W1AW/8 – ARRL Centennial QSO Party

Background Info

This year the ARRL is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Besides a special National Convention and other events they have a special call **W100AW** that will be on for the year. They are also running a Centennial QSO Party for the whole year. During this QSO Party, ARRL officers, regional and section officials, and even ARRL members are worth points toward awards. See the page: Centennial QSO Party and the Leader Board for more info. Also, as part of this QSO party, the W1AW callsign will be on the road operating from every state and several territories and possessions. Each state has 2 weeks assigned on the table at: W1AW Portable Schedule. To see how other W1AW/n operations have done to date see: W1AW/n Summaries

The North Carolina team produced a nice video summarizing their operation as well as the whole W1AW program. See Video.

The second West Virginia (WVDXA) station week is: October 22-28. The operating period for that week is: 0000Z Wednesday to 2359Z Tuesday. So in local time we will start at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, October 22nd and end at 7:59 p.m. Tuesday, October 28th . We are looking for operators to sign up for 2-hour blocks of operating with the W1AW/8 callsign from West Virginia during this period. The information below is about how to sign up and the operating rules and suggestions for the week.

W1AW/8 Operator Sign-up List

We have created a day-to-day / hour-by-hour / station-by-station scheduling grid which is now available. If you are interested in signing up for any of the W1AW/8 WV operating blocks, contact Hal, W8HC, or Clark, W8TN. You will need to supply us with your Callsign, Name, Email and Phone Number plus a Password. We will register you for the Operating Schedule website below and you can then, on that site, choose to Reserve or Cancel Time Slots where you wish to operate. If you forget your Password, contact Clark, W8TN.

W1AW/8 Operating Schedule

Don't forget to check out the W1AW/8 Blog frequently for news and operating suggestions as well as links to reference information including the W1AW-8 Chat Page. Below is the Blog URL:

W1AW/8 Blog

Operating Rules and Suggestions

Most Important Rules:

- You must be an ARRL member to operate a “HOST” station. However, this does not prevent someone who is NOT an ARRL member from operating at the station of an ARRL member as long as it is located in WV.

- We must always identify as W1AW/8. Give exchange as 59(9) WV, if anyone asks, you can give your own Grid and County.
    - Because there are multiple instances of W1AW/p on the air, it's important to sign the call with greater frequency. My personal opinion is every three Q's or once per minute is enough, but you can identify more often if you wish.
    - It's not really necessary to send the state with each QSO, but we like it.
    - It's not necessary to log anything from the stations you are working except the call. Don't ask for repeats on anything except the call.
    - Please feel free to thank guys for their service if they mention being a VE or Card Checker or something. The audience really likes this and I have heard many of the W1AW/p ops engaging the callers - it has really been excellent.
    - If anyone asks, and maybe periodically if it’s not too busy, say to QSL via the ARRL.
    - Do not use your call to identify or in response to questions about the operation location or operator, this could lead some stations to think that you are I am handling QSL cards. Just reply with QTH WV and QSL via ARRL. If a friend calls you, yes, say hello and that you are the operator, that is fine. I am more worried about someone who doesn't know what the event is about thinking that the operator or station is handling QSLs.
- Remain calm and courteous (no frequency fights, stay away from nets, ignore intentional QRM, etc)
- Be careful of band edges! Stay 3kc ABOVE the lower band edge on LSB and 3kc BELOW the upper band edge on USB.
- If you are sharing a station and using the N1MM logger, as soon as you sit down, do a Ctrl-O or OPON and enter your call in the logger. That will place your callsign in the N1MM ADIF file as the Operator.
- If you get complaints of bad audio, splatter, etc, check your amp tuning and compressor settings, but if not resolved, QRT until the problem is corrected.
- Here is the Centennial QSO Party ARRL Suggested Frequencies. Here is the Amateur Radio Band Map.
- Contacts using 3 modes on the same frequency are not allowed... in other words, do SSB in normal SSB bands, CW in normal CW areas, and Digital in normal Digital segments.
- 60 meters will not be used.
- No repeater contacts.

