

The content which follows is a transcript of the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast hosted by Jerry Taylor, KDOBIK. This monthly version of PARP is typically released the last week of each month.

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 46.

From the ham shack of KDOBIK, located in Colorful Colorado, this is the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast.

This is show number 46, volume number 4 with a release date of September 14 , 2011.

Hello and welcome to the practical amateur radio podcast.....Creating Elmers One Podcast at a time. My name is Jerry Taylor and my amateur radio callsign is KDOBIK. Yes, this podcast is all about amateur radio or ham radio. Regardless of whether you're currently studying for your exam or have been in ham radio for years, I'm hopeful this podcast will help you. In keeping with our Creating Elmers one podcast at a time philosophy, if you learn something from this or any of my podcasts, please share that knowledge with others. Thank you.

Thank you for returning for another episode of the practical amateur radio podcast. Also, thank you for helping spread the news about this podcast and of course for sharing all that you learn about the hobby and not just what you learn from this podcast...but all that you learn with others. This hobby is unlike anything else I've ever experienced. The free flow of information with a no-strings attached way we share and build up one another is truly amazing. I'm very much humbled to be able to do my part with each and every podcast episode.

I have some really great news which many of you probably already have heard about if you follow me on Twitter, Facebook or Google +. More about that later in the show.

Back in the August program I mentioned I wanted to discuss JT65 and well....that is exactly what we're going to do. But before I do, I just want to remind everyone...especially amateurs living in the US that September is National Preparedness Month. No this is not a commercial for anyone or anything...it's just my reminder and my way of sharing with all of you and getting you to think about the subject of preparedness.

Now preparedness is not just us as amateur radio operators being prepared for the next storm, natural disaster or even a manmade disaster. We for the most part do that very well. Of course there's always room for checking and double checking our ham shack, mobile operations, portable operations and our ham radio go-kit setups. Something as simple as checking that our batteries are charged and giving everything in our go-kits an eye-ball inspection is never a waste of time.

Also, we're getting into that time of year where we should all do our visual inspections of our antennas, towers, feedlines, ground connections etc. etc. As I've said, I try to do two inspections per year of all my exterior components. I do it in the late spring and early to mid fall. It doesn't really matter when you do them as long as you look things over. I choose late spring and mid fall because in Colorado both summer and winter can be harsh. What the cold winter, ice, wind and snow doesn't break the hot sun likely will. Taking time to inspect and make repairs when the weather is mild, will save me from having to do it when the weather is cold or hot.

The preparedness which I truly want each and every one of you to think about and review is your own household status. To my friends living in the Northeast, are you ready for another winter ice storm? To my friends living down around the east coast and bordering states of the gulf of Mexico, are you ready for the next tropical storm or hurricane? To my friends living in California and up along the west coast of the US, Are you ready for the next earthquake? To my friends living in the mid-west and southern states....Are you ready for the next tornado? To my friends living in the rocky mountain region, are you ready for the next blizzard? To my friends living anywhere and everywhere....Are you ready?

The point I'm making is I think we sometimes pay too much attention to making sure we are ready to go on the ham radio service side...that we forget about our non-ham radio lives. Just think about it...check out ready.gov again that is romeo, echo, alpha, delta, yankee . GOV You'll find ideas for how to plan for emergencies and provide ideas on what you may need to stock up at home to provide for your family.

Please, Please, Please, when planning for your family...don't forget about your pets.

Final thought, If you visit MyAmateurRadio.com and on the left-hand side menus, look in the one titled Podcast and Show Notes, then click 2009 Episodes, Volume 2 and listen to the three part series I did on emergency communications. In episode 15 I kicked it off by talking about preparing your home first before preparing your go-kit. Then in episode 16 and in episode 18, I discussed the topic of emergency communications and those organizations like ARES, RACES and SATERN. If you are new to the hobby, listen to those three episodes and also don't forget about your local amateur radio club as being a key resource to your community in a time of need.

OK...JT65. If you remember back in episode 38 I discussed WSPR. Now keep in mind while this is episode 46 and episode 38 is only 8 episodes ago, episode 38 was released way back in April 2010. Yea...I know...bad Jerry for taking so much time off.

