



North Fulton Amateur Radio League NFARL eNEWS

August 2018

***Over 40 Years Promoting
Service | Friendship | Education | Fun***

www.nfarl.org



NFARL August Meeting Program

Digital Modes: Lessons Learned

Presented by Bob Hensey, K4VBM

Bob is one of our more active NFARL club members on the airwaves. He is an expert in digital mode operation, and has been highly focused on the FT8 mode. He is also the leading station from Georgia in the 2018 ARRL Grid Square Chase. He will be sharing his knowledge on some of the basics of digital operation and how the digital applications can be utilized to enhance the amateur radio experience. This is especially timely and relevant during the current low phase of the solar cycle.

He will be presenting a program this month on "Digital Modes: Lessons Learned" at the NFARL club meeting on Tuesday, August 21st.



Bob Hensey - K4VBM

First Place Congratulations Are In Order!

QCWA and NFARL club member Terry Joyner won First Place in the 2018 QCWA QSO party.

This is third time Terry has placed first. He placed first in the phone category in 2015, 2016 and now in 2018.

Congratulations Terry !

NFARL Upcoming Events and Dates

- **Every Sunday — NFARES net** - 8:30 PM - 147.06 MHz (+) PL 100
All licensed Hams are welcome, you do not need to be an ARES member!
- **Every Monday — Tech Talk** - 8:30 PM - 145.47 MHz (-) PL 100
NFARL's flagship technical based "non check-in" net. The net is always better when using the web based chat room but Internet is not required to join the net. Check NFARL Nets [website](#) for more information and "how to".
- **Every Wednesday — Hungry Hams Lunch Bunch** - 11:15 AM
Meet with your fellow club members every Wednesday!
Slope's BBQ, 34 East Crossville Road, Roswell.
- **Every Thursday — YL OP Net** – 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM 145.47 MHz (-) PL 100
Check NFARL Nets [website](#) for "how to."
OM's (guys) are welcome to listen in to this YL net.
Great opportunity to get your YL's on the radio!
- **Every Saturday — Royal Order of the Olde Geezers (ROOG) Lodge No. 1**
9:00 AM - Reveille Café, 2960 Shallowford Road, Marietta (at Sandy Plains and Shallowford). Everyone is welcome: You don't have to be "old" or a "geezer" to join this breakfast get-together.
- **Second Saturday – VE Testing** - 10:00 AM
NFARL provides Amateur (Ham) Radio test sessions on the second Saturday of each month - Walk-ins are welcome, no appointment is necessary. All exam modules are offered at all sessions.
Location: [Alpharetta Adult Activity Center at North Park](#)
13450 Cogburn Road, Alpharetta, GA 30004
Please check our [website](#) for more information.
- **Second Tuesday — NFARES Meeting** - 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Fellowship Bible Church, 480 W. Crossville Road, Roswell.
Check [NFARES.org](#) for more information.
- **Third Tuesday — NFARL Club Meeting** - **August 21, 2018**, 7:30 PM.
Pre-meeting activities begin at 7:00PM.
Location: [Alpharetta Adult Activity Center at North Park](#)
13450 Cogburn Road, Alpharetta, GA 30004
Program: "Operating Digital Modes - Lessons Learned"
by Bob Hensey, K4VBM
- **Fourth Tuesday – NFARL Executive Team Meeting**
August 28, 2018, 7:00 PM
Location: [Arbor Terrace at Crabapple](#)
12200 Crabapple Road, Alpharetta, GA 30004
Meetings are open to all NFARL members. Space is available on a first arrival basis. Please contact the [President](#) to ensure available space.



North Fulton Amateur Radio League

Invites All NFARL Members
to a



Ham Radio Island Picnic !

When : Saturday August 25th, 2018, 8:00 AM until dark

Where: Lake Lanier's West Bank Park, 3500 Buford Dam Road

Rain or Shine! Huge Covered Pavilion Reserved!

**Hot dogs, hamburgers, soft drinks and water will be
provided. The grills go hot at 12:00 noon!**

*We will be operating at least three radio stations
from this island location all day long
as we participate in the*

US ISLANDS QSO PARTY

and we'll be submitting our contest log to the

US ISLANDS AWARDS PROGRAM

**Join us for one hour, for lunch or for the entire day!
Operating slots will be available for anyone that would
like to join in the radio fun.**

**If you plan to join us for lunch please R.S.V.P. to Mark, KJ4YM,
kj4ym@bellsouth.net, by August 22nd so we'll know how much
food and drink to have available!**

See You On The Island!

