. Company coming. Dash tossed out excuses like candy canes to explain why, from about the twentieth of December to New Year's Day After, he met his friends at the garage side door and escorted them very briskly and directly to his bedroom ham shack in the basement.

## His Problem?

Upstairs loomed a cruel hoax. Always, since Dash could remember, great holes gaped in his family's Christmas trees—voids so big you could fly a sleigh and nine reindeer through one side of the seedlings and out the other. Feeble branches, missing most of their needles, sagged under the weight of the ornaments no larger than gum machine charms. Beyond the Valley of Sad and Dreary, these little sticks were enough to give a kid a complex.

## Poor Baby

His trauma went all the way back to New Jersey, hundreds of miles south, where Dash's best friend since first grade, of equally modest means, yet radically different family Christmas customs, always had the best tree in the world, if not the entire New York City metropolitan area. Each run-up to Christmas his friend's tiny tract ranch house living room became Rockefeller Center. And the tree?

## To the Ceiling and Beyond!

Dash's buddy's cool carpenter dad sometimes had to cut off a couple of feet just so their annual mother of all Tannenbaums wouldn't punch a hole in the roof. And once he righted that mighty balsam behemoth, it was time for blue and green antique German glass balls big as any sold by Brunswick for the purpose of *making that spare*. These were followed by more boxes of European heirloom ornaments, along with outdoor-sized C9 Christmas

lights and enough glittering tinsel to spoof the radar of a Soviet Badger strategic bomber.

Dash! was always invited to help decorate this monster and he did so with a certain rueful glee. Because he knew that as soon as the last icicle was hung with care, his buddy's cool Christmas Dad would take but one puff on his bulldog pipe and admin-

ister the coup de grâce.

Like a gunny sack of salt dumped in the deepest wound, out came the antique electric trains with track *this wide* and a double-throttled transformer big as a dodge ball. ■

"Sickness.  
Pestilence.  
Company  
Coming."

## That's Not All...

Hey kids, stay tuned for the further adventures of Dash and *The Gift of The Yagi* by clicking here:

[www.dashtoons.com](http://www.dashtoons.com)

You'll discover what exciting exploits Dash and his pals are up to, and while you're visiting you'll find a whole lot more for you to explore and do!



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W1 from Connecticut. My dad eventually acquired a Connecticut call sign himself, W1VMW, and thus the famous red, black, and white ARRL QSL card ("one of the ARRL Headquarters gang"). The playing cards may have been printed previous to this, or possibly after, when W9BRD was back in Illinois and mailing his monthly "How's DX?" column for *QST* long distance from Chicago. Printed on the backs of the other deck, in cool blue, was a facsimile of the cover of *The Radio Amateur's Handbook* from the era. It's entirely possible that fierce card games were played with these decks, "CQ Serenade" on the turntable; mass quantities of cigarettes being lit by my father's silver "QST/W9BRD"-engraved cigarette lighter(!). And, it cannot be ruled out that while playing said card games W9BRD/1 may have been wearing a silver tie pin also engraved, quite beautifully, with the W1AW call letters. Perhaps his best buddy Phil Simmons, who had himself gotten a job in these parts for a brief time, was scowling across the card table at him, eyebrows squinched together in the concentration of challenge. If so, he would most likely have been in his W1ZDP incarnation, and what else? Why, probably wearing his lovely "W1ZDP"-engraved tie clip! (My dear, dear Uncle Phil became a Silent Key in 1969.)

**"Gil"**

While working at ARRL in the 1950s, one of my dad's pals was the wonderful cartoonist Philip "Gil" Gildersleeve, W1CJD, who created more than 1,500 cartoons for *QST* over the years. During my dad's time spent working at ARRL he would oc-

asionally provide Gil with ideas for these cartoons. Gil rewarded him for two of these suggestions by giving my dad the original drawings for these cartoons: the first inspired by W9BRD's marriage to Carol in 1952; the second inspired by the birth of W9BRD's first child. My Dad, so honored, quickly put them behind glass but he must have been in a hurry, as the cartoons have hung in his shack ever since, protected but completely crooked in their frames. He must have intended to set them aright at some point when he had time but never did. This I find completely endearing and so they remain in all their tippy glory, on a wall in W9BRD's shack to this day.



Carol Simmons-Newkirk at 18-years of age

My dad is a Silent Key now but his shack remains pretty much as it was in its last incarnation here, and one of his antennas still graces our backyard from house to garage. The robins and other birds he loved so much still fly back and forth, passing this wire on the way to their nests in the great pine trees that enclose the yard.

