

# The NEWSLETTER

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*Links that will take you to web locations referenced in this newsletter are shown in [blue text](#).*

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# Grandma Mara's RAMBLINGS

As much as you try to prepare, to keep Murphy from putting in an appearance at your Field Day event, you can't possibly foresee every thing that can happen. Saturday dawned warm and calm with the weather lady promising great conditions through the weekend and into Monday.

The Scouts showed up on Saturday morning, as promised, and helped raise the vertical antennas into position, and lay the radials out over the ground.

They were quite fascinated when Walter pulled out his air powered tennis ball antenna launcher and easily placed the lines for the dipole and inverted-v up and over several tall tree limbs. After the support ropes were in place, they were lining up to try a few shots of their own. With a smile on his face, Walter obliged them all. By the starting time at 1800 UTC, the two rigs were connected, tested, and ready to go - each of them at opposite ends of Walter's RV.

We hadn't set up any specific operating schedule as we intended it to be fun. Wendy's family understood that a control operator had to present when they were operating. They also said they weren't into middle-of-the-night radio either!

Saturday operations were great. Mostly, I watched as Wendy and her family talked with other hams around the world. There's something about a female voice on the radio that adds a few extra kilowatts to the transmitted signal! Wendy and her mother would often times start a pile-up going simply by finding a clear spot (as clear as you can get on FD!) and calling CQ Field Day.

Her father made a contact with an Italian ham who lived in the same town where he had served part of his mission. They chatted for quite some time, switching back and forth between English and Italian.

For a time, her brother spoke with a British YL, about some interests they had in common. In the end, they exchanged e-mail addresses and agreed to write one another. That contact was interesting in that they had a reasonably clear frequency until they signed and then all heck broke loose! It was as if everyone on frequency was listening to



the conversation between the two young people, and when it was over, they all wanted to contact the young lady Brit!

And just before 11pm local, Wendy's mom answered a CQ FD from another YL, up in Alaska. Somehow, they got on to the subject of genealogy, and found they both tied into the same family line a couple of generations back. Who says coincidences can't happen!

You can see why I would say that this Field Day turned out well for Wendy and her family. Each of them had something to "take home" with them.

The meal that evening was something else that each of us will remember for a long time. The weather was perfect with a slight breeze to keep the bugs at bay and warm enough to be sitting outside without a jacket. Walter brought a big pot of his special chili. While he wouldn't tell anyone the ingredients he used, he did say that one of the secrets was to let it simmer really slowly in the oven for twenty-four hours.



Wendy's mom brought home-made bread and rolls, and I brought a cooler full of root beer buried in ice. For dessert there was chocolate layer cake, with extra chocolate, and vanilla ice cream. Even better than the food was the company and the spirited conversation.

We shut down the radios around midnight with everyone agreeing it had been a great event. Wendy's family headed to their camper while I headed home for what remained of the night. Walter was staying in the RV and would keep an eye on things for the remainder of the night.

Just before 3am, a powerful but short-lived local wind storm came up out of nowhere and took down one of the verticals. Thankfully, it was the one farthest away from the RV and the camper, so no one was hurt and nothing (other than the center section of the vertical) was damaged. And maybe Walter's pride was dented slightly because the support lines didn't hold. Out early the next morning to survey the damage, he was heard to mutter to himself something about "Murphy" and "stronger rope" and "heavier screw anchors".

In the end, a bit of bent antenna tubing really doesn't matter. None of us will remember Murphy's intrusion, except perhaps as something to chuckle about. What will be talked about for a long time to come are the good times, good food, and great memories of family and friends having fun.



# SUGGESTED AMATEUR RADIO EQUIPMENT FOR BASIC EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

by COLIN W9UPK

Colin's comment in his e-mail - *"I am teaching my last radio class (Technician level) before we leave on our mission in November and the class members wanted some advice about equipment. It was a chance to update the list I made back in 2009. I thought you might enjoy seeing it again. It hasn't been carefully proofed yet but thought I would get a copy off to you anyway. It is interesting to note that prices, in most cases, haven't gone up that much, and you can even purchase a handheld for \$90."*

For a copy of the earlier list that Collin refers to, see the [March 2009 Newsletter](#).

