W9JOZ

Next Meeting is
May 17, 2018

DUES ARE PAST DUE FOR 2018
Still $12.00

Weekly 2 meter Net

Once again we are having the Saturday Night Net at 8:00 pm on the 145.410 repeater.
We have been only having about 5 or 6 checking in to the net.

Hope you can check in.

Due to Hamvention and Mother's Day, there may not be a Foxhunt in May.
 Thanks
John W3ML

Meetings are at the Henry F. Schricker Library on the third Thursday of each month, with the exception of December.

The library is located on west Culver Road, two blocks west of Highway 35.

Are you on the air?

Richard, K9QA is an official ARRL DXCC Card Checker. Contact him at k9qa@arrl.net to have your cards checked.

DX Century Club

May Events

Birthdays

6th - KC8PKY Linda

24th - KC9FQA Bart

Starke County Amateur Radio Club Weekly 2 Meter Net will be on each Saturday at 8:00 p.m. Central time.

DAY OF WEEK: Saturday 8:00 p.m. Central time
HOST: KN9OX Repeater
FREQUENCY: 145.410 - 600
PL TONE: 131.8

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Fox Hunts

There may not be a Foxhunt May.

Foxhunts are the third Sunday of each month.
Miles and a two-hour time limit
Meet at 1:00 CST at the Sandy Acres Park on the south end of Knox.

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Heathkit SB-220 2 KW HF Ham Radio Amplifier

The Heathkit SB-220 has two 3-500Z, amplifier.

I never ran it at full output, usually stayed around 1200-1500 watts out.

Asking $500.00 cash.   Pickup only.

Contact John W3ML at mailto:w3ml@w3ml.com 574-772-2772

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Indiana QSO Party
May 5th

The 2018 Indiana QSO Party will be held May 5th (the first Saturday in May) from 10 AM CDT until 10 PM CDT. The objective is for amateurs worldwide to contact as many stations in as many counties in Indiana as possible on the 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meter Amateur bands. Stations outside of Indiana work Indiana stations only. Indiana stations work everybody, including other Indiana stations.

The INQP is a great time to work on the [Worked All Indiana Award](). It only takes 60 confirmed counties out of the 92 to earn the initial certificate. Your INQP QSOs count as confirmed QSOs toward your WAI. Just indicate the INQP QSOs on your GCR, and they will use your submitted log to confirm the QSOs. For County Hunters this is also an opportunity to increase your count and to help others to bump up their totals.

For more information including the rules, checkout the Indiana QSO Party web site:
http://www.hdxcc.org/inqp/

Don't forget-you can give credit to the Club when you submit your QSO Party log.

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"Alexa, help me with ham radio"

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

I have had an Amazon Alexa (https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Echo-And-Alexa-Devices/b?ie=UTF8&node=9818047011) for nearly a year now. Mostly, I just use it to listen to internet radio stations or tell me a joke, but I think it has more potential than that. For example, I've written before about how I'd like to develop an Alexa skill to control my IC-7300 (https://www.kb6nu.com/use-alexa-amateur-radio/). I haven't gotten around to that yet, but, Joe, N3HEE, has just published an Alexa skill called Continuous Wave (https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B07C7HS47J/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_0). It's designed to help you learn Morse Code.

To use this skill, you have to first enable it. Once enabled, say, "Alexa, open Continuous Wave." This opens the skill at the main menu. You can then say any of the following at any voice prompt…

- Learn
- Practice
- Alphabet
- Common words
- Random words
- Words
- Sentences
- Call signs
- Contest
- Quick Brown Fox
- QSO
- Help
- Stop – To end your session.

I've just played around with this app for a short time, but I've found it to be quite entertaining. It does, however, have one big drawback. You can't set the speed. It's currently limited to sending at 20 words per minute only.

Also, the learn function could use a little refining. When you give the command "learn," it asks you for a character, sends that character three times, and then asks you for another. If you could set the speed at which the skill sends characters, it could teach a character like the K7QO Code Course, first sending the character slowly, then ramping up the speed.

