

The Tickler

The President's Propagation.....

Hello everyone. We have been very lucky this winter and have not been plagued with loads of snow and ice. However, we are having a pretty nasty winter storm even as I am typing this letter to all of you. It is bad enough that the schools are already putting out their notices that they will be closed on Thursday. I am writing this late on Wednesday night. When I went to work this morning there was a car down in the ditch on M-34. It didn't look like anyone was hurt, but the headlights were facing straight up in the air. I bet their ride wasn't a good one for the car to have been placed into that position. I was glad it was not me and that I made it to work on time.

Norm W8TTH and I once again were unable to attend the Mansfield, Ohio Hamfest. Norm had his Black powder pig shoot the weekend before and he had a lot of catching up to do in our shop. It is usually a good hamfest, but I haven't heard how it was this year. Next month there will be a couple of fairly local hamfests. They are the Marshall Hamfest and the TMRA Hamfest. These two share the same weekend. The first is on Saturday, March 19th and the other on the next day. The TMRA Hamfest will be held at the Owens Community College in Perrysburg, OH again this year. They are usually both pretty nice and well attended.

Mark has ordered the Dayton Hamvention tickets and I have received some information about the annual bus ride to Dayton and I will bring that to the meeting next Monday.

I have been going to the club on Monday nights and it is always nice to spend time with all that attend those gatherings. Please come and join us, if you have the time. It is a good time to just sit and communicate about whatever. The spectrum of topics is usually quite varied. And as always, if there are Amateur Radio concerns, projects, or questions they are always welcome.

Please don't forget to check out the website at www.w8tqe.com.

Please send any new information and/or pictures to Bob K2IBM. He is our web master and we need to support him and the club by sharing things through the website. Also, don't forget our newsletter editor, Jeremy KD8VSQ. He also needs your support. They both do a great job for all of us.

I hope I didn't forget to mention anything and if I have I am sure I will find out at the meeting. I hope to see you all at our Leap Year meeting on February 29th.

73, Ginny W8TTX

IT'S NOT YOUR MICROPHONE, IT'S YOU!

Steve Katz, WB2WIK/6

Those of us who foray into the “phone” bands have all heard some G-dawful modulation.

There are the “wi-fi audio guys” who, to me, sound like fingernails scratching a chalkboard, but I'll admit some like the way that stuff sounds. I don't, but that's neither here nor there.

There are the over-processed guys who have fallen victim to AKTR* Syndrome, and as long as they believe what they do, will never, ever sound good.

(*AKTR = All Knobs To Right. This is a method where the operator simply turns all the knobs on his transmitter fully clock-wise, keeping adjustments very simple.)

There are the “radio dispatchers,” who sit back in a chair about two feet away from their microphones and operate from that position. They always sound crappy, without exception. This method of operating creates a very under-modulated signal unless the operator also follows the AKTR philosophy, in which case, then you can hear his heart beat, clock tick and cat meow, and those items all modulate his rig about the same as his voice. Along with lots of room echo.

There are the mumblers. There are the cross-talkers: You know, guys who talk across their microphones rather than into them, honestly believing the mythology that somehow that works better. There are the yellers who elevate the pitch and intensity of their voices every time they're on the air, and never use a conversational tone until the rig's shut off.

There are those with lisps and various impediments to normal speech, and while many of those could be cured by simply listening to their own voices played back by a tape recorder, most have never even tried this.

And then, there are the drawlers. These are folks who don't actually live in the deep south, and really don't have a southern drawl, except when they're on the radio, when they suddenly develop one. Or if not that, then some other silly accent they don't really have.

Why is it that only about ten percent of all hams using the phone bands actually sound good on the air?

Pssst: It's usually not their microphones, or even their rigs. They really don't need audio equalizers or other means to add “fidelity.” What the ones who sound lousy really need is a way to listen to how badly they sound, and learn how not to sound like that.

Some useful hints

No matter what kind of microphone you use, use it as you would a “hand mike.” If your lips are more than an inch or so from the front of the microphone, you're too far away. If you've never operated this way: Trust me, it works, and you'll sound a whole lot better as soon as you start operating this way.

