

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Fishing for QSOs

Of Tiddlers and Tunas

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

You never know where the kickstart for an article will come from. This one arose from a pleasant series of exchanges with an e-mail correspondent. We started out discussing Morse and the quality thereof we've recently heard on-air.

He was concerned about all the run-together, poorly spaced, CQs he has been hearing and how difficult, if not impossible, it is to copy and whether to even attempt a reply. There are both pros and cons on this topic and I am on the side of answering even tough to copy fists. As long as I can copy a station's callsign, I will reply.

On the plus side you'll be helping a fellow operator get needed on-air practice and you may get to enjoy a conversation with an operator whose keying is hampered by the disabilities of age, injury or a congenital problem. That said, poor keying often inhibits, or prevents, ragchewing, but at a minimum, the most basic QSO constituents: RST, QTH and name can be exchanged, leading to a complete, if not completely satisfactory, QSO.

Our discourse continued on to the process of initiating QSOs and CQ'ing. I always consider CQ'ing the Ham Radio version of fishing. You know you'll get something with fins (aside from the errant and proverbial rubber boot), but it may be a tiddler or a tuna.

My introduction to Amateur Radio practice and protocol came primarily from primordial

ARRL books and pamphlets apparently written contemporaneously with the reign of the "Old Man," at headquarters and revised, ever so slightly, every decade or so. These texts dictated the "law" of "3X3," i.e., send CQ three times followed by "de" and your callsign three times—then listen—and I followed their dictates to the letter. Of course, in olden, crystal-controlled, Novice times it also meant tuning up and down the band while listening for a reply. After almost thirty years of ye olde 3X3 I've progressed to a more fashionable 2X2 figuring it was time to streamline my operating practice.

I am not a frequent CQ'er; doing it only about 30 percent of the time I'm on the air and looking for a QSO. There are sufficient ops looking for a chat to save me the effort of using my newly fashionable 2X2. Moreover, I usually

do more "reading the mail" than talking—there are some good yarns available for the listening.

Some pleasant surprises resulting from calling CQ include: FISTS members in Japan and Australia and nearby Hams who have grown into longtime

*"...it's the
personalities,
not the
geographical
entities..."*

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My Lucky Dayton Trip

Steve Wolfcale, N9WAT



N9WAT Accepting Prize
(Photo by VA3KV)

For Dayton this year, unlike previous visits, I had no specific purchase or information gathering plans so I took a very relaxed approach. Arriving a bit later than normal Thursday night, I did not feel I had to be in the first wave when the doors opened Friday; my Dayton partner, AAØBP, agreed. Consequently, we arrived at Salem Mall around 9:30 or so and were able to immediately board a bus to Hara Arena.

Shuttle buses have worked very well at Hamvention since the return to using the local RTA.

Arriving at Hara with preordered tickets, we went directly to the flea market. Cruising the aisles, it was apparent attendance was down again this year. The weather was cool, overcast and misty Friday morning, but there was no rain or high winds and the weather held out all day. Without doubt a decent day by Hamvention standards, however, the threat of rain may have kept a few people away. Later in the afternoon, we went inside to check the FISTS booth and picked up a K7QO Code Course. As usual, there were always three or four people querying the FISTS members manning the booth. We checked a couple of other exhibits and called it a day around 4:00, as we were both tired from our work schedules earlier in the week. Saturday was beautiful and we took our time viewing the rest of the flea market. Moving inside, I snapped a picture of the main arena at mid-afternoon. You can see (photo on page 3) by the amount of open space that attendance was down; in past years this area was very difficult to walk through.

Inside, too, there were fewer vendors—Fair Radio Sales was conspicuously absent. The League had a

large “ARRL Expo” area at the rear of the ballroom area that occupied quite a bit of real estate. On the plus side, it was easier to move around even when pulling a boatanchor cart.

I was looking for a counter timer and thinking about a soldering station, but wasn’t in the mood to buy Saturday so I left Hamvention with only a large bunch of heat-shrink tubing and a couple of bundles of alligator clip jumper cables.

Hamspeak

While discussing potential purchases with flea market vendors, it occurred to me that translation is needed regarding equipment condition. Having purchased one or two pieces of equipment per year at Dayton, I thought I would take a stab at it. Here is how to interpret the vendor’s answer to your question, “Does it work?”