## Suggested Amateur Radio Equipment for Basic Emergency Communications

### Background

In choosing equipment for the beginning amateur radio operator (ARO), there are a few major considerations to be decided. For example, what is the purpose for the equipment and how much money does the individual want to prudently spend. The information that follows is based on the premises that the ARO is interested in basic emergency communications. From there, he/she can make decisions based on costs and whether or not the equipment will be used mobile, as a base station, or for both purposes.

First of all, I suggest mobile equipment, meaning equipment that can be mounted in a car.

1. It can run off the car battery and doesn't require a separate power supply. All of today's amateur radio equipment uses 12 volts DC. Household electricity is usually at 117 volts AC.
2. A mobile transceiver (transmitter/receiver) can be

considered cheaper because an additional power supply is not needed and the antennas can be relatively inexpensive.

3. Mobility allows for the assessment of damage in communities and neighborhoods following a disaster.
4. Mobile equipment is adaptable. For example, it can be used in a car or taken into the house and used as a base station (providing that a power supply and a transmission line to an outside antenna are available from within the house).
5. There are excellent handheld devices that are suitable for pedestrian operations. They have their place, but they are limited in power (5 to 7 watts max. vs. 35 to 75 watts for a mobile transceiver) and, depending on the ARO's location, their usage may be limited to repeater operations only. If simplex is used and not duplex (simplex is station to station, and duplex meaning using a repeater), the range will be more limited. Nonetheless, handheld transceivers can be connected to a magnet mount antenna (called a mag mount), on a car to extend range and rapid mobility. It is also possible to connect a handheld to an outside antenna mounted on a house but sometimes too large an antenna will overload the front end of the handheld and an extended run of coax cable will decrease the power finally being transmitted at the antenna end.
6. A dual band transceiver (mobile or handheld) is nice but usually unnecessary. A 2-meter transceiver will suffice very nicely and will certainly be less expensive.
7. It is not necessary to purchase a transceiver with lots of bells and whistles or extended frequency range for receiving. The extra features are seldom used and only make usage more complicated. At a minimum, the transceiver must have input for PL tone, offset, and some memory channels; and a rechargeable battery. The inclusion of weather channels is nice. All the mobile equipment listed below has these features.
8. There are various available antennas and ways to mount them to a car. The easiest is a magnetic mount to which the antenna is connected using an NMO connector. Usually the mag mount will have a 12' to 16' RG58 coax cable to extend from the antenna base to the transceiver in the car.
9. The taller the antenna on the car the better but one has to consider the height-to-garage entrance or parking ramp. Most antennas have some flexible bend or a spring at the base, but if bent too far the mag mount will pull loose and tip over on edge.

10. If possible, it's well to look at how others have mounted their antennas and what they are using. If you have the money, there are even antenna mounts that can be rotated up and down, or they can attach to the lip of the trunk and be concealed in the car trunk until needed.
11. The best antenna location, however, is with the antenna located mid-way atop the car. The car top acts as a ground plane. If the car top is a non-metal surface, find an antenna that has its own ground plane and/or mount it where you do have a metal surface or proper connection.

### Suggested 2 Meter Mobile Equipment

**ICOM IC-2300H**, 2-meter FM mobile, rugged design, amber or green LCD display with four levels of brightness, backlit keys and large oversized tuning knob. It covers 144-148 MHz transmit with 118-174 MHz receive for AM aircraft and weather channels with weather alert. Power levels: 65, 25, 10 or 5 watts, 207 memory channels, memory scan and 50 programmable CTCSS/PL tones. The unit comes with DC power cable, remote control mic, mobile mounting bracket and mic hanger. Dim: 5.5" width, 1.6" height, 6.4" deep and 2.43 lbs. Current price \$250

**ICOM IC-2200H**, older version of the IC-2300H and basically similar, priced at \$200

**ICOM IC-V8000**, 2-meter FM mobile with two outstanding features: 75 watts of output and a front mounted speaker. Other features: selectable power output of 75/25/10/5 watts, transmit 144-148 MHz with 136-174 MHz receive, 207 memory channels, programmable CTCSS/PL tones, rugged aluminum chassis, remote control microphone, DC power cable, mounting bracket, selectable green or amber display, and mic hanger. Dim: 5.9" width, 2" height, 5.9" deep and 2.22 lbs. Price \$240.

