

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

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 58.

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

This is show number 58, volume number 5 with a release date of August 24 , 2012.

Hello everyone. My name is Jerry Taylor; my amateur radio call sign is KDOBİK and welcome to the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast...Creating Elmers One Podcast at a time. Amateur radio or ham radio is what this podcast is all about. If you are currently studying for your exam or have been in ham radio for years....I'm hopeful this podcast will help you. If it has helped you, I hope you will continue to listen and I also hope you'll tell others. Also, in keeping with our Creating Elmers one podcast at a time philosophy, if you learn something from our podcasts....please share that knowledge with others.

I know what you are thinking....I told you last week during PARP + 14 that I was going to delay PARP 58 until September. However, I received an email (unrelated to my announcement of not planning to release PARP 58 in August) from a very good friend and fellow ham. Again, this is unrelated to PARP 58 and he said (and I quote) "Jerry, we are like Marines - We don't leave a man behind!" (end quote)

That statement encouraged me to throw some notes together and get episode 58 recorded and get it out almost on schedule for August. Remember, PARP + is a weekly show which contains mostly time-sensitive information. These regular PARP episodes release monthly and release generally the third week of the month.

Before I get started, one comment about the Marines comment and why that encouraged me to stay up late and throw these notes together and record the audio. No....I'm not an ex-Marine. While it was a childhood idea to join the Marines and participate in their drum and bugle corp, I didn't go that route. And please understand I'm not comparing myself or my podcasting to a Marine. I have the highest regard for all of our armed service members and rest well at night knowing they are protecting our interests all around the world.

But what did catch my attention about my friends comments (and again I'm not trying to brag), but I've created something with the practical amateur radio podcast which may be important for many of our fellow hams and soon to be hams. My goal for 2012 was to produce a regular PARP episode each and every month in an effort to Entertain, Encourage, Educate and Inspire those who listen. This episode may be shorter than some of my previous episodes....but I certainly hope to at the very least encourage and inspire some of you today.

The topic for this episode is getting on the air for the first time and overcoming something we call Mic Fright.

Every single one of us (at one time or another in their life) has experienced that "First Time" feeling when we sit down to make our first QSO. It may not have even been a microphone...perhaps it was a CW key. The question enters our mind...how will our fist sound to the other guy. Will he be willing to

send at the speed I'm capable of copying? Will my mind completely go blank and all the dits and dahs will just sound like a foreign language to me?

Of course, the majority of brand new hams starting out today....their first QSO will probably be in the form of a voice or phone QSO. Also, more than likely...this QSO may be in the form of a VHF or UHF repeater or simplex QSO. In any event, the first QSO....may appear to be difficult and scary....and this feeling will be the same regardless of band or mode.

Most will agree....in our hobby (and this even applies to the important service aspect of amateur radio) that we will LISTEN more than we speak. Or should I phrase this as saying, WE SHOULD.....listen more than we speak.

Perhaps you purchased your first radio even before you were licensed and you've been listening to the local repeaters and listening to the various nets taking place in your area. In most cases what you will hear and experience during this time of listening will demonstrate proper on-air etiquette. However, you may certainly hear things on the air that DO NOT demonstrate or represent proper on-air etiquette. I'm sure you'll recognize the difference.

Again....listening is a great way to learn. But there will come a time, and only you can determine when that time is....for you to speak on the air. I'll admit...I was nervous the first time I attempted a QSO.

As I've mentioned many, many times over the past 5 seasons I've been producing PARR....your local amateur radio club can be a huge help to you in many different ways. Even if for no other reason than the comradery of being around likeminded individuals, the lessons you will learn can be invaluable to you as you start out in the hobby.

I've heard of clubs who hold an Elmer session at the beginning of their club meetings. These sessions are geared towards new hams. This would be a perfect setting to help introduce and encourage those who have not attempted their first QSO to do so in a non-threatening environment.

Some clubs even take this a step further and will host an Elmer Net. Again with a non-threatening attitude, it not only provides an opportunity for a beginner ham to talk on their radio for the first time...but it also teaches good amateur practice when checking into on-air nets.

I would encourage those who are more experienced hams to volunteer to setup and run an Elmer session at your face to face meetings and also think about starting an Elmer net on your clubs repeater.

If an elmer sessions and nets are not available to you in your local area, then you still have several other ways to overcome mic fright and have that first on-air experience.