“Does it work?”

I just got it from (fill in anything here) and I haven’t even plugged it in.

This means that for sure he plugged it in and either nothing happened or something horrible happens such as smoke, shrieking noise, etc.



Hamvention Flea Market Area



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I plugged it in and it lights up but I haven't tested it.

You can be assured that it lights up, however, the chances of it working are about the same as you hitting the Power Ball.

I checked it out and it works.

For a receiver: it lights up and the speaker made noise that resembled a station.

For a transmitter: it lights up and a wattmeter deflected somewhat when he hit the key.

For a transceiver: probably the same as the receiver. If it receives it will transmit... right?

For a signal generator: it lights up and has at least some output, however distorted, on one range.

For a... well, you get the idea.

Don't get me wrong; I have never had a bad experience buying used equipment at the flea market. Given the low prices, you just need a little bit of skepticism and you will do fine. The one unit I purchased last year that didn't work was so cheap compared to a working unit that I could probably sell it on eBay as a parts unit for more than I paid—this was a “lights up, but haven't tested” unit.

Reach Partner

Saturday night while watching *Sky King* episodes on my laptop and sipping some liquid grape, my cell phone rang my callsign in Morse (see: *K9YA Telegraph*, Vol.1, Issue 5, May 2004, “Beep, Beep! Making your Cell Phone Ring in

“...I like this group because they are always building something.”



Military Radio Enthusiast with Hand Crank Generator

Morse code.”). Grabbing the phone I glanced at the unfamiliar area code and number and thought it was a wrong number; when the caller asked, “N9WAT?” I knew it wasn't. Jim Stafford, W4QO, event chairman of Four Days in May, was calling to tell me I won their grand prize raffle! During our quick trip inside Friday, I swung by the QRP ARCI table to see what they were up to. While I have never tried QRP, I like this group because they are always building something. I purchased a raffle ticket to support them and don't remember checking out the prize. The caller said I had won an Elecraft KX1 and other items and it would be best if I picked them up. Within minutes, we were on our way to the Holiday Inn on I-675.

Arriving at a large tent behind the Holiday Inn, I was greeted by the group president and event chairman and surrounded by a half-dozen people snapping their digital cameras. After the photo session, we took a while to examine the fine homemade equipment still on display from an earlier judging. Ingenuity and quality workmanship was apparent in all the entries. After about an hour of chatting with everyone we gathered up the goodies and headed back to our hotel. The prize consisted of the KX1 with paddle, 30-meter and auto-tuner options; a Pacific Antenna PAC 12 antenna kit; a Hitech IC-1012 fast charger with 12 AA NiCad batteries rated 2700 mAh; and a Coleman dome tent, folding “easy chair” and camp table for the rig. The ARCI QRP group assembled a prize that provided all the major components to enjoy radio outdoors in traditional QRP minimalist fashion.

Sunday morning I awoke with renewed enthusiasm to go back to Hamvention and pick up that soldering station I was thinking about. After talking to a very helpful vendor in the flea market area I purchased

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Main Arena



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Ham Radio and Scouting

Art Steinke, WB9JKZ, trustee, W9BSA



Formal Instruction

I mmersed in a deep sleep and dreaming of that elusive DX station I have been trying work for many years, I was abruptly awakened by a loud noise. Sitting up in my cot and rubbing my eyes I glanced at the alarm clock and saw it was 5 a.m. Wondering what woke me up, I stepped outside the large army tent that housed us and saw a line of buses and semi-trailers as far as the eye could see. I recalled this was the day when over 35,000 scouts

and 6,000 adults were to arrive at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia, for the Boy Scout National Jamboree.

At the Jamboree, scouts are introduced to many vocations and hobbies and just plain have fun. Some of the activities offered are Ham Radio via ARS K2BSA and the radio merit badge and licensing classes.

Seven days earlier, I arrived at the Jamboree site to set up K2BSA. Our staff consisted of 42 Ham Radio operators from the United States; two from Japan and one from Australia. We had 44 adult scouters with experience not only in Hamming, but more importantly, with experience in the scouting program, there were also some licensed youth scouter operators on staff.

