

ROADS Report

Editor: Bob Peschka, K7QXG

Vol 4 No. 3, March, 2011



The Prez Sez.....

It's March already and we have VE Testing scheduled at the Courthouse on Saturday March 12, with Ron W7HO in charge. Let anyone you know

wanting a license or upgrade about it. I wonder if it would be a good idea to put out an announcement on the Oregon Emergency Net on 3980 evenings? I check into that net a lot, and there are many all over the state checking in.

I want to thank Mike Fuller K7CIE for another excellent program on how to make your own QSL cards on your computer. His looks fantastic and it doesn't look too hard for most of us to try and have ourselves a new QSL.

It was nice to have Bonnie Altus, AB7ZQ, as a surprise guest. She lives in Sheridan so was able to come to the meeting.

We still have over \$4,500 in the bank accounts. I wonder if we can find a good cause or club project?

We decided at our last meeting to not have the club perform Field Day as a group. Those few who indicated a desire

to still do it are encouraged to form a small group, or participate with another club like the ones in Salem or McMinnville. Of course you can participate at home with emergency power or regular commercial power too.

I guess the HAMFAIR went fine. I'd like to know if we broke even, made something or lost some? At least we had fun meeting and rag chewing with friends and old acquaintances. Thanks to those who took a shift or more at the tables.

Our next meeting is at Farrol's in Rickreall at 6 pm. It's a dinner meeting with very little business and mostly just visiting with one another. Since it's March 17, St Patrick's Day, the Board voted last July to have this with a possible Irish theme. There will be corn beef and cabbage on the menu, plus all the rest on their usual evening menu too.

There will be a good door prize we were told at the meeting. If you wear green and buy a ticket, then you'll receive another ticket free. That should be fun.

So come on out to the meeting on the 17th at 6pm for a good time. See you there!!

Station Of The Month

WA7MZM



Dave runs an ICOM IC-756PROIII into an ICOM AH-1 remote antenna tuner that end feeds an Inverted-L wire antenna - vertical 50 feet, horizontal 50 feet. He certainly produces a good signal when he checks into the 10-10 Sunday net. Dave has experimented with several antenna designs and finds this one works well given his location in a grove of oak trees.

Dave uses a Kenwood TS-570 when he goes mobile to a magic hill near Dallas for Sunday's 10-10 Nets when he decides to enjoy the scenery instead of staying home. Also pictured is an AMERITRON AL-80A linear amplifier and below that is an ASTRON RS-35M 13.8v power supply.

"The rest of the stuff, I don't have a clue what it's for..." (Quote by Dave)

Dave was first licensed as WN7DZC in 1964. Later he acquired his present call (Dave moved around a lot). He spent 2 years in the Navy and 9 years in the Navy Reserves. He worked for Qwest for 28 years and left that organization as a Manager to take a job with Sprint. He worked for Sprint as a Tech until his retirement.

Dave operates 10 meters mostly, at the present time, and has developed an interest in becoming active with the digital modes. He has also been working on improving his CW skills. At the present time Dave is more interested in the technical aspects of our hobby than in operating his equipment.

WA7MZM has served as Net Control for the Oregon Trail 10-10 net in the past, and puts out a bodacious signal from his mobile unit when parked atop the "magic hill."

Dave has his home for sale at present and wants to move to Colorado. If you are looking for a nice home, set in a grove of oak trees, and don't mind that you cannot put up a beam or decent antenna system, then Dave's place might be just right for you.

7 QP (7 Land QSO Party)

Greetings, Oregonians!

The 2011 7th Area QSO Party is May 7 this year, the day before Mother's Day.

While you are thinking about it, put this 7QP date on your calendar, and then go into the kitchen and put the date on your wife's calendar as "busy". This way you will not be surprised by any "special events" on this important weekend.

Until then, the 7QP staff will be working hard to organize activity from all the darker corners of 7-land. To this end, if you plan to activate a particular location, send your intentions to 7qpops@codxc.org. If you would like advice on what the needs are, please drop us a line. We want to make sure that all the Oregon counties are active this year ...and beat those guys down in Arizona for the maximum participation award.

