

How do I?

An occasional series

This week: A Random Walk Through Radio Land (Hints and Kinks)

This week we are just going to ramble about some topics that maybe deserve a full article later or are just some hints and kinks that make radio more fun.

On Sunday I was net control for the CARC 2m net. My radio desk is not as well organized as I'd like and really needs to be a table rather than a desk. My current 2m rig is further right than I'd like. I record the checkins manually and add them to the log later, so I need paper. and the CARC Bingenet cards take up that space. So I shoved the computer left closer the HF rig. After the 2m net, I moved the computer slightly right and used the HF rig for the Virginia Fone Net on 75m. Everything was fine. It was early so I went to WSJT-X to see what FT8 was like. I forget if I started on 40m or 160m but it was busy. I went to make a contact and every time the rig went to transmit the frequency went up 500hz I have seen it do that before, but it kept doing it. So if I started at 7074 I ended up around 7078. Not good! I kept resetting WSJT-X to the right frequency and it kept changing. I changed bands, stopped and restarted the program, rebooted the PC and it kept doing it. I checked the on line WSJT-X documentation for ideas. no solution.

I started tracing wires. Had no clue how that would help as I had not unplugged anything but wasn't sure what else to try. Then I realized the power transformer for the PC was laying on top the USB cable from the sound card. So I moved it. Then I shifted the PC further right. Problem solved!

FLDIGI-the Fast Light Digital Modem. We have written about it before in this series (*PC Programs*). I don't use it as much as I did a couple years ago, but I am constantly amazed at how it has stayed current and reinvented itself several times. When I first heard of it in 2007 it was already a couple years old. Back then it was primarily used for PSK31-a digital mode) but was also used by some folks for 2m long distance work. The Emcomm and traffic handling communities use it a lot now. There is a Groups.io email list devoted to FLDIGI. It is called winfldigi. To gain access, just create a groups.io account (free), then go to find groups. You can search by name, or simply type in "ham radio" and see what you find. Warning: it is a vibrant, active group and will fill up your inbox!. If you use FLDIGI, please turn on RSID for both transmit and receive. This will, just the radio in your car transmits the name of the song or artist as it plays, transmit the mode you are using. That makes it much easier for the program to automatically

identify the mode and lets you read the message and reply if appropriate. The other day I went to the 14.070 watering hole looking for PSK31. Didn't see any but a very cool message I had never seen before came across. Thanks to RSID I know it was a flavor of DOMINO, another digital mode, which deserves more investigation. Watch this space!

If you have a Kenwood TS590 series (590, 590s, 590sg) there is an Groups.io list for you. It is TS-590. Also very active and full of helpful hints to help you get more play value out of your rig. Got a problem? The experts on the list can probably help!

FT8. Some love it, some hate it. No matter what you think, especially in 2018 it got hams on the HF bands. This winter I am starting to sense FT8 fatigue. Especially during the week it feels like many of the same calls from the same grid squares. Personally I like PSK31 as it is more conversational. FT8 mostly satisfies the paper chaser. I only have a couple hundred FT8 QSO's spread across 7 bands. I don't do well on 160m. Most folks think for 160 you need a wire dipole. I have a vertical antenna that is not sold as 160 capable, but works. I only have maybe 12 states (all modes/bands) and generally figure my limit is about 500 miles. FT8 has extended my range. Last night I worked a station near New Orleans. Pretty sure that is a new personal record for me on 160m.

QSLing. Please QSL! Paper cards can be unique and very plain or fancy as you like. They can also be expensive. Instead of saying "I won't send a QSL card", please get a free Log book Of The World (LOTW) account from the ARRL and a E-QSL account. I log every QSO to LOTW and the digital, contest and special events I E-QSL as well. For "special" QSO's I use paper as well. If you have been checking into our 2m net and open a LOTW or E-QSL account, you will have QSO's there awaiting your matching one for confirmation. Digital log books have a downside. You can lose data. I had a couple FT8 QSO's that I accidentally deleted from my log. Because I had LOTW'd and EQSL'd I was able to retrieve my info and get them back in the log. It was easier to find those two qos's there than go to my back up log and rebuild it. I keep my electronic log (N3JFP AC Log-see *PC Programs; Logging Software* in this series) on 4 hard drives. I have it set to back up an external drive every time I exit the program and that drive gets backed up to two others.

Spring is coming. That gives us more chances to get out and play. Both radio and photo safaris. Please continue to watch this space, but don't get upset if fresh content isn't posted as often. Or better yet-create your own! Just email to our esteemed editor, Andy at AF3I@RadioClub-CARC.com for consideration.

Catch ya on the air!