Other Important Things

- Call CQ, there is not much sense in dialing around calling people, they will be looking for us.
- Stay in General portion of bands (or Tech on 10m ssb) as much as possible
    - Think about 80-M where General SSB ends at 3800 kHz but Europeans can't go above 3800 kHz. Maybe listen down?
    - Also consider 40m where Generals go down to 7175 kHz on SSB but Europe can't go above 7200 kHz. Maybe listen down?
    - Then don't forget techs only go up to 28500 kHz on SSB.
    - N2NL out on Guam wrote and said that because of Chinese automated message stations that exist on 40 between about 7.028 and 7.040, it is very difficult for Asians to hear us in there. He recommends staying below 7.027, so to stay in the General band will be tight.
- Use reasonable cw speeds, don't do 60wpm just because you can. Slow down occasionally for the casual ops.
- Don't spot yourself, there will be enough others to spot us.
- Avoid working stations by call areas if possible, but if you must use this technique to manage the pileup, rotate through them quickly(7-8 per call area), don't make the zeros wait an hour (or, START with zeros for a change!)
- Use only standard phonetics on phone
- It doesn't hurt to occasionally ask for DX Only if the band is open and stateside is loud, or to ask for mobiles/QRP only, just don't do that for more than a couple minutes.
- If pileups are really too big you can go split, UP 5 and don't spread it out too wide is probably best... just be careful not to land your pileup on a net or other busy frequency.
- Try to use the chat page W8TN has created to know who else is on and to communicate with the other ops if necessary.
- If your band “dries up” or there is no propagation anywhere, check the operating schedule for an “open band.” If you still want to operate during this time, RESERVE the time, making sure you have it correct. You should also announce that you are QSYing to the guys in the W1AW/8 chat page. Once again, we must not have 2 stations signing W1AW/8 operating on the same band/mode simultaneously. We CAN however operate stations on (for example) 20-M Phone, 20-M CW and 20-M RTTY simultaneously.

General FAQ Stuff

- How do I avoid interfering with nets? ARRL HQ has gotten some complaints about W1AW operations interfering with nets. This is somewhat expected given the size of the pileups on some bands where nets are prevalent like 20 SSB. I know I am not on the bands enough to know where the nets are and likely most of you are not either. Most Net's expect that everyone should know that, of course, they are on 14.XXX every day at 1430 UTC. This is not fair but, it is what it is and everyone will be happier if we avoid nets. The general advice is:

- Listen before you transmit and check out your listening frequency range if you are going split. If you just take the approach of being a considerate operator things should be OK 99% of the time.
- There are a couple of lists of nets that people have suggested. You can take a look at these. AC6V and N1YZ.
- Some of the major nets people have said to be on the lookout for include, but is obviously not limited to: Pacific Seafarers Net (14300), Century Club (3905, 7188/7178), Geratol (3668), TripleH (7190 @ 0700 UTC), County Hunters (14336 and many more often X36 on SSB and 56.5 on CW.), OMISS (14290), etc.
- Similarly, we should also watch out for the SSTV areas notably 14230 +/- and established DX segments like 3790-3800.
- Digital operators when operating RTTY should look out for PSK31 which is usually around .070 and JT around .075 and .076.

Any special suggestions for Digital operators?

- For those of you that want to operate the digital modes, the scheduling link has separate "Reservation" buttons for "RTTY" and "PSK31." However, we can only operate ONE digital mode per band. Please reserve BOTH Digital modes during any 2-hour blocks you wish to operate, regardless of the digital mode. Just make sure you note the utilized mode in your logging program.
- Operate RTTY and if possible at least some PSK31. Experience from other states is that 80-90% of their Digital QSO's are RTTY and the majority of the rest are PSK31. If you are capable of other digital modes give them a try as long as you are making QSO's.
- A good guide for RTTY sub-bands can be found at: RTTY Subbands
- Some hints on handling a RTTY pileup can be found at the following, and from my personal experience at YN5Z handling a RTTY pileup is tricky if you have never done it.
  - G0AZT (Scroll down to see "Eddies Commandments for the DX Station)
  - Contest RTTY Tips

What do I do when the pileup starts to build? Now won't that be fun! If you like pileups you are going to have a great time operating as W1AW/8. If you have never experienced pileups you are about to. (And for the pileup novices there is some additional material later to look at). General experience from other state operations is:

- Avoid going by call areas if at all possible! This has been the operating technique that has generated the most complaints to ARRL HQ and the other W1AW/# operations. The general reason is that you will asking the vast majority of the pileup to standby for long periods of time when they can hear you quite well. If you absolutely feel you have to thin out the pileup by going by call areas the advice I can offer you is:
  - Work no more than 7-8 stations in each call area before moving to the next one. This should let you get through all ten call areas in a half hour or less.