As always, we appreciate your support in making this a successful contest. But it is more than that. It is an opportunity to share your skills with the newer members of our ranks or "Elmer up" with one who can help you. So talk it up at the next club meeting or on the air. You might even be able to sell it to the club as "operator practice for your next Field Day".

I will send another reminder notice about two weeks before the 7QP with any late updates.

This year we are trying extra hard to promote mobile operation. Consider this. When operating from one spot there is a certain number of people you can work. If you are mobile and change to another county, you can work them all over again. You almost never run out of people to work. There are many who chase counties for the USA County Award, or chase the mobiles in 7QP. You could be their hero. If you are considering a mobile entry, let me know so we can coordinate maximum state-wide coverage.

7QP info is available at <http://7qp.org> : maps, county operation information, rules, log sheets, computer

programs to use for automated logging, special techniques - lots of neat stuff.

Again, thanks for your support of Oregon's share of the best QSO party in the land, the 7QP.
See you again in about 6 weeks.

73,

Dick, K4XU ...or N7XU, if you prefer

Oooooops! The Minimum Is Over...

Wow! The "Minimum" we have been struggling with in the Pacific Northwest ended with a bang! It all started about February 12th with a slight surge that continued to push signals further and further out and reached significant impact on February 15th when the SFI was at 113 and there were enough sunspots to satisfy most of us. It was reflected in the success many of our members enjoyed, whether they prefer SSB, CW, or digital. Even 10 meters opened several days in a row, and although the opening each day was all too brief, it allowed some great QSOs.

On Valentine's Day, **KX5W** took advantage of the great *10 meter* opening that took place around 5 PM our time, and he managed QSOs with Indonesia, Tahiti, Taiwan and New Zealand.

At the same time:

KE7JNT was down the band working stations across the USA as fast as possible. **N7WWH** managed a few choice contacts, and **K7QXG** was in the kitchen fixing dinner. *What!* How did

that happen? Well, it seems that Bob had volunteered to prepare one of his special dinners for his XYL Shirley on Valentine's Day, and preparation had to start at 4:15 PM. Even so, Bob managed a few QSOs before heading to the kitchen.

February 15th things really began to heat up, and DX from Europe and Africa was found on 20 and 15 meters on SSB, CW, RTTY, and PSK. Then some DX from the Pacific showed up on 12 meters. At one point, **K7QXG** snagged *Cameroon* on the first call on 20 meter RTTY, and just 6 minutes later worked *Antigua* on 17 meter RTTY, getting the contact with the first call.

In the afternoon, 10 meters faded in and out and Hawaiian stations were heard in the SSB portion of the band. One, **AH6V**, Jerry, was using battery power to run his rig and used a simple dipole. Isn't it wonderful what you can do when 10 meters opens up?

Then the mail arrived and K7QXG received his QSL from **ZD9T**, Tristan Da

Cunha. What a perfect end to a perfect day.

KE7JNT continued the QSL success the next day when he received his highly sought after QSL from the Sovereign Order Of Malta.

W7LOU now has MixW up and running and should do well, whether on PSK, RTTY or CW.

Several members of ROADS are now using the *AC 3.0 logging software*. It is simple to use and has many features of value to any amateur. I set it up and gave it a try, and for the low cost of \$19 I consider it an outstanding bargain. The support from **N3FJP**, who created it, is excellent.

Swap Meet: Feb. 20th. This annual event did not bode well for ROADS. Last year we did well on sales, but this year was a disappointment. Ah well, the market goes up and down, and it was certainly down when we rented tables and tried to sell a few "treasures".

Word has it that Jim, **W6SVP**, had to have surgery while spending the winter at his home in Mesa, AZ. Seems the vertebrae was crunched together near the neck and it was causing Jim to take some falls. Send him an email and let him know that we are all thinking of him.