Want Some Reason To Get On The Air? / Jim Stafford, W4QO

Let's face it, you probably need some motivation to get on HF. Maybe it's to chat (ragchew) but usually folks are looking for a little bit more. I've said for a long time that you (we) need a goal. Maybe it's Worked All States, maybe it's to join your friends on 75M for the morning "aches and pains" roundtable, maybe it's to work DX and get 100, 200 or 300 countries. All of those are good but perhaps there are some that you may not have heard of but would like to try.

SOUTHCARS – There are a number of "service nets" that meet midday every day and SouthCARS is one of them. There are also MidCARS, EastCARS, etc. South Coast Amateur Radio Service (SouthCars) is there for us to make friends and get an answer to your call. Test your radio or understand propagation. They meet on 7.251 MHz each day at officially 8AM to 1PM but there are

hams monitoring the frequency at other times as well. They have



South Coast Amateur Radio Service

Fifty One Years of Excellence to the Amateur Radio Community



a Traders net on Wednesday. But here is what I find useful – they put emphasis on MOBILES. I've reinstalled my HF rig in my truck and as I'm out and about, say 10AM plus/minus, I can see if I can hear the Net Control Station (NCS) and answer when he/she asks for mobile check ins. They do assign numbers so after you listen for a while, go to their website: <http://southcars.com/> Get a number (you do not need one to check in) and give your suffix ONLY one time when asked to check in. They make a fun thing out of it by having you get "on the blue bus" with your number .. again, not necessary, but fun!

3905 Century Club – This is another net that is very friendly. This net started out meeting on 3.905 MHz. but now they are all over the bands. They are technically a Worked All States net. If you participate, you agree to send QSL cards (don't have one? Drop me an email – w4qo@arrl.net). They are more "rule based" than SouthCARS and they have a newcomer page at: <http://www.3905ccn.com/files/pdf/3905info.pdf> It's another fun thing to do and get your WAS while making friends. 3905 also has a lot of other awards. While SouthCARS is all SSB, 3905 includes CW and digital now. Take a look thru <http://www.3905ccn.com/> This might be a motivation to "get on the air" ..GOTA

OMISS – Here is another group that many hams enjoy. It is also a net oriented toward WAS, and has over 10,000 members. For some reason, the website seems "under construction" from my shack: www.omiss.net There you'll find schedules of nets. You need to work 2 members and pay a single membership fee of \$7 for life. One of their easy nets to work is daily at 9PM on 7.185 MHz. NFARL member Steve, AB4TT, is a OMISS member.



SKCC – The Straight Key Century Club (SKCC) is a good way to get comfortable with CW. The organization is very interested in helping SLOW CW folks improve their skills. Yes, they do use only straight (mechanical such as bug/sideswiper) keys but if you use one you will find it easy to shift between the SK and a paddle. SKCC is a real gung-ho bunch. Check out their extensive website: www.skccgroup.com There are over 18,000 members and it's FREE! If you are the slightest bit interested in CW and own a straight key please sign up. This club has a very simple

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"protocol" to exchange numbers and make a QSO (contact). There is a SKED page (<https://sked.skccgroup.com/>) site. The club has numerous awards for working members as well as WAS, etc. I am member #1281.

Ten-Ten International – This is one that encourages 10 meter operation to "keep the band open". And it's a favorite of many in the NFARL club. The local chapter called New South has an on the air net on Sunday PM at 1930Z (that's 3:30 in Summer and 2:30 in Winter). This net meets on 28.410 Mhz and club member Chaz W4GKZ is the long time NCS. On the net (or anytime when 10M is open and you can work folks) ask for their 10-10 number. When you have 10 callsigns worked and logged you may apply for your own 10-10 number. It costs \$15 to sign up. There are many contests and activities to warm up the band. Check it out at www.ten-ten.org for details and the application form. My 10-10 number is #14628 (from decades ago!)

