



# The Compass!

Official Newsletter of the Great South Bay Amateur Radio Club, INC.

December 2017

Volume 45

#12

**Next General Membership Meeting: Thurs., Dec. 28th, 8 PM**

**GSBARC Free Ham Radio License Classes!  
General License Class Currently Running  
Tuesdays from 7 - 9:30 p.m.**



*Winter Field Day is Coming! Jan 27th & 28th*



*GSBARC Pres. John Melfi, W2HCB, being presented with a plaque for the club's participation in the 2017 Hope for Warriors Run*

**On the cover: Start / Finish Line of the annual Hope for the Warriors Run in front of Babylon Town Hall**

**Long Island's Friendliest Amateur Radio Club!**



# President's Message



As I start this month's message, it is 33 degrees! The barometer is at 29.74 and trending downwards. And oh yes, it is snowing. Our first snowfall for the start of winter! So I hope you all got those antenna projects done. I know I harp on it a lot. But look: it's snowing. Well, we all know it's not the end of the world -- just a nuisance.

Thanks to all of you who helped out with the Hope for The Warriors run on November 18th -- we had a very good turnout of ham operators who volunteered and you all did a great job. I would also like to thank the Bridging the Gap GMRS crew for assisting us again. Between both groups, we covered 96 posts of the 115 that needed to be manned.

As you all know, our club trailer which is used for many events and emergency communications is a long-term and almost never-ending project. We installed the battery backup system with extra rig runners along the operating positions which have two USB ports also to charge up a phone or iPad. We also installed two Icom IC 7100 radios which will be used for digital communications as well as HF operations. We also upgraded the power supply to 50 amps. It is wired to an EZ Gate 80, then to a master rig runner which then sends power to all four radios and the two rig runners at the operator position. This is all backed up by a deep cycle battery, so if we lose AC power or the generator runs out of fuel, we can stay on the air and not miss a beat.

If you were at the general meeting for the elections, you all know the results: the executive positions are all the same as well as the director positions. It is nice to have a very good board to work. We have done so much over the last 10 years and there is more to come. We really enjoy doing all the operating events. It is great to see the participation increase year after year. Just a REMINDER IT IS TIME TO RENEW YOUR 2018 DUES! Do it in person or via

PayPal through our website [www.gsbarc.org](http://www.gsbarc.org)

Hey, the barometer is now down to 29.67 still trending downwards!! Glad I am inside tonight and not at work for a change. In case you are wondering why I get to the meetings later than usual, the traffic from New York City to Deer Park has been horrendous. Speaking of meetings, it was great to see K2RYD with cast off and proudly wearing her DXCC pin. Congratulations Salli! Now you have go for each band. That will be a lot easier once you get that tower and beam up.

January is going to be a little busy for us. It all starts with Ham Radio University on January 6th 2018 at a new location LIU/Post Hillwood Commons Student Center, 720 Northern Blvd., Brookville. Please visit the web page <http://hamradiouniversity.org/>

January 20th is our annual winter night out, which will be from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Goccia D'Oro, site of the old Bozena Restaurant, 485 W. Montauk Highway, Lindenhurst. There is ample parking in their own lot. Handicap access from the parking lot.

Menu:

Appetizers hot antipasto:

Baked clams, Shrimp Oreganata and Fried Calamari

Pasta: Penne a la Vodka or Filetto di Pomodoro

Salad: Tri-Color Salad

Main Course (choice of): Filet Mignon, Chicken Margherita, Veal Goccia D'Oro, Broiled Salmon

Dessert; Strawberry Shortcake

Wine, soda, beer, coffee,

espresso, cappuccino and tea \$50 per person

Please use the PayPal link on our website to sign up.

Please make sure you state what the payment is for so we know.

The following week we will be doing Winter Field Day from the EOC January 27th 2pm -January 28th 2PM we will be running 3 stations and will need a lot of operators take part in this fun event. If you are a newbie, this will be a great way to see and learn how to work the low bands. Don't be shy! We welcome everyone to come on down and be part of a fun event.

