

# ACARC

## Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club

March-April  
2018 Edition

### ACARC

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Julian Bradberry  
(WD4FTR)

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Amateur Radio Club**  
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### From The Editor

FT8 mode seems to be exploding in popularity. How can you tell? The operating areas of other digital modes like JT65 and PSK31 are often barren wastelands. Unless there is a contest highlighting a certain mode like the RTTY weekend in February most of the action seems to be in FT8 mode. In this issue is an article by Linwood Todd (NT4F) stating that maybe we need to take a breather from all of the digital mania...to spend some time doing things like in "the good ole days" of SSB communications. Talk to each other...make that human contact.



### Upcoming Important Events

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Mar 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup></b>          | Charlotte HamFest<br>Concord, NC  |
| <b>Mar 20<sup>th</sup><br/>Apr 17<sup>th</sup></b> | Monthly club meeting 7:00pm<br>CFCC North Campus  |
| <b>March 31<sup>st</sup></b>                       | RARSFest - Raleigh, NC  |
| <b>Apr 14<sup>th</sup></b>                         | VE Testing 10:00am<br>CFCC North Campus   |
| <b>Every Monday</b>                                | 2 Meter Rag Chew, 9:00PM<br>147.18MHz, +0.600 offset, 88.5 tone<br>Norman (KI4YSY) is net control |

# In The Good Old Days

*By Linwood (NT4F)*

In the good old days there were tubes and microphones and straight keys. What else did you need? You could buy a 100 watt radio in kit form, put it together and were able to fix it if it ever broke. The rigs were big and bulky and kept the shack warm with the heat from all the tubes.

In the good old days you had to tune across the dial to find a station you wanted to talk to, listen to find out where the station was and then try to work him/her. During the QSO you would have to give the other station your QSL information because there wasn't any instant electronic or digital look-up of station/operator information. There was however a printed Call Book, but it wasn't very accurate unless you had not moved since the last printing of the Call Book or the supplement. After the QSO was over and you said your 73 then you would hand write the QSO information in your paper Log. Then you could confirm the contact with a paper QSL card through the US Postal Service. Then wait for his or hers in return.

In the good old days once you managed to acquire enough QSL cards for all the contacts you made for whatever award you were working toward, you either had to send them to the ARRL or maybe you could attend a hamfest with cards in hand and have them checked by a representative of the ARRL.

In the good old days life was simple. To communicate with friends via Ham Radio on a regular basis. You set schedules and talked about the weather, radio equipment, antennas, family and oh yea a signal report.

Where did the good old days go? Today radios are so small you can take one with more bells and whistles than ever before to the top of the mountain and work the world with very low power. With the Internet and Smart phones you don't even have to tune across the dial looking for a DX station to talk to, you can just bring up the DX Cluster and see who's on the bands. Start your digital program on the computer tell it to send a CQ and it will answer the station answering your CQ and give a signal report, say 73 and turn off your transmitter. The program will also log the QSO for you automatically, if you want. When you're done all you have to do is log into Log Book of The World at the ARRL and get credit for the contact with the other station .... Easy, right?

Oh and if you want to talk to your old ham friend just call him/her on Skype or Facetime. Don't have to set a schedule or anything.

Somewhere in between the good old days and today we lost the desire to communicate with each other on a personal basis. Is that what Amateur Radio is all about?

I'm not advocating going back to the good old days completely. What I am suggesting is to pick up the microphone and/or the key and have a good old fashion QSO with someone, ask them about the weather where they are, how long have they been a ham, are they still working or retired and a little about themselves, their station equipment, and of course, if they have grandchildren. You'll be amazed how good it feels to do this. It's not all about the number of QSO's you make, but the quality of the ones you do.