QRP – This is more of a category than a single club. There are dozens of them. Locally, there is the North GA QRP Club – www.nogaqrp.org There are QRP clubs all over the country and the world. Most of you know that I'm an avid QRPer as they say. Many clubs have magazines of



their own such as the QRP Amateur Radio Club, Int'l; also called QRP ARCI – www.qrparci.org This international club has over 18,000 members. If you operate or would like to operate QRP (5 watts CW-Digital/ 10 watts PEP SSB), you should join. The local North GA club meets the second Saturday of each month at the Shepherd Center in Downtown ATL. Carpools form from the NFARL area so ask around. There are many opportunities to operate QRP on the HF bands. Check the QRP "watering holes" for active stations - <http://www.qrparci.org/qrp-update/qrp-frequency>

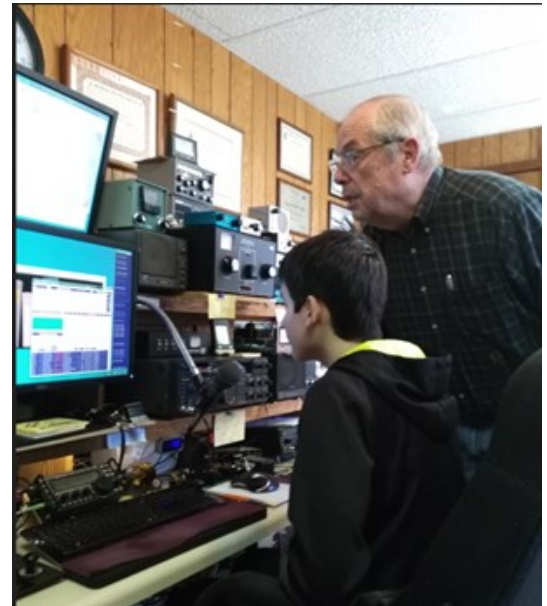
or call CQ QRP. There are many contests for QRP "only" or as a sub-section of the major contests – check Bruce's 8 day Contest Calendar for this week's contests and note how many have QRP categories. <http://www.contestcalendar.com> As info, I operate all my FT8 (a rather small number of contacts) at 5 watts. I have 35 states and 34 countries on 6 continents.

Lastly. I know many of you are familiar with this net – Tech Talk sponsored by our own NFARL club. It meets Monday evenings at 8:30 PM. But here are some things you may not know. Our Sweat Mtn repeaters are all tied together for the net. You can use Echolink on your computer or smart phone to check in – node #560686. But here is what's unique – it is NOT a check in net (that is, unless you are not near a computer at net time, such as mobile). Otherwise, you simply make yourself known in the chat room – <https://nfarl.dodropin.org/>. A list of those in the chat room constitutes the "check in" group. Steven, KW4HQ, is our amazing, well versed, NCS and all things technical are discussed. There are a lot of Tips/Hacks and many links/pix posted in the chat room to answer the questions posed. Try it! Why not join us wherever you are!

Road To A New HF Ham Shack / Diane Pete, KN4KSD

Back in March Jim Stafford, W4QO, invited my family and I to join him at his ham shack to experience the ARRL DX Phone contest. Colby and I were not yet licensed at the time and this was our first exposure to HF radios, antennas, contesting and contesting software. After a crash course from Jim he said it was time to get on the air.

Colby pulled up his chair to the radio, pressed the foot pedal, and threw out "Kilo 4 Japan!" After a few moments, we heard someone acknowledge the callsign and before you know it Colby had made his first HF contact to a ham in French Guiana! After a little more time on the radio, he also reached Germany, France, Croatia, Belgium, Belize, and the Cayman Islands.



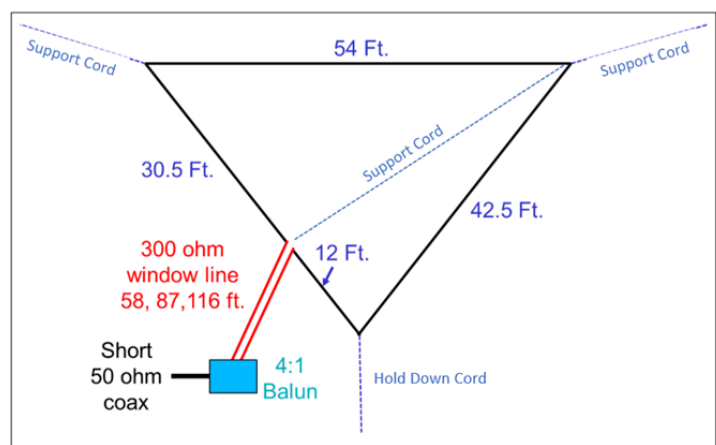
My son Landon also made some HF contacts, and tried to break through a pileup to reach Reunion Island, off the coast of Madagascar, but there was just too much competition so he moved on.