    - You can also throw in specific continent calls "Europe Only", "Asia Only", "DX Only" as well as asking for QRP and/or Mobiles.
    - If you have a band that has only a 30 minute window each day to some continent whereas several hours to the US, you better concentrate your operations in the 30 minutes to that continent and ask the US to standby. It is fine and helpful to explain that to the pileup: "US please standby while I work XXXXXXX. I only have a 30 minute propagation window for them and want to work them when I can. I will be back to the US soon".
    - Be aware of where you have propagation now, where you don't, and how it will be changing as you move through the call areas. Nothing gets the pileup madder than to hear you fade away while you are working some other call area that they know will still have propagation hours from now.
- You are best off going split using standard split amounts - UP 5-10 on Phone, UP 1-2 on CW and UP 1-3 on Digital. If you have never transmitted split before make sure to try it out before getting on the air.
    - Remember you will still be mobbed if you keep listening on the same split frequency. You really need to move the receive frequency around thru the pileup else you lose most of the advantage of split.
    - For those of you that have not operated split before here is some advice from KM7R: Realize if you operate split you will be doing it backwards from what almost all of us are used to when we work a DX station who themselves is operating split. In the latter case, which we are familiar with, we keep our listening frequency fixed and change our transmitting frequency to find where the DX station is listening. Since when operating split as W1AW/8 you are now the DX station you will be keeping your transmitting frequency fixed and will be changing your listening frequency to pick out a call in the pileup. I highly recommend you practice this setup on your radio before you start operating as the buttons you push, the knobs you turn, and the way you use your VFO's will be different enough to really confuse you. I've been there, done that, so I speak from experience.

- **What if someone calls me who I already have in the log but still wants to work me again?** The easiest thing is to just work them again and log them again. They may be calling you because they want an insurance contact or they were not sure about their prior QSO. So, the advice is "Work and Log all Dupes". It will be faster than trying to convince them you already worked them and have them in the log.

- **What if someone asks "How do I get your QSL card?"** QSL cards from W1ØØAW and W1AW operating portable will be sent automatically via the QSL Bureau system to each U.S .A. station who signs-up online with the ARRL to receive such cards (this form is not ready yet - please watch for an announcement from the ARRL). This is a one-time only use of the QSL Bureau for this purpose. Stations will need to have envelopes on file at their buro. QSLs will automatically be sent to stations outside the U.S.A. via the QSL Bureau as normal. QSLs may be requested directly from the ARRL also, with an SASE required for return.

Logging

I think most everyone uses logging software these days. The League is requiring that we provide them with ADI Files for uploading to LoTW and for QSL labeling. Again, HQ will be taking care of ALL QSLing and we will need to be diligent in our efforts to provide them with clean logs that are properly formatted.

- If for some reason you don't have a logging program, I recommend the N1MM Logger. If you aren't familiar with it you can get it free from the N1MM Logger web site. This program has some great features but it is highly recommended that you install it and become familiar with it.
- We will have more discussion about logging as we get closer to the event. We may even try to schedule a special training session for anyone who needs help with the logging software.
- **IMPORTANT---**
- Logs in ADIF format must be sent to Hal W8HC. I prefer that you send the final log from all operating at your Station in a single combined file at the conclusion of our week.
- **Each log needs to include the ITU Zone, CQ Zone, Grid Square (4 characters) and County for each transmitting station.**