**Kenwood TM281A**, 2-meter FM transceiver, 65 watt output, multiple scan functions and memory names. It covers 144-148 MHz transmit and 136-174 MHz receive. NOAA Weather band reception with alert tone, 200 memories, illuminated keys and large LCD with adjustable green backlighting, CTCSS, DCS and 1750 tone burst, forward facing speaker, auto repeater offset. Dim: 6.3" width, 1.7" height, 5.4" deep, and 2.5 lbs. Current price \$540.

**Yaesu FT-1900R**, 2-meter FM mobile, extended receive 136-174 MHz, and 144-148 MHz transmit (includes the 10 channel NOAA weather bank), power 55/25/10/5 watts, 221 memory channels with 8 memory banks, Morse

code trainer, auto power shut-off, illuminated front panel keys, includes backlit mic, dim 5.8" w, 1.6" high and 5.8" deep, 2.6 lbs. Price \$150. Verify if power cable and mounting bracket are included (can't tell from available literature).

**Yaesu FT-2900R**, 2-meter FM mobile, 75 watt output large LCD display, covers 144-148 MHz transmit and 137-174 receive, ultra high cooling sink eliminates the need for a cooling fan, 221 memory channels, alphanumeric display, 10 channel NOAA weather bank, CTCSS and DCS. Dim: 6.3: wide, 2" height, 7.3" deep, 4.2 lbs. Price \$165.

**Alinco DR-135TMKIII**, 2-meter FM mobile, covers 144-148 transmit and 118-135 AM aircraft receive and 136-173 MHz receive, includes Wide/Narrow FM, 100 alphanumeric memories, large alphanumeric LCD display, CTCSS, multiple scanning modes, 50/10/5 watt output, Dim: 5.58" width, 1.57" height, 6.83" depth and 2.3 lbs. Price \$170.

**Alinco DR-135TPMKIII**, 2-meter FM mobile. The same transceiver as listed above but with the addition of TNC for 1200/9600 bps packet and APRS operation. Price \$249.

### Mobile Antenna Systems

**Larsen, NMOMMR** Motorola-style round magnetic mount, with 12' of RG-58/U coax cable and a PL-259 connector. Price \$36.99. This magnetic mount will work with the following antennas:

**NMO150B** (Black), Freq. 144-174, 3dBd of gain, 200 watts max., type 5/8 wave, 51.5" height, whip W490. This is also available in chrome: **NMO150C**. Price \$29.99. If the 51.5" is too high to mount on your car roof, then there are shorter models: **NMO2/70SH**: it's dual band (no problem) and 19" tall, 200 watts max., ¼ wave center loaded, 1.8 dBd gain, . price \$49.99. **NMO2/70B**: it's also dual band (no problem), 36.75", 100 watts max., 1.6 dBd gain, ½ wave center loaded, and price \$79.99. **NMQSPEC**, ¼ wave, unity gain, 200 watts, 22", price \$24.99. All of these antennas mount to the antenna mount mentioned above. Note that Larsen also has a 5/8ths wave antenna NMO2/70 at about 36". A 5/8ths will provide more gain than a ½ or ¼ wave antenna. However, it will be taller and may be more cumbersome entering and leaving your garage.

Other mobile antennas are available from **Comet/Maldol** and **Diamond**. There is a wide assortment and they are quality antennas but most are not mag mounts.

## Base Station Considerations

If you want to use the transceiver in the house as a base station or want that additional flexibility, obtain a good 12 volt DC marine battery. They have better longevity than car batteries (more information on this at <http://www.batteryfaq.org>). You will need a battery charger, one that

will trickle charge keeping the battery constantly at peak voltage. **Battery Tender** is recommended, which costs \$35-45 depending on the source. Know the precautions for using any deep cycle battery in the house.

If you don't want to use a battery in the house, you can purchase the **Astron RS-20A** power supply, price \$99.99.