I got on the air as well making contacts with Europe including Ireland, Italy and Switzerland. We were hooked! From that day onward, we knew we wanted to get licensed and setup our own HF station.

We were very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with Chuck Catledge, AE4CW, and John Tramontanis, N4TOL, on our antenna design and installation. Chuck and John came to our house to scout the location to see what kind of space we had available. Our yard has quite a few trees around its perimeter, and we're not in a Homeowners Association, so this gave us a lot of options. Chuck and John recommended building a Side-Fed Inverted Delta Loop.

The main components for the antenna were:

Side-Fed Inverted Delta Loop



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- ◆ DX Engineering 160M Dipole Kit for \$89
- ◆ Balun Designs Model 4113tw, a 4:1 Current Balun 1.5 – 54MHz 3kW for \$71
- ◆ CobraBraid 500' 3/16" black Dacron polyester – two spools for \$80 from eBay
- ◆ Two 2½" Everbilt clothesline pulleys from Home Depot for \$5

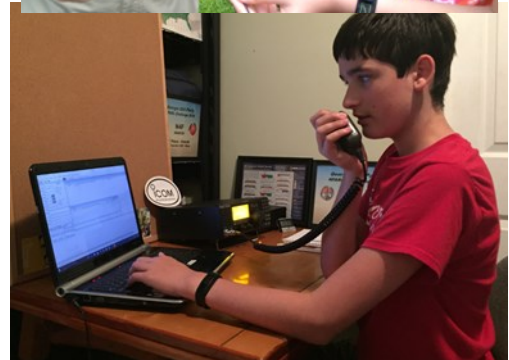


Chuck led the antenna building project and talked us through the steps in his process. We laid out the wire, measured twice (or even three times) to ensure we had the measurements correct, then cut, crimped, soldered, and tied. The tennis ball launcher was a highlight and Chuck masterfully got the ball over the top of two tall pines on the first attempts. The end of one rope has a ten pound weight at the bottom and we've seen it go up in the air 10+ feet during a heavy wind that made the pine tree sway.

We hoisted the antenna into place so that it ran over the house, and we worked the feedline into the house through the roof's ridge vent. We added padding to the wire where it meets the roof to ensure that any wind movement wouldn't damage the wire. The wire goes through the attic to our new radio room which is part of our utility/storage room. We've setup a desk for our new (to us) IC-718 and a new (to us) Astron SS-25 power supply.



We are happy to report that we've been able to tune in hams from 10 meters all the way down to 160 meters! Our current Technician licenses limit us to operate on only a portion of 10 Meters, but there we've made contact with California, Texas, and Massachusetts. We've started listening in to other bands which has been really interesting. We seem to pick up a lot of folks over in Texas, but we also managed to hear a ham operating from Venezuela. One evening around 8pm we were on 20M and heard a ham about 4,000 miles away in in Wales! He was working a big pileup with a lot of North American hams who were really excited to make the connection. We are looking forward to upgrading to General to join the fun.



Mobile Rig Noise Problem/ Tim Lemmon, WK4U

I thought you all would enjoy this, as it may apply to you. Here's why.

Lately in my car I've been hearing all kinds of popping and static out of my dual-band mobile radio when it's turned on. Even with the squelch closed, I'd still hear noises out of the speaker every so often. I checked all RF and audio connections and everything seemed fine. The radio works fine when I use it, but the noises were new. Oh well, I guess the radio is developing an intermittent problem. Time to think about retiring it to the work bench - until I figured it out...



Tim WK4U

With the new hands free law here in Georgia, I mounted a goose neck on the floor that holds my phone near my right knee. I'm very happy with it. The noise is coming from my phone when it transmits on higher power. My dual-band radio is inches from the phone now. Move the phone away from the radio and the noise goes away.

So if you hear strange noises from YOUR mobile radio, it might be your phone's new location in the car.

ARRL Announces the 2018 NFARL Scholarship/ John Kludt, K4SQC

Every year a portion of the proceeds from HamJam is donated to the ARRL Scholarship Fund in the name of the North Fulton Amateur Radio League.

This year the NFARL Scholarship was awarded by the ARRL to Alpharetta resident and NFARL member Alexandra Kemp WD4BDQ. In a handwritten note to NFARL Alexandra writes:

"I want to thank you for selecting me as your recipient of the NFARL Scholarship for 2018-2019. I will be working on my Master of Science Aeronautical degree this year and grateful that I could get this scholarship from my local ham community.