The **Oregon Trail Chapter of 10-10**, which has many members of ROADS in it, is alive and well with a very active net on 28.590 every Sunday at noon. Net control stations include W7HO, W7LOU, KE7JNT, N7WWH, WA7MZM, and K7QXG. The big winter SSB QSO Party is

over, and the results won't be published on the 10-10 web site for a while, but some local members are anxious to see how they did compared to other 7 land stations.

Don't forget the **March meeting** at Farroll's in Rickreall on Thursday, March 17, 2011 starting at 6 PM. Corned Beef and Cabbage are on the menu for this day only. Remember that this event is for members and their significant others.

KG7G has not been seen or heard (on the air) for some time, so maybe Kelly is working on his home brew aircraft again. We are all awaiting the first test flight this summer so ROADS members can get some great photographs.

Warm Weather Projects: W7KVT must take down his beam and tower and determine the cause of rotation failure. From the ground it appears the mast is binding in the top of the tower and the beam will not rotate. **KE7JNT** will be putting up a monster quad, and perhaps be doing a little work on his tower. **N7WWH** always has *something* going on at his QTH, whether its antennas, coax problems, or just improving things. **K7QXG** will be assembling his home brew 30 meter vertical and testing it. Anyone else with summer projects?

CW Get: CW Get is a software program for those who need to use a PC and keyboard to send and receive CW. Made by UA9OSV, it is shareware, but \$35 will activate all the features. Read about it at: www.eham.net/revfiews/detail/2136. Well worth your time!

Beginner's Digital.....