Anyway, during episode 38 I introduced you to WSPR. WSPR spelled Whiskey, Sierra, Papa, Romeo stands for Weak Signal Propagation Reporter. I received a ton of email after that episode and most of it was thanking me for introducing them to this mode. Well...I truly hope the response rate is equally as impressive when you check out JT65.

Now, JT65 and WSPR are a lot alike, but they also differ. Both are a weak signal digital modes. Both (and this is my opinion) are great modes to experiment with for those of us with limited station abilities. Meaning those using stealth antennas, or not as efficient antenna types etc. But of course, WSPR isn't a true QSO mode. Meaning it's really more of an automated mode and while I suppose you could exchange a QSL card for confirmed contacts, I doubt other hams do that and most importantly WSPR isn't a recognized mode in logbook systems like the ARRL's Logbook of the World, eQSL etc. But that doesn't mean you should stop running WSPR.

Again, this is just my opinion, but I think WSPR is the perfect mode to test the capabilities of your station. Install the software, configure the software to your receiver, don't forget to sync your PC clock and we'll talk more about this in a minute, and let'er rip.

But....not so fast. While it might be tempting to just start up WSPR and go to bed, go to work and come home the next afternoon. You do need to be aware of the rules and such regarding unattended station operations and such. I think the way I phrased it way back in episode 38 was as follows:

While I'm not going to tell you that you shouldn't run WSPR 24 x 7 ... Just how "hands-on" you are when operating WSPR is between YOU, your license authority and your conscience.

Unlike WSPR, JT65 is a true keyboard to keyboard digital mode. JT65 is supported by all the logbook sites and QSO's are eligible for awards and hams generally exchange QSL's (either paper or electronic) to confirm the contact. Like WSPR, If your setup to operate digital modes like PSK and RTTY, then you are almost ready for JT65.

Now if you aren't running WSPR and you don't understand the importance of truly being on time. Then before you do anything else....before you download and install the JT65-HF software...Please do yourself and all other hams a HUGE favor and download and install a good PC clock syncing application. Yea I know Windows has that thing that....it's not good enough.

Back in episode 38 I mentioned and I still use a Windows based application which works fine in Windows XP and also in Windows 7 by the way as I just upgrade my shack PC to a new Windows 7 machine. Anyway, the name of this software is Karen's Time Sync and it is available from Karen's Power Tools website at Karenware.com. I'll post a direct link in the show notes of where you can get this time sync application.

<http://www.karenware.com/powertools/ptsync.asp>

The important take-away from this is to download it, install it and use it. I have it setup to auto-start when I start up my machine and it syncs every couple of hours. In addition, I've tried other utilities which help to sync your PC clock. I've gone back to Karen's Time Sync as it is the most accurate of any of the other products I've tried.

OK...I know you are chomping to know more and learn more about JT65.

JT65 was created by the same ham who created WSPR. Joe Taylor, K1JT and no relation (that I know of) to yours truly. You'll find the link to where you can download the JT65 software in the show notes. You can also Google JT65 and get there as well.

<http://nw7us.us/jt65a.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/jt65mode>

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/jt65-hf/>

<http://iz4czl.ucoz.com/jt65-hf-setup.pdf>

<http://www.hamclubs.info/JT-Utilities/>

As I stated earlier, JT65 is a true keyboard to keyboard digital mode. The importance of time is key in having successful QSO's in this mode. The transmit cycle begins at the top of every 60 seconds or minute intervals. The transmit cycle is precisely 47 seconds in duration leaving 13 seconds. The cycle repeats itself again.

A typical QSO from start to finish is only a few minutes long. If you are answering CQ's, you will typically have 3 transmit cycles. If you are calling CQ, (including the CQ transmission) you will have 4 transmit cycles.

The JT65 software, called JT65-HF was developed by Joe Large, W6CQZ and has a waterfall much like PSK and you'll see a decode screen. In this decode screen you'll see the data which the JT65 software decodes and displays for you. A station calling CQ will show up after the 47 second transmit cycle. You'll have just a few seconds to double-click on that entry then click the Answer CQ button. Then at precisely the top of the minute your station will begin transmitting. Your station will transmit for 47 seconds. At the top of the next minute you're station will receive for 47 seconds. If the station calling CQ heard your CQ Answer, then it'll show up in the decodes box.