My dad and I used to have a contest each year to see who could spot the first robin bold enough to return in the early Chicago springtime. One year I found him coming up the steps that led from his basement shack to the back porch. We opened one of the porch windows and leaned out together. The icicles on the roof were dripping, and the March day was cold but the sun was getting stronger. Suddenly, and at the same time, both of us spied the First Robin. He was hopping and making a whirling cheery caroling sound, so lovely. "Dad, look!" I say, but he is smiling—he has already seen it.

Later in his shack I catch him straightening one of the crookedly-framed Gil drawings on the wall. He sees me and, as usual, bursts into song. "Ohhhh, Mandrake my dear, you've nothing to fear. The robins are here. There's spring in your beer. So be of good cheer!" And on he goes, plucking lines out of his head as he sings one of his father-to-daughter songs that he alone can sing, variations of which I have heard all of my daughterly life. Looking back, I think this may have been some of the most beautiful music I have ever heard, even beating that snappy old favorite, the "CQ Serenade"! ■



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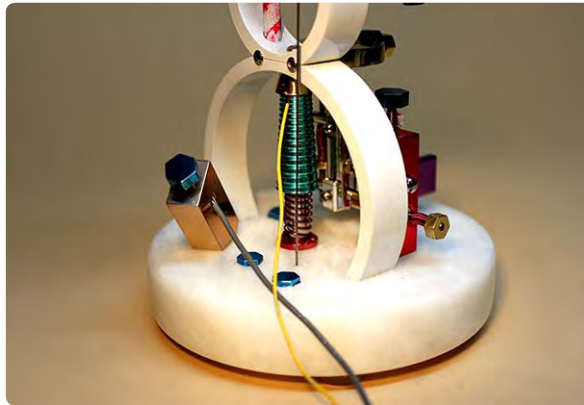


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golden present which looks like it has been dropped in the snow: just put one wire through the hole and tighten the screw (snowflake) on top. The other input is the spring-loaded "pine tree"—just pull it down to reveal a hole into which the second wire is placed. And a few blue snowflakes have been cemented to the marble "snow"—just for appearance!

Now, at last, you might well be thinking...does it actually work? It does...crisply, and with less keying effort than most "bugs" I have used. And the speed is easily adjusted—using both the adjustable mainspring and the small top hat weight—between about 12-wpm and 40-wpm.



So to all of my friends who thought I was a modern-day Scrooge...hah!, and a Merry Christmas to you too! I first ran this key on a stormy winter night, basking in the soft yellow glow of my Heath HW-16's tubes (my Novice rig!), and for an evening, believe it or not...I felt like a kid again. ■

#### With Gratitude... Our 2015 Authors

Bob Ballantine, W8SU	Hal Mandel, W4HBM
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Bob Cashdollar, NR8U	Jeff Murray, K1NSS
Frank Dörenberg, F/N4SPP	Amanda Newkirk, ex-WN9PMC
Chuck Guenther, NIØC	Paul Ross, W3FIS
James A. Henson, W4UFP	Don Shelton, K5OK
Rick Hiller, W5RH	Jim Smith, K3RTU
Ted Holland, WB3AVD	John Swartz, WA9AQN
Don Keith, N4KC	Arnold Timm, KAØTPZ
Scott Laughlin, N7NET	Duke Wahl, Jr., WA9WJB

event with over 75 operators, all modes, two bonus stations and over 127,000+ QSOs in 2015!

*We honor not only the 13 Original Colony States, but also our Military and Veterans. We all have fun putting this event on, and try to make it fun for those calling in to us. I cannot take all the credit for this. Most of the credit belongs to the amateur operators who spend long hours behind the key and mic to make this happen during their holiday, but most of all, the folks who call us and participate.*

Each year's 13 Colony certificate celebrates a new theme. Here, compliments of KU2US, is a list of past and the coming year's themes.

2009: Map of the 13 Colony States (Inaugural Year)

2010: George Washington (Likeness of G.W. and Purple Heart medals)

2011: Declaration of Independence

2012: Colonial era U.S. Navy Tall Ships

2013: Banners of the Revolution

2014: Colonial Era Currency

2015: Founders and Patriots Of The Republic

2016: Soldiers Of The Revolution



Participating operators can opt for the certificate alone or the certificate plus a QSL card for each colony station worked. QSL requests for each station worked must be accompanied by your card and a S.A.S.E sent to that station's QTH.

Details at the 13 Colonies Web site:

<http://www.13colonies.info/>

Mark these dates on your 2016 ham radio things-to-do calendar: the 13 Colonies special event starts 1 July at 9 am EDT (13:00 UTC) and finishes 6 July at midnight EDT (04:00 UTC 7 July).

A big thanks to Ken Villon, the colony station operators and all the event participants who combined to make this an engrossing, memorable and rewarding time on the air. ■