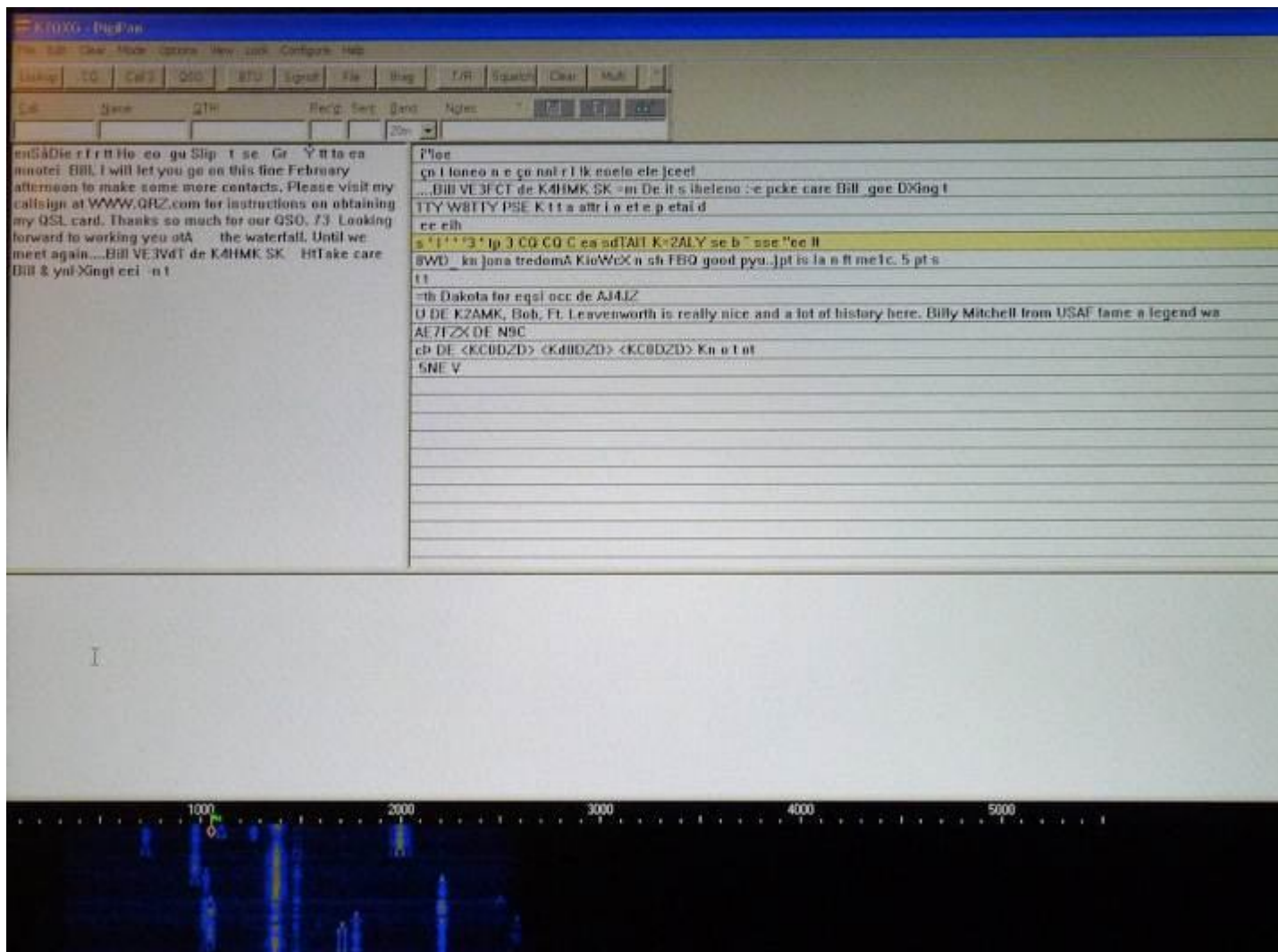


Figure 1. Digipan

Digipan is the very best digital software program for beginners to cut their teeth on when embarking into the world of PSK communications. It is simple to use; comes with good instructions; and can be setup and running in minutes; and it is FREE. It will monitor several QSOs on the “waterfall” at the same time. It creates a log that can be transferred to more sophisticated software programs later.

So what do you need to get started? You need a computer with a decent sound card - the Creative brand comes to mind - and an interface to go between the xcvr and the computer to provide the proper isolation. There are many schematics on the Internet for building your own interface, or you may choose to buy one of the commercial units. One of the more popular ones is Signalink, but it has a single drawback: When you progress to serious RTTY contesting, you will want to run true FSK to take advantage of all the filters in the transceiver, and Signalink does not support true FSK – only AFSK.

More about FSK and AFSK in a later issue. It will take a few issues of the Report to cover the various aspects of digital operation, so be patient. In fact, if you plan to launch into digital communications in the near future, it might be a good idea to print out this series of articles.

Another fine interface is made by MFJ, and West Mountain Radio has the venerable RigBlaster in several different models. I use the RigBlaster Plus, and it suits my needs, but it may be too expensive and complicated for some of our members.

Of course there are the truly sophisticated units, such as MicroKeyer II, that come with their own built in sound card that will plug into an USB port on the PC. These are a dream folks, and I would own two or three if it were not for the price tag on them.

So, to get your feet wet, download the latest version of Digipan and install it on the PC. Even a laptop will work just fine. Next, build or buy the interface. While you are waiting for UPS to deliver your unit, you can open Digipan, read the help file, and begin exploring.

Once you have the interface in place, and all the cables connecting it to the PC and transceiver in the right place, you can turn on the radio and set the dial at 14.070. I must mention that improper cable connections are the #1 cause of digital troubles when getting started.

Note that I selected the frequency 14.070. This is the most active PSK spot on any band at any time...well, as long as the band is open. There will be lots of activity here to practice on, and it will allow you to adjust the brightness of the "waterfall" and take care of other configuration needs.

The "Waterfall": Look at **Figure 1** and you will see some blue lines on a black background at the bottom of the photo. There is a fine yellow line inside some of the blue lines. The blue lines are signals. When your transceiver is set to 14.070, the PC will display a 3 KHz wide waterfall. Sometimes the waterfall is a light yellow, unless many strong signals are present. You can see a "ruler" at the top of the waterfall that is marked 1000, 2000, 3000, etc. These are KHz divisions. 1000 is equal to 14.071, and 2000 is equal to 14.072, and 3000 is equal to 14.073, etc, etc.