*73,
Alexandra Kemp WD4BDQ"*



Steve and Alexandra Kemp

The President, Board of Directors, and the HamJam community are happy to be able to lend their support to Alexandra's academic pursuits. Alexandra is the daughter of long time NFARL member Stephen Kemp, WB4CVB.

Friedrichshafen HamFest / Dave Moss, KE4UW

I have a daughter living in Munich, Germany, and a brand-new granddaughter born in January of this year. So I had an XYL-approved excuse for visiting Germany in June. I can't honestly say the timing was all coincidental, but while I was in Germany and the XYL was occupied with the new granddaughter, I took a few days to visit Friedrichshafen and the HamRadio Hamfest - sort of the Dayton Hamvention for Europe.

The HamRadio event is held at a relatively new (or at least really well maintained) facility called the Messe. It is near the airport in Friedrichshafen (which also has a train station), and there are busses that run from the Messe through town (or an express straight to downtown Friedrichshafen) so you can get most anywhere by bus. The facility and the orchestration of the event are really top-notch. Everything I saw was done very professionally. Things were arranged so I never saw a long line for anything - not to buy tickets, not at the food vendors, and not really at the vendors in the main hall. They have figured out how many vendors/cashiers/etc. are needed, and have them staffed when needed to keep lines short. (I hope the folks in the Hamvention booth were paying attention to both the facility and the organization!) There are many, many food vendors to choose from with a lot of local specialties. It is Germany, so beer for breakfast was not an unusual sight.



The HamRadio event occupied four large halls at the Messe. The main (largest) hall had the manufacturers (including Icom, Kenwood, Yaesu, and Elecraft), most of the commercial vendors, and many national amateur radio societies (including ARRL).

Most of the national society booths were a gathering place for hams from that country, which was a concept new to me and really pretty neat. There were places for hams from Sweden, Finland (saw Marti Laine there), Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Greece, UK, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, France, and even Thailand to come hang out, with some displays and maybe snacks or drinks to share some of their culture with others. Pretty neat. ARRL should do the same, but their booth was almost 100 percent focused on selling (books and memberships) and QSL card checking. Some of the UK hams I had dinner with commented that they felt if you weren't buying a membership, the ARRL folks weren't interested in getting to know you. Too bad.



One hall was for forums, and another two were for the flea market. I would guess that each of the flea market halls was about the size of the Huntsville HamFest. One was full, the other about $\frac{3}{4}$ full with a few empty tables at the back.

A fifth hall was a Makers Fair event, that was included with the HamRadio ticket. I took one quick spin through it, but didn't spend much time at the Makers Fair. It was Germany, though, so the first big exhibit as you went in was on brewing beer. An essential skill in Germany when the SHTF.

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I didn't see anything new from the big vendors at HamRadio that wasn't also shown at Dayton—not a big surprise, as they are only a couple weeks apart.

There were a few European vendors that I had never seen before at a HamFest. One was Fritzell antennas. Rumors of their demise several years ago were apparently somewhat exaggerated. In addition to their Cadillac wire antennas they have a pretty full line of yagis that appear to be built like a brick outhouse. Optibeam was also there, with a number of yagis also pretty rugged.



Hilberling was there with a transceiver you could have for only about 14K euros, with a matching amp for another 6K euros.



There were several vendors in the flea market area that were selling some pretty high-tech stuff—remote antenna switches, relays that can be controlled via the internet, switch boxes for vertical phased arrays, K9AY arrays, and stacked yagis, etc.



The SPE Expert amplifier folks were there with the Italian guy who is the designer. He was demonstrating how you can run low power into one SPE amp, then the output of one amp into another amp, and he says "look here" and points to a watt meter showing just about 5KW output. I told him that must be the "Italian kilowatt" we have heard so much about. He didn't think it was funny.

There was way more VHF/UHF equipment for sale than I have ever seen before at a HamFest. There were maybe 10 vendors selling various 6m and up antennas (yagis, HB9CV designs, verticals, log periodics), a pretty good selection of radios and antennas for 4m, several folks selling transverters, and at least a half dozen vendors with their own amplifiers (most legal limit) for 6m, 4m, 2m, and 440, and a few not quite legal limit for some higher bands. One guy had a 3KW 2m amp. I didn't notice, but maybe it was from Italy.