Overall, though, I think this is a great first shot at a usable Alexa skill for teaching Morse Code. I hope this is the first of many versions of this skill.

Other ham radio skills

While I was poking around on Amazon, I decided to see what other amateur radio skills might be available. Here are a few that I found:

- Ham Exam (https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B01N7NQ3JE/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_6&qid=1524602919). Ask Alexa to ask you questions from the Technician Class question pool.

• Ham Lookup
(https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073YL88SL/?ref=skill_dsk_pnps_dp_1)
. Allows you to look up amateurs by call sign. Information is provided from the
callbook.info database.

• Ham Radio Propagation Forecast
(https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B073THV6ZP/?ref=skill_dsk_pnps_dp_0)
. Reports the latest forecasts directly from HamQSL (run by N0NBH).

• ARRL Audio News
(https://alexa.amazon.com/spa/index.html#skills/dp/B078Y7NGYT/?ref=skill_dsk_skb_sr_1&q
id=1524750783). Adds ARRL Audio News to your Alexa flash briefing.

Building your own voice app

The Continuous Wave Alexa skill was developed using tools found at VoiceApps.Com. Two
other websites—Pullstring (https://pullstring.com) and StoryLine
(https://getstoryline.com)—also have tools to help you build voice apps. And, Amazon
has an online tutorial that will teach you how to build an Alexa app. I'm just getting
started with these tools, so I can't recommend one over the others, but they do look
like they'll make developing voice apps easier.

Since I'm currently in the process of updating my No Nonsense Technician Class License
Study Guide, it occurs to me that I should also develop an Alexa skill for drilling
students on test questions. I guess you could call them audio flashcards. Stay tuned
for that.

When he's not trying to figure out how to build voice apps, Dan blogs about amateur
radio at KB6NU.Com, teaches ham radio classes, and operates CW on the HF bands. Look
for him on 30m, 40m, and 80m. You can email him about the voice apps that you like at
cwgeek@kb6nu.com.

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Handy Hint
Cutting Dacron Lines for Wire Antennas
By Steve Mollman-KD9HL

There are many materials used to make rope; synthetic fiber and natural fiber. The most popular are synthetics such as nylon and Dacron. They are strong, hold up well to the weather and stress, and coil without kinking. Rope is also made from natural fibers like cotton and hemp (manila), and other synthetic fibers such Kevlar, and polypropylene. Synthetic lines are lighter and stronger and more rot-resistant than natural fiber ropes. Synthetic lines are slipperier than natural fiber ropes so be sure to check your knots to make sure they are secure.

Polypropylene line is the least expensive of the synthetic lines, however, it deteriorates quickly from ultra-violet rays and wear. It is not a good line because its hard surface tends to slip from cleats and can splinter, causing cuts if it runs free through your hands. Not recommended.

Nylon rope has a lot of stretch (up to 40%) and is very strong for its size, allowing it to absorb shock loads well. However, when it is wet it can lose up to 25% of its strength. It wears well, resists mildew and rot. Nylon three-strand stretches to dampen the shock of wind action against your antenna. Just make sure it does not stretch too much for the situation in which you use it. Sunlight will cause eventual deterioration. Acceptable with caveats.

Polyester (Dacron) rope wears better than polypropylene, is almost as strong as Nylon, and retains its strength when wet. It does not stretch as much as Nylon. Polyester (such as Dacron) is often used for sailboat running rigging, anchor rode, towing lines and other applications where you don't want line stretch. It will, however, chafe easily so check it often and protect as necessary. Dacron is probably the most UV resistant synthetic. Recommended.

Natural fibers such as manila, sisal, hemp and cotton will shrink when they get wet and also tend to rot or become brittle. Manila has a minimum of stretch and is very strong. However, it has only about one-half the strength of a comparable-sized synthetic line. Not recommended.