If you've spent time listening to the local nets taking place in your area (and most major metropolitan areas will have several) then you have probably noticed the net control station serves as the controller and manager of the net. He or she will start the net off with some type of an introduction to inform those listening on what the net is about, which club or organization is sponsoring the net and some general rules.

The thing to remember about on-air nets is there is a time to check-in and a time to just simply listen. Paying close attention to the NCS or net control station is all you need to do. Again, he or she will

announce when they are ready to take check-ins and in what order. The order might be in the form of alphabetical order based on the first letter of your callsign suffix. The callsign suffix will be the first letter after the number in your callsign.

Using my call sign as an example, KD0BIK. The first letter after the ZERO is the letter B - Bravo. The Net Control Station might ask for check-ins from stations Alpha through Delta. If this were the case, then this would be the time I would check-in.

Most check-ins will include announcing your callsign using standard phonetics and may also include your name and location. Again, the NCS will typically provide this instruction. So if this were the case, when the NCS asked for Alpha through Delta check-ins, I would state "This is Kilo, Delta, Zero, Bravo, India, Kilo.....Jerry in Denver".

Using standard ITU phonetics is extremely important. This should be something all hams commit to memory and it isn't hard. I'll post a link in the show notes to the standard ITU phonetics. I would recommend studying these. If necessary, print these and hang them on the wall right next to the band plan.

http://www.emcomm.org/svares/training/itu_phonetics_10_30_2001.htm

http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Hambands_color.pdf

Don't have a copy of the band plan hanging on your wall? I'll post a link in the show notes to the nice color version of the ARRL version of the band plan for US hams. I'll also tell you that even as an extra class ham...I still from time to time refer to my band plan chart. Finally, while I've yet to move a single piece of radio gear into my new basement ham shack. I already have the current color ARRL version of the US band plans hanging on the wall. I truly encourage you do print this and hang it on the wall. By the way, the most current version is dated March 5th 2012.

So just to re-cap checking into a net. Follow the Net Control Stations instructions, check in when it is your time and speak slow and clear and use the ITU phonetics. You'll know the NCS heard you as they will typically acknowledge those who check-in.

It really is that simple.

Now another way to get that first QSO under your belt is to spend some time listening to your local repeaters. Again...listen, listen and do even more listening and you'll get the feel of how repeater QSO's typically operate.

As I've mentioned before on this podcast, repeaters cost money to operate. Of course there are costs to purchase or build the repeater, there are monthly costs associated with things like electricity and the leased space to store the repeater and mount the antenna.

Most repeaters are sponsored by a club and some are sponsored by individuals. It is good amateur practice to join the amateur radio club who sponsors the repeaters you plan to use. Your dues and/or general activity in the club will go towards helping to offset these costs. So just keep these things in mind when using the repeaters in your local area.

But after you've listened for a while....pick up the microphone and state your callsign slowly and using ITU phonetics along with your name and perhaps state you're a new ham and this is your first QSO. Most hams enjoy helping a new ham get their first QSO in the books. I know I do.

But what do you talk about? While I do encourage you to avoid certain subjects, especially for your first time QSO....really the sky is the limit. Speaking of sky....talk about the weather if that is something you feel comfortable with.

I think the misconception with some is that all hams talk about is our radios, antennas and such. While QSO's certainly do take place on that subject matter, I've held great conversations with other hams about many other topics.

I think it matters not what the topic is about...along as you enjoy talking about it.

Now some of you may fall into the category of, have your license but don't have a radio yet. How can you break the ice and still experience a first QSO.

Well that is easy and this is where Echolink can come in handy. Don't believe everything you read about how Echolink isn't real ham radio. If you have a license, a computer and internet access....you can take advantage of Echolink and speak to other hams all over the world. I am even willing to help you make that first QSO via Echolink.

You'll need to visit Echolink.org to setup an account. This website, again that URL is Echolink.org will provide you all the details you need to know to setup the account and have it validated. Once validated and once you have installed and configured the software, you can begin using Echolink to have QSO's all over the world.

<http://www.echolink.org/>

Have a smart phone running either the Apple iOS or Android Operating System? With a validated Echolink account, apps are available for the Apple iPhone, iPod touch and even iPad along with devices running the Android Operating system. You can connect and join Echolink nodes and experience Echolink QSO's right from your smartphone....regardless where you might be located.