Model	Output Power	Coverage	Memory	Price/ Weight
Alinco DJ-175T	5 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive	200 w/alphanumeric	\$90 8.7 oz.
Alinco DJ-V17T	5 watts	144-148 transmit 130-173 receive	200 w/alphanumeric	\$140 9.9 oz.
ICOM IC-V80	5.5/2.5/0.5 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive with WX channels	207 w/alphanumeric	\$140 12.3 oz.
ICOM IC-V80 Sport	Same as IC-V80 but comes w/ no wall charger or NIMH battery	Same	Same	\$100 12.3 oz.
ICOM IC-V82	7/4/0.5 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive with WX channels	200 w/ alphanumeric	\$150 13.8 oz.
Kenwood TH-K20A	5.5/2/1 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive	200 w/ 6- character alpha.	\$150 7.8 oz.
Yaesu FT-250R	5/2/.05 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive	209 w/ alphanumeric	\$130 12.4 oz.
Yaesu FT-270R	5/2/0.5 watts	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive	200 w/ alphanumeric	\$140 13.8 oz.
Wouxun KG-UVA1 VHF/UHF*	5 watts VHF 4 watts UHF	144-148 transmit 136-174 receive 400-470 trans/receive FM: 76-108	12 channels	\$130 9.7 oz.

**Table 1 - Suggested 2 Meter Handheld Transceivers**

\*Wouxun is dual band, and new on the market from China. The others listed above are from Japan and by long standing manufactures. The manufacturers listed above make other models not shown here. Check out their individual web sites for more information.

The Astron power supplies are reliable and capable.

Finally, an antenna will be needed for base operation. The magnet mounted antenna for your car can be used if it has a suitable ground plane, such as big cookie sheet, a large metal filing cabinet, or other suitable large metal surface. The better situation, however, is to have an antenna mounted above your roof line. Such antennas can be built or purchased. You will need some 50 ohm coax cable (RG58, RG8x, etc.), to go from your transceiver to the antenna. A 2-meter vertical antenna does not have much wind surface area and can be mounted atop a 10-20' 2" PVC pipe that is bracketed to the house. Two meter antennas can be purchased or can be built. The copper tube cactus J-pole is easy to build and works well.

### Suggested 2 Meter Handheld Transceivers

See Table 1 on page 5. Most will come with a wall charger, rubber duck antenna and a NiMH or NiCD battery. All are packed with many features and one can purchase optional add-on equipment, such as an external microphone, ear phones, and carrying case. Some will have battery packs that use expendable/replaceable alkaline batteries.

### Sources for Information and Purchasing

1. Amateur Electronic Supply or AES: [www.aesham.com](http://www.aesham.com), 1-800-558-0411. The main location is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with other stores in Cleveland, Ohio; Orlando, Florida; and Las Vegas, Nevada.
2. Ham Radio Outlet or HRO: [www.hamradio.com](http://www.hamradio.com), 800-854-6046. They have locations in Anaheim, California; Oakland, Burbank, San Diego, and Sunnyvale, California; New Castle, Delaware; Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; Phoenix, Arizona; Atlanta, Georgia; Woodbridge, Virginia, and Salem, New Hampshire.
3. If you go online, you can locate other amateur radio suppliers, such as Communications City at 786-336-0046, [www.commcity.com/](http://www.commcity.com/); Radio City in Minnesota, 800-426-2891, [www.radioinc.com](http://www.radioinc.com); Cheap Ham in New Jersey, 732-716-1600, [www.CheapHam.com](http://www.CheapHam.com); Texas Towers in Plano, Texas, 800-272-3467, [www.texastowers.com](http://www.texastowers.com).
4. Shop around and compare prices. Check out the record of any supplier before ordering.
5. Online reviews of equipment can be found at [eHam.net](http://eHam.net) and other sites.
6. The American Radio Relay League is a professional organization representing the interests of amateur radio operators. Their web site is

[www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org) and the telephone is 860-594-0200. Annual membership is \$39 and includes the monthly publication QST.

