



# *The Short Circuit*

December 2017

since 1927

Volume 90, Issue 12



The December meeting of the United Radio Amateur Club will be a Holiday Party (!) held **SATURDAY**, December 16th<sup>h</sup>, at the Think Café (302 W 5<sup>th</sup> Street) in San Pedro. Here's what the 'thieves' exchange' table looked like last year ...



## ***Program:***

Officers for 2018 will be installed after the dinner and before the Thieves' Exchange. See Doug's QST column for the list of officers for next year. If your name is not on it, don't despair, there are lots of volunteer jobs open for you ... Field Day Chairman (or band captain, or participant), K6AA Station Operator, participant in Museum Ships Weekend, California QSO Party, Lighthouse Weekend, and more. If you have a gift for gab, you can write about what goes on in the First Saturday Breakfast, or take a crack at being Newsletter editor (yes, indeed), and remember, we are still looking for a club Secretary. If you want to get involved, if any of this sounds like something you would like, tell a board member and get going!



## ***QST de President Doug, W6HB...***

Election 2017 is in the books and your new 2018 URAC officers are:

President	Sam Lollar, K1SL
Vice President	John Linder, KC6JHV
Treasurer	Gary Forister, N6HMR
Secretary	--- OPEN ---
Director	Ivan Mikulich, KB6ATT
Director	Homer Meek, K6HKT
Director	Steve Mandich, K6NT
Director	Larry Fadden, KK6TXN
Past President	Doug Dowds, W6HB

I will work with Treasurer Gary to process the required IRS, FTB and Secretary of State reports in January. President Sam will have to appoint a qualified individual to perform the duties of Secretary as soon as possible as that position is key and required to be formally filled prior to filing. Treasurer Gary will coordinate with the new officers to make required changes with our bank.

The URAC Holiday Party will be at the Think Cafe on Saturday, December 16 along with the swearing in of officers and the Thieves' Exchange. The cost is \$35 per head and your payment needs to be received by Treasurer Gary, N6HMR, NLT December 11. Make your checks out to URAC. To participate in the Exchange, bring a wrapped gift valued at \$20.

Thanks to Ray, N6HE, and Clay, AB9A, for their great presentation on SDR technology and the Icom IC-7300. Looks like a few members have already lightened their wallets as a result.

Larry, KK6TXN, has the new VHF / UHF antenna and triplexer for K6AA. Qualified and capable members need to contact him to map out the work scope and schedule the installation.

Thanks to all who go the extra mile for URAC and have made my past presidencies enjoyable. For now, pretty much consider me retired and in the back of the room.

***73 -- Doug -- W6HB***

## December ... First Saturday Breakfast



### December First Saturday Breakfast

22 Members and guests gathered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Club Breakfast. This was discussed around the table:

John, KC6JHV, is going along fine while work is being done at his home.

Bill, W6AJ, has a relative in the Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society: G0ZEP; Richard Carter Steve, K6NT passed

George, WA6YBR (our newest builder) has been building: NESCAF ("audio filter switch capacitor",



Edgar, AG6BJ noted on TV stories of abandoned sites, in this case metal structures next to the Chernobyl site; "Woodpecker antennas"

Doug, W6HB: got another terrific deal on airline ( Air New Zealand ) tickets to Rarotonga and will be visiting the island again this coming May with Peter,

WA6HXM, who is on track to be E51HXM. He says the best day to get ANZ tickets is cyber Monday, but if you want to be notified of special deals, you should sign up for e-mails with the airline.

Sam, K1SL, as our incoming club president, thanked all who voted. He would like to see more people at the K6AA station...you are welcome to sign up for as little as an hour a month! And as a reminder, starting in January, the monthly membership meeting will be at the First Saturday Breakfast, and will continue until the parking situation at the Museum improves.

Norm, KG6FSA, passed.

John, WA6SDK has noticed that band conditions have been better lately and that he has worked some DX from the station.

Scotty, K6ZNL reported that the booth that URAC manned at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium Sea Fair worked out well...the attendance at the Fair was up overall, and the people who stopped by our booth were genuinely interested in Radio. Special Thanks to John, WA6SDK, and Janet (Homer's daughter).