Remember these PSK signals are only 33 Hz wide. The backdrop they appear on is called the "waterfall" regardless of whether it is black or light yellow. The blue lines flow downward like water going over a waterfall.

Practice receiving signals for a few days before you attempt your first PSK QSO. It will make a world of difference. Please take note of the information that is exchanged at the beginning of the QSO. It will look something like this: *W4GKM de K7QXG ... Thanks for the contact. My name is Bob Bob and your signal is 599 599 in Dallas, OR Dallas, OR. CN84iw CN84iw. BTU W4GKM de Bob K7QXG.* This is a typical transmission (variations will look much like it). The CN84iw is the locator to assist some stations in pinpointing you on a map. They are referred to as Grid Squares.

Look at the top of **Figure 1**. You will see several radio buttons in a horizontal line across the top of the software program. These are used in all digital programs and you program them in advance with certain messages. One may contain your call and is set to send it three times. That means that when you call someone you don't need to use the keyboard to send your call three times. Just put the mouse pointer on the button and click it once. Out goes your call over the airwaves. Now isn't that slick?

Please note that when you use digital, you want to be sure that your transceiver is set for 50% of key down power. More important, there is a gentleman's agreement on the digital bands that we never run more than 50 watts, and most stations use 20 to 40 watts. You do not need more than that on PSK. I have used PSK31 for nearly 11 years now...started when it first came out... and I have only encountered three stations that ran more than 50 watts.... And that is in more than 3,000 digital QSOs.

Before you transmit the first time you need to adjust the sound card output. There is a wealth of information on that topic on the internet and among some members of ROADS.

I will finish this first article with a series of photos that show another more sophisticated program that allows you to use RTTY, Feld Hell, MFSK, and other digital modes. Next month I will resume and try to answer any questions that are sent to me.

If you prefer that I not continue this series, and consider it a waste of space, then please email me and I will discontinue it.

MixW

This software program is my staple, and I have worked stations all over the world using it. Unlike Digipan which is FREE, MixW allows only 25 contacts and then you must send the vendor \$50 to obtain the key that allows full use of the software. I should also mention that another very popular program is Ham Radio Deluxe, which is FREE, but rather complicated – so I do not recommend it for beginners. There are many more digital programs out there, such as Win Warbler, that are free, but not many hams use them.

Take a look at the waterfall in **Figure 2**. and you will see the double trace of RTTY signals. In MixW, when you select RTTY from the list of modes available, your pointer becomes two pointers, connected together, and to copy and call one of the stations shown on the waterfall, you position your pointers on the two lines created by one signal. RTTY signals are usually 300 Hz wide.

I mentioned earlier that you should use a good sound card, like the Creative SoundBlaster. The better the quality of the sound card, the better it will decode the signals.