Don't talk “across” the microphone. That looks silly, and doesn't sound any better, at all.

Use conversational tone. Don't elevate the pitch or volume of your voice simply because you're on the air. Speak normally, as you would to someone sitting in front of you.

Practice enunciation, using a tape recorder or digital voice recorder. Most people, especially if they've never been broadcasters, have a very incorrect impression of how they sound. The tape playback clears that all up.

Adjust your transmitter (assuming the mode is SSB) so that the “ALC” indicator registers just a bit on voice peaks, and goes dead between voice peaks. If the “ALC” scale on your particular transmitter goes from 1-10, and the “highlighted” area where you're “supposed to” use it is a range from 2-7, adjust your mike gain so that a very occasional peak indicates about a “5,” and normal speech is down around “2.” Background noise, including the cat, the dog, the TV in the next room, and everything else, should indicate absolutely nothing.

If you do operate SSB, and most of this discussion concerns SSB operation, by all means try to buy, build or borrow a true PEP wattmeter. A normal wattmeter cannot indicate PEP, and PEP is what counts when you're operating SSB. Some wattmeters have a "peak" or "PEP" position, but do not have a power supply operating them, nor internal batteries to power the PEP circuitry. If you have a meter like that, rest assured it is *not* a PEP meter, period. It's impossible for it to be, because peak reading circuitry consumes power, and cannot work by magic.

The reason I stress the "PEP meter" point is that so many hams look at their average-reading wattmeters and try to modulate their rigs so these meters indicate whatever the output power of their transmitter is supposed to be. If you do that, you're guaranteed to sound crappy on the air, and you'll probably achieve such reports. A 100% modulated SSB transmitter will usually indicate 20-30% of actual output power on a typical (non-PEP) wattmeter. That same transmitter will indicate 100% of actual output power on a PEP meter, and this will make you feel better and also provide you with great insight about the difference between peak and average power. (Remember, the average power of a high-level modulated AM transmitter is 25% of PEP; however, all of that is the carrier, so even if you don't say a word, you're running an average power of 25% of PEP, and that power is entirely wasted: Which is why suppressed-carrier single sideband became popular in the first place.)

Most microphones, regardless of design, work best under full sound pressure, e.g., when you provide them with as much sound pressure as they can handle without damage. In the case of communications mikes, that's a lot of pressure. You can't provide that pressure from across the room, a foot away, or usually not even from two inches away, unless you're screaming. With normal voice modulation, you'll want to be right up against the microphone. It's what sounds best, and it's what works. Take a look at any broadcast studio and you'll see announcers right up on their microphones. Ditto any concert with vocals. You never see anybody back a foot from the mike. That doesn't work.

Get in the good habit of close-talking the microphone, no matter what the environment, or what type of microphone it is. I've never come across a microphone that didn't sound better under full sound pressure.

Desk mikes

Desk mikes are silly.

Okay, I'll go a bit further (although I really could have ended it there). They're not only silly, but they always cost more than hand mikes, and never sound better. For radio operating, what works, if you have one hand free, is a hand mike. If you don't have a hand free, then a boom mike, or boom headset.

Anything that puts the mike element right in front of your lips.

Problem with desk mikes is that most are not designed to be comfortably used if you want your lips up against them. They're too short, so you have to lean over. Or, they're too *something*. If you can mount a desk mike so that it's the same height as your mouth when you're comfortably seated at your operating position, great. But rarely is this the case. Which brings me back to my first statement: Desk mikes are silly.

The ambient

The ambient is your operating environment: What's around you. It should be quiet, so that nothing other than your voice modulates your transmitter.

If you have a wattmeter with different scales of sensitivity, here's a great test: Set the wattmeter to its most sensitive position, preferably something like 5W full scale, or maybe 20W full scale. Then, run as much power as you can (preferably a kilowatt), and key your push-to-talk switch with your mike gain and any processor or compressor set as they would normally be set for your operating. Count to three and look at the meter. Does it indicate anything at all? It shouldn't. It should just lay there, read-ing zero.

If it reads anything at all, that's too much, as you have background noise modulation which is extremely distracting to anyone trying to listen to you. I say *trying*, because hard as I try, I usually can't listen to anybody with that much background noise. And "any" is too much.

