



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association for August 2012



FOXBORO



August 24, 25, and 26 is Boxboro! 2012, the ARRL New England Convention. There is so much to do at Boxboro, starting with the DX Dinner on Friday night which features Don Greenbaum N1DG telling about the VP8ORK South Orkney Island DXExpedition. Saturday night is the Grand Banquet featuring Fox 61 Meteorologist Geoff Foxx, K1GF!

Out forums and talk schedule is second to none!

VE exams and DXCC card checking are available, and of course there's the outdoor flea market and indoor exhibit area with all the major manufacturers and many others. Don't forget the Wouff Hong ceremony at midnight on Saturday.

There are hourly prizes, and some big prizes at the end. Visit:

<http://www.boxboro.org> to purchase tickets in advance!



Doing digital modes made very simple

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

This past winter while I was a snowbird in sunny southern California I set up a small HF station using my trusty Yaesu FT-897D and a random length wire (Marconi) antenna attached to a wooden fence. I was having pretty good success operating CW and sideband and even working the occasional DX station. One afternoon while tuning across the twenty-meter band I landed on 14070 kHz and there was the telltale bird chirping twitter sound of PSK transmissions.

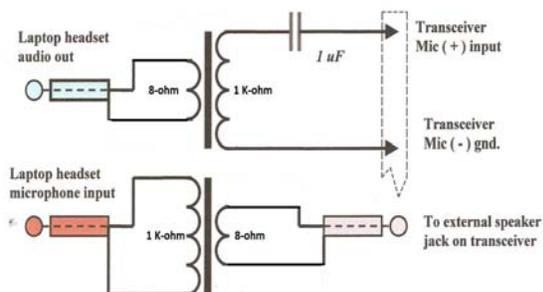
I thought it would be fun to do some digital mode operating while there but my little notebook PC did not have a serial port. It did have two USB ports that could be used but I did not bring along my USB to serial converter cable or my soundcard interface box - oh well. A thought went racing through my head, --a rare event,-- why not use the built-in microphone in my little notebook PC to pick up the sound coming from my rigs speaker and decode it.

Digipan 2.0 was quickly downloaded onto the notebook from the Internet and I placed the notebook close to the transceiver and darn if it didn't start to decode signals and print them on the screen. Now I wanted to operate PSK but how do I get a keying function without the keying circuit in my interface box? Then it hit me, "VOX." Since PSK and other digital modes operate at the audio level, why not use the AFSK audio generated in the PSK program to key the transceiver via the VOX function in my FT-897D.

I wanted to attach the notebook computer to the 897D with a couple of audio cables with the appropriate audio and microphone plugs. I headed off to the local Radio Shack store in Poway, California to get the parts I needed. At home (ME) in my soundcard interface box I used two 600:600 ohm audio isolation transformers available at the RS store (237-1734). At the Shack I found a short either-net cable with the same plug that fits the Yaesu microphone jack (MH31) there too. It is a good idea to use audio isolation transformers to keep from having audio ground loop and hum problems introduced into the transceiver. I placed the transformer and capacitor in a small plastic Radio Shack project box.

If you employ this interface technique your microphone plug pin-out may be different on your rig. On the standard 8-pin microphone jack most likely pins 1 and 7 are the Mic(+) and Mic(-) pins. (K-wood ICOM, etc.)

The circuit below shows the simple hook-up between the computer soundcard/audio jacks and the microphone and speaker jacks on the transceiver. The 1uF capacitor is used to pass audio but block and DC voltages that may exist on the microphone input circuit of the transceiver.



If your local Radio Shack no longer carries the small 600:600 audio isolation transformers you can substitute their 1000-ohm to 8-ohm audio output transformer (273-1380). Connect the 8-ohm transformer leads to the audio outputs on the laptop and external speaker jack on the transceiver and the 1K-ohm transformer leads to the two microphone leads. This output transformer should work fine in place of the isolation transformer.

With your laptop now connected to the transceiver you should make the following transmit and receive audio adjustments:

1. With your PSK digital program running on your laptop, connect the transceivers external speaker jack to the laptop's microphone input jack as shown above. Make sure the rig is tuned to the PSK portion of the band (i.e., 14068.5 kHz etc.).
2. Adjust the volume level of the transceiver so you see a clean waterfall presentation of received signals on your

computer screen. If you have the volume to high you will see the signals OK but it will appear like you are looking at them through a snowstorm. You should start to see text floating across your screen.

