

TENNESSEE CONTEST GROUP

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MAY 2020

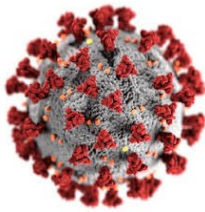
Top stories in this newsletter



Upcoming Contests



Meet the President:
Hunter Mills K3IE



Contesting Under a
COV:ID



Member Spotlight
Kirk Pickering K4RO



Upcoming Contests

Contesting is a way of life for members of the Tennessee Contest Group. Check out the Upcoming Contests and Contest Scores pages for contest scores from the prior month. "Upcoming contests" will highlight contests and special events coming up soon.

Meet the President

As I started to work on the next TCG newsletter, I heard a suggestion that perhaps it would be interesting - and fun - to find some common ground (besides contesting, of course). As we continue with the good work that TCG does, our newer members (and some of us who have been here for a bit) may not know a lot about our TCG President, Hunter Mills, K3IE. Take a minute to learn more about our leader as he enters his second term as President.

Member Spotlight

Our **Member Spotlight** for May features Kirk Pickering, K4RO. Learn some interesting behind the scenes info about Kirk, one of our very RADIO-ACTIVE members. Care to share your story in a future edition? Email Cathy Goodrich at w4cmg.dx@gmail.com with your info, or to get more details.

Contesting Under a COVID-19 Era

The COVID-19 restrictions may have created a sense of "cabin fever" as you try to keep busy at home, but bypassing the endless list of household chores that could be done! Juan AC6ZM has crafted an article to provide some ideas about how to CONTEST UNDER A COVID ERA, that is sure to give you a few new ideas about ways to pursue contesting, maintaining good social distancing while making plenty of contacts!

CONTEST UNIVERSITY & the HAMVENTION QSO Party

We are all disappointed that Hamvention will not be held this year. As one of our key opportunities to visit, pick up that one (or many) more piece of equipment, and meet some of the contacts we made on the air in person, it is truly disappointing, but some important that we stay safe in the world of COVID-19. Register for the Virtual Contest University, to be presented through ZOOM technology on May 14, and then keep the spirit going, by participating in the May 16 HAMVENTION QSO Party.

Meet the President

Meet Hunter Mills, K3IE

In this time of “social distancing”, people are learning more ways to connect, Meet Hunter Mills, K3IE, who has begun his second term as TCG President. Hunter was kind enough (with a little extra “nudge” to send me his “virtual interview” so we will know more of the “person behind the call sign”.



About Hunter, by Hunter:

I grew up in a southwestern suburb outside of Philly (Drexel Hill, PA).

I was introduced to amateur radio in my teens by a ham who installed 2-way radios in the service trucks of my father's family heating/air conditioning business in Philadelphia. Once my dad brought home an HF rig and I could hear people speaking from all over the world, I was hooked. My ham radio years started during Solar Cycle 21 - lucky timing (hi).

Joe Welch (K3CT - SK), was my Elmer. He was an FCC instructor and is responsible for my love for CW. Though his tutelage, I obtained my Extra Class in high school and picked my vanity call, K3IE.

Joe introduced me to the Frankford Radio Club (FRC) and I quickly became a contest junkie. I operated from some of the FRC Multis during the 80's but my favorite was Jim Berger's K3II (SK). I spent many contest weekends at Jim's house during my 20's.

A job opportunity brought me to the South back in 1994 and I have lived here ever since. I work in the life insurance industry and am a Regional VP for John Hancock Life Insurance Company. I cover five states (TN AL KY MS LA) and spend a lot of time (pre-COVID 19) traveling on business.

I migrated to the Flex radios over 10 years ago and am now enjoying operating my Flex 6600 remotely from my hotel rooms. I enjoy CW contests, the weekly CWTs, and operating QRP with my KX2 out back on our patio or on a summit (rarely).

Other hobbies include the occasional round of golf, fishing (Louisiana style), traveling with the family, and watching our three children navigate through life. I live in Brentwood TN with my XYL Lynn and our two dogs.

