SQUELCH TALES

Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association

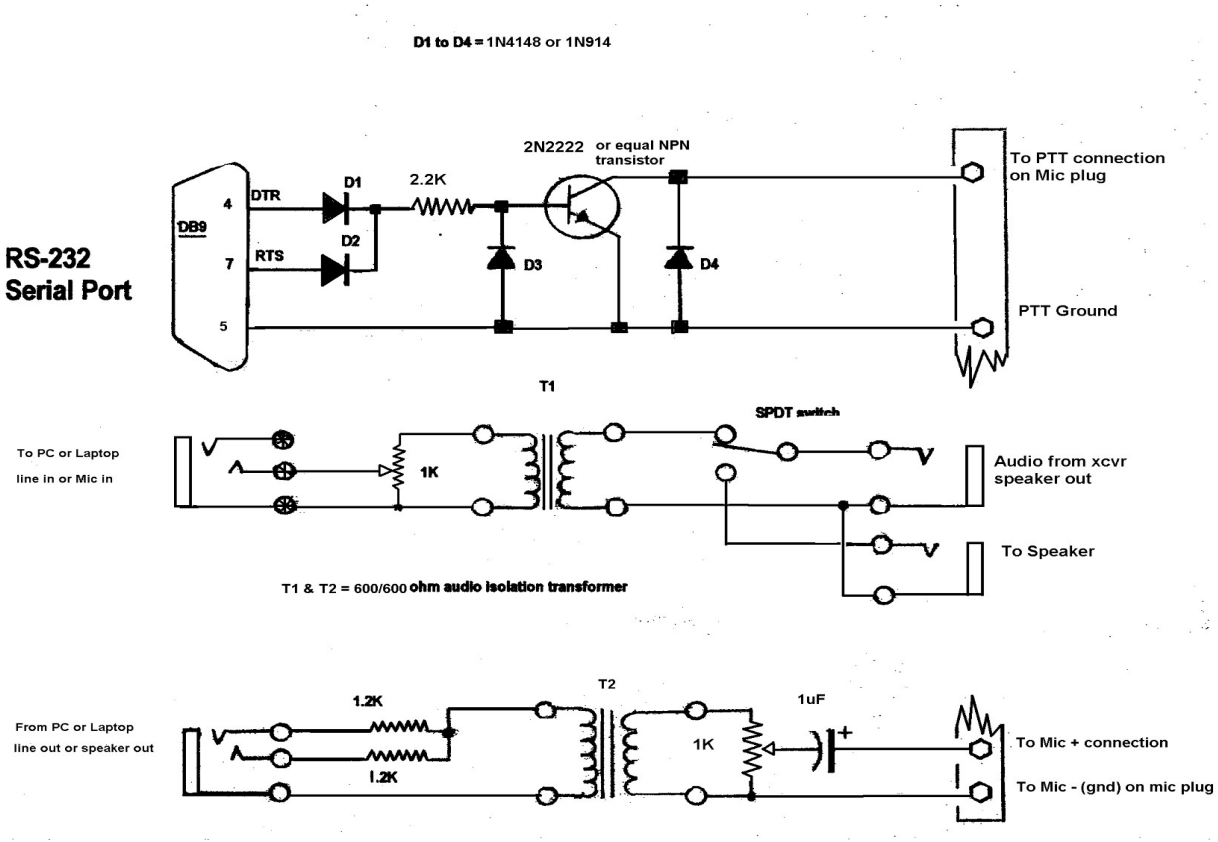
for January 2026

DIGITAL MODE INTERFACE FOR OLDER TRANSCIVERS

By Bruce Randall, W1ZE

With the newer transceivers, post 2020, the need for a digital mode interface device may not be needed. Just a USB to USB cable and digital program like WSJT-x, FLDigi etc is all you need to get you started operating in the digital modes. However for folks that are happy with an older transceiver that does not have a USB or data jack you will need a device to connect your PC or laptop to your radio, referred to as a Sound Card Interface.

Soundcard interface devices are still being sold commercially by West Mountian and other firms for around $100+. However if you would like to try your hand at making your own interface device with a few available part, the following diagram could make it easy to get you rolling. I have used this circuit to make a successful interface between my PC and older Icom IC-746Pro and other older rigs and it has works very well for me.



I assembled my interface circuit onto a small small 2 x 3 inch perf project board and placed it in a plastic project box slightly bigger than the circuit board.

The keying circuit takes it PTT control from the RS232 serial port on the computer. All the diodes used in the circuit are 1N4148s or 1N914s. The transistor can be any general purpose NPN such as a 2N3904, 2N2222, etc..