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SOTA-type operations must be pretty popular in Europe, as there were many folks selling some sort of mast and/or tripod for portable antenna supports, and lots of qrp radios and accessories.

There was a lot of military surplus in the flea market as one might expect—but most was NOT US military stuff. I did see one of the AB-155/GRA4 40-foot masts, but there were many others that were German or Russian. In fact there was a fair amount of Russian surplus radio equipment. A bunch of folks were selling pretty QRO-looking portable surplus wire antenna setups (with hand winder) that must have been like #4 or #6 stranded wire. Maybe for the Italian kilowatts.



There was a surprising (compared to US hamfests) focus on youth at HamRadio. There was a large display of radio for scouting (including some pretty complex lashed-wood pioneering project towers for JOTA setups). There was a youth area in the DARC area (sort of like ARRL Expo at Dayton) that had hands-on things to do. An electronics museum had some easy to build projects for youths. A group of Austrians had a display of finished youth projects that had been worked on for prior year youths on the air YOTA events, including a qrp transmitter and a half-wave end-fed antenna on an old phone cord wider, with the balun and SO-239 built into the winder box. The hands-on things and youth displays were full of kids from maybe 8-18.



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There were a lot of kits available for things like qrp radios, qro amplifiers (HF and VHF/UHF), and accessories. RF Kits was there, of course. Many others were more basic.

I ran into only one person that I knew - W4AX Mack McCormick. He was helping in the Elecraft booth. He saw my SEDXC name badge and flagged me down.

The Zeppelin hanger is across the street from the Messe. I took advantage of the opportunity to go on a short 30 minute ride - what a fantastic experience! Guess who sponsors the zeppelin?

The logistics for getting around Friedrichshafen are pretty easy to figure out. You can fly direct to Friedrichshafen, but only from a few places (Frankfurt seemed to be the only flights from within Germany). The airport is pretty small. The German train system is pretty good - I took the train from Munich to Friedrichshafen, with one change of trains on the way. There is a train station at the airport (near Messe) and another downtown. Busses run from downtown to the Messe. I stayed at a Holiday Inn Express that was very near the Messe (I could see it from the hotel window). Getting to the HamFest was a 20 minute walk (or two stops down on the bus that stops right in front of the hotel). Taxis are available too. It was about 8 Euros to go from the hotel to the airport. Friedrichshafen is a tourist town on the Bodensee (Lake Constance), with enough things to do to make it a destination on its own. There are museums (zeppelin and Dornier), boat rides/rentals, beautiful views across the water to the Swiss Alps, etc. Pretty much everywhere I went, once folks figure out you speak English, you can communicate just fine. I did learn enough German to say "ein bier, bitte".



So, that was my take on Friedrichshafen. I had a good time, and got to see some new and interesting things. Would I go again? I don't know that I would fly to Germany just to go to the HamFest, but I'd go again if I had some other reason to be going to Europe (like a baby granddaughter in Munich, or even a vacation elsewhere in EU). Or maybe if I was going again I'd find something else to do or see while I was in Europe (like this time). I suspect if the timing is right, I'd do it again.

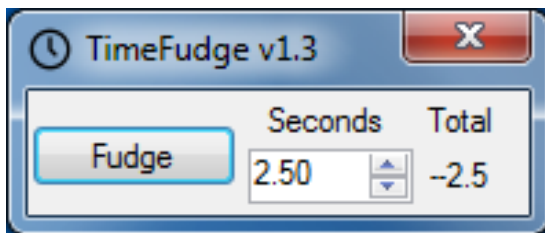
Dave KE4UW

Digital Op Station Not Time Synced? / Bob Hensey, K4VBM

What to do?

I'm sure if you have operated JT65, JT9, or FT8, you have seen more than one station calling CQ and you tried to answer him/her but never get a response after multiple tries and checking that no one else is trying to contact him. Then you look closer at the software display and realize that his DT (Delta Time = deviance from the atomic time clock) is -2.5 seconds. WOW! No wonder he/she can't hear you – his/her computer clock is not synced to the standard atomic clock time. Everyone is supposed to know that they need to have something like Meinberg NTP to synchronize their PC clock for some digital modes.

Well, I discovered a really cool program called TimeFudge that allows you to actually Temporarily change your PC clock a certain amount. The author is W9MDB, and you can download the latest version of this cool little program from his QRZ.com web page. After installing, when you run it you will see this:



Click to Add, CTRL-Click to Subtract, ALT-Click resets to starting point.