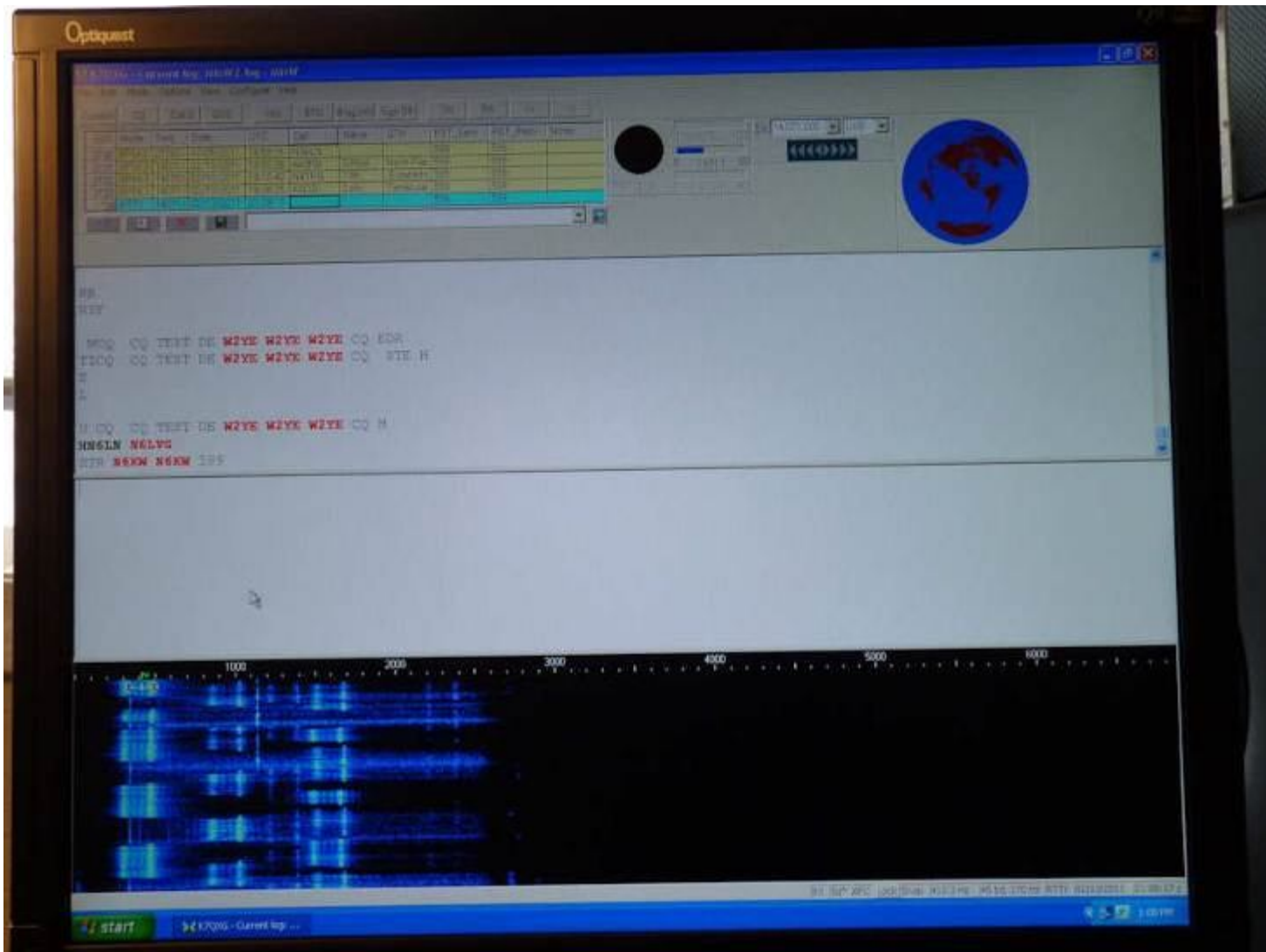
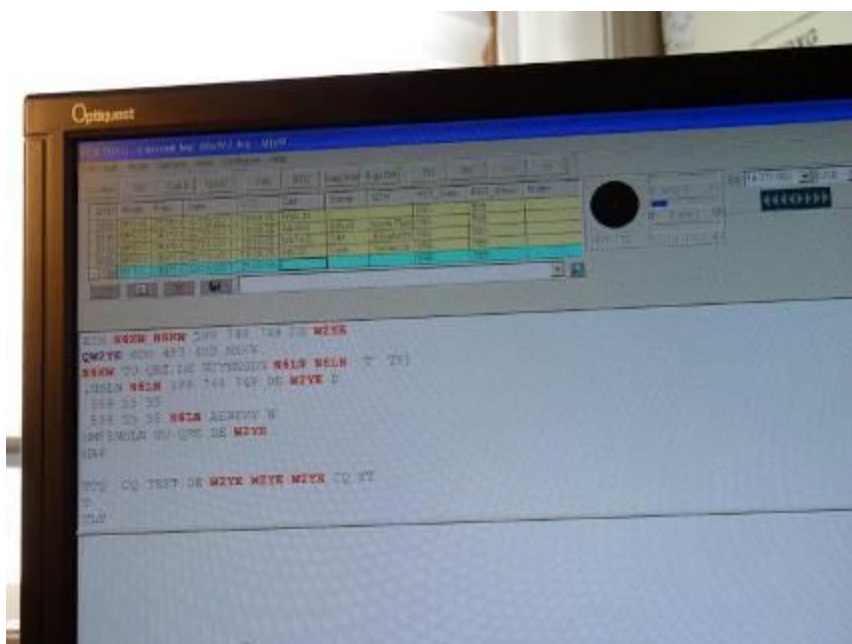