Band by Band Notes

- 160m
  - Please don't put your operations on the even 10's on 160 or 80 meters. There are birdies in many places both US and the world, where being on the even 10's will keep the ops at the other end from hearing you. I suggest CW 1821.5 or 1826.5, Digital 1807.5 and Phone 1855 or 1865.
  - 1850 in some parts of the country (for example, New England) has a lot of ragchewers on it also and they are very possessive of the frequency
- 80m
  - Please don't put your operations on the even 10's on 160 or 80 meters. There are birdies in many places both US and the world, where being on the even 10's will keep the ops at the other end from hearing you.
  - For 80 M similarly 3526.5 for CW, 3587 for Digital and above 3800 for Phone as in keeping with the ARRL request that we stay in the General portions of the band...(OF COURSE) we need to have some Phone below 3800 for DX in Region 1 and 3
  - Commercial QRM etc is located in different portions of the bands around the world so dropping to the lower portions of 80 and 40M in particular can be a good thing. However, it has been noted that dropping lower on all bands from time to time will produce some nice pileups for at least a short while.
  - Warning: The bottom 10 kHz of 80M and bottom 4-5 kHz of 40M is full of junk in some parts of the world.

    - Japan RTTY Sub-band is 3520-3530 and 3599-3612 though most stick to the lower portion
    - Think about 80m where General Phone ends at 3800 kHz but Europeans can't go above 3800 kHz. Maybe listen down?
    - Finding an operating frequency in the General Phone portion can be hard because of the many frequencies used by the same groups every evening. The best bets seem to be around 3800-3808. This is a case where spending a high portion of time operating below the General segment is the right thing to do.
    - Beware of mode limit for Digital at 3600, don't listen above that for State Side, though JA and others may be up there.
- 40m
    - Commercial QRM etc is located in different portions of the bands around the world so dropping to the lower portions of 80 and 40M in particular can be a good thing. However, it has been noted that dropping lower on all bands from time to time will produce some nice pileups for at least a short while.
    - Warning: The bottom 10 kHz of 80M and bottom 4-5 kHz of 40M is full of junk in some parts of the world.
    - As you mentioned, 40m is a mess out here(Guam). In all honesty, the best place on 40m for JA is probably between 7012-7018. There is sometimes a sliver of space just above 7025 but the JA RTTY/Phone window starts just above the General band edge and QRM is really bad in the local evenings (NA East Coast sunrise).
    - Over the past few weeks, here is a breakdown of activity on 40CW from Asia: 7000-7010:OTH Radar, 7008-7012: Japanese JCC chasers, 7012-7018: relatively clear, 7023-7024:BY CW ragchewers, 7027 on up: JA RTTY and Phone ("pig farmer nets", not unlike 80m above 3800 stateside).
    - Japan RTTY Sub-band is 7025-7045 and 7100-7200 though most stick to the lower portion. You will not work any JAs in the 7088 +/- area
    - Also consider 40m where Generals go down to 7175 kHz on Phone but Europe can't go above 7200 kHz. Maybe listen down?
- 30m
- 20m
    - Watch out for the many nets operating in the Phone portion of the band. Make sure to listen before transmitting and if you go split check planned listening frequencies
- 17m
    - Special warning on mode limits: 18110 is UPPER limit for Digital in US. If working split listening up be sure to leave room. Also keep away from NCDXF beacon on 18110. Maybe better to listen down to be safe.
- 15m
    - I strongly urge stations to try 15m just after JA sunrise (starting 2100 GMT or so). W1AW/1 had a nice pile of JAs calling one day during the brief time I listened. Spend an hour or two on 15 until the band closes and this will probably be your best window into Asia.
      You have more opportunities to work JAs on 15 and 40 because 20m is reserved for higher class licensees in Japan.

- 12m
    - Special warning on mode limits: 24930 is UPPER limit for Digital in US. If working split listening up be sure to leave room. Also keep away from NCDXF beacon on 24930. Maybe better to listen down to be safe.
- 10m
    - Yeah, and cw on the 5's on 10M is bad because of South American (and Russian?) CB.. so 28005, 28015, etc up through 28305 are often full of CB, they sometimes also show up at 28535.
    - Don't forget US Techs only go up to 28500 kHz on Phone.
- VHF/UHF

Handling a Pileup

This is for those of you that have never been on the receiving end of a pileup. A pileup occurs when several stations are calling you at the same time and their callsigns overlap, intermix, and otherwise are hard to make out. Experience has shown that W1AW operations are, at times, creating pileups. So, first be ready for it to happen. Working pileups is a skill that is learned and developed.

