

W4B – GEORGE WASHINGTON’S BIRTHDAY SPECIAL EVENT AT HIS BOYHOOD HOME, STAFFORD, VIRGINIA - FEBRUARY 13, 2021

The Washington’s Birthday Special Event was originally planned to happen on location at Ferry Farm, Washington’s Boyhood Home in Stafford County. Katie Gilliam (K4TER) proposed, planned and executed this event. However, due to the ice storm which occurred that day, a decision, based on weather forecasts, and wanting to err on the side of caution and prudence, was made the evening before, not to use Ferry Farm, but to ask each operator to work their QTH bases. The results (contacts) exceeded expectations!

There were 7 Operators, KI4JVE, NS4J, K3EP, KH7RC, K4CAS, N7RCE, and KB5LNC who managed a total of 312 QSOs.

The group worked 42 states, 17 DXCC QSOs. VE3LTP, VE5DLC, VE4BG, VE3XT, VE3SYK, VE9VE (Canada), HP2AT (Panama), KP4EJ (Puerto Rico), G3YUE, M7ATE, (England), F4IFO, F5UJQ (France), SP2Y (Poland), and EA4T (Spain).

QSO Numbers and Bands

179 on 40m, 65 on 20m, 27 on 15m, 27 on 2m, 15 on 70cm, 236 phone, 10 CW, 12 FM and 30 DSTAR

Operators Comments:

It was great to have flexible operators today!

It was a lot of fun and great to have everyone covering for each other...worked out fantastic...now all I got to do is get my stuff back together again...but good excuse to improve.

I estimate that approximately 80% of contacts specifically thanked us for running the special event and recognizing its historical significance. One in particular was a history teacher from Charleston, WV area.

I had only one contact with a club member (KA3BWP – JP), who thanked us for running the event.

Had a great time. Thanks all.

Great job on everyone’s part.

I had quite a few folks who were very enthusiastic about our special event. In fact, two specifically stated that it was very sad that the majority of the people they knew had no idea when George Washington’s birthday actually occurred vice Presidents Day. Another Ham from Arizona wondered what old George would think about recent events over the last 20 years or so.

Definitely everyone who made a contact had very positive comments and were happy we took the time to do this.

Last comment...was a great time...thoroughly enjoyed it. We need to do it again...maybe as a club doing Museum Ships on the Air in June or the Lighthouse\Lightship event and see how many as a group we can get.

Tanks for all the work folks and Katie....great job pulling it together.

I found no negatives, and the positives were already addressed by Rich or Harry. Several contacts were happy for something being done specifically for George Washington, and not for all Presidents.

Regarding Wires-X rooms and D-STAR reflectors, I know when Last Man Standing does their events, they have two different teams connected to two different reflectors. I think the USS Midway activation for the Flag Raising on Mt. Suribachi event yesterday was running on the PAPA Sys and reflector 012A.

Next time, having the Wires-X room and the D-STAR reflector published early in all our communications should let people know how and where to find us. We had the HF frequencies listed, but not the Wires-X room or the reflector.

Maybe next event we publish if we are going to be doing DSTAR, Digital, Wires-X, Winlink, DMR, etc.

D-STAR: W4B can be reached via the WS4VA C module, or REF062D

Wires-X: W4B can be reached via room 8929

Digital: Mode/Band/Frequency - FT8 (freq), RTTY (freq), FLDIGI (freq), etc.

CW: Bands and Frequencies

Just some thoughts.

Lessons Learned:

1. DSTAR

Working for a special event can be tough

Working D-STAR for a special event can be tough. I found it necessary to QSY to other reflectors to drum up contacts with only a few following me back to REF062D.

David seemed to have luck by trying other repeaters.

Busy reflectors, such as REF001C proved fruitful, but for the short term as I did not want to tie up such a major reflector for too long, announcing that I was QSY'ing back to 062D as leaving. At one point, there was a reflector that was set up somewhere in the D-STAR network that was specifically set up for special events though it may have been decommissioned.

2. FUSION

Maybe next time designate someone to specifically work Fusion assets

The one aspect that I did not find time to explore were the Americas link and Irish rooms that Kelly made available. I was overwhelmed in listening/talking on two different radios as well as logging.

Although the Fusion repeater had a lot of activity that I did not tap into, I was finding it difficult to legibly copy the people that I happened to listen to at the moment without breaking into an on-going QSO.