Seven days prior to the arrival of the scouts, we began to set up our display area. The main tent was the hub of our activities. We had three SSB/CW stations; one digital station, to handle most digital modes; and slow-scan and fast-scan TV stations. In addition, we erected a satellite station and our own 2-meter repeater.

The antenna system consisted of mono-band beams for 40- through 10-meters. Of course, we needed to

install them on the 60-foot utility poles the Corps of Engineers provided for us some years ago. For 80-meters, we erected a simple dipole between two of the poles.

As some of us prepared the main station area, the staff that teaches the radio merit badge readied their equipment in the merit badge midway area where over 80 different merit badges were offered. Imagine, hundreds of scouts sitting in an area preparing for the radio merit badge. Another part of our staff was readying areas for Amateur Radio licensing classes and VE exams.

About six hours after the scouts arrived we were deluged with visitors to the station area. Our main goal was to introduce Ham Radio to the scouts. We took groups of eight through the station area and described what Ham Radio is all about. Visitors took part in QSO's with Hams around the country, and

at times, the world. There were hidden transmitter hunts and the Mars Rover; a radio-controlled vehicle equipped with a TV camera. Scouts could maneuver the Mars Rover through a series of obstacles using a remote TV monitor for visual guidance. Our station was open 24-hours-a-day, with scouts visiting during daytime hours and Ham Radio operators the rest of

the day. We worked all states and over 100 countries during the Jamboree.

"Our main goal was to introduce Ham Radio to the scouts."



Captive Audience of Future Hams



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Our 2-meter repeater was in constant operation; we had over 200 scouts and adults sign in to our daily net. The repeater was also used for Jamboree information, weather reports and emergency communications backup should a problem arise. In the evening, we had more than 100 check-ins for general information and staff questions. During the day we had one staff member monitor the repeater for operations' information requests.

We also had arrangements with NASA and AMSAT for a direct contact with the International Space Station. It was early morning and several hundred scouts and adults come to the main station area to hear the space station communications. Twenty scouts had the opportunity to interview U.S. astronaut, Susan Helms. We heard her calling us just as the space station rose over the horizon. It was a great high for all present to hear Susan speak with the scouts.

Major Ham Radio manufacturers provided most of the radio equipment and station accessories to K2BSA. The ARRL sent one of their staff, a scouter

himself, to assist our operations. They also donated hundreds of manuals and reference books for our classes. Looking back: 783 scouts worked on the radio merit badge, and 501 of them earned it; 182 people participated in the VE sessions with 73 new Technicians, 11 General and three Extra Class successfully passed. The K2BSA staff felt we had a very successful Jamboree and more importantly, brought Ham Radio to the thousands of scout and adult visitors to our station displays.

For the 2001 Jamboree I put together a slide-show CD of our entire operations, and I will be doing the same this year. If interested, contact me for more information on obtaining the CD. This year, the Jamboree will be held July 22, through August 3. We invite you to listen for K2BSA and give us a call. ■



On Air Demonstrations



Erecting One of Many Antennas for the National Jamboree



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They Could Have & Should Have

Perils of Vintage Radio

Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB/W9BRD

Collectors of antique Amateur Radio gear often open up Pandora's box when they bring home golden oldies. Even newer products captured at flea markets for bargain prices may contain unpleasant surprises.

Most Hams of earlier days often undertook their own repairs and modifications. It was, after all, *Amateur Radio*. When a clever circuit revision showed up in the latest journal they gave it a shot. Though now a fading tradition, it was basic to the game.

Manufacturers must have realized this, but it was of little importance to their marketing objective. Wouldn't it have been neat if they had tucked a small multi-page maintenance log into each unit before shipping? No big deal, a mere addendum to the usual operating manual and schematic.

This would have encouraged future owners to carefully track tube changes, wiring revisions, etc., as meticulously as they kept their QSO and DX records. The data would follow equipment through successive owners, providing service information and general pedigree.

I was occasionally as guilty as the next OM in paperwork carelessness, I must admit. W9BRD's Collins 32V-3 buffer-doubler stage was revised for increased

drive on 28 MHz. I was too rushed at the time to fully document the modification. Years later, when disposing of the rig, I had an awful time physically retracing my work. Scribbly doodles on diagrams can be more confusing than helpful.