Treva, N6HMS said that Gary, N6HMR (our current and also incoming treasurer) was out giving glider rides to vets this weekend. We need to get your reservations and payment for the Holiday Party and also we need your renewal for the club. Please get your monies in ASAP.

Mary (Ingo's xyl) said Hi to all.

Homer, K6HKT has noticed something interesting...the Coast Guard 'speak' for 'silence' is pronounced 'SEE-LANCE' (like the French) and the opposite is pronounced: 'SEE-LANCE FINI'.

Ingo KK6EWB, brought his Elecraft Speaker to be signed by the designer, our own Bruce Edgar. He reports that the on-line ads for the speaker note the signature as an added perk.

Larry, KK6TXN. Santa came early. He has a brand new Icom IC-7300. And best of all, Santa got it for \$999.

Nick, N6EFI however, has a feeling that the K4 (Elecraft,) is coming out soon. He is waiting for that. Ivan, KB6ATT, has been on the radio on and off, in between physical therapy for his shoulder. He is looking forward to the Christmas Party.

Nickolas Lee (no call sign yet) came to take the license exam, passed and stayed to join the club. A most hearty welcome! He lives most of the time at Two Harbors, Catalina Island.

Stuart, WX6ST, who also has bought the IC 7300 says his longest distance QSO, so far, is to St. Helena Island on 15 meters.

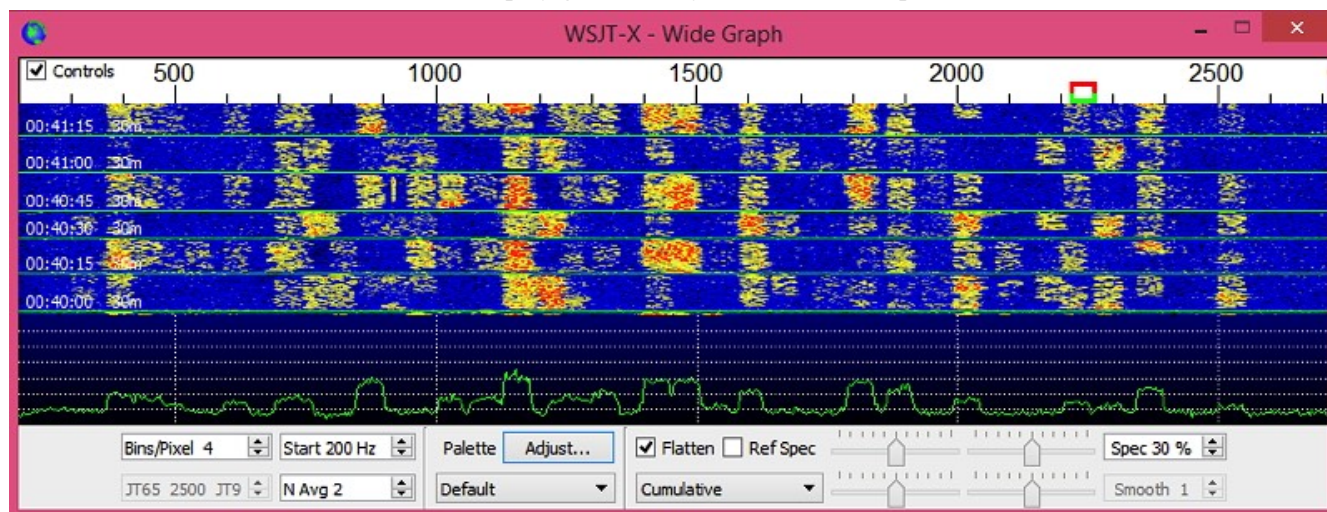
Reported by Scotty K6ZNL

## **FT-8: I'm not really feeling the magic**

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

Partly out of curiosity and partly because Jeff, KE9V, shamed me into it, I setup my Signalink interface, downloaded WSJT-X from <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjsx.html>, and started operating FT-8, the latest “shiny object” (as the ARRL dubbed it) from the K1JT team. As you probably know, this mode has really caught on with the digital crowd, and the waterfall is chock full of FT-8 signals. Part of the reason for this is that it has some of the characteristics of JT-65, but is not as excruciatingly slow.