JT65 is not a rag-chew mode at all. The structure of the QSO is just how I explained it before. A station will call CQ, another station will answer that CQ. Then the original station will provide a signal report, then that will be followed up by the second station sending his or her signal report. The original station will send a confirmation report of receiving the report displayed as an RRR. The second station will then send 73 and that will be followed with the original station sending their 73. That's it...that's absolutely all there is to a JT65 QSO.

Now...just one more thing. Like WSPR, JT65 is a weak signal mode. This truly is what makes this mode incredibly fun and at the same time challenging to operate. You'll find you don't need a lot of power to make QSO's. Most stations run QRP levels or less and up to 25 to 30 watts of power is considered high power for this mode.

I'm going to post several links related to information regarding both the JT65 mode as well as the JT65-HF software. You'll want to visit MyAmateurRadio.com and view the show notes for this episode, episode 46. There are several utilities designed to be used with the JT65-HF software. I use JT-Alert which simply reads my Ham Radio Deluxe logbook to determine if I've worked a station before. There is also a utility called JT-Macros which just as the title suggests, provides a few shortcut macros to help you add additional abbreviated text to the transmitted text edit field.

So how much do I enjoy the JT65 mode? It's become my favorite mode and in just the last month or so, I've worked over 135 unique stations on JT65 and JT65 has helped me add to my DX list. I believe I'm up around 25 countries worked and hope in the next couple of weeks to have QSL cards back confirming contacts for my first Worked all Continents award.

Featured Website Segment

The featured website segment for this episode is my own blog website. Yea I know it's a bit cheeky to self-promote my own blog on my own podcast. But hey...I think you'll like reading it.

So go to kd0bik.com/blog to find it. My blog site is going to be a mixture of my own adventures in this wonderful hobby as well as some educational content mixed in. I tried just making it about me with no elmering and I failed. I guess this elmering thing is too important to me.

So again, please visit www.kd0bik.com/blog I try to post at least one blog posting each week.

Now...if you like to read amateur radio blogs, you really need to check out amateurradio.com. Again that is just amateurradio.com. Don't confuse it with myamateurradio.com....it is just amateurradio.com. Anyway....over at amateurradio.com you'll find several amateur radio blogs all in one place. Some of the best amateur radio bloggers are featured on that website.

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- **Featured Gadget Segment**

Amateur Radio is all about gadgets. Some gadgets may directly relate to amateur radio and some may not. However, in most cases the featured gadget will at the very least be something that may help you in some capacity around the shack.

- None

- **Ham Adventures Segment**

- As many of you know, I got my amateur radio license as a technician class ham in August of 2007. I quickly upgraded to general in Jan. of 2008. This rapid ascent was partly the blame of Randy Hall, K7AGE and his PSK31 videos. The first time I saw his video series on PSK31 I thought to myself what a cool mode that was and it would be right up my alley running a stealth antenna setup.

Between August 2007 and January 2008, I got my HF rig all setup for PSK31 and would call CQ on the 10m band but with no luck. This just inspired me to keep reading and to keep studying for general. My wife and I spent Christmas that year at home and took extra time off between Christmas and New Years. I really used this time to study and increase my confidence with the practice tests. On Saturday, January 5th I went to a local VE session and successfully passed my general exam.

I was excited. I had made general class and had access to all those wonderful band segments that generals get access to. Of course this included the data modes which still to this day make up the greatest portion of my on-air activities. I was in heaven...and I believed general would be all I would need or want.

In May of that same year (2008), I started this podcast. This podcast and some social media activities have allowed me to get to know many hams. Of course, actual on air QSO's have introduced me to many new friends. Many of you have been so kind to me and really while many of you say "thank you" to me for being an Elmer to them in some capacity....it truly is I who need to thank so many of you.

I think it was some time in the late summer of 2008 that I purchased the ARRL extra class study manual. In addition, I also purchased the Gordon West audio program covering the question pool and I started the process of studying for the extra upgrade. Of course, what I didn't know at the time was how many times I would stop and re-start the process. Each time became a little more frustrating and I began to lose focus and also lose the belief in myself that I could actually pass this extra exam.