You're lucky to find a tempting monster whose innards have been untouched since the original sale. "Mint condition in original carton" does not guarantee absence of flaws, of course. No factory is always perfect. I used a virgin National NC-101 that did the job well enough, but didn't seem to have the pep of others I tried. Tube replacement was no help. For a start, I began changing aging by-pass capacitors. In the process, I discovered that three important cathode resistors were 10,000 ohms instead of the specified 1,000 ohms. A bad morning on the assembly line, or a bad night before?

That affirmed the validity of a long-held personal pet peeve. Simple two- or three-stage transmitters were usually built with switchable metering that checked various currents flowing throughout. Multistage top-grade receivers, on the other hand, displayed only hard-wired S-meters. A cheap six-point rotary switch and a few feet of additional hook-up wire would have nailed that lazy NC-101 at the pre-shipment quality-control bench. And, what an aid to future troubleshooting! ■

Liverpool's Skyline to Flash Morse Code Messages

Internet users will soon be able to initiate the transmission of Morse code messages via powerful light beacons mounted on some Liverpool, UK buildings. According to a May 30, 2005 article in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the Morse code beacon scheme is planned as part of the city's River of Light program where many of Merseyside's most important buildings are bathed in light.

Using Morse code, messages will be sent from building to building to celebrate important events and to transmit messages from visitors to the River of Light Web site. The beams will switch from red to blue when Morse code is transmitted.

From the *Daily Post* article:

"Principal Lighting Designer Clare Grindey said: 'The beacons will be a linking across the entire Mersey Waterfront area. They'll stretch across four key areas—Halton, Wirral, Sefton and Liverpool.' Each beacon will be able to send messages in Morse format either flowing along the chain in a sequence, or simultaneously.

"Control of the messages and lights will be Web-based and anyone with access to the Internet can send a message.

SEE - LIVERPOOL MORSE ON PAGE 7

a new Edsyn temperature-controlled soldering station. I also purchased a used 100 MHz Tektronix counter timer for about 20% less than the Friday/Saturday price. If you get to Dayton try to attend Sunday morning, by 9:30 people were pulling out of the flea market area abandoning their treasures, some still marked with their "rock bottom" price.

This year we didn't stop to look at the jetsam, but headed back to the rooms to pack up our goodies and begin our return trip. Departing Dayton around noon, we encountered a very light sprinkle. Overall, the weather this year was about an eight on a scale of 10 and, in spite of my reported drop in attendance, the ability to move freely through the entire event was very nice and more relaxing than previous years. You should try it next year! ■

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"Miss Grindey added: 'Webcams at key locations will enable people from say, Runcorn, to see what is happening in Southport.'

"The beacons can also generate the same message at the same time, for example if they wanted to unite to celebrate a particular event.

"Two cathedrals, the Three Graces and some of Liverpool's architectural gems are expected to sign up to the 'Morse Code' project." ■

MORSE TIPS & QUIPS



AFTER YOU LEARN MORSE CODE,
BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'LL BECOME
A CW HOUND!

friends. In keeping with the fishing analogy, years ago, my first, big, surprise catch literally arose from the sea, the Caribbean Sea, when the signal of a station in the Netherlands Antilles was snared by my storm window antenna and popped out of the Argonaut 509. The operator was the manager of a seaside resort and his QSL card included a photo of the facility.

Of course, it's the personalities, not the geographical entities that make a truly indelible impression. I have been fortunate to count among my CQ responses a number of Ham Radio luminaries including Prose Walker, W4BW (SK), and Rod Newkirk, W9BRD/VA3ZBB.

Prose was an indefatigable CW operator, my ragchew with him ran a pleasurable two-and-a-half hours when I, nearly 40 years his junior, asked for a rest break. We rejoined the conversation an hour later. According to the ARRL's Web site, he, at one point, "...headed up the FCC's Amateur and Citizens Division, which handled regulatory and licensing functions for more than a million FCC licensees" and was the "FCC official some consider the godfather of the so-called 'WARC bands'—30, 17 and 12 meters."

Rod, a member of the CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame, wrote *QST*'s "How's DX" column for decades. Now, we at the *K9YA Telegraph* are privileged to offer his articles to another generation of Ham Radio operators.

One great thing about fishing with a CQ, you don't have to worry yourself with a bewildering choice of fresh or saltwater tackle, lures and baits. Just chum the surface with a few calls and the "fish" will rise to take it. ■



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