7. CQ Amateur Radio is another fine publication for amateur radio operators. Copies can be obtained by subscription or from the magazine racks in better bookstores.
8. Amateur radio operators are quick to help. If you know one, don't hesitate to ask for assistance. Every new ARO needs an Elmer, one who will willfully provide advice and assistance. Larger cities have amateur radio clubs where you can also find assistance.

Colin Wheatley, W9UPK

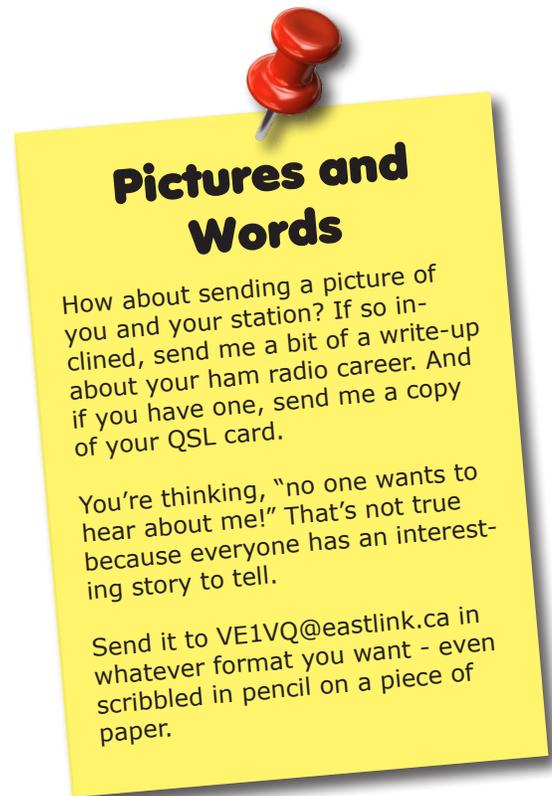
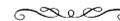
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Updated June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012



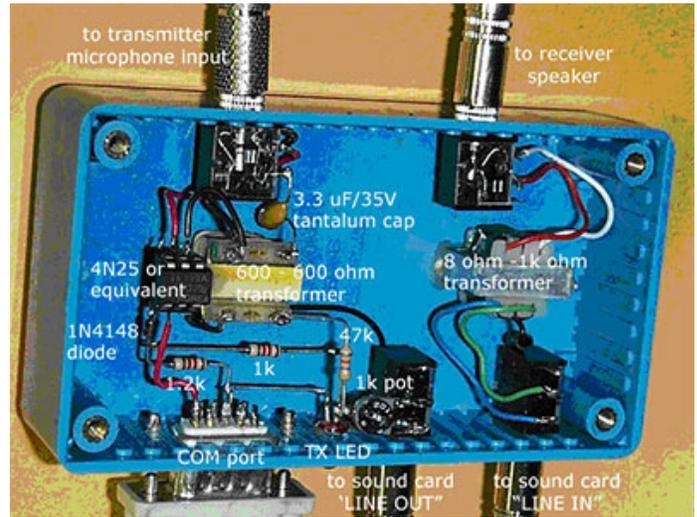
# TECHSTUFF

By VE1VQ

Some time ago, I tried PSK and a few of the other basic digital modes using a home brew interface and the computer sound card. An interface for the digital modes doesn't have to be complicated because the brainy stuff is taken care of by the software (most of which is free on line) and the computer sound card. A few years after that I moved up to a "store bought" [Tigertronics SL-1+](#). That unit worked well and I still have it, although I haven't powered it up in quite a while.

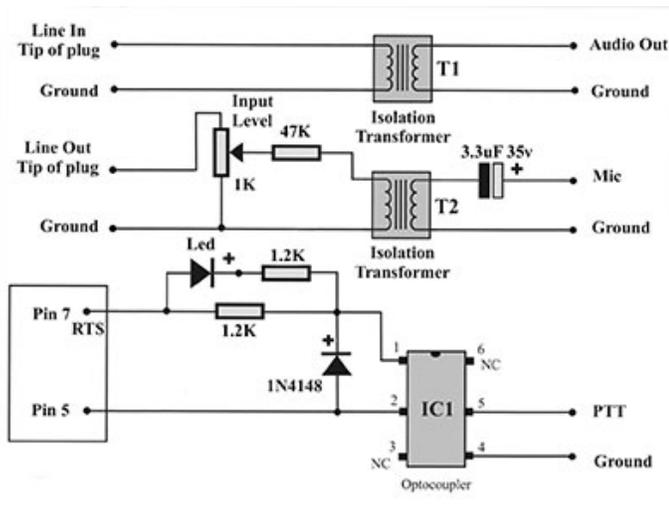
Mention of a digital net<sup>1</sup> using both OLIVIA and MT63 formats on the Saturday morning 40M ERC net in early June by Charles, N2NOV, stirred my interest once again. I did some reading about [digital modes](#)<sup>2,3</sup> in general and [OLIVIA](#) in particular.