As you all know a good part of our club members are also ARES and RACES members. Just a reminder that our ARES net follows Amateur Radio Newslines on our 2 meter repeater we then move to simplex then to digital on VHF from there we move to digital on 10 meters then up to SSB on 10 meters.

Start of Net 146.685 -600 110.9 encode decode  
Simplex test 147.535 110.9 encode decode  
Digital drill 144.970  
Digital drill 28.120  
SSB test 28.340

I know we talk a lot about emergency communications. The reason we do is to make sure we are all ready just in case. That is the reason for all the nets and drills. So if you can be there on Monday nights starting at 7:30 it all starts with the Info net followed by the DX report then Amateur Radio Newline followed by the ARES net.

I know that many of you have battery backup for your stations and many more are getting ready to do it if you have any questions please feel free to email if you have questions. In case you need my email address it is [W2HCB@arrl.net](mailto:W2HCB@arrl.net).

I would like to thank all the members who made 2017 a great year for our club from the national parks events, lighthouses, American Air Power event, and of course Field Day, where you did an awesome job from set up to on the air not to mention the great dinner we all had. Also for all the public service events we all did. It is a great feeling to have such an active membership you should all be proud of how you have helped GSBARC grow this year

As I finish this month's message it is not snowing and the barometer is now at 29.87 on an upwards trend at my QTH. As you can tell it took almost 24 hours to write this month's message as life goes on. I hope you are ready for the holidays. There are a lot of new radios coming out and always other ham radio toys one wants. I hope you get something good and fun. On behalf of the whole executive board – and from me and my family – we wish you all a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Festivus, Solstice or whatever else I may have missed. Our general meeting will be on the 28th.

Thank you to all that were part of the Hope for the Warrior run back in November. You all did a great job we had many new operators at the event and they did a great job

*73. John Melfi, W2HCB* 

## *Inside the Squirrel Cage*

by Caryn, KD2GUT



**A**re you a Christmas ham? Not the kind that sits on a plate radiating steam on the dining room table for the holiday feast. I mean the kind who sits in the shack on that very same day trying to avoid giving off magic smoke while scoring a rare DX.

You're the kind of ham who knows a Santa Net isn't something you use to reel in the big guy in the red suit as he flies overhead.

You know a Yule log isn't a list of all the contacts you make between 0000 UTC Dec. 24 and 2359 Dec. 26.


You're the first to admit that Elmers aren't elves standing just slightly taller than their North Pole counterparts. (And they don't wear those horrid green outfits with the curly-toe slippers and bells.)

You know the difference between Christmas cards and QSL cards – but send both anyway.

You also know that Mrs. Santa is neither an XYL nor a YL but that she still loves rocking out to “Grandma Got Run Over By a Pileup.”

You've become too much of an OM to still believe in Santa Claus but you never gave up on Hamta Claus. He's the guy who's got the mobile rig in the sleigh, has loaded Rudolph's antlers on 20 meters and lets out his signature laugh: “HF, HF, HF.”

And most of all, you dread a “Silent Night” because it means the bands – all of them – are dead.