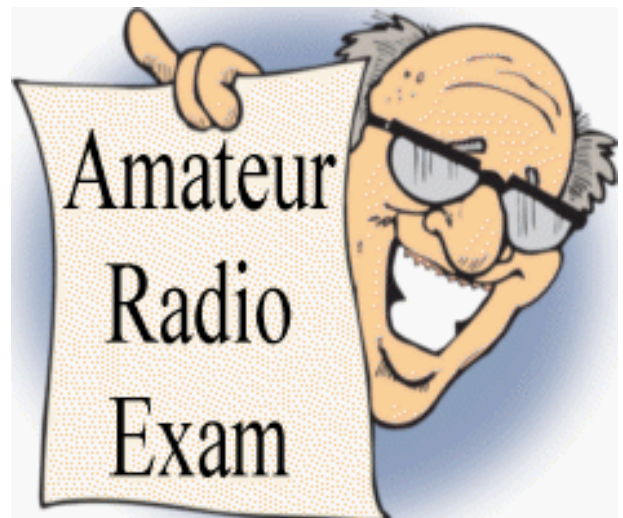
In The Good Old Days!



## VE Testing

*By Steve (AJ4JJ)*

VE testing was conducted on Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at the North campus of the Cape Fear Community College. This was our first test of the year and we had 7 to test. Glad to say we have 3 new Technicians, 2 new Generals, and 2 new Extras. Thanks to the 9 VE's that came out to help!



## Orlando HamFest

*By Jack (WD4OIN)*

Seven of our club members, Steve (AJ4JJ), Paul (AD4HZ), Bill (N2COP), Jean-Paul (N1JPL), Bob (WA3IRG), Jack (WD4OIN) and Robert (KN4ANE) rented a new Ford van and left Wilmington at 5:00am on Thursday morning for the Orlando HamFest. We arrived about 5:00pm, checked in and went to a big seafood supper.

Friday morning we headed out on the 3 mile drive to the HamFest. Beautiful day with shorts on (81 degrees). Shortly after arriving one of the group started feeling bad and went to the medical tent. Bob Kiehlmeier (WA3IRG) was told his sugar level was high. Bob took some insulin and requested to go back to the room and rest. Jean-Paul (N1JPL) and Jack (WD4OIN) started back to the room with Bob but Bob started getting worse so we took him on to a nearby hospital.

When we drove up to the emergency room it was a circle drive and no parking. A guard helped us get the medical staff and took the van to a parking area for us. Jean-Paul and I both were impressed with the efficiency of the hospital. The emergency room staff went straight to work, didn't ask us a lot of questions and took care of Bob. After Bob was taken care of then they asked their questions. In this day and time when we hear so many negative things about hospitals we just want you to understand how impressed with the Florida hospital system we were.

On Saturday, all were in attendance at the HamFest and we enjoyed ourselves. Some items were bought and some interesting forums were attended. By 6:00pm we were all starving again and out to another big supper.

Sunday morning we left about 7:00am headed back home via a big Cracker Barrel breakfast. It was a longer trip going home than it was going down, or seemed so. The trip was organized and put together by Steve (AJ4JJ) , great job.

## Tip of the Month

From mods.dk

This is a tip to protect the table from the soldering iron.

Get a ceramic floor tile and use it as a work surface to protect the table top. These tiles come in various sizes, from 9" square to 24" square. Mine is 12" x 24", and this is about right. Thicknesses vary, mine is 3/8" thick. These tiles can scratch the table top, so get some stick-on feet or rubber cupboard door bumpers & stick them on the underside, or keep a cloth pad under the tile. If you are lucky, (I was) you may be able to get a tile in a discontinued pattern free from a tile distributor or installer, or a do-it-yourself supply store.

These tiles are pretty rugged - after all, they are meant to be walked on. Being ceramic, they can take a lot of heat, more than a soldering iron can develop. One thing though, they are ceramic, almost like a very tough china, and can be broken. Don't hammer on one, and it should last for decades.



## NCQSO Party

*By Jeff (W4BIX)*

Another NCQSO party has come and gone and 2018 is in the books. Eight of the Azalea Coast Amateur Radio Club's finest operators came out to the battleship to help run our 50 point bonus station for the party.

By the starting time of 10:00am we had two stations up and operating – the 20 meter SSB and the 40 meter CW. Band conditions were very poor at the battleship and contacts were few and far between. Our first phone QSO didn't come until 41 minutes into the event. We only made one in-state phone QSO...and that was our own Linwood Todd (NT4F) calling us on 20 meters from about a mile away saying he was on his way to the ship! A majority of the phone QSO's seemed to be DX to

Europe or west coast of the US. CW QSO's were the opposite direction – up and down the east coast. It wasn't for lack of trying. By 2:00pm we had enough of banging our heads against the bulkhead as it seemed the conditions were not going to change. We wrapped everything up & called it a day. We are restricted as to what bands we can work as we are using what is left of the ship's original 75 year old antennas and coax. And it can be finicky at times.