I have an old IBM ThinkPad running Windows XP, in



My home brew interface was built in a Hammond plastic box. The transformers were glued upside down using two-part epoxy cement. The optocoupler is a 4N25 installed in a socket. The interface connected to the serial port on the laptop. Hard to find one of those in a computer these days.

terface box is the same for all transceivers, only the cable going to the rig's accessory/data socket changes to make the proper connection. Change your rig? Simply order a new interface cable to fit. As well, there is an internal socket where wire jumpers are inserted to tailor it to your particular rig. Signalink also sells pre-wired headers made for specific radios, if you are not comfortable with



This was the serial interface that I built and used for several years on PSK and a few other modes. T1 is an 8 to 1000 ohm miniature audio transformer while T2 is a 600 to 600 ohm audio transformer of the same size. If you search on-line you can find similar designs to this one.

which the battery had long since departed this computer realm. It still works, as long as the power supply is connected.

I patched the IBM into my office network to access the Internet and downloaded [FLDIGI](#) from the website <http://www.w1hkj.com/> and, on the same day, placed an on-line order with a Canadian ham radio supplier for a new interface, the [Signalink USB](#), along with the interface cable to fit my TenTec Jupiter.

The people at Signalink have a good system! The in-



The front panel of the TIGERTRONICS Signalink SL-1+. Like the home brew interface, it uses the computer's sound card for all audio processing. Changes to the RX and TX audio levels are done with sound card settings. A little cumbersome when shifting between modes or trying to adjust RF output, but quite do-able.

plugging in a few wires, or if you have more than one radio you want to use it on.

While I was waiting for Canada Post to deliver the new toy, I played around with FLDIGI as best I could without actually getting on the air.

And it came to pass (as they say) that the package was delivered to my door by the mail lady wanting my signature.

Set up was relatively simple. Reading and following



The front panel of the TIGERTRONICS Signalink USB model. This one has a sound card of its own and does not depend on the computer's card. Audio level settings can be done conveniently with the knobs on the front panel. A lot simpler to connect if your rig has a data port.

the directions does help! In fact, they send a separate sheet telling you to read that sheet first before you start the installation instructions. Between the reading and the actual hands-on time, it took me better than an hour before I had it set up and working. Receiving was not a problem. That only took a few minutes. The default settings in the software work fine for that part. The problem was setting the power output level with the TX control! The instructions said to set the rig's power output to full (in my case to 100 per cent). Then set the transmitted power to between 20 and 50 watts with the Signalink's TX knob. This with FLDIGI booted up and on TX idle. However, turning the knob a few degrees (from fully CCW) caused the power output to go from 2 watts to full power of 100 watts. That made it very hard to set for the lower power level required in order to protect the transmitter against the damage of a 100% duty cycle. I reduced the audio level using the computer audio level sliders for the Signalink's built-in "sound card" down to the point where the interface failed to go into transmit, then increased it slightly to the point where it switched reliably every time. A bit better but not really great! I re-read the manual, and searched the manufacturer's web site. There was a note about the same situation in the troubleshooting part of the manual, but I'd already tried those recommendations and found that they didn't appear to fix my problem. I sent an e-mail to support to see what their recommendation for a cure might be. They suggested that I replace the MIC wire jumper with a 33K ohm 1/4 watt resistor. It worked a bit better, and pointed me in the right direction. In the end, I installed a 100K ohm resistor to give me nearly 3/4 of the rotation with the "sound card" levels reset to their original suggested values - much better!

