



The QUARAE



Volume 19 Issue 2

Editor John Lindvay

February 2018

January Minutes

There was no official meeting in January due to a lack of quorum. Only a few people made it to the Red Cross building due to an Erie snow white out just like December. Frank Etzler K8WQT gave a presentation of WPSR. We still need a president for the club. If you are interested please call me at 490-0253 or e-mail me at jlindvay@msn.com.

Editor Says

We need the software and operating manual for the .82 repeater. If anyone knows where they are at, please contact me. Right now, we use a couple of GE radios that belong to WA3MKT. Rick has been more than generous with this equipment and it is time we gave it back to Rick and install the ICOM radios that we spent so much money. The problem is that someone has the manuals for the radios and the controllers. Who that is, no one seems to know.

I have been getting phone calls expressing an interest in amateur radio. Unfortunately the persons calling have all been from the Meadville area. I would like to give them a Meadville ham's name and phone number but I do not know how to contact anyone there. I could use some help in this endeavor.

Kevin and I want to have field day somewhere else than at the club house. I would like some place where we could interact with the public. Perry Square? Gridley Park? The Niagara? The Bayfront Maritime Center/ Anyone have any recommendations?

VE Exams are on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9 AM. There will be no VE Exam in May due to the

Dayton Hamvention. **WATTSBURG WIRELESS ASSOCIATION**. 9333 Tate Road. Room 114.

Use the south east entrance next to the playground.

Please arrive early to fill out paper work. You need a form of ID with your picture on it and \$15 to take the test.



My goal for 2017 was to lose 10 pounds. Only 15 to go.

FT8

By John Lindvay

Sometimes Saturday morning I go to breakfast with Joe KA3CPV at the Wattsburg Club. I entered the radio room and saw Ron KB3QBB operating the ICOM and his computer. Ron is known for his expertise in PSK31. I saw he was operating something different. It was called FT8. I looked at his computer screen and saw all kinds of activity. The screen would change every 15 seconds. Ron would say every minute, "There is another one." In



Radio Association of Erie Club Meeting – Thursday February 1st at the Red Cross Bldg. located at 4961 Pittsburgh Ave.

7:00 PM- General Meeting
Program: Vintage ARRL video

this day of zero sunspots and very poor propagation, Ron was knocking out a new QSO almost every minute, with nothing more than a key press on his laptop.

I heard WA3MKT and some other hams talking about it. Rick used it for a short while. His only comment was, “You could contact other hams and not have to say anything.” Mike, WB3DEL, said after operating a short time, he probably would make WAS and DXCC. I took me a whole year to make WAS on CW.

I was intrigued. I wanted to try it. I went to the WSJT-X web site and downloaded WSJT-X. I also downloaded a clock synchronization program called Dimension 4. You need to sync your computer to have the same time as everybody else. After a couple of phone calls from Mike Brumberger who helped me set up the program, I was able to complete two contacts with Mike. He is EN91. I tried all the bands except 160 meters. I do not have an antenna. Nothing was heard on 6 meters, 10 meters, and 15 meters. I was quite surprised to make contacts on 17 meters, 20 meters 30 meters, 40 meters and 80 meters. I was flabbergasted to make contacts on 80 meters since my 80 meter double bazooka was laying on the ground. After a week of making contacts with the push of a key on my key board, I guess I am bored. It was fun for a while.

“If you have or are thinking of diving into the FT8 digi world I was made aware via a [Dutch blogger Paul PAOK](#) (his brand new call) of this amazing [FT8 operating guide by Gary Hinson ZL2ifb](#). This guide is for the seasoned FT8 op, the beginner and those who are not sure if they really want to give it a go but would like to learn what it's all about. I won't go on and on about the guide..... just read it and find out for yourselves, it's a great addition to anyone interested or operating FT8.” by [Mike VE3WDM](#)

A recent study has found women who carry a little extra weight live longer than men who mention it.

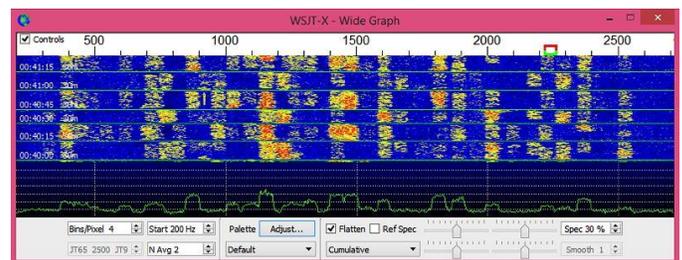
FT-8: I'm not really feeling the magic

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Partly out of curiosity and partly because my friend Jeff, KE9V, shamed me into it, I setup my Signalink interface, downloaded WSJT-X from <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjsx.html> and started operating FT-8, the latest “shiny object” (as the ARRL dubbed it) from the K1JT team. As you probably know, this mode has really caught on with the digital crowd, and the waterfall is chock full of FT-8 signals. Part of the reason for this is that it has some of the characteristics of JT-65, but is not as excruciatingly slow..

Over the past couple of days, I've made 32 QSOs, including a couple of DX contacts. It's been fun to try something new, but to be honest, I'm not really feeling the magic.

Part of it is that I don't feel like I'm really doing anything. I downloaded the software, plugged in my digital interface, fooled around with the settings a bit, and then, the computer started making contacts. I have to click a few on-screen controls to make contacts, but even that's a step that could be easily programmed in by the WSJT-X developers. (In fact, I wonder why they haven't done that already!)



CAPTION: WSJT-X screenshot. The sequence of transmissions in the Rx Frequency window comprises a contact.