A waterfall display generated by WSJT-X at 7:30 pm, 11/23/17.

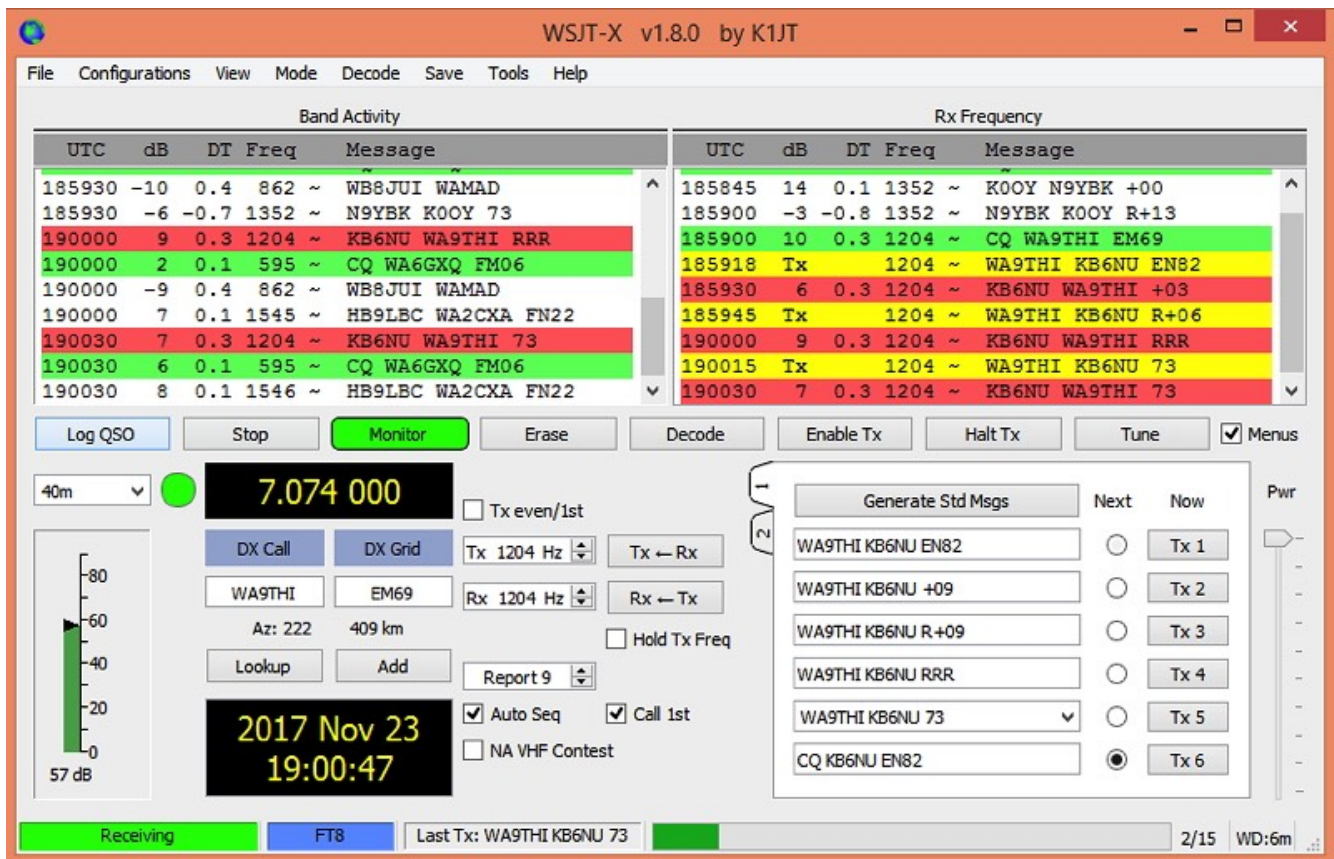


Over the past couple of days, I've made 32 QSOs, including a couple of DX contacts. It's been fun to try something new, but to be honest, I'm not really feeling the magic.

Part of it is that I don't feel like I'm really doing anything. I downloaded the software, plugged in my digital interface, fooled around with the settings a bit, and then, the computer started making contacts. I have to click a few on-screen controls to make contacts, but even that's a step that could be easily programmed in by the WSJT-X developers. (In fact, I wonder why they haven't done that already!)

