Bruce Kelley 2025 Soapbox Comments part 1 of 2: 1/11/2026

I believe solar events were responsible for lousy propagation. At 90 years old, I didn't have the zip to pound the key as much as I did 26 years ago, but it is still a thrill when I hear another 29'er coming through the ether - KB0ROB.

Had lots of fun, I think almost 10 years since my last BK (eek!) I will be applying for AWA membership-thanks for all you do - KC8ZQS.

Deciding to build a 1929 transmitter for this year's event was a "last minute" decision. I did not get the transmitter completed until the second weekend. Luckily, it worked great and initial testing showed 3W out at 13 Watts of input power. Not bad! Much fun was had making 4 contacts in the last few hours of the event. Looking forward to next year and other events where I can use my new rig! - KD0SVI.

This was my first year operating in the Bruce Kelley Event. My friend Steve WA3JJT graciously provided me with a #27 tube and a few other parts and I assembled a Hartley over a few weekends. I plan to make some improvements for next year! It was fun though challenging at times and made me appreciate the early amateur radio pioneers. Memorable QSOs with Maggie KE2AIZ and Steve WA3JJT - N2DA

Great fun using the homebuilt Hartley. I thought there were fewer stations on 80 meters this year, but that may have been band conditions. I sometimes fire up the Hartley for regular QSOs during the year, which often brings some humorous inquiries and comments - NI8N

I found band conditions were poor to fair with high noise levels, seemingly the after effect of the solar flares a few days prior. On Saturday evening, conditions on 40m improved briefly enabling my signal to reach the east coast. I was called by N4GJV, Ron, in NC for what promised to be a choice trans-continental contact. But the opening was short lived with QSB causing Ron to rapidly fade out before I was able to copy his power level - VA7MM.

It was fun to get the MOPA on the air again. The rig uses push-pull 45s in the Colpitts oscillator to drive a push-pull 45 power amp with 6 mA of grid current and 90 mA of plate current at 275V. I used a National SW-3 regen receiver, from Steve VE7SL's collection, for a few QSOs. Propagation was poor to the east, but we had enough 29'ers out West to make it fun - VE7CNF

Another BK with terrible low band propagation. Once again it was 20M that saved the day! The sudden propagation lift on 40M during the closing minutes was a really nice gift - VE7SL

This year's BK was another great opportunity to put my '29 gear on the air. I did have one non-AWA station inform me of my very bad chirp, key clicks and frequency wobble - a little personality to set my signal apart from the crowd. I felt that my signal had a little too much personality on 20 so I stayed off of that band and my antenna is too low for decent propagation on 80 or 160. 40 worked out fine for me - W0VLZ.

Fun as always. My first contact was a rough one, not so much for me, but I'm sure for John, N2BE, who had to follow my drifting and chirping around. I give him a lot of credit for the contact. I later found the sweet spot tap on my on Hartley coil, and things were a lot more tame - W3FJJ.

I only was able to squeeze in two hours of operating time this year. Even with that limited amount of time, I had a fantastic time working friends. Band conditions here in SE PA were very good on 80 meters, my only band. Tried to hear Steve VE7SL late at night on 80M, but no luck.

It is wonderful hearing Luke KC3SCY who I mentor, do so well this year now that his CW is up around 20 WPM - W3GMS.

I had planned to get a 1929 transmitter on the air for the better part of a decade. I got a great deal on some 27 tubes at SEA PAC and was off to the races. The single 27 draws about 40mA at 200V key-down, so 8W input. It outputs 2-3W on 80, 40, and 20. Propagation was terrible this year, but I managed to make 12 QSO's throughout the PNW. I had a blast and plan to come back next year - W7JMP.

Love this event! I was able to use the National SW-3 on the last two contacts, and the Heath SB-301 for the rest due to QRM, and how broad the SW-3 is. I use a knife switch for T/R, and a vintage key buzzer combo that looks to be in the 1929 period. Glad to see so many newcomers this year - WA3JJT

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This contest is my absolute favorite. I got my Hartley to go on 20 meters and called many CQ's but no joy. Very gusty winds each weekend swayed my antenna causing a large frequency shift. The 2nd Weekend I found stations on 40 operating on both segments 7110-7125 and also 7050-7070 - K4CHE.

The BK was tremendous fun this year--as always! The rigs behaved well, and I was able to get back onto 20M, but with much more consistency this year, thanks to Gary W8PU sharing his success with a longer, smaller diameter tank coil for his Hartley on that band. The most amazing moment was when Steve VE7SL and I were able to QSO in the final stages of the second weekend on both 20 and 40M - VA to BC. When 80 and 40M get rolling in the heat of the BK, it certainly transports the op back to a time when the airwaves were full of buzzing, chirping, and drifting and swishing to tune. I'm glad to see some new calls in the log this year - KN4RRQ.

I was very happy to participate in yet another "Bruce Kelley Memorial 1929 QSO Contest". This one goes down as another unique event possessing its own on-the-air "personality". There were three major problems for me: storm static (2nd weekend) on 80M, less on 40, AC powerline noise, which was up-and-down, and high winds, at times. I loosened my antenna coupling, which reduced my power a bit, but stabilized my signal. My gratitude goes out to all those intrepid ops who showed up and dealt with whatever this event could throw at them - N2BE.

After I already worked anyone I could hear, and who could hear me, on 80M, 40M, and 160M, in desperation, and against my better judgement, I put the 20M coil in the PP Hartley sporting a pair of '27s. I wasn't planning on getting on 20M at all because on that band the rig has two problems: chirp and drift, with LOTS of both. I was able to make 2 QSOs on 20: KC8ZQS and WK3A. Thanks to both Matt and Bruce for their patience and for chasing me up and down the band. Now I'm just waiting for my "pink ticket" to arrive in the mail! - NE1S.

Switched to 20 meters and started working stations, with a 10 element LPA on top of the mountain I was ready to fill up my 20 meter log sheet quickly then Murphy's Law hit.After the contest I found the problem, the remote relay in the MFJ remote antenna switch for my LPA went bad so the antenna wasn't switching in! Had a wonderful time, great event with great operators - WA8UEG.

It's great running the old-time oscillators, listening to people wonder how in the heck you put such trashy signals on the air! But this is how it was in 1929. I got to put my '29 (AKA as a 1921 Hartley) on air, which was written up in the August 2002 issue of the OTB (Old Timer's Bulletin) now the AWA Journal. It only puts out about a watt. Second was my '29

push-pull TNT, also powered by the same two type 10 tubes. Third is a ’29 Hartley using a single 211 tube. I’ve been doing the BK for over 30 years now - WB2AWQ.