When cutting Dacron rope, prevent the ends from fraying by wrapping vinyl electrical tape twice around the line at the spot where you want to cut. Use a very sharp single edged razor or box cutter to cut at the midpoint of the tape. (White tape is used in the Pic for clarity).

It is important that after cutting the rope that the ends are sealed properly. If not, the outer braid jacket will creep back up the rope exposing the inner braided core. This can cause problems.

Using a flame, touch the taped end of the rope to the TOP TIP of the flame long enough to create a molten bead of rope material. Remove the flame and pull the molten end with a cloth rag (Don't use a paper towel- this stuff is HOT and will burn you). This will taper out the molten material so there is a concentric molten seal as well as not leaving a "bulge" at the rope end. (A bulge would increase the rope diameter at that point possibly causing pulley interference or knot tying problems).

I like to use a "Figure-Eight" knot to secure the line to the fixture. Similar knots like "Bowline on a Bight" or "Halyard Hitches" also work well. Finally, I dress the loose end by slipping a short length of heat shrink tube over the line and the stub end and then shrink the tubing with a heat gun. A heat gun is preferred over a propane torch as the temperature is easier to control and avoid damage (melting the Dacron will weaken the line). Dressing the ends with vinyl electrical tape is not advised if you want a long lasting result. The tape's adhesive will eventually soften as a reaction to the weather, sun and age allowing the tape to come loose.

Tools Used

Propane Torch, Heat Gun, Utility Knife, Rag, Vinyl Electrical Tape, Heat Shrink Tubing

◄73's and good DX ►

Tidbits

Last week I was in Santa Fe and got to visit the home of W8ZR. if you have not seen his shack, I encourage you to check out his QRZ page... and especially his web site: http://www.w8zr.net/ His home brew gear would make Art Collins and Dick Ehrhorn say "wow".

Dave Bunte - K9FN

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Go Inside An Operating Gates 250 Watt Am Transmitter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzpVhCL5aPg

Harold Ruggles - W8FIB

For the old timers that used to play with Crystal Radios.

Vintage Antique Galena Crystal for Crystal Radios - Mallinckrodt 1 Lb unopened! | eBay
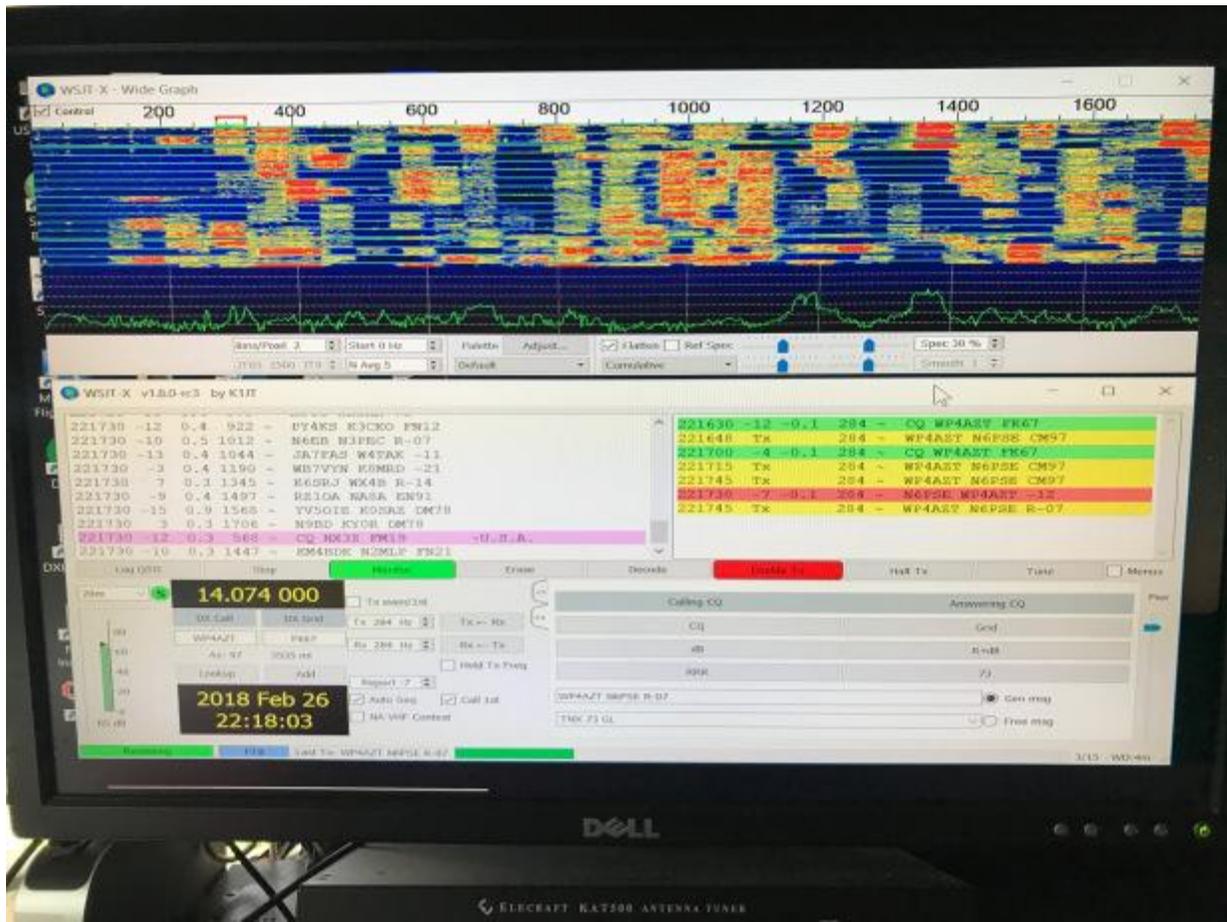
Harold Ruggles - W8FIB