**Continued ... next page**





WSJT-X screenshot. The sequence of transmissions in the Rx Frequency window comprises a contact.

Take a look at the screenshot above to see how a typical contact happens. When a CQ appears in the “Band Activity” window, you double click on it. When you do this, the software begins listening for signals on that frequency. In this case, I double-clicked on the CQ by WA9THI. When I double-clicked on the CQ, the program began decoding signals on that frequency and display the transmissions in the “Rx Frequency” window. Then, I clicked on “Enable TX” and the program began the contact sequence, sending “WA9THI KB6NU EN82.” EN82 is my grid designator. This is shown as the first yellow line in the Rx Frequency window. The transmissions that I sent are highlighted in yellow. The transmissions sent by WA9THI are highlighted in red. The sequence of transmissions shown there comprise a complete contact, and that whole process takes less than two minutes. And, once WA9THI received my first transmission, the sequence is all automatic. You just sit there and watch the two computers talk to one another.

While I can certainly appreciate the thought and the work that went into the design of the protocol and programming to implement it, sitting and watching the computers talk to one another just doesn't excite me. On the other hand, if you're one of those guys who wants to make contacts, but doesn't really want to talk to anyone, than this is the mode for you!

Here are a few more notes about FT-8 operation:

- Not surprisingly, synchronizing your computer with the other stations computer is very important. To do that, you need to get your computer to use the network time protocol (NTP). I failed to do this when I first installed WSJT-X, and while my waterfall was full of FT-8 signals, WSJT-X just wouldn't decode them.
- I got my PC laptop to talk ntp by installing Meinberg NTP software (<http://www.ntp.org/ntpfaq/NTP-s-def.htm>). Once I did that, WSJT-X magically started decoding transmissions.

- Most of the cool guys seem to be using Meinberg NTP, but there are other options. One of the guys in our club is using a program called Dimension 4, for example.
- Apparently, you don't have to limit your power output as you would with PSK-31. At first, I set my output power to 10 W. I had a bit of success at 10 W, but I expected more. When I asked on Twitter how much power other guys were using, most of them said that they were using more than that.
- For the last couple of sessions, I've been setting my output power to 25 W, and I've been having more success. I've now worked several Europeans on 30m.
- Even at 25 W, my signal reports are more often than not not as good as the signal reports I'm handing out. I haven't figured this one out yet. This doesn't happen to me when I'm operating CW, so I don't think it's my antenna.
- When I'm operating, I write down the calls of stations I've contacted. The reason for this is that while WSJT-X does have a logging function, it doesn't have a log window, so unless you have a great memory, you could end up working guys two or three times a session. That's probably not a big deal since contacts are so quick, but I'd rather avoid doing that if I can.
- WSJT-X works "split." While most contacts take place on the same frequency, a station can call you anywhere in the passband of your receiver and WSJT-X will decode the signal and begin a contact. This threw me the first time or two that this happened, and I tried to change my transmit frequency to match the other station's. In doing so, I messed up the sequence. I now just let the contact proceed normally, and it works out great.
- When I work the other digital modes, I set my IC-746PRO to the USB-D mode. In this mode, the receive passband is narrower than for working phone. When operating FT-8, however, you don't want to limit that passband. Signals will appear across the entire 2.6 kHz of the USB signal, and if you narrow the passband, you won't be able to work those stations.
- WSJT-X checks the validity of call signs. This afternoon, there was a guy who had typed in his call as "WAMAD" and was calling CQ. WSJT-X wouldn't let me answer that CQ.
- Operating this mode opens up the possibility of working more stations whose callsigns spell words and adding those QSL cards to my collection. I have, for example, already worked K1GUY, N4HER, and N5SLY. I'm guessing that these guys don't operate CW.

All told, I've found this to be an interesting foray into a new digital mode. While I'm not feeling the magic that some others seem to be feeling when operating FT-8, it certainly will be a change of pace to operate this mode from time to time. Give it a shot and tell me what you think.

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Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides and blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com. When he's not working FT-8, he teaches ham radio classes and operates CW on the HF bands. You can email him at [cwgeek@kb6nu.com](mailto:cwgeek@kb6nu.com).