Roll back the clock just a few weeks. I actually talked about starting the study process over during episode 45 just last month. I explained how I discovered the South Coast Amateur Radio Society and

their extra study group held on Echolink twice a week. Anyway, the class and those teaching it really helped me focus on the material and in a lot of cases helped the entire class better understand the material as well.

As we cruised past the half way mark I had actually found myself a little bit ahead the rest of the class. This was only possible because I had read through so much of the material before and I was scoring fairly well on the sample tests. But I had really made no decisions on when I would test. I did want to test prior to next summer when the question pool changes, and I also wanted to test prior to the end of 2011 (since I had made this a new years resolution) and then I wanted to test prior to October 4th as that is my birthday and when I turn 45. I thought...well how cool of a birthday present would that be.

Well...as I just stated, the scores on the sample tests were looking better and better. I found a VE session taking place about 25 miles from my QTH and decided to give it a try. So on Saturday, August 27 I took the amateur extra exam and YES..... I passed it. KD0BIK is now officially an extra class ham.

So I guess you can say I took some of my own advice and just buckled down, really got serious and accomplished my goals.

Now...don't worry. I'm not going to become one of those guys who feels the only real hams are extra class hams. I don't believe this and neither should you. However, I will say that if you want something bad enough....if you try hard enough and put the amount of effort and believe in yourself....you can do this.

First, if you are listening and you are not licensed. What are you waiting for. Get the technician class material, study and go get your license.

If you are a tech class ham, if you want to upgrade to general...yes the general test is a little harder than tech, but you can do it if you want to and try hard enough.

Finally...if you're a general...why not push for extra? I won't lie to you. Yes...the extra class exam is a little bit harder than general. It's also 50 questions compared to 35. But it is not impossible. And Trust me when I say....the effort you put into studying and preparing for either general and/or extra will pay off in how you'll feel when you walk out of the VE session with a signed CSSE form. It's been a couple of weeks and I think I'm still smiling.

Now I know many of you have a question for me. I think that question is something like, Jerry now that you have your extra class ticket, what are you going to do now? Well...no I'm not going to disney land or world. But this is a good question...actually no it is a great question.

I would like to become a VE or volunteer examiner. I realize I could have done this as a general class ham and administered technician exams, but wanted to wait until I had achieved extra class. Now that I have done that, I think becoming a VE is a great way to give back to the community. I'll get that paperwork filled out and sent in just as soon as I've received my paper license from the FCC (more about that in a minute)

Second, someday...this may be 2012 or later...but someday I would love to learn CW. I don't feel pressured to learn it because some feel no code hams are not real hams. That's BS to put it simple, but I want to learn it because I think it would be a cool mode to work.

Finally, I'm looking forward to just having fun in the hobby and the continuation of learning new things about the hobby and service of amateur radio. Just because I've reached extra doesn't mean I'm done learning. Of course, what I learn will automatically be passed down to all of you via this podcast. I hope you are ready.

Now, as I stated at the top of this segment, I did test and successfully pass my extra exam on Saturday, 28 September. At the time of this recording, if you go look on QRZ you'll see I'm still showing as general and if you look at the ULS (as I have done many times each day since about the first of September) you'll see my application is pending.

I've actively blogged over on my blog site at www.kd0bik.com/blog about this whole thing. Best I can tell the pending status is due to the fact I have a common name and another first initial J. last name Taylor (not ME) is flagged in the system as needing manual review. The week of Labor Day the individual who handles these manual reviews was out on vacation and based on what I was told from the ARRL, who called the FCC on my behalf, this should be cleared up the week of 12 September. However, it is nearing the end of day on the 14th as I'm actually recording this episode and it still shows pending status.

So this is why I'm still showing as general and of course why I need to wait before sending in my VE application. I know it will happen and I'm really having to practice at my patience skills. But I think I'm doing fine.

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Mailbag

Mail goes here

Well this wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. We will return again with episode 47 sometime in October. I hope you'll check out all the links I've posted regarding JT65, my blog site and of course the brand new Elmer Connection on MyAmateurRadio.com.

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Until next time, 73 to all from KDOBIK.

This has been The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast is written and produced by Jerry Taylor. You may contact Jerry by email at kd0bik@arrl.net or by visiting his website at www.myamateurradio.com. The practical amateur radio podcast and myamateurradio.com are protected under the Creative Commons license. Please see myamateurradio.com for details.

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