Since I want to match the -2.5 DT, I would CTRL-Click the 'Fudge' button, moving my PC clock back 2.5 seconds. Then I could make a contact with the station that used to have DT -2.5 but now I match him perfectly (maybe just send him a Free Message like "SYNC UR CLK". Then I can click the 'Fudge' button to add the 2.5 seconds back to my clock. How cool is that? Now go try it!

NOTE: Most time sync programs and/or services will eventually override your 'fudge' as they are programmed to make sure your PC clock stays in perfect sync with the atomic time every so often. The sync interval is normally configurable.

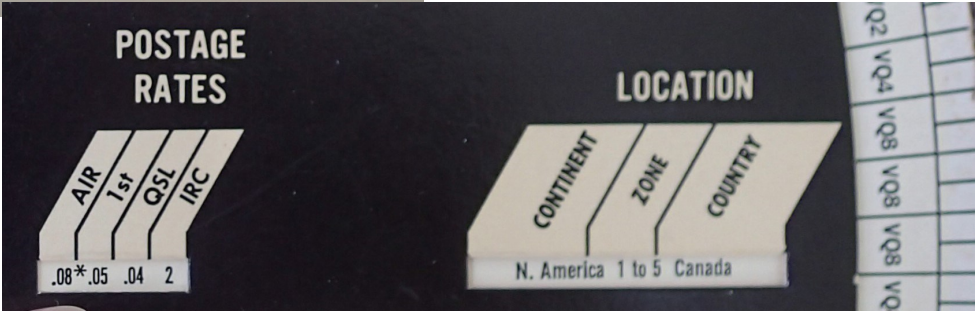
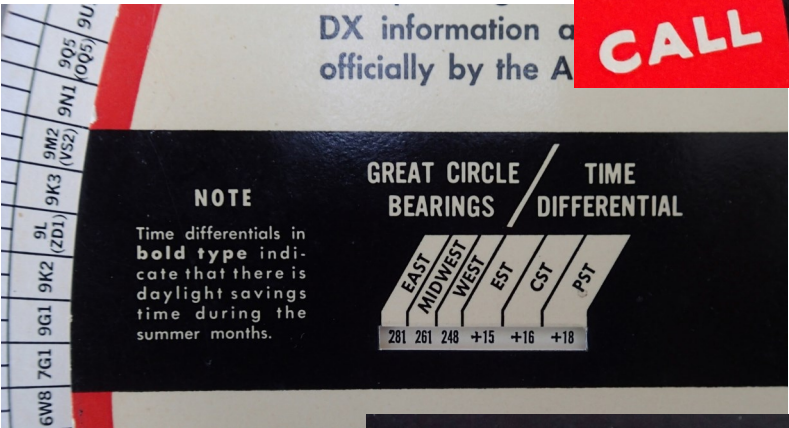
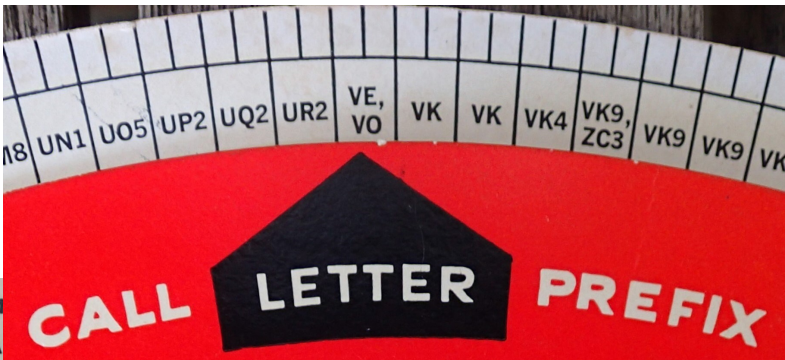
W9OIP's Second OP by Electro Voice/ Terry Joyner, W4YBV

A lot of new hams today have asked me "how did you look up a DX station back in the good old day's" (the 1960's).

I tell them it was all part of the fun of ham radio back then (no computers). In 1963 W9OIP's SECOND OP arrived on the market. It was an operating aid designed to make DX information available for all countries that were officially recognized by the Amateur Societies of the world.