We have several **new** pieces of equipment for sale and new prices on some items already listed. Check out our For Sale Page
http://www.w9joz.org/forsale.htm

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What Do You Think?

By Paul S. Ewing-N6PSE

FT8 is really fun!

WSJT-X running FT8 with the waterfall on top and the contact area below.

FT8 is the latest digital mode taking amateur radio by storm. The WSJT-X free software enables amateurs to work JT4, JT9, JT65, QRS64, ISCAT, MSK144 and WSPR in addition to FT8.

FT8 is by far the most popular and fun to use mode of the WSJT-X Software set. FT8 is a low power, extremely efficient mode. Instead of using "brute force" to make a contact such as the case with RTTY, FT8 is a mode where understanding and finesse achieve the best results. FT8 is relatively new and is constantly being improved with new releases coming almost monthly.

The main benefit to FT8 is that with a small low power station, you can work stations all around the globe with little difficulty. In fact, in a period of just two days, I was able to work over 100 entities just on FT8.

I find FT8 fun and relaxing to use. Once you understand the layout of the software, you can merely click on a station calling CQ. Your software will continue to call that station until a connection is made. Then there is an automatic exchange of signal reports, an acknowledgement and 73.

It is kind of fun to answer a CQ and then go fill the coffee cup only to return minutes later and see that you made a contact with the station. Some internet naysayers feel that FT8 is going to harm the hobby and possibly reduce the use of CW. I think FT8 is just one more tool or feature to use and have fun with amateur radio.

You can learn more about FT8 and download the free WSJT-X software here:

https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjtx.html

This is your confirmation pop-up when a contact is made.

Enjoy FT8, it is here to stay!

What do you think?

Paul N6PSE

Thank you to Paul Ewing-N6PSE for his kind permission to print this item. Paul is a noted DXpeditioner having operated from many rare and semi rare spots, including the South Sandwich Islands, Yemen, Myanmar, Eritrea and the South Georgia Islands. He can be reached at pauln6pse@gmail.com

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If you have something for the newsletter, please send it to me before the 20th of the month.

See you at a meeting.

73
John, W3ML

STARKE COUNTY
AMATEUR RADIO
CLUB
WWW.W9JOZ.ORG