Best 73, Hunter K3IE (Dit-Dit Dit)

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Next edition: JUNE 2020

Contesting under a COVID-19 Era

by Juan Lopez Jr. (AC6ZM)



The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly changed our way of life with isolation and social distancing. A positive upside of this situation is the ability to spend more time in the chair to participate in Radio Sport contesting and other amateur radio on-the-air activities. Examples of recently emerging radio events are: (1) RSGB Hope QSO Party, (2) K2H special event to celebrate front line pandemic heroes, and (3) STAYHOME special callsign event around the globe. According to ARRL, some countries around the world are allowing radio amateurs to use special “STAYHOME” call sign suffixes. For example, listen for A60STAYHOME/# call signs from the United Arab Emirates, 9K9STAYHOME from the Kuwait Amateur Radio Society, and TC1STAYHOME the COVID-19 special event call sign from Turkey.

Another good consequence of COVID-19 stay home restriction is the participation increase in the weekly Mini-CWT’s hosted by CWops. A quick review of several weeks of data (see figure 1) of 1900Z sessions in January 2020 compared with April 2020 reveals a 36% increase in participation. CWops member sponsorships have also seen a corresponding sharp increase. Equally as interesting are the number of enrollment requests for CW Academy. There are currently more students than class slots and advisors available to meet the demand. They have a waiting list that spans the globe. Please consider becoming an advisor for CW Academy, its easy, FREE and a great way to give back to the community.

	Jan	Apr
1900Z	301	399
1900Z	304	423
1900Z	321	437
Average	309	420
Percent Increase		36%

Figure 1. Mini-CWT participation increase in 2020

Another area impacted by COVID-19 travel restrictions are the temporary ban on mobile and rover operations for state QSO parties. Change is the mother of invention—so to speak—and many state QSO parties have modified mobile/rover operations by creating (1) Virtual Mobile stations, and (2) distributed Multi/Multi operation for teams.

Virtual Mobile Stations: The Florida QSO party is the first known implementation of the virtual mobile concept. They preselected several Florida stations that run on a band/mode slot with a designated CALLSIGN for 2 hours for a specific county. The CALLSIGN is then handed off to another operator in another county to continue the run. To out-of-state operators participating in the QSO party it appears as though there is a mobile/rover moving from county to county. In state QSO parties, one of the biggest attractions are the multipliers handed out by mobile and rover operations. The virtual mobile option keeps the QSO party attractive to out-of-state participants. Reflector comments are full of recommendations for improvements and lessons learned that upcoming State QSO Party committees can potentially implement. I suspect this trend will continue.

(continued next page)

Contesting under a COVID-19 Era (cont.) by Juan Lopez Jr. (AC6ZM)

Distributed Multi/Multi Team: Due to the “No Travel Restriction” and Stay Home order now in place in many states, plans for mobile and rover operations were canceled by state QSO party organizers as previously mentioned. The Georgia QSO party was the first victim of the “Stay Home” interruption. This significantly reduces the number of county multipliers available to out-of-state operators which in turn reduces the attractiveness to out-of-state participants. However, a new multi-op opportunity presented itself in order to ensure participation by out-of-state operators. The new team category is the “Distributed Multi-Multi (DMM)” and the follow-on “Distributed Multi-Single (DMS).” Both categories rely on Internetworking technology and remote technology operations.

TCG participated in a DMM team for the GAQP. N1MM was used across the Internet to share logging functions with a distributed logbook. The TCG team consisted of four members AC6ZM (Juan), W4NZ (Ted), WK9M (Randy) and K3IE (Hunter). N1MM performed flawlessly the entire weekend contest period. We provided suggestions based on our experience to the N1MM staff whom worked closely with us to get the configuration correct. N1MM provides a software lockout so no two members operate on the same band/mode at the same time. Every operator has visibility of everyone else through an N1MM network pop-up window that stays persistently visible when operating in the distributed network mode. The setup was not difficult and even Hunter could do it! We learned a few things that should become standard practice for anyone that tries this approach. I will list a few of them here to share our experience.

Breaks: When you leave the operating position for a break, park your radio dial on a WARC band frequency so it won't prevent another operator from using a particular band/mode that is eligible for the event. This also serves as a good indicator that you are away from the operating position.

Group Chat: Announce when you are on/off to the entire group through a group chat available through N1MM. Messages show up in the bottom of the rate window. If you precede your message with an asterisk, the message will be broadcast to all members.