Get rid of the noise source, or make adjustments to your station.

Distortion

Any that can be discerned as distortion is too much. There's distortion in everything, so we'll never achieve "zero." But you shouldn't be able to *hear* any obvious distortion, other than that caused by propagation. On HF, and even sometimes on VHF, there surely is distortion created by "the path" (propagation) that isn't actually there when the signal leaves the transmitter. But most of us who have spent any time operating know the difference.

Best way to avoid distortion is to not overdrive any stage of the transmitter. Not the mike preamp, or the balanced modulator, or any of the driver stages, or the final amplifier. In an SSB transmitter chain, all modulated stages are linear and can operate pret-ty much distortion-free if not overdriven.

Overdriving the mike preamp can be pretty easy to do, with some rigs. All you need is too much mike gain for the voltage the mike is producing. Close-talk the mike as repeated *ad nauseum* above, and adjust your mike gain for slight ALC activity. That's usually the right amount; although, with some rigs, it may not be. It really pays to listen on a second receiver, using headphones, if you can. [Headphones](#)

Using headphones can create a better-sounding, better modulated signal for you!

How? A few ways...

Headphones allow you to use your transceiver's MONITOR function (if it has one - all the "high end" rigs do, and some of the mid-line rigs do, too), so you can listen to yourself and see how you sound.

Headphones allow you to use a second receiver (if your transceiver has no MONITOR function), to do the same thing. Headphones also allow you to operate in a very quiet environment. It's peaceful and serene, and you can hear signals in headphones that *nobody* could hear in any speaker in the world. When SONY developed the *Walkman*, they realized the magic of a set of \$2 headphones. The headphones bring the sound close to your eardrums and allow you to hear a range of frequencies you can't hear if those same sounds are generated by million-dollar speakers across the room. Once you get used to operating with headphones all the time, it's unlikely you'll ever go back to a speaker.

(BTW, other members of your household will thank you for ditching the speaker. "Radio receiver noises" represent a majority of the noise pollution generated by hams in their own homes, and using headphones eliminates this.)

And, headphones set the stage for the greatest boon to two-way radio communications: The boom headset, which includes a microphone that you can have planted directly in front of your lips to create the best modulation you'll ever have. Better than desk mikes, anyway.

Equalizers and such

Nah.

Ham radio would be nothing without experimentation, and by all means, feel free to experiment! However, in lieu of \$500 worth of modulation-altering add-ons, most operators would benefit more from \$500 worth of professional vocal training. Improving your diction, enunciation and voice timbre is something that you can take with you everywhere you go, for the rest of your life; it will make you a better public speaker, a better telemarketer, and a better communicator in all facets of life and for most, I'd highly recommend this over electronic gizmos that work only with your transmitter.

Conclusion

If you don't get stellar reports of full, rounded, smooth, punchy, great modulation - it's probably not your microphone's fault. It's far more likely the operator. Learn to close-talk, adjust levels properly, minimize room noise, and really articulate. Practice with a tape recorder or DVR, and work on your own voice until you think it sounds great. When you do, others will, too.

WB2WIK/6

IN STANLEY'S OPINION

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members that voted and elected me to the board. My wife Donna (W8DIY) and I joined the club because of the vast knowledge and kindness of the people that immediately took us in under their wings and their willingness to help bring me back up to speed after 12 years away from ham radio and the great help in getting Donna licensed and us both upgraded to Amateur Extra in such a short time. In my opinion, that is why the club was originally started back in 1947.

After a little research, I put a few stats together. The AARC membership list includes 59 members. Of those members, 19 are still delinquent on paying their dues. Donna and I would like to make an incentive offer in an effort to get the delinquent members to pay their dues. Upon payment of their dues, they will receive the Adrian Amateur Radio Club Badge. This will be a custom badge with their name, call sign, and city on it. This will also be offered to all those who have already paid their dues.