I salvaged two small 600:600 ohm audio isolation transformers of some old scrapped out computer boards but I have purfhased a 10 pack of EI-14 600:600 Audio Transformer from Amazon for under $10. The other resistors, capacitors are all common value parts. The two 10K pots can be selected to suite the builders assembly arrangement.

As a footnote, I have made over a thousand FT8, FT9 and PSK digital QSO using this exact interface. Not bad for about $30 worth of parts.

73 & Happy New Year, W1ZE

MARA MEMBERS CELEBRATE ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

During the afternoon of Saturday December 27th a good group of MARA members and their sigificient others gathered at the Sea Dog Brewing Company restaurant in Topsham for the annual Holiday Season Year End lunch. A good and happy time was had by all.

A treat for all of them was the return of Chuck Bullett, W1AEK and his lovely XYL Lori. Chuck just retired from CBS in San Francisco and returned to Maine and his new home in Portland. Chuck was one of the original founders members of the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association back in 1980.

SWAP-N-TRADE

Squelch Tales newsletter, will be happy to post readers ham radio related equipment items for sale or trade. Send your item with description to Bruce Randall/W1ZE (jbrandall43@comcast.net).

ANYTONE AT-6666 10-Meter all-mode transceiver

60-watts in SSB. & yes it will operate on 11-meters. It is in like new condition with box, manual, programming cable & hardware. $125.00 + shipping if you want it mailed to you. POC = Bruce, W1ZE in Phippsburg at jbrandall43@comcast.net

From the newsletter editor

Bruce Randall, W1ZE

Since 1998 I have been assisting the MARA by putting together hopefully a newsie and informative newsletter

Several months ago I asked the MARA executive board to think about recruiting a new editor to continue the newsletter because at 83 I was getting burned out trying to find content that would be interesting to the readers.

The board asked me to please continue putting out the newsletter and maybe they could find

someone to assist me in the process, maybe an assistant editor or helper.

I was amazed that one of the Associations new members and a new ham Kevin, W1SEA of Phippsburg volunteered to help. With that I said, "OK, I'll hang in there."

What would help the new editing team would be more content contributors with stories, building projects, technical articles, etc. to make Squelch Tales interesting publication.

Squelch Tales readers we encourage you input.

73, Bruce .

FCC Allocates 60-Meter World-Wide Amateur Band Approved at WRC-15; Continues Amateur Use of Four Additional 60-Meter Channels, and Updates 420 MHz Coordination Information

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on December 9, 2025, released a long-awaited Report and Order adopting a new amateur radio spectrum allocation in the 60-meter band that was approved for world-wide use on a secondary basis in the WRC-15 (World Radiocommunication Conference 2015) *Final Acts*. The Commission also agreed with a petition from ARRL The National Association for Amateur Radio® to continue to allow amateur operations on four existing 60-meter channels outside the international allocation with a full 100 watts. The new rules will go into effect 30 days after publication in the *Federal Register*, when amateurs may then begin using the allocation.

Specifically, the Commission allocated 5351.5 - 5366.5 kHz (60 meters) to the amateur service on a secondary basis with a permitted power of 9.15 watts ERP. The Commission also authorized amateurs to continue using four existing channels outside of the 5351.5 - 5366.5 kHz band centered on 5332, 5348, 5373, and 5405 kHz on a secondary basis with a permitted power of 100 watts ERP. There are no antenna restrictions but antenna gain must be used to calculate ERP.

The 60-meter allocation is available to amateurs holding a General Class or above license. The maximum permissible signal bandwidth is 2.8 kHz.

Amateurs are cautioned that this allocation is strictly on a secondary basis, and amateurs must avoid interfering with non-amateur stations using this spectrum. This obligation includes the responsibility to monitor for such stations using appropriate receiver bandwidths. The FCC emphasized that "allowing amateur operations in this band while fully protecting incumbent primary Federal operations is our priority, and even intermittent interference in this band could jeopardize important Federal operations."

The Commission left open ARRL's 2017 Petition for Rulemaking to implement this WRC allocation (RM-11785), stating that "we expect the Commission may address any necessary power adjustments for the new 15 kilohertz international allocation in that proceeding." ARRL will be observing operations in the new band to evaluate the effect of the 9.15-watt limit and already has been monitoring the regulations and experiences of amateurs in other countries.

Finally, in the same Report and Order, the FCC updated 420 - 450 MHz coordination and contact information for geographic areas where the peak envelope power (PEP) of amateur stations operating is generally limited to 50 watts. There was no substantive change to the areas covered by the power limitation.