Figure 2.



This is a view of the MixW log at the top of the monitor. The waterfall is at the bottom of the screen, as seen in Figure 2 above.

I neglected to mention that when setting up the station for PSK, you must make sure that there is NO ALC deflection! Setting the mic gain control is very important if you want a clean signal without splatter. More on that in the next issue.

Finally, if you wish to see a video on setting up Signalink with a

Yaesu rig, visit this web site:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ig0j9oIUo2E&feature=related>

Yes, it is for a specific rig, but you should be able to get an idea of the method used to obtain a clean PSK signal.

Note that in the video the author is using Digital Master 780 software. It is very popular, but I still recommend Digipan for the first try at operating digital. Another software package is FLDigi, which is free, but not as popular as Digipan, Ham Radio Deluxe and Mix W. Most stations pair up Ham Radio Deluxe with Digital Master 780 and describe their software as HRD+DM780.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH.... UNLESS YOU WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE THIS ARTICLE CONTINUED.

Making Your Own QSLs



Those who missed the meeting on February 17th missed an excellent presentation by Mike, K7CIE. The presentation was made using power point and it took us through all the steps from start to finish to produce an excellent looking QSL card.

K7CIE

As an added bonus, Mike had available 20 copies of his thorough outline for making the QSLs with WORD and he also had 20 CDs with ready-to-go patterns that were distributed to members in attendance. An excellent job Mike!

Of note, there were 18 persons at the meeting, which is nearly half the ROADS roster. One of those in attendance was Bonnie Altus, our PNW

representative for ARRL. Field Day was discussed and it soon became apparent that out of all the members present, only 5 were willing to undertake the task. So, K7QXG made a motion that ROADS not have a Field Day team in 2011. The motion was seconded and passed with only two dissenting votes. Perhaps next year we can attempt to field a team for this national activity.

A preview of a coming issue.....

Ye Olde Editor took a look at the 2010 issues of the Report and has decided to feature two pages of photos of the 2010 Stations Of The Month in a future issue. With no one stepping forward and volunteering to have their station featured, this may prompt some members to rethink their stance.

Late Reports and Other Stuff

W7KVT reports working FO8RZ and T30YA on 40 CW. He is presently looking for a keyer paddle (but does not want iambic).

AO1AAW showed up on 15 meters on Feb. 25th with a powerful signal. This Special Event station closed operations on Feb. 27th. Its Antarctic QSL card is terrific, and if you missed out, they will be on the air again a year from now. For more information and a look at their very colorful information, check out their call on QRZ.com.

Feb 24 & Feb. 25 For those of you who were QRV on those two days, and especially in the morning, it is clear that Cycle 24 has arrived. It reminded me of Cycle 22, when European DX began rolling in around 7:30 AM with big signals – often 10 db over S9. The following is a sampling of CW and SSB signals worked or monitored. Of course, some good ones were also worked/monitored on PSK and RTTY:

SSB

Loaded with EU DX such as G, 9A5, PA, HB9, and I. Most were found in the Extra Class part of the SSB part of the 20 meter band.

CW

This part of 20 meters was really smokin' and some signals were 10 over S9. A few of those noted included OK, DL, EG, OH, S5, M0, CT, OE, OZ, HI8, FO8, LY and of course 5X1 in Uganda. Again, most of the stations were in the Extra Class portion of the 20 meter band, although several were worked on 15 meters.