We have bylaws that have not been revised since 1991. I would like to see a revision to the bylaws and brought up to date with some of the current clubs in the area. We need to pay closer attention to the bylaws! Unknowingly, even I was in violation of them due to being behind on my dues. However, I rectified it as soon as the treasurer Mark (NU8Z) dropped me a note—thanks for the reminder, Mark! The point is, we need to pay more attention to the club and its overall purpose. The club members need to work together as a whole.

We need to get our clubhouse in a little better order, the shack is in need of better maintenance on a routine basis. We have a fine station there that is fully capable of contesting, special events or even just coming by to demonstrate amateur radio to someone new! There are several people interested in this hobby but do not know where to go. Let's give them a chance and show what fun we have with it!

It's going to take all of us to keep this club together. We need more participation of all members. Over the past couple of years, the only time I saw some of the members was at the annual ice cream social. Maybe we would get more member participation if we had our club meetings at the Spotted Cow. But seriously, we all know what needs to be done. We need to promote this hobby by getting people interested in it and not think of the club meeting as an annual event. Let's keep the membership interested!

We need to be able to have testing sessions at least once a month staggered from the other local clubs to enable new amateurs or upgrades to do so quickly. I will look into this and see what the other clubs schedules are and make my recommendation's to the board on the next meeting. I am very confident that, in the near future, we will arise to good standings to the membership.

The repeaters are under review and backup systems are in the works in case of failure. Bob K2IBM has volunteered to head up a technical committee to keep everything heading in the right direction. Thanks Bob!

I would also like to see some better interaction with surrounding clubs instead of our just our little club. Let's see what some of the other clubs are doing. Let's look into satellites, new data modes, and even have a picnic and invite some of the surrounding club members!

Cletus (K8TLT) has been hard at work trying to get us up to speed on ARES, RACES, and Sky-Warn. These are the things we need to learn and be ready for. He has established an emergency simplex frequency at 440.5. Look at the Dundee and Pinckney tornadoes in recent years. Monroe, Chelsea, and Ann Arbor Arrow Club were very instrumental in assisting the Red Cross and getting help to those unfortunate folks. The same thing could easily happen here. Do we have a plan? Do we have an order to get the word out? What about scheduling classes? Every team has a playbook. We, too, should have a playbook for when such events happen. As far I know, we only use word of mouth from the few that are working on trying to get things organized.

Every Sunday night at 8 p.m., we have a net to help promote activity and information among us. The net controller has had a few problems. The repeater has had a few problems. The net was in disarray. We need to have an alternate frequency. During the time when we were having repeater problems, what would it have taken to have a planned simplex frequency for backup. What would it have taken for an alternate net controller with a simple preamble to step in and take over the net? I have put together a preamble format that will enable a backup net controller to jump in and take over the net should the need arise. I will make these available at the next board meeting for their approval.

In my opinion, these issues need to be addressed and not just pushed onto the few that are trying to help out. We have some very talented people who are working in the background —Jeremy (KD8VSQ), Dave (KB8MXX), Norm (W8TTH), Bob (K2IBM) and others who have heavily invested their time in this club with specialized test equipment, knowledge, and building techniques in an effort to get the repeaters and internet up to speed. Let's not forget the crews, Norm (W8TTH), Ted (K8AQM), Denny (WE8Z), and others who work so hard to run the radios on the special ship events and help make these events possible. We all have our special talents and, when we combine them that is what makes us Adrian Amateur Radio Club what it should be!

One last thing and then I'll get off my soap box. Bob (K2IBM), Jeremy (KD8VSQ), and Ted (K8AQM) work and scrounge up material to put together the website and newsletter. They should not have to play detective or beg for news or articles to help keep them going. They need stories and news to make it all work. It doesn't take much to get it done. The phone numbers and email addresses are on the club membership list. I would really hate to see us lose these resources due to lack of participation. These are put together for everybody's benefit—not just so Bob can use his monitor for a night light or for Jeremy to have extra paper from printing out the Tickler to proof read it and then start a fire in the fireplace with it. Feed these guys info. Even the little things—birthdays, anniversaries, anything! If you have a few items you want to sell, a few things you want to buy or need help with—send the info to Bob, and he can place it on the homepage or Jeremy can put it in the Tickler.