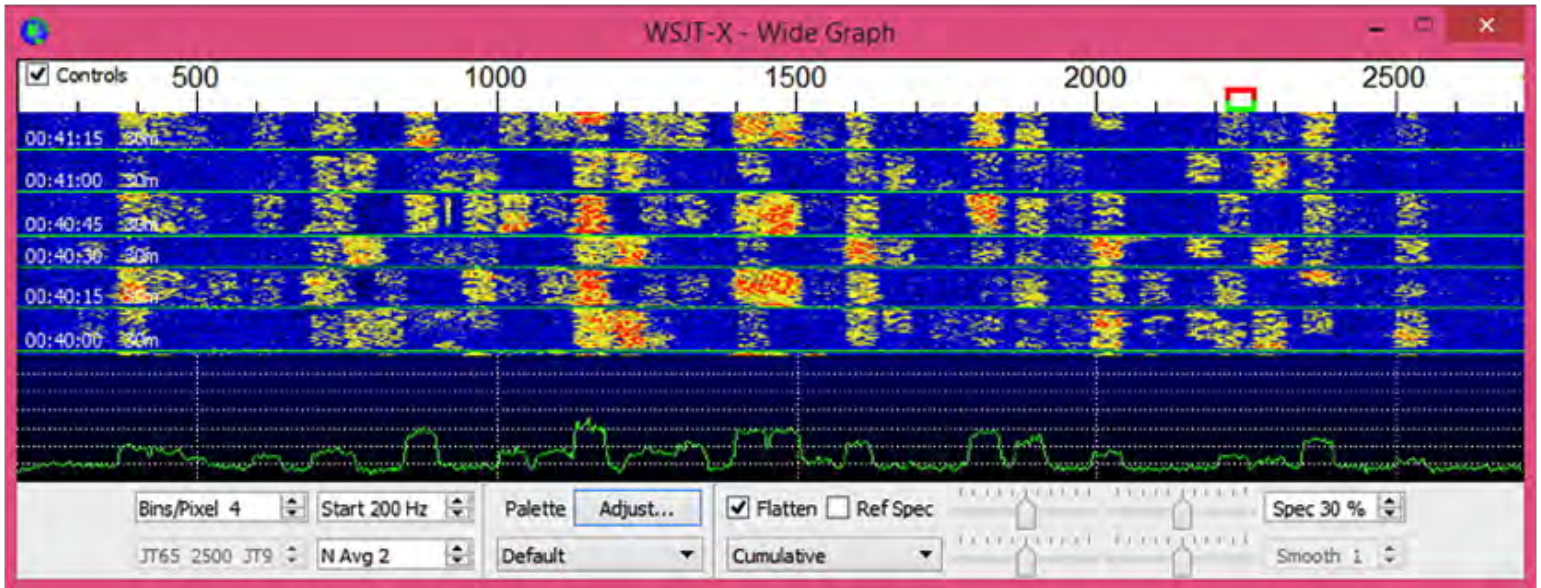
Ah, but do you hear what I hear? I think it's sleigh bells, perhaps, just under the noise. If you're a true Christmas ham, you can hear a twinkling of it and you'll wait patiently, as we will, until the band comes back. We'll all be listening then for the most famous “CQ DX” of all. 

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

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU



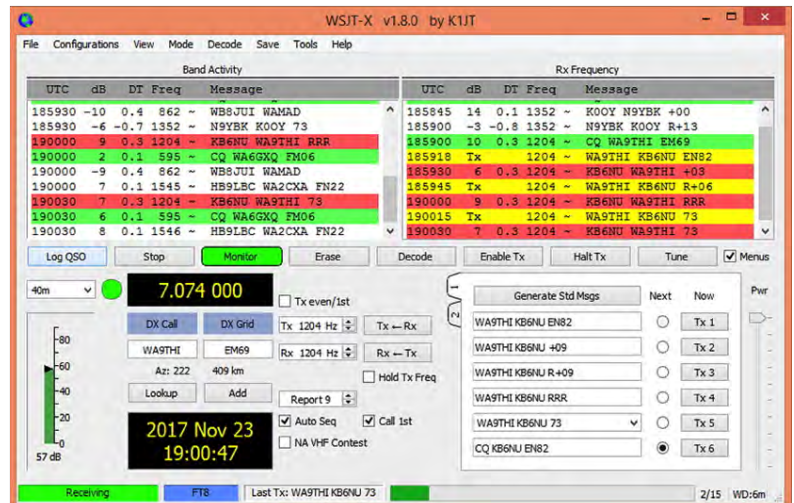
Out of curiosity and partly because my friend Jeff, KE9V, shamed me into it, I set up my Signalink interface, downloaded WSJT-X from <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjt.html>, and started operating FT-8, the latest “shiny object” (as the ARRL dubbed it) from the K1JT team. As you probably 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 p.m., 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!)



*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 decoded 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 call signs 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.

***Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the “No Nonsense” amateur radio license study guides and blogs about amateur radio at [KB6NU.Com](http://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).*** 

# BTECH UV-25X4 Review

By John Smale – K2IZ



I have never really had a mobile radio in any of the cars I have owned. There are many reasons, but most had to do with my short commute time to work back in the late 80s. The telephone garage in Bethpage was right across the street from Grumman. I was driving an '85 Dodge Omni and I had a one of the first Kenwood VHF radios with a VFO instead of crystals. The radio just sat on the front seat. I'd go on the Grumman repeater from Copiague and because of so many stations being on it, I'd get three or four turns before I reached the garage. Today I lease my car. They take a rather dim view of drilling holes in the car body. I still volunteer for public service events using an HT, 5 watts into a VHF/UHF whip mounted on the top of the car. This works most of the time but there are some locations where higher power would work better.

I already own the BTECH UV-5X3 because I want to be able to use the Great South Bay ARC's 220 repeater. It's a 5-watt HT, useful for a lot of events but I wanted something with a bit more power. That's when I saw an ad for this radio, something that could improve my signal if I am at a distant post in an event.

It's listed as a four-frequency radio but here in the United States we can only use three of them -- 2 meters, 220 and 440 -- plus it can receive the standard FM broadcast band, high power for 2 and 220 and 440 is listed at 25 watts. Low power is listed at 5 watts. It's not 50 watts like the higher-priced VHF/UHF rigs but 25 watts into a roof-mounted antenna should be enough to produce a stronger signal at the receiving end rather than a 5 watt HT.

Computer programming is available through CHIRP using an FTDI USB to 1/8 TRS plug. The antenna plug is an SO-239 rather than the SMA female used in the HTs.

The microphone is almost the same size and weight as the microphone used on my Kenwood TM-V71 and so far the audio tests through the local repeaters are good.

The manual is easy to read but I prefer doing the programming through CHIRP. There are a ton of features including 10 that let you change the colors on each line. It's just a matter of reading the manual and seeing what you need.

One review I read mentioned that if you are trying to get into a "tight" conversations, you know the ones with the "Quincey The Quick Mic Keyer," it might take a few tries, something to think about for our present operating habits.

I bought mine along with the programming cable through Amazon. Check their site for the price. It seems to be a nice entry level for ham radio operators who want to be able to access all the local repeaters from their cars and have a bit of additional power for public service events. How many new amateurs have asked "the question" -- how much does this hobby cost to get started in? This BTECH seems to be a good answer rather than "over \$500." ☺



*K2IZ's puppy, Sophia*

# Formula for a Ham's Feel Good Day: Operation Santa 2017

Take 5,000 special needs children from all over NYC



Add Santa arriving on a 767-400



Sprinkle in some clowns and happy volunteers



Some song and dance



Add 10 hams that know they helped make today possible



Take it from me; you will not forget this day. Join us next year and experience it yourself.

73 and Merry Christmas de,

Lou, NO2C and Salli, K2RYD 🇺🇸

# YAHOO!

**GSBARC has a New Yahoo Group and the old one has been deleted**

**If you are a member in good standing and want to join the club's new Yahoo group, go to:**

**<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/gsb-arc/info>**

**and click on "Join Group" Be sure to add a note when filling out your information with your call sign so we know who you are!** ☺

## Club Apparel

Want a shirt, jacket, hat, sweatshirt or t-shirt with a Great South Bay club logo? We now use *Mr. Shirt*, located at 80 East Montauk Hwy in Lindenhurst ([www.mrshirt.com](http://www.mrshirt.com)). Now you can get color matched backgrounds on your logo too. Check them out... ☺

## ARES/RACES Information

**Div. 1—Town of Babylon ARES/RACES**

Net: 146.685/R, Mondays 8:15 PM  
EC/RO: John Melfi, W2HCB, (631) 669-6321

**Div. 2—Town of Huntington ARES/RACES**

Net: 147.210 MHz +600/ PL 136.5,  
Mondays 7:00 PM

EC/RO Steven W. Hines, N2PQJ,

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

**Div. 3—Town of Islip ARES/RACES**

Mondays 8:30 PM

EC/RO: John J Blowsky, KB2SCS, 631-467-2410

**Div. 4—Town of Smithtown ARES/RACES**

Net: 145.430 MHz, PL136.5, Mondays 7:30 PM  
EC/RO: Rich Johnston, KC2TON, 631-872-4039