By using the prefix of your DX contact it gave you the local beam heading, country, time differential, all postage rates (air, 1st class, QSL IRC's) DX Zone, Country QSO record, Country QSL Record, and over 160 World QSL Bureaus.

So "back in the good old days" you could just put your contact's call letter prefix in the top of the wheel and you could see all the information you needed to log the contact.



For quite some time I have been a subscriber to the excellent newsletter the "K9YA Telegraph". It is a free newsletter available to all on a subscription basis. It has a controlled distribution list so one needs to sign up for it (a link is included below).

Phillip Cala-Lazar, K9PL, is the editor and he has written many wonderful articles that I have enjoyed over the years. I thought this one was of great interest especially with the recent explosion of FT8 "quickie" QSO's. I am not against FT8 and I feel it has its place as a mode especially with band conditions as they are. And yes, I do use FT8, to me it is like a contest exchange where you give your call 5 9 (9) and a TU for the contact. There are many naysayers who say it is not "real" ham radio. But then is Echolink real ham radio? To each their own. Many thanks to K9PL and the K9YA Telegraph for permission to use the article. I encourage all to sign up and enjoy each monthly issue as I have.

Here is the subscription link: http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/listinfo/k9ya_telegraph

*The following is from the publication "K9YA Telegraph "
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Hi... Good-Bye

In Defense of Quickie QSOs

By Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

A long string of quickie QSOs that fill several pages, equaling nearly 100 QSOs in the station log, occasioned this feuilleton.

A recent QSO was initiated shortly before I pulled the big switch for the evening. During one last excursion of the 40-meter band I heard a strong station repeatedly calling CQ on the nearly empty band, with no takers. I decided to make one more QSO for the day and replied.

He came right back and we shared good signal reports, QTHs and names, rather amazingly unimpaired by QRM, QRN or QSB. Return exchange was 73 and TNX. Total time of QSO, two minutes, I was at first a bit perplexed, but ultimately content. After all, it was to be the last QSO of the day and about time to hit the sack, so, mission accomplished, one more contact in the log and a bit more activity on a seemingly unoccupied amateur radio band.

Now, a caveat before I launch this brief discourse, a short (pleasant) QSO is better than no QSO. It's not that I haven't earned my share of rag chewer club certificates including ARRL, FISTS and SPAR, so I'm very pleased and prefer to rag chew when I can. However, more often than not, conditions and other operators' desires offer few opportunities leading to lengthy conversations.

The whys and wherefores of the apparent upsurge of Hi-Good-bye QSOs have been discussed ad infinitum online, on the air and between ham buddies at lunch. All these factions hold their own views to be true.

Observing the state of amateur radio HF activity over the past few years I've reached the conclusion that short QSOs are a good thing and can meet many of our operating objectives

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including the necessity to keep our bands occupied and busy.

Short QSOs are good for:

- Time restrictions—Bedtime, before work or a meal, jumping on for a quick QSO break.
- Band conditions—Considering poor current and foreseeable band conditions, epidemic QRM, QRN and QSB, a short QSO is often all that can be managed.
- Squeezing in the last or only QSO of the day—to sate that indefinable feeling that something's missing without a daily QSO, "a day without sunshine..." etc.
- Working toward awards and certificates, not excluding contest QSOs—short by diktat—A multitude of clubs and groups offer achievement awards and certificates in recognition of the number of members worked. Occasionally these exchanges lead to lengthier QSOs, but more often, a short cheery exchange of numbers.
- QRP QSOs—Think band conditions stated above—multiplied.
- Testing new and repaired gear on the air—CQ TEST, short contacts and signal reports to assess performance and repairs done right.
- New and retread operators with key or mic fright—Some new and, apparently, seasoned ops may not have learned the art of extended QSOs and are just getting the hang of Morse or voice skills and procedures.

For at least the last couple of decades, most everyone is multi-tasking, or claiming to be multi-tasking, on smart phones, tablets and other devices. That facility led to a world where dialogue was often conducted by tweets in a confining and limiting 140 characters. Tweets—now extended to 280 characters—the Twitter version of a rag chew?

In the past amateur radio publications decried empty, template QSOs filled with double-dashes, NIL, QRU? and their phone equivalents to stretch out QSOs to what was prescribed as the classic QSO "tied with a bow." So, better to enjoy a quick formulaic QSO of signal reports, QTHs, names and happy salutations and move on to another, than to sweat out a laborious one.

"Shave and a Haircut, Two Bits."

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