Master Computer: It is good practice to dedicate one computer to be the master synch station for logging and time keeping. Only one is needed to host all stations. It will take care of distributing all log entries to everyone on the network instantly. The master computer will also keep the master time to synchronize all logs on the network.

Synchronize Logbooks: There is a forced synchronize function available in the network status window that you should execute if you lose power or lose network connection to the master computer. It is good practice to force a synchronize function at the end of the contest in order for every participant to have the same log before taking the master offline.

OPON: Using the OPON in the callsign entry window and entering your callsign will allow all operators to see the actual callsign of the operator at the keyboard in the network status window. If not, N1MM will display the callsign used to setup the logbook database (typically a club callsign).

W4NZ (Ted), and other members from the Tennessee Valley DX Association (W4XK, K3JWI and K4VIG) decided to participate as a DMM entry in the FLQP. They enhanced the N1MM distributed configuration by implementing a Virtual Private Network (VPN). They also opted to use their newly assigned club call KM4EA. For the FLQP, N2XYZ (Frank) and other members of their club implemented a DMM for the virtual mobile stations.

One final note, the Indiana QSO party is the first known state QSO party to actually implement the new DMM categories after other states experimented successfully with last minute rule changes. A lot of credit goes to the GAQP and FLQP organizers for sharing lessons learned and operating enhancements along the way. In fact, 3830scores.com now has the DMS and DMM categories available for selection in the INQP. An English proverb seems appropriate here--necessity is the mother of invention--so they say. Ham radio is no stranger to experimentation and trying new things. I'm glad for the opportunity to push the boundary of Radio Sport with TCG. Catch you on the bands! 73. de Juan AC6ZM

Upcoming Contests



There is a LOT of activity through the end of the month, for both CW and other mode operators! See the “short list “ below, and check these links to some of the commonly used websites more information:

Date	Contest Name	Mode
9-May	CQ-M International DX Contest	CW, Ph
9-May	CQ-M International DX Contest	Dig
9-May	SKCC Weekend Sprintathon	CW
9-May	Arkansas QSO Party	CW, Ph
9-May	FISTS Spring Unlimited Sprint	CW
9-May	50 MHz Spring Sprint	CW
10-May	WAB 7 MHz Phone/CW	CW, Ph
16-May	HAMVENTION QSO Party	CW, Ph
16-May	UN DX Contest	CW, Ph
16-May	His Majesty King of Spain Contest, CW	CW
16-May	Aegean RTTY Contest	Dig
16-May	Feld Hell Sprint	Dig
17-May	Run for the Bacon QRP Contest	CW
18-May	RGSB FT4 Contest Series	Dig
21-May	NAQCC Sprint	CW
21-May	QRP Minimal Art Session	CW
23-May	Baltic Contest	CW, Ph
25-May	QRP ARCI Hootowl Sprint	CW
25-May	QXC Challenge	CW
27-May	SKCC Sprint	CW
28-May	RCSG 8-Meter Club Championship, CW	CW
29-May	PODXS 070 Club 3-Day Weekend Contest	Dig
30-May	CW WW WPX Contest, CW	CW

Contest Calendar Links

- ⇒ CQ Amateur Radio: For links to Contests, plus tips for New Hams, Awards, Amateur Radio Club Listings and more: http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/cq_hobby_radio_links/cq_hrl_contest_links.html
- ⇒ April Contest Corral is available at: <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Contest%20Corral/2020/April%202020%20Corral.pdf>
- ⇒ DX Zone Contesting Calendar listing: <https://www.dxzone.com/catalog/Contesting/Calendars/>
- ⇒ WA7BNM Contest Calendar: <http://www.contestcalendar.com/> - 8-day, 12 month, etc.
- ⇒ Annual CQ Contest Calendar: http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/cq_contests/cq_annual_contest_calendar/cq_annual_contest_calendar.html
- ⇒ DX Zone Contest Calendar: <https://www.dxzone.com/catalog/Contesting/Calendars/>

Member Spotlight

Meet Kirk Pickering K4RO

Thank you to Kirk for answering the call for a few folks to "volunteer" to be part of our Member Spotlight. I can say from having seen it, that I was incredibly impressed with his "shack" that makes my little corner with a radio look so small (yes it is)! When the scores come in, Kirk is always close to or at the top. Read more about how he got interested in becoming a Ham, and some of his experiences, both in life and in the world of Amateur Radio.