You might wonder why I didn't turn the offending level down at the accessory port. There was no setting in my Jupiter's menu to adjust the level, nor was there any adjustable pot shown on the rig's schematic.

Charles was kind enough to send me some further information to assist in getting me started on the net. Like enabling the RXid and TXid on the main screen. And telling me that the net was 1kHz up on the waterfall display from the listed frequency. And not to forget to set the rig to upper sideband.

Another thing to remember is that OLIVIA is not like PSK31. Where the latter starts decoding a second or so after you click on the signal, OLIVIA takes many seconds more before you see text showing up on the computer screen.

On the first Wednesday evening after I had things set up, I tuned to the net frequency, started the laptop and booted FLDIGI. Once I had a waterfall on the screen I set the mode to OLIVIA and clicked on the signal showing at 1 kHz up from the bottom of the display - and after a few seconds, the letters started printing out on the laptop screen. And there was N2NOV's call as net control! How easy was that?

If you want to read the QST Short Take reviews on either the SL-1+ or the USB interfaces, you can check them out at the links below.<sup>4,5</sup>

With the home brew unit and the SL-1+, I used DIGIPAN for the software. This time I decided a new one was in order, one with more available modes to play with, and as mentioned back at the first of this column, I thought I'd try FLDIGI. Several people had mentioned to me that they used it and really liked it. Different than DIGIPAN and with another learning curve to overcome. Ah, but the fun of learning something new.

<sup>1</sup> NBEMS Net - 7.036 MHz on Wednesdays and Saturdays, 7pm and 10am respectively. The format is OLIVIA 500/8 (bandwidth of 500 Hz with 8 tones) or 8/500 (depending on where you look).

<sup>2</sup> This [digital mode site](#) has sound samples so you can hear what you should expect when trying to find one on line.

<sup>3</sup> Here's [another site](#) with pictures of waterfall views and occupied spectrum, and the sounds of each.

<sup>4</sup> QST Short Takes on the [USB Signalink](#) - <http://www.tigertronics.com/files/slusbqstreview.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> QST Short Takes on the [SL-1 serial port version](#) - [http://www.tigertronics.com/files/sl\\_review.pdf](http://www.tigertronics.com/files/sl_review.pdf)



## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**“Worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere”**

~ Erma Bombeck

## DI-DAH-DI-DAH<sup>D</sup>

I know it may be considered unmanly to say it, but I hate to shave! I don't know why I hate to shave, just that I do. How long does it take to spread a bit of foamy stuff on my face and scrape off the offending hair with my trusty Gillette? What - less than five minutes! Years ago, I grew a beard just to be able to stop shaving. The first couple of months nearly drove me crazy with the itching on my neck. I said if I ever shaved it off, I'd never grow it again.

It was black when I first had it. Over the years, however, there were areas of gray which seemed to creep in. I had it for so long that my youngest had never seen me without a beard. She used to say, “If you love me, you would shave it off so I can see what you look like.” I used to tease her back that I guessed I didn't love her then. She would always counter with, “I'm your youngest and your favorite so of course you love me.” She was in her early twenties when I got rid of it. The reason it went was a calling as a temple worker. In the interview with the Temple President, he sort of beat around the bush (so to speak) about having to be clean shaven. My response to him was, “it's only hair!”

I thought about growing it again earlier this year and I actually got about a week and a half's growth going when it itched so badly I had to get rid of it. Another wrinkle is that life now requires that I have to use an auto CPAP machine at night, so facial hair would defeat the face mask's seal.

You'd think that modern science or medicine or someone working for a drug company or in their garage would come up with a goop of some kind that you could smear on your face and stop your beard from growing, wouldn't you? Perhaps it's a conspiracy and the razor blade companies are in league with them all.

If I think I have it hard, I only have to look at my xyl and see all of the time and torture she has to endure to rid herself of unwanted hair. Come to think of it, maybe I don't have it so bad after all!

Until next month,  
VE1VQ



### More Pictures and Words

Did you or your group participate in this year's Field Day? If you did, how about sending us a picture and/or a write-up?

Send it to [VE1VQ@eastlink.ca](mailto:VE1VQ@eastlink.ca)