**Div. 5—Town of Brookhaven ARES/RACES**

EC/RO: Ted Debowy, AC2IR, 631-751-6576

**Div. 6—Riverhead ARES/RACES**

EC/RO: Steve Casco, W2SFC, 917-701-3919

**Div. 7—Southampton ARES/RACES**

EC/RO: Dennis O'Rourke, KB2ZWW, 631-728-5424

**Div. 8—Southold ARES/RACES**

EC: Don Fisher, N2QHV, 631-765-2757

RO: Charles Burnham, K2GLP, 516-779-4983

**Div. 9—East Hampton ARES/RACES**

EC/RO: Nat Raynor, N2NEI, 631-324-3738

**Div. 10—Shelter Island ARES/RACES**

EC/RO: Neal Raymond, N2QZA, 631-749-9330

### Suffolk County

### ARES/RACES Net:

**Mondays 2100 Local—145.330/R (136.5 PL)**

**Alternate Frequency—146.820 (136.5 PL)**

### New York State

### RACES Net (HF)

**Sundays 0900 Local, 3993.5 KHz LSB**

## 2017 VE Session Dates

- December 23rd

*All sessions are at the Town of Babylon EOC at 10 a.m., located in the basement in the rear of town hall. Please bring photo ID, a copy and your original amateur radio license (if you have one), and any CSCE's you may have. Non programmable calculators are allowed. The exam fee is \$15 payable by cash or a check made out to "ARRL VEC".*

Visit [FCC Universal Licensing System site](http://www.fcc.gov) to register for an FRN number to use on the paperwork.

*Attention all GSBARC OMs and YLs! You are invited to the 2nd Annual "Special YULE Baby" Christmas Net on 146.685, hosted by Lou NO2C and Caryn KD2GUT in honor of a day they share marking another trip around the sunspots.*

- Ignore Band Conditions
- Ignore lack of DX
- Come to our Christmas Net and Show off your new Toys

Caroling not allowed but celebration required!

Exact local time will be posted on the GSBARC Yahoo Group as the date comes closer, but it likely will be Christmas Day afternoon. If nodes are operational, EchoLink and IRLP visitors welcome!

73, Lou and Caryn  
The Christmas Hams

### *The GSBARC Repeater List*

146.685 - shift, 110.9 PL Enc/Dec  
223.860 - shift, 110.9 PL Enc  
440.850 + shift, 110.9 PL Enc/Dec  
440.250 + shift, DSTAR  
444.2375 + shift, DSTAR  
445.700 + shift, 114.8 PL Enc/Dec  
446.775 - shift, 110.9 PL Enc  
\*927.3125 - shift, D606

\*Affiliated repeater, not owned by club.

## Club Name Badges

Club name badges are available from *The Sign Man* ([www.thesignman.com](http://www.thesignman.com)) of Baton Rouge, LA.

The badges which are 1-3/4 in. x 3 in. If you visit The Sign Man's webpage you can order the badges by using a drop down selection on the orders page and clicking on "Great South Bay ARC—NY" ☺



## All Flag & Flagpoles

FLAGS • BANNERS • FLAGPOLES & REPAIRS

SPECIALIZING IN CUSTOM FLAGS AND BANNERS

97 Gnarled Hollow Road, East Setauket, NY 11733

Tel: 631-751-5500 Outside NY: 800-247-8331

Fax: 631-751-5505

Website: [www.all-flags.com](http://www.all-flags.com) • E-Mail: [info@all-flags.com](mailto:info@all-flags.com)

## GSBARC Free License Class Schedule:

**General: November 21  
thru January 30, 2018**

**Note: All Classes Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9:30 PM. Class text book is the current ARRL License Manual for that level. For more info email [Kevin, AB2ZI at kmorgan6@optonline.net](mailto:Kevin, AB2ZI at kmorgan6@optonline.net)**