

RTTY