Notes from K7ZO: I, K7ZO, have some experience in this on Phone and RTTY during my Nicaragua operations. Imagine 50 JAs calling you all at the same time with the same signal strength on 10 Meters Phone. I survived that and you will to.

Here is general advice:

- First and foremost stay calm and don't panic. You will figure it out, make QSO's, and keep going. Don't just spin the dial to get away from it. Remember, this is the fun part!
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** Don't let the pileup go for longer than a few seconds without asking for part of a call as the following suggestion explains. If the pileup is used to you transmitting quickly after finishing a QSO they will learn to only call once or twice then listen, if you let it go until it thins out after a minute or more they will keep calling long and longer each time until you give up.
- If you listen to the jumble of noise, at least on CW and Phone, you will hear bits and pieces of a callsign. It might be two letters, a letter and a number, just a number, or maybe even just a single letter. But even though you can't make out the whole callsign at once, you will hear parts of one. And that really becomes your first task - to just get part of a call. The idea then is to work back and forth with the other station to fill in the rest of the callsign. So, if in the pileup you hear a "Whiskey 3" respond back to the pileup with "Who is the Whiskey 3" or on CW & Digital send "W3?" Listen for the station to come back and try to get some more of the call. Perhaps now you hear "Whiskey 3 Alpha". Then say "Who is the Whiskey 3 Alpha" or "W3A?" on CW & Digital. Keep up this back and forth process until you get the whole call. In CW and Digital it is handy to program a memory or function key to send the partial callsign in the log and then the question mark. So in this case you would just enter W3 into the callsign field and then press that function key to send "W3?"... with N1MM you just enter the part of the call you hear and can

either put the ? in the entry field or press F5 then F7 to send the partial call followed by a '?'.

- Do not give your exchange until you have the other stations callsign. The other stations expect this. So, if they hear you give the exchange they will assume you have their call and are then likely to QSY before you actually get their call in the log. Remember - exchange comes **after** getting the callsign.
- Unfortunately while you are trying to get the other station's callsign everyone else is not going to standby. Some to most will, but not all. So even though you might say "Who is the Whiskey 3" many stations will keep calling. Whatever you can do, ignore the other callers and keep working to get the station's callsign that has "Whiskey 3". This is known as **Controlling the Pileup**. If you start trying to work the "Whiskey 3' but then change to the "4 November" because you hear that the pileup will soon realize it is in their best interest to just keep calling when you ask for a specific station that does not contain part of their call. This is called "**Losing control of the pileup.**" You don't want to do that.
- However, things being the way they are, at times you will find there really isn't a "Whiskey 3" out there. You can hedge your bet and try 'How about the 3?', before giving up, this gives you a quick chance to get a smaller pile to pick from. But if not then, of course, you have to move on. Often I will say, on Phone, "OK I guess there isn't a Whiskey 3 QRZ" to let the pileup know I am still in control.
- Those are the basics. And these apply whether you are working simplex or split. You move to split frequency operation when the pileup is so large and unruly that no one can hear you trying to work the other station because of all the QRM they are causing. You will know when it is time and often the pileup will tell you "Go Split, Go Split".
- Usually Digital operators on RTTY and PSK will need to go split before Phone and CW because the computer decoders can't separate out two calls from pileup. I know when I have worked RTTY pileups all I can do is just wait to see who the last guy is calling and then the decoder will give me some print I can use. Going split helps solve that problem.
- Working a pileup is a skill. It is something you learn and get better at with practice. Some of the other W1AW operations have posted videos and audios of their operators so you can get a feel for what it will be like for you. Check out:
    - Phone Pileup - see how many different calls you can hear!
    - Phone Pileup - another good Phone one from Utah, you can hear both sides of many QSO's
    - CW Pileup - a good CW one from the Utah team - you can hear both sides and the op working down the pileup
    - NC Video - a nice video from the North Carolina team on their week, including many QSO's including Digital/PSK31
- I would also suggest you listen to some pileups to get a feel for how they sound. Pretend you are the rare station all these folks are calling.
  You can find bunches of them by Googling "radio pileup recordings" and then just surfing around. Try to find ones that let you hear both sides of the QSO - transmit and receive. A couple sources of them are:
    - DX University
    - N6GQ - Look in his Recordings section and "A few select recordings from my YN2AA operation"