I jumped on Fusion and made 4 QSO for W4B with positive results and in fact resulted in several 20M contacts as the word got out...though this was at the end of the operating period. We should have someone in the future who is operating the Fusion system. I personally find D-STAR much easier on the ears that Fusion but that is just me and others mileage definitely varies....Great system and Great partner to D-STAR.

3. Future efforts to conduct a special event could and should allow the operation from individuals QTH if they feel more comfortable vice at a central location. I believe this will increase the potential for SARA members participating who might not participate from a central location. Of course, this will mean a more hands on coordination requirement.

4. WIRES-X

Is there a way to advertise on WiresX events that are going on in specific rooms or how difficult is it to name / change the name of a Room? Reason I ask is maybe in the future we use our own Room Kelly has set up for special events and monitor that one for contacts vice moving to America's link which is extremely busy?

Kelly...the big rooms...do they not have people in those rooms that are coming in via multiple different modes...say hotspot to dongle to ??? before hitting the room thus degrading their audio? That may be why audio is effected before it ever gets to our system?

5. Jumping between radio's and bands and logging simultaneously is a challenge especially when you're not a contestor.... so I personally am going to start doing a bit more of that to hone those skills though I am not a big fan of contesting but it does have its purpose and utility which has become clearer for me.

6. HF

I believe that we could not hear each other for at least two reasons:

Stations too close to each other regardless of power...and groundwave probably not effective...no surprise.

Antenna's, I believe are mainly dipoles being used and if we are all shooting East and West...we are all in each others null spots.

I could hear folks coming back to Harry very clearly but never Harry's transmissions. Maybe to make things a bit easier we could in the future log for each other even though we are not co-located...this would help if there was a pileup...Kelly helped me out a couple of times on Fusion by providing the call-sign which made it much easier to make the contact and log it at completion.

A single or a couple of stations jumping around like Jay did can have great benefit as they can also advertise where the main frequencies are for other operators.

7. Had to move to my 706MKII-G from the car when the IC-7000 wasn't behaving very well....God I love that rig...one thing for reference...you all probably know it but...let the rig acclimatize before powering on....going from very cold to a toasty 68 has effects...conversely the sweating going from hot to cold.

The AT-180 Tuner I was using was constantly falling out of tune...as I operated I watched both the rig and what was going on outside...when the rig would drop tune...there was either more ice on the wire or had a couple of birds jumping around on it...coincidence...maybe...maybe not...first time I have ever encountered this.

Going to attempt to put the old screwdriver antenna on the fence in the back around the silt pond....hopefully...won't piss off the HOA Nazi's that should give me an alternative to the dipole that is not cut to any specific band that I used yesterday. I can tune 75 & 20 no problem but 40 was 6:1 which really sucks.

8. I spent the day on 15m and probably should have coordinated to move around as this band was sporadic as you might have guessed. I kept telling myself that the band was about to open up - but was very up and down at best. I had contacts that were 5/9 one moment then 3/2 the next in the same transmission. I don't contest either, so this event helped me finally use the record function on my radio to call CQ...I gave my finger a workout but saved my voice! Those that did make contact were, like everyone else reported, very happy to have us on the air.

Disappointed that we really weren't on station at FF, but the home QTH is a great option and was a smart decision for yesterday. I sometimes work special event stations either to get the certificates or just simply to try and reach out for a contact. I note often that the station is not always collocated with the event. So not a big deal in my opinion. I enjoyed having the "beverage" of my choice at hand!

Really appreciate you guys doing this... I always thought special event stations would be a great club event option, especially in this area with all the history options around. Another local thought for a special event would be the USMC birthday (setup at the museum?) or something FBI related; I'm sure there are many options of historical note.

Weather:

Maybe we'll have better weather next time. Given the coating of ice I see on things outside, it would have definitely been a lengthy, messy tear down had we proceeded on location at Ferry Farm.

Definitely the correct call to do this via our own QTH's given the weather conditions.

Future Potential Events to look forward to:

1. USMC Birthday
2. FBI
3. Museum Ship on the Air
4. Lighthouse / Lightship
5. Other Historical
6. Washington's Birthday 2022

AM FM SSB CW Digital

Click on a Zone # for more information on that zone.

Select option below