**DX OPERATIONS FOR DECEMBER 2017**  
**Per NG3K**

Minami Torishima, JD1: Is now operating thru 12/15/2017. QSL via JA8CJY  
Togo, 5V1JE: Is now operating thru 12/31/2017. QSL via N9MDH.  
Brunei, V85: Is now operating thru 12/10/2017.m QSL via KC0W.  
Malta, 9H: Is now operating thru 12/11/2017. QSL via SM6DQR.  
St Martin, FS: Is now operating thru 12/8/1017. QSL via K9EL.  
Laos, XW4ZW: Is now operating thru 12/8/2017. QSL via K4ZW.  
Cyprus SBA, ZC4MK: Is now operating thru 12/12/2017. QSL via G0KOM.  
Cape Verde Is, D4C: Will be operating from 12/9 thru 12/10/2017. QSL via IK2NCJ.  
Senegal, 6V1A: Will be operating from 12/15 thru 12/17/2017. QSL via 6W7JX.  
Corsica, TK: Will be operating from 12/16 thru 12/24/2017. QSL via NZ1C.  
Barbados, 8P0VR: Will be operating from 12/17 thru 12/31/2017. QSL via DD0VR.  
Senegal, 6W: Will be operating from 12/25 thru 1/12/2018. QSL via WA3DX.

**Subject:** Santa Net 2017 - Of possible interest to families with young kids or grandkids



The 'Santa Net' will be operating again this year on December 23-24 beginning at 2pm EST each day, on or about 14.325 MHz.

Any inquiries should be directed to AA4EE, "Bob" in Tamarac, FL.

[aa4ee@mac.com](mailto:aa4ee@mac.com)

~ December 2017 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					<b>1</b> World AIDS Day	<b>2</b> URAC First Saturday Breakfast, 8 am Think Café, San Pedro
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b> Human Rights Day	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> URAC Christmas / Holiday Party, Think Café, San Pedro...6 pm
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Winter Solstice (Northern) URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Christmas	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>						

~ January 2018 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> URAC First Saturday Breakfast AND membership meeting, 8 am Think Café, San Pedro
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Human Trafficking Awareness URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Martin Luther King	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> URAC 2M simplex Roundtable, 8 pm, 145.510MHz	<b>26</b> Australia Day	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			



## **Two Free Amateur Radio Courses**

FCC **“Technician”** course (entry level)

FCC **“General”** course (2<sup>nd</sup> level)

Each course is 2 sessions

The sessions will be on 3 and 10 February 2018

**Technician** 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM both Saturdays (bring your lunch)

**General** 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM both Saturdays

The FCC tests will be 10:00 AM to noon on 17 February 2018

At the start of the 3 February Technician course, the Palos Verdes Amateur Radio Club will give a 30 minute presentation on how to get further involved with amateur radio.

The class location is at Fred Hesse Community Park,  
29301 Hawthorne Blvd., Rancho Palos Verdes.

**Confirm your attendance to Walt, K1DFO at [waltordway@juno.com](mailto:waltordway@juno.com)**







There is no fee for either course.  
Taking the FCC test is \$15.

### **Optional Material (sold at cost)**

Gordon West books with all the FCC test questions,  
\$22 for the Technician and \$26 for the General  
Paper copy of Walt's Power Point charts,  
\$22 for the Technician and \$22 for the General -

For courses sponsored by the Palos Verdes Amateur Radio Club, students thru grade 12 who pass their examination at a PVARC VE test session will, upon application to the Club, be eligible for reimbursement up to a maximum of \$50 to cover the cost of materials and the examination fee.

Everyone who obtains their first ham license through a PVARC VE test session, regardless of age, will receive a free membership in the Palos Verdes Amateur Radio Club for the remainder of the current calendar year.

<i>2017 U.R.A.C. Executive Board</i>			
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SECRETARY John Rockwood WA6SDK		TREASURER Gary Forister N6HMR	
DIRECTOR Steve Mandich K6NT		DIRECTOR Homer Meek K6HKT	
DIRECTOR Larry Fadden KK6TXN		DIRECTOR David Reid W6KL	

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