Take a look at the screenshot above to see how a typical contact happens. When a CQ appears in the “Band Activity” window, you double click on it. When you do this, the software begins listening for signals on that frequency. In this case, I double-clicked on the CQ by WA9THI. When I double-

clicked on the CQ, the program began decoding signals on that frequency and display the transmissions in the “Rx Frequency” window.

Then, I clicked on “Enable TX” and the program began the contact sequence, sending “WA9THI KB6NU EN82.” EN82 is my grid designator. This is shown as the first yellow line in the Rx Frequency window. The transmissions that I sent are highlighted in yellow. The transmissions sent by WA9THI are highlighted in red.

The sequence of transmissions shown there comprise a complete contact, and that whole process takes less than two minutes. And, once WA9THI received my first transmission, the sequence is all automatic. You just sit there and watch the two computers talk to one another.

While I can certainly appreciate the thought and the work that went into the design of the protocol and programming to implement it, sitting and watching the computers talk to one another just doesn't excite me. On the other hand, if you're one of those guys who wants to make contacts, but doesn't really want to talk to anyone, than this is the mode for you!

Here are a few more notes about FT-8 operation:

- Not surprisingly, synchronizing your computer with the other stations computer is very important. To do that, you need to get your computer to use the network time protocol (NTP). I failed to do this when I first installed WSJT-X, and while my waterfall was full of FT-8 signals, WSJT-X just wouldn't decode them.

- I got my PC laptop to talk ntp by installing Meinberg NTP software.

<http://www.ntp.org/ntpfaq/NTP-s-def.htm>

Once I did that, WSJT-X magically started decoding transmissions.

- Most of the cool guys seem to be using Meinberg NTP, but there are other options. One of

the guys in our club is using a program called Dimension 4, for example.

- Apparently, you don't have to limit your power output as you would with PSK-31. At first, I set my output power to 10 W. I had a bit of success at 10 W, but I expected more. When I asked on Twitter how much power other guys were using, most of them said that they were using more than that.

- For the last couple of sessions, I've been setting my output power to 25 W, and I've been having more success. I've now worked several Europeans on 30m.

- Even at 25 W, my signal reports are more often than not not as good as the signal reports I'm handing out. I haven't figured this one out yet. This doesn't happen to me when I'm operating CW, so I don't think it's my antenna.

- When I'm operating, I write down the calls of stations I've contacted. The reason for this is that while WSJT-X does have a logging function, it doesn't have a log window, so unless you have a great memory, you could end up working guys two or three times a session. That's probably not a big deal since contacts are so quick, but I'd rather avoid doing that if I can.

- WSJT-X works “split.” While most contacts take place on the same frequency, a station can call you anywhere in the passband of your receiver and WSJT-X will decoded the signal and begin a contact. This threw me the first time or two that this happened, and I tried to change my transmit frequency to match the other station's. In doing so, I messed up the sequence. I now just let the contact proceed normally, and it works out great.

- When I work the other digital modes, I set my IC-746PRO to the USB-D mode. In this mode, the receive passband is narrower than for working phone. When operating FT-8, however, you don't want to limit that passband. Signals will appear across the entire 2.6 kHz of the USB signal, and if

you narrow the passband, you won't be able to work those stations.

- WSJT-X checks the validity of call signs. This afternoon, there was a guy who had typed in his call as "WAMAD" and was calling CQ. WSJT-X wouldn't let me answer that CQ.

- Operating this mode opens up the possibility of working more stations whose callsigns spell words and adding those QSL cards to my collection. I have, for example, already worked K1GUY, N4HER, and N5SLY. I'm guessing that these guys don't operate CW.

All told, I've found this to be an interesting foray into a new digital mode. While I'm not feeling the magic that some others seem to be feeling when operating FT-8, it certainly will be a change of pace to operate this mode from time to time. Give it a shot and tell me what you think

Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides and blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com. When he's not working FT-8, he teaches ham radio classes and operates CW on the HF bands. You can email him at cwgeek@kb6nu.com

Amateur Calendar

February 1 – RAE Club meeting

February 3 - Space Shuttle Columbia Special Event Station, K5C, Nacogdoches, TX. Sponsored by Nacogdoches Amateur Radio Club. All contacts will be confirmed via LOTW. Special QSL card available for SASE. See w5nac.com

February 3 - Minnesota QSO Party. See www.w0aa.org

February 3 Vermont QSO Party. See www.ranv.org/vtqso.html

February 3 - 0-10 International Winter Contest. See www.ten-ten.org/

February 3 - British Columbia QSO Party. See www.orcadxcc.org

February 4 - North American CW Sprint. See ncjweb.com/Sprint-Rules.pdf

February 6 – Corry Club Meeting

February 8 – Union City Club Meeting

February 10 - OMISS QSO Party. See omiss.net/Facelift/qsoparty.php

February 12 - ARRL School Club Roundup. See www.arrl.org/school-club-roundup

February 12 – Abe Lincoln's Birthday

February 13 – Wattsburg Club Meeting

February 14 – Valentine's Day

February 17 - ARRL International DX CW Contest. See www.arrl.org/arrl-dx

February 17 – VE Exams

February 17 - AWA Amplitude Modulation QSO Party. See www.antiquewireless.org

February 19 – President's Day

February 19 – Conneaut Club Meeting

February 24 - South Carolina QSO Party. See scqso.com/rules

February 24 - North American RTTY QSO Party. See www.ncjweb.com

February 25 - North Carolina QSO Party. See rars.org/ncqsoparty

February 25 - Washfest Hamfest 2018, located at South Park Township, PA. Sponsored by Wireless Association of South Hills ARC. See <http://n3sh.org>