The Bad News: Despite all this wonderful DX, and great propagation, Ye

Olde Editor still lacks North Dakota on 15 meters, any mode, to complete his 5 Band WAS. Sighhhhhh.

VE Test Coming.....

Just a reminder that we have a VE session coming up the second Saturday in March on the 12th at 9:00 AM.

Thanks

Ron W7HO

North American RTTY QSO Party

It took place on Saturday February 26th, and was well attended. This event is primarily for amateurs in the USA and Canada – although I did work KG4SS in Guantanamo Bay. As mentioned in the Feb. ROADS Report, if you are working on your WAS award, this is a fast way to reach your goal. Halfway through the 12 hour event I had 40 states on 20 meters alone, and decided to give it a rest and have a cup of tea. I did see signals from two other states that I was unable to work...ME and NH. My search for North Dakota continues. Even 15 meters cooperated and there were numerous states on that band as well.

A Feld Hell QSL

This interesting QSL card is from the Feld Hell Club, which is a collection of individuals who use the old Hellschreiber digital mode of communication. They hold an event a couple of times a year that is sparsely attended – mainly because there are not many hams who use this mode of communication. More about Feld Hell in a future issue.

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PLS QSL
TNX QSL

STATION	DATE	UTC	FREQ	2X MODE
K7QXG	12-20-08	1607	14.074	FH
POWER	REPORT	OPR NAME	OPR CALL	QTH
100	599	PETE	K212	FL

THANK YOU FOR QSO 73 & GOOD FELD HELLI

D X by Doc KX5W

The solar flare index (SFI) went up from an average of the low 80's to 114 in mid February. This is good, and about then is when 10 meters opened up for me on Valentine's Day, the 14th.

Between 5 and 5:30pm local I was able to work on 10 M Tahiti, Indonesia, New Zealand and Taiwan all on 10 SSB. Then it closed back down. Felt like the good old days for awhile.

I was able to work the announced DX Peditions to Sao Tome and also the Cameroon, and a few members on the 10 -- 10 net indicated working one or both too.

The ARRL International DX Contest was held on Feb 19 to 20 in the cw mode. I started it in the Dallas mobile home with my indoor dipole, not expecting much. To my surprise I did work Russia, Japan, Alaska, Hawaii, Brazil, Colombia, Guam and Montserrat, with 100 watts. Then back in Corvallis, with a better antenna (windom), worked all four of the new ones in the Netherland Antilles again. This was insurance as the St Eustatius previous contact hasn't QSLed.

Some of the better announced DXPeditions in March include the following:

4W3A Timor Leste March 27 and 28;

CY0 Sable March 7 to 15;

VK9C Cocos-Keeling now to March 5--saw them on the cluster late Feb

but did not hear them;

5X1NH Uganda now to Apr 14;

LU1ZS South Shetland now to Mar 15;

4S1KKG Sri Lanka now to Mar 13; and

D2AM Angola now to Mar 17.

So let me hear from you for the next newsletter if you work something exotic or new for you. Good DXing !!!

Editor's Note: I did work 5X1NH, and was able to hear Jordan on 20 CW this morning, but conditions were very erratic. He was working mostly 7 land stations. Cocos-Keeling was on yesterday, as was D2AM, but I did not try for either one as I already have them confirmed. I do need Timor Leste (4W), but that will be hot and heavy action since they are there for just a skimpy two days. I would need a station like W7LOU to work them (Lives on a hill, 65 foot tower, and an Alpha amp). So what is my station like: I live in an old river bed with a steep hill to the North of my backyard, and a tiny 30 foot tower, with the A4S triband yagi and my power is a THP 1.2 KFx at 600 watts. Not a "Dragon Slayer" by any means.

Well folks, that does it for this month. I know it's a large issue, and I prefer to keep it to 8 pages, but there was too much good information this month to pass it up. Things are improving and perhaps next issue we can have more photos once more and get the size back to 8 pages or less.

73 K7QXG Editor