We love being a 50 point bonus station for the party and will continue to do so if invited. Hopefully conditions will be different next year and not as frustrating. We had a new member join us on board – June (N4FAM) and we put her on the mic immediately.

NI4BK made 42 CW QSO's and 49 phone QSO's for a low total of 118. Thanks to everyone who came out...your help is much appreciated:

Larry (N4NXX), June (N4FAM), Brad (WD4FTR), Allan (KX2H), Jim (K3DEP), Norman (KI4YSY), Linwood (NT4F) and Jeff (W4BIX)



June logging, Larry working phone & Linwood supervising



Allan on the paddles & Norman logging



Jeff on the log, June on the mic & Linwood once again supervising



## Bravo Zulu

ACARC club member Larry Pfeil (K6RM) had an article published in the January 2018 QST magazine issue, page 75. Check it out!!! Great job Larry!

# On-the-Air Test of New FT8 “DXpedition Mode” Set for Early March

*From the ARRL Newsletter*

A second beta version of WSJT-X version 1.9.0 has been released, the WSJT development group announced this week. The “release candidate,” as it’s called, is designated as version 1.9.0-rc2. An initial beta release has already been field-tested by a small group of users. The WSJT development group said a primary purpose of the second beta release is to allow further field testing of the new FT8 “DXpedition Mode,” designed to enable DXpeditions to make FT8 contacts at very high rates, and it is inviting the Amateur Radio community to participate in a public test run of FT8 DXpedition Mode on the evening of March 6 (North American time).

“The goal is to simulate a rare DXpedition pileup by having many stations (‘Hounds’) calling and trying to work a designated pseudo-DXpedition station (‘Fox’),” the announcement said. All test participants must use WSJT-X version 1.9.0-rc2.

**Test times and frequencies are March 6, 2300 UTC on 14.080 MHz; March 7, 0000 UTC on 10.141 MHz; March 7, 0100 UTC on 7.080 MHz, and March 7, 0200 UTC on 3.585 MHz. Frequencies are not the conventional FT8 operating frequencies and are subject to change, subject to conditions. Last-minute changes will be posted.**

According to the FT8 DXpedition Mode User Guide, contacts between the DXpedition station and callers can be completed in as little as one transmission apiece by the calling station. Authorized DXpedition stations can transmit up to five signals simultaneously, allowing contact rates up to about 500 per hour under ideal conditions.

Operation will use split mode, which is already commonplace for DXpeditions. The DXpedition station (Fox) will transmit at audio frequencies between 300 and 900 Hz; multiple simultaneous signals will be spaced at 60 Hz intervals. Calling

stations (Hounds) make initial calls anywhere in the 1000 – 4000 Hz range.

Exchanges would go something like this:

Fox    Hounds

1. CQ KH1/KH7Z
2. KH1/KH7Z K1ABC, KH1/KH7Z W9XYZ
3. K1ABC KH7Z –13
4. KH7Z K1ABC R–11
5. K1ABC RR73; W9XYZ –17
6. KH7Z W9XYZ R–16
7. W9XYZ RR73; G4AAA –09...

“If you have legitimate access to more than one call sign, please feel free to call and work the Fox more than once,” the announcement said. “We want the test pileup to be as deep as possible.”

The WSJT-X development group said Amateur Radio clubs or groups may wish to conduct their own tests of FT8 DXpedition Mode, with one station acting as the Fox and the others as Hounds, although in such tests, the Fox will be limited to using a single transmitting “slot.”

Installation packages for Windows, Linux, macOS, and Raspbian Jessie have been posted on the WSJT website.

Other features and updates in the second beta version include JT65 decoding improvements; optional auto-sequencing in JT4, JT9, and JT65, when VHF/UHF/Microwave features are enabled; better suppression of low-confidence false decodes generated by AP (a priori) decoding in FT8 mode; improved decoding performance for WSPR mode, especially effective at LF and MF; minor adjustments to auto-sequencing behavior; more flexible Doppler control features for Earth-Moon-Earth; improved waterfall sensitivity for very weak signals; automatic real-time forwarding of logged information to N1MM Logger+; expanded and improved UDP messages sent to companion programs, and “bug fixes and other minor tweaks” to the user interface.