Again, I'd love to connect to Echolink and help you with your first QSO. Just drop me an email at kd0bik@arrl.net and let me know when you would like to try to meet up. Echolink is a great amateur radio tool, that will allow you to communicate with other hams around the world as you work towards purchasing and setting up your own station.

Remember....your first QSO...regardless of the mode or means, is the key to your second QSO and your third QSO and so on. While you may experience what we call mic fright....this just helps make your very first amateur radio QSO all the more special.

Featured Website Segment

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Our featured website segment for episode 58 ties into Echolink. I know I've talked about the Ham Twit Net on previous episodes, but for new hams who are looking to meet other hams and do so via Echolink, then check out the Ham Twit Net. Their website is hamtwit.net.

This group began as a way for hams who were also on the social network twitter to all share in their common interest of amateur radio in a method of more than just 140 characters or less. They formed a weekly net held on Echolink and the net has been going strong for a few years now.

The ham twit group meets 0100 hundred hours Thursday, or 9 PM Eastern Wednesdays on Echolink node 387265. You can learn more about the Ham Twit Net by visiting hamtwit.net. I'll post a link in the show notes.

<http://hamtwit.net/>

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I'll admit that it's been several months since I checked in to the ham twit net. But once the new ham shack work is complete, I think I'll try to check in on a more regular basis.

Please check it out and tell them all I said hello.

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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.

In this episode, the featured gadget items are two items which I've included in my new ham shack setup. Today in my old ham shack I have one monitor attached to my shack PC. Until just a few months ago, I was still using an old CRT style 19" monitor.

Being the kind of guy that doesn't like to throw anything out, this 19" CRT was approaching 12 years old...but it still worked. While it still worked fine, I did choose to replace it as I was attempting to gain a little more desk space in my old shack. So I replaced the 19" CRT with a 21" flat screen.

In the new shack, I'm going to have plenty of desk space and thought it would be nice to purchase a second 21" flat screen and operate with a dual monitor setup.

The only challenge I found was my current shack PC only had one VGA connector. While I could have upgraded the video card in the PC, I wanted more flexibility and opted for a USB to VGA adapter.

With this USB to VGA adapter, I can add my new second monitor and operate in what's called extended desktop mode. This setup will be great when I want to have the main Ham Radio Deluxe window open on one screen and either DM780 or the HRD logbook open on the second monitor. I can just move the mouse from the left screen to the right.

Flat panel monitors have certainly come down in price in recent years. I believe they are easier on the eyes than the old CRT types, they certainly take up less space and are also a little cheaper to operate.

The USB to VGA adapter I picked up from Micro Center was less than 30.00 and works great for my use and the performance is awesome. I can't detect any video lag on the second monitor and like I said, it will certainly come in handy for all sorts of ham shack uses.

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Ham Adventures Segment

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_As I have shared with you on just about every episode of PARP for the past several months. Work on the new basement ham shack is slowly drawing to a close. My 2012 goal of completing this new space will be a reality and operating from the new space for the Colorado QSO Party which is Saturday, September 1st is also going to happen.

My wife and I are taking another short stay at home vacation next week and I plan to get all the final finishing touches done and start moving equipment into the new space. As I said, the Colorado QSO Party is Saturday, September 1st and I'll be in the new shack for this contest. I'll tell you more about the Colorado QSO Party and my involvement during PARP Plus 15 next week.

The basement project has been a long process as you might can imagine. I've devoted almost every weekend to the project and both my wife and I are ready to do other things. Ironically, I must admit that I'm looking forward to finishing the new ham shack so that I can get out of the ham shack and go and operate a Summits On The Air activation. I certainly hope to make this happen in September. Are you ready Tom?

_Well this wraps up another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. Sorry I told you all last week there would be no regular PARP this week, only to end up recording one after all. Remember, this podcast is very much an extension of my amateur radio hobby. While I try very, very hard to stick to a regular schedule....sometimes other life events may cause me to need to make a slight change. Because I view this podcast as an extension of my involvement in the hobby, I apply the 5th element of the Radio Amateur's Code which is

Balanced - Radio is a hobby, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

But...I do plan to return with the next full featured episode of the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast sometime in September. Certainly by then I'll have the podcast studio equipment setup in the new space.

Of course, please listen to the weekly PARP + editions to get all your on-air events, contests and a lot more for the week and weekend ahead. PARP + is available each Tuesday at zero hundred hours UTC or Monday evenings 6 PM Mountain time.

Until next time, 73 to all from KD0BIK.

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.