Kirk was featured in a QSO Today interview with 4Z1UG (and other places). Here is a "Cliff's Notes version" that Kirk shared for your reading pleasure!

"I discovered electronics around age 4 by shoving a pair of TV "rabbit ear" antenna spade terminals in to the wall socket, then grabbing the antenna to "adjust" it. The shock threw me across the room, and I have been captivated by antennas ever since.

My real introduction to radio was when a complete stranger named Forrest Haley gave me a Heathkit GR-81 regenerative receiver at age 9. Both of my parents had died from cancer by the time I was nine years old, and that little radio provided a lot of comfort to a pretty troubled kid.

I progressed from SWL to CB Radio to finally getting licensed in late 1976. I began DXing in earnest about 10 years later, and got interested in contesting around 1993, right around the birth of the TCG. Contesting has dominated my radio life for the last 25+ years.

I spent 35 years in the IT industry, and am now semi-retired. My specialties were Geographic Information Systems and UNIX System Administration. I still consult for a few clients, and am actually busier than I was during my full-time working years. I've been telecommuting since 1996, which has allowed me to spend a little bit more time in front of the radio.

I have won a few contests, but have earned a much larger number of second and third place finishes. While operating the CW Sweepstakes full-time for 25 years, I managed to scrape together five wins; three times in the QRP category and twice in the LP category. Lately I've been enjoying the CWTs very much, and have been fortunate to operate at K3LR several times for the big DX contests. I've also been grateful to travel for a few contest DXpeditions using various call signs from the Turks and Caicos Islands (VP5) and Bonaire (PJ4).

I do believe in giving back to contesting, and served as a Referee at WRTC 2014 in New England. I also served as an NCJ columnist for 7 years and was the NCJ Editor from 2012-2014. Finally, I've been honored to serve the TCG by managing the mailing list and web site continuously for the last 26 years, among other services.

My primary non-radio interest is music. Like K0EJ, I am big Grateful Dead fan, and used to play in a variety of rock and improvisational bands. A few of us contesters formed a small band which performed at Dayton for several years called the Spurious Emissions. It was a comedy act with bad music, and was a lot of fun while it lasted. For the last 20 years, I have focused on Old Time String Band music which is played on acoustic instruments, with the Fiddle leading the way. Susie and I have hosted Old Time jam sessions at our home for the last two decades. It's great to see the growth and enthusiasm for TCG over the last quarter century. Here's to the next 25 years!

73, --Kirk K4RO"

Interested in???

Is there a new mode (FT4, FT8, RTTY...) that you might be in? Or do you have an active interest in a radio-related topic that you would like to share with our TCG members? In today's world of Virtual meetings via Zoom, MS Teams, freeconferencecall.com and many other modes (not to mention some VERBAL radio discussions) let's find some common interests and get a group together. If you are not interested in meeting, but would like to see a topic in print, or have an article to share, we can do that too! Please send you ideas to topics to learn, or to share, to Cathy Goodrich at w4cmg.dx@gmail.com, or post them on the TCG Reflector to start the conversation.



TCG Website
Maintenance
Volunteers Needed



HAMVENTION QSO
PARTY



Submit Your Scores

VOLUNTEER HELP NEEDED!

We are looking for someone to take over managing the TCG web site. We need someone with the interest and time to keep the TCG web site regularly updated. Tasks would include maintenance of the official TCG Roster, the Photo Gallery, TCG Newsletter postings, and any other pertinent information useful to TCG.

Knowledge of the Wordpress content management system would be a huge plus, but anyone with knowledge of computers could learn the tasks. Assistance will be readily provided along the way.

Please contact k4ro@k4ro.net directly to enquire.

HAMVENTION QSO PARTY: Saturday, May 16

[Source: https://hamvention.org/hamvention-qso-party-saturday-may-16/?fbclid=IwAR0GVp1gruFuHemCiRttB9_wlUPZnhzAXV1HVIPAKRtPXQJzuZUw-7LTt4]

“Let’s celebrate the many years we have all had at the Great Gathering we call Hamvention. We also want to remember Ron Moorefield W8ILC who never missed a Hamvention and contributed to our club until his recent death. Let’s light up the airwaves with our remembrances of Hamventions of the past! See you on the air! K3LR, Tim Duffy and W8CI, Michael Kalter.