Of note, a few weeks ago, I was at the Hazel Park Ham fest and ran across a friend from the Monroe Club. He told me how he enjoyed reading the Tickler and how he was trying to get his club to release their newsletter to non-members. As it is set up right now, the Monroe Club restricts their newsletters to their own members to read online. I also saw a friend from the Arrow Club in Ann Arbor, and he told me he also reads the Tickler. So let's get together and give them something to read about.

Okay, I'm stepping off my soapbox. As the title says, these are my opinions. They are not directed to any specific individual but to the club as a whole, so let's get it all together and have some fun. That's what it's all about!

73

Stan (W8ATE)

W8ATE@laseritup.com

Vacationing with the XYL!



My wife is very understanding, I am extremely lucky! When she says, "Lets go south for a week to get out of the Michigan cold," I'm already packing! This February she wanted to go to St. Kitts for a week, no problem to get a li-cense there! First I packed my radio gear and then figured what clothes I needed to pack around my gear, good planning of course! I travel light with a K2/100, my trusty Sigma V antenna (low profile at the resorts) a paperclip paddle and my Vizkey(dits died on me..nuts!).



The wife says, "vacation comes first, radio second (really?)." I do most of my operating in the early morning and later at night...my wife gets up late and goes early to bed...perfect!

Here is the vacation setup of V47TR (aka K8AQM). I worked 260 SKCC members on 10-20m and even a couple on 30m which he antenna doesn't do! I was able to go from SKCC # 8509 to 8509T during the week stay, all

thanks to the many fine ops who heard my signal and the K3UK sked page!

The antenna is only 9 ft tall and packs easily in my suitcase. We were on the bottom floor and you can see how close the antenna was to the building but the picture showing our "view" was right to the US. I did take a paddle and spent one day working as a DX station which netted and additional 400 QSOs so all in all I worked 660+ QSOs during the week.

If you would like one of the QSLs just use the SKCC bureau or send on direct with an SASE. Now, on to T32TR! The plastic bag covers the switching relays and coils.

Ted K8AQM



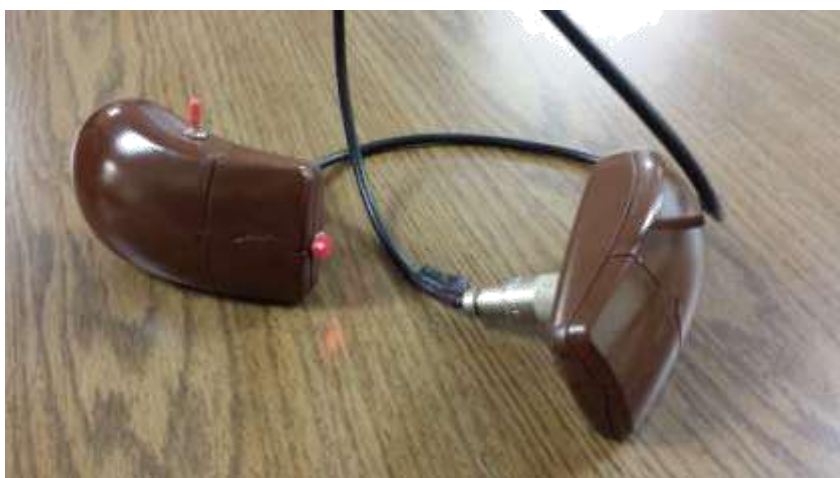
New Use for Old Mice!

Bill WB8NPI sent along his latest creation. Using two old “mice” Bill has made a continuity checker for coax.



There are times when we want to check for a short in a long piece of coax from the shack. Bill removed the ball in the mouse and found an SO-239 fit perfectly in the hole and holes for mounting screws lined-up too. So each mouse has an SO-239, one mouse has a mounted 9 volt bulb

and battery inside. Bill even added a switch to turn the unit off and on. The idea is simple and the project cheap. Bill used the old hole where the cord was for the pilot light and filled the other hole and “wheel” slots with JB Weld. A coat of whatever paint was available finished off the project. Although an ohm meter would work as well, there are times when Bill’s idea would be simpler and



easier to use. I can see a run of coax from the top of the tower to an antenna that needs checking ...working with a meter on the tower/antenna would be more difficult! You can never have too many tools! Thanks Bill for the idea.