Developer Joe Taylor, K1JT, has told ARRL that the goal is to have the official release of WSJT-X version 1.9.0, finished, documented, and thoroughly tested well in advance of the planned KH1/KH7Z DXpedition to Baker Island in June.

General availability of the official WSJT-X version 1.9.0 will be announced "in the near future," the development group said, at which point users should no longer use any release-candidate editions.



## Z60A will participate in the ARRL International DX Contest (SSB) March 3 - 4 (UTC)

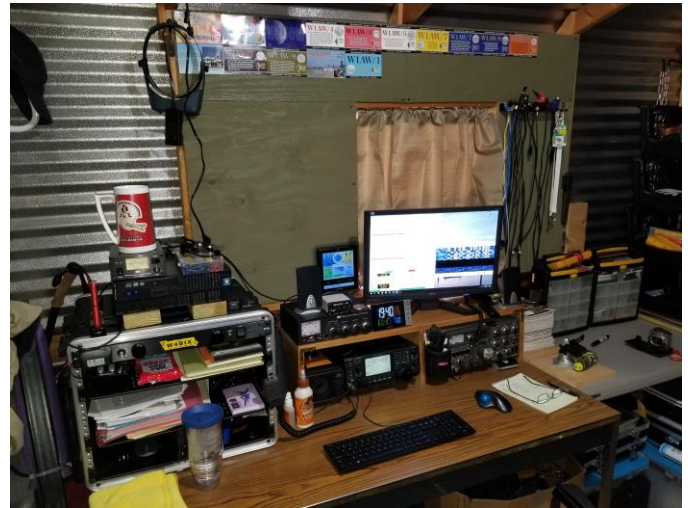
*From the ARRL Newsletter*

Pertti Turunen, OG2M; Martti Laine, OH2BH, and Henri Olander, OH3JR, have reactivated Z60A from Kosovo, the newest DXCC entity. In the prior Z60A activation, high noise levels hampered reception on the low bands. Several local radio amateurs have been working to pin down noise sources, and, while 80 and 40 meters are "relatively clean," 160 meters "is still a challenge." The operators plan to set out Beverage antennas as far as possible from noise sources. The Finnish visitors will carry two complete stations for Kosovo's IARU Member-Society SHRAK, which local operators will put on the air.



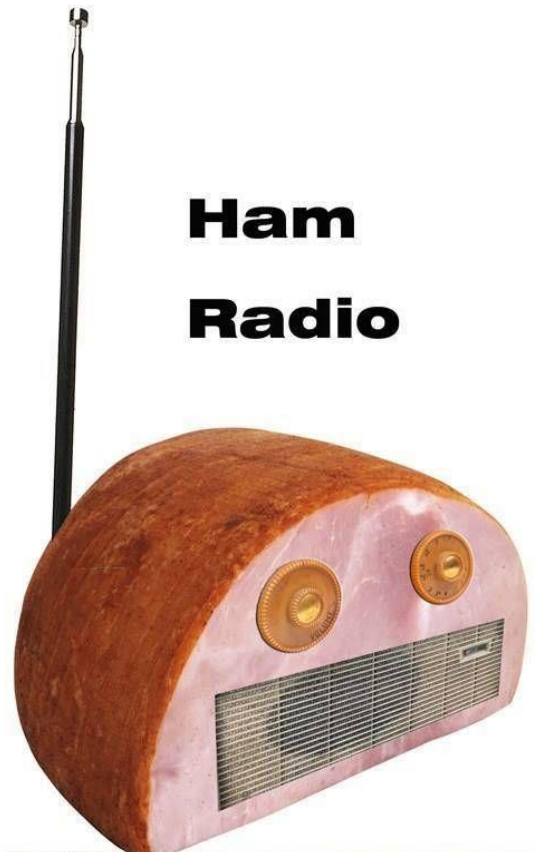
## This Issue's Shack

This is the shack for W4BIX...although it's already changed since blowing up the IC-746!



Email me a digital photo of your shack for the next issue! I'll even accept regular paper photos and will scan them in.

## Ham Radio



SO MUCH PUN.COM