3. Connect the laptop headphone speaker (audio) out to the microphone input on your transceiver as shown in the drawing.
4. Turn on the VOX function in your transceiver. Key on the PSK program transmit (TX) function and you should see your transceiver start to transmit. Quickly switch back to receive (Rx) in your computer PSK program.
5. You will have to adjust your transceivers VOX gain control so that your transceiver transmits with TX audio from the program.
6. Now adjust the audio output level of the laptop so that it keys the VOX circuit. Adjust your laptop volume and rig microphone gain so that you transmit about 20 to 30 watts of RF output with "NO" ALC meter movement on the transceiver, that will provide a clean signal.

You are now ready to start making QSOs in PSK, TTY, and other digital modes.

73, WIZE



THREE RIVERS HAMFEST, AUG. 11

The Piscataquis ARC will sponsor the annual Three Rivers Hamfest on August 11 from 8:00 a.m. to noon at the American Legion Post, 18 West Main St., Milo. Planned activities include VE exams and a fox hunt. Breakfast and luncheon concessions will be provided by the Post American Legion Auxiliary. Door prizes, to be drawn at noon, include an MFJ antenna analyzer and a Peet weather station. Talk-in on the club's on the 147.105 (pl 103.5 hz). Admission is \$5.00. For more info., visit the PARC website at k1pq.org.



Parkview Golf Tournament

Reported by Steve Kercel, AA4AK

On July 10, for the third year in a row, we provided Midcoast CERT/ARES provided communications support to Parkview Adventist Medical Center for their 11th Annual Classic Golf Tournament. Our thanks go out to Harry, N1TTT, Marjorie, KX1I, Fran, K1BBJ, Tom, N7CHG, Dwight, KA1PTT, Dan, N5AGG, and Steve, AA4AK. What is remarkable about this event is that we consistently have a good turnout despite the fact that it is held on a weekday. It shows what good food and nearly perfect weather can do.



We were there bright and early at 7:00 am. Here we see our intrepid EC, Harry, N1TTT, plotting strategy with Parkview's Cheryl Monet, Coordinator of the tournament. It turns out that it takes quite a bit of preliminary activity to get a hundred golfers on the course and starting at the same time, and Parkview did a masterful job. The golfing started at 8:30 am and ran to a bit past 2:30 pm. Needless to say, those of us who were hole-watching had quite a bit of quiet time to contemplate the scene. For many of us, with extremely hectic schedules, six hours of serenity (mostly) was actually quite welcome.



What was most encouraging about this event was that we dealt smoothly with an entirely new management team this year from Parkview. As with many institutions in these turbulent times, Parkview suffers a rather high turnover in its senior leadership positions. The individuals that we dealt with had heard of ham radio before, and were aware of our relationship with Parkview, but they had never actually seen us perform before. They had high expectations, and we met them. Clearly, we have an excellent institutional relationship with Parkview, and it continues to thrive even as we deal with new staff. Again, thanks to all.



July Sagadahoc LEPC meeting with mans best friend

Reported by Steve Kercel, AA4AK

We had an unusually large turnout by Midcoast CERT/ARES members at the July 10 meeting of the Sagadahoc Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). A BBQ dinner and a K9 demonstration have that effect. The BBQ dinner hit a snag when the grill that John Starbird was using stopped working. However, our "prepared for anything" EC, Harry, N1TTT, happened to have a spare grill in his jump kit. (No joke!) The BBQ dinner was excellent.



The highlight of the meeting was a K9 demonstration by Bath City police Officer Michelle Small, and her dogs, Keylo and Aegis. Here we see Keylo in an encounter with our own Tom Wallace, N7CHG.



The dog wins. The only surprise was how quickly she won. Tom ended up no worse for wear (from the dog). Tom's XYL witnessed the whole episode. He is not saying what her reaction was after they got home.



At the age of 10½ (73 in dog years) Keylo will reach retirement age in a few months.

Michelle, who raised Aegis from a pup, is hoping that Aegis will take well to police training.



Michelle will keep us posted on Aegis' progress and Keylo's retirement. We wish them all our heartfelt thanks, safety and good luck in their vital service to the community.



Beach to Beacon run needs help

Several Midcoast ARES/MARA members will be involved with the Beach to Beacon run on August 4. Ivan, N10XA says more help is needed,

N10XA, is organizing the ham support for B2B, and would appreciate all the MARA help that he can get. It is worth recalling that Ivan and the Andy club have been generous in their support of MARA activities. If you can, please help out in a very worthwhile it would be appreciated. If you can help contact John Goren, K1JJS at k1jjs@arrl.net and he can get info to Ivan, N10XA.

Note: there are no other community events scheduled for the mid coast for August that we will be helping with. Tour de Merrymeeting Bay has been canceled and we have advised the Maine Hospice that their scheduled bike event is unsafe due to the throngs of folks heading to the air show in Brunswick that same day.