Anyone else out there have a nifty little idea to share?

ADRIAN AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
Board/Meeting Minutes

Board Minutes

Neil KC8DAR, Mark NU8Z, Bill KD8TTM, Stan N8ATE, Bob-K2IBM, and Ginny-W8TTX were present. Norm W8TTH and Beth KF7WDC were absent.

Discussion included –

Our 440 Repeater coordination was lost. The 440 is up at Ted's K8AQM's running as un-coordinated. We will re-visit the issue in a year. The 2 meter coordination is up to date. Other items were the hamfest location, the Mad River Plaque, and Dayton tickets. Board meeting started at 7:00 p.m. and was ended at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes by Ginny Schutte

Meeting Minutes

Roll call was taken and there were 23 were present. We had 2 visitors.

50/50 was won by Mark NU8Z who donated his share of the money back to the club.

Due to the December 2015 meeting being cancelled there were no minutes to be approved.

The Treasurer's Report was approved on a motion by Neil KC8DAR with a 2nd by Stan N8ATE. Motion passed.

There was a motion from Bill KD8TTM with a 2nd by Jim W1SJG to move the AARC Hamfest from the Lenawee County Fairgrounds to the Civil Air Patrol Building where our meetings are held. Motion passed.

After discussion by the club members it was decided that due to the lack of our club's participation in the Michigan QSO contest and the value to our club that we would not be donating money for the Mad River Plaque this year.

Mark NU8Z announced that he will be ordering the Dayton Tickets and asked for a show of hands of any interested parties. He will be ordering 9 tickets.

Cletus K8TLT discussed the club's ability or probability of the members participating in any RACES or ARES events. If needed, he will contact the members at 440.5 with a pl of 100.

Muriel Perkins Etter's KC8DAT's obituary was read to everyone. She was a past member of the club.

The meeting started at 7:38 p.m. and ended at approximately 8:40 p.m.

There was a short program presented by Ted K8AQM which was very entertaining. If you weren't there, you missed out on some fine ham radio humor.

Submitted by Ginny W8TTX

CQ CQ CQ CALLING ALL MEMBERS

We need your help!



The Tickler is in need of articles to put into publication.
We want your input to help us produce the Tickler.

If you have submissions for the Tickler please contact [Jeremy KD8VSQ](mailto:Jeremy.KD8VSQ) and it will be included in the next months issue of the tickler.

Join us on Facebook! Follow the URL below and click the "Like" button and what ever we post will be shared instantly with all club members.

<http://www.facebook.com/w8tqe>

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Weekly AARC Nets

Sunday Night 2 Meter AARC ARES Net at
8 pm on the W8TQE Repeater 145.370 – pl 85.4
Net Control - Bill KD8TTM

Tuesday and Thursday CW / SSB 10 Meter Nets
10 Meter CW Chat starts at 8 pm on 28.050 +/- QRM
10 Meter SSB Char Starts at 9 pm on 28.328 +/- QRM

Local Area Repeaters

W8TQE 145.370 - 85.4 pl Adrian, Michigan

W8TQE 444.675 + 123 pl Adrian, Michigan

K8ADM 443.375 + 107.2 pl Adrian, Michigan

K8ADM has access to Echo Link

Adrian ARC 38th Annual Hamfest and Computer Show

September 13, 2015
Hamfest Chair
Mark nu8z@comcast.net

AARC Web Page and E-mail Reflector

Website: www.w8tqe.com
Email: adrianarc@mailman.qth.net

The Tickler is the official paper of the Adrian Amateur Radio Club in Adrian, MI. It is printed monthly and is distributed to members of the club, local disaster officials, local electronic outlets and other editors of ham radio newsletters. Articles about activities of members are solicited. Permission is granted to any other publication to reprint items appearing here, provided complete source credit is copied including previous print source. The club owns and operates repeaters W8TQE on 145.370, - 85.4 PL or 537 from your touch tone pad and 444.675, 123 pl.

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These are put together forever by everybody's benefit — not just so Bob can use

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