Here is the deal: 12 hour event, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EDST on Saturday of Hamvention May 16, 2020. Operate CW or SSB on 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters. The exchange is a signal report and first year you attended Hamvention. If you have never attended Hamvention you send 2020.

Send your score (number of QSOs) to 3830scores.com within 5 days of the event. You can print a certificate on line via www.HVQP.org. More details will appear on the Hamvention QSO Party web site being set up now.

Special bonus: W8BI, the club call of the Dayton Amateur Radio Association (DARA is the host of Hamvention) will be activated by designated DARA members from their home stations. You can add 10 points for each band/mode QSO with W8BI (12 available). So you can earn 120 bonus points (like having 120 additional QSOs).”

Submit Your Scores—Even If You Think They’re Bad

OK... I’ve heard it before and I’ve even said it before... “I am not going to submit my scores because I didn’t do as well as I wanted to in the contest.” **Do it anyway!**

As a fairly new contester, I would see the scores that come through from the 3830scores.com, and be *absolutely intimidated!*

Our seasoned Contesters are SO GOOD, especially when I looked at my far from impressive (to me anyway) contest score. I finally figured out that you don’t have to be THE BEST, you just need to do YOUR PERSONAL BEST, and **it will feel good!!!**

As a bonus, you may find that the score you submit might still put you in a high scoring position for your class and power, especially if you submit a log as an out-of-state participant in a state contest. (For example Second Place, Single OP Low Power in a recent sprint with a score of 652—not a typo!) OK, it was bad, even for me, but it pleads the case that you may place better than you think. You will find that you compete with yourself and from event-to-event you will do better for the sheer experience of participating.

***GET ON THE AIR, THEN SUBMIT YOUR SCORES!!!**

* Be sure to select “Tennessee Contest Group” for the “Club” on 3830scores.com

Contest University 2020 will be held online free via Zoom

Thursday, May 14th 8:45 am EDT/12:45 UTC

[Source: <https://www.contestuniversity.com/course-outline/>]

The Contest University scheduled to take place at the Dayton HAMVENTION was canceled due along with the HAMVENTION. There is still an opportunity to participate, though remotely, and enjoy the large number of courses and workshops!

Course Outline:

8:45 am EDT/12:45 UTC Welcome to CTU 2020 from W8CI, K3LR and N9JA

9:00 am EDT/13:00 UTC W3LPL – “Effective Low Band Receiving Antennas”

10:00 am EDT/14:00 UTC W2NAF – “2020 Solar Cycle Update and the HF Response to Ionospheric Storms and Traveling Ionospheric Disturbances”

11:00 am EDT/15:00 UTC N6TV – “Everything You Need to Know About USB and Serial Interfaces”

12:00 pm EDT/16:00 UTC Lunch on your own

12:25 pm EDT/16:25 UTC K1AR – Memorial reading of the Silent Keys for 2020

12:30 pm EDT/16:30 UTC NN1C – “Exuberance and Youth Contesting – Update on What is Going On”

1:00 pm EDT/17:00 UTC W0YK – “Digital Contesting Hints & Kinks”.

2:00 pm EDT/18:00 UTC K1DG – “Optimizing your Station for Contest Operations”.

3:00 pm EDT/19:00 UTC N0AX – “Grounding & Bonding for Contest Stations”

4:00 pm EDT/20:00 UTC NC0B – “Contest & DX Performance A Complex Subject Today Great RX Performance – TX Limitations”

5:00 pm EDT/21:00 UTC W3LPL – “60 Years of Competitive Contesting — the W3LPL Story”

6:00 pm EDT/22:00 UTC K3ZJ – Presentation of CQ Contest Hall Of Fame 2020

At the conclusion of the CQ Contest Hall of Fame induction – CTU will give away an Icom IC-7610 transceiver courtesy of Icom America to a licensed amateur in the United States that is online with Zoom at the end of the Hall of Fame Inductions.”

See the website for more information at: <https://www.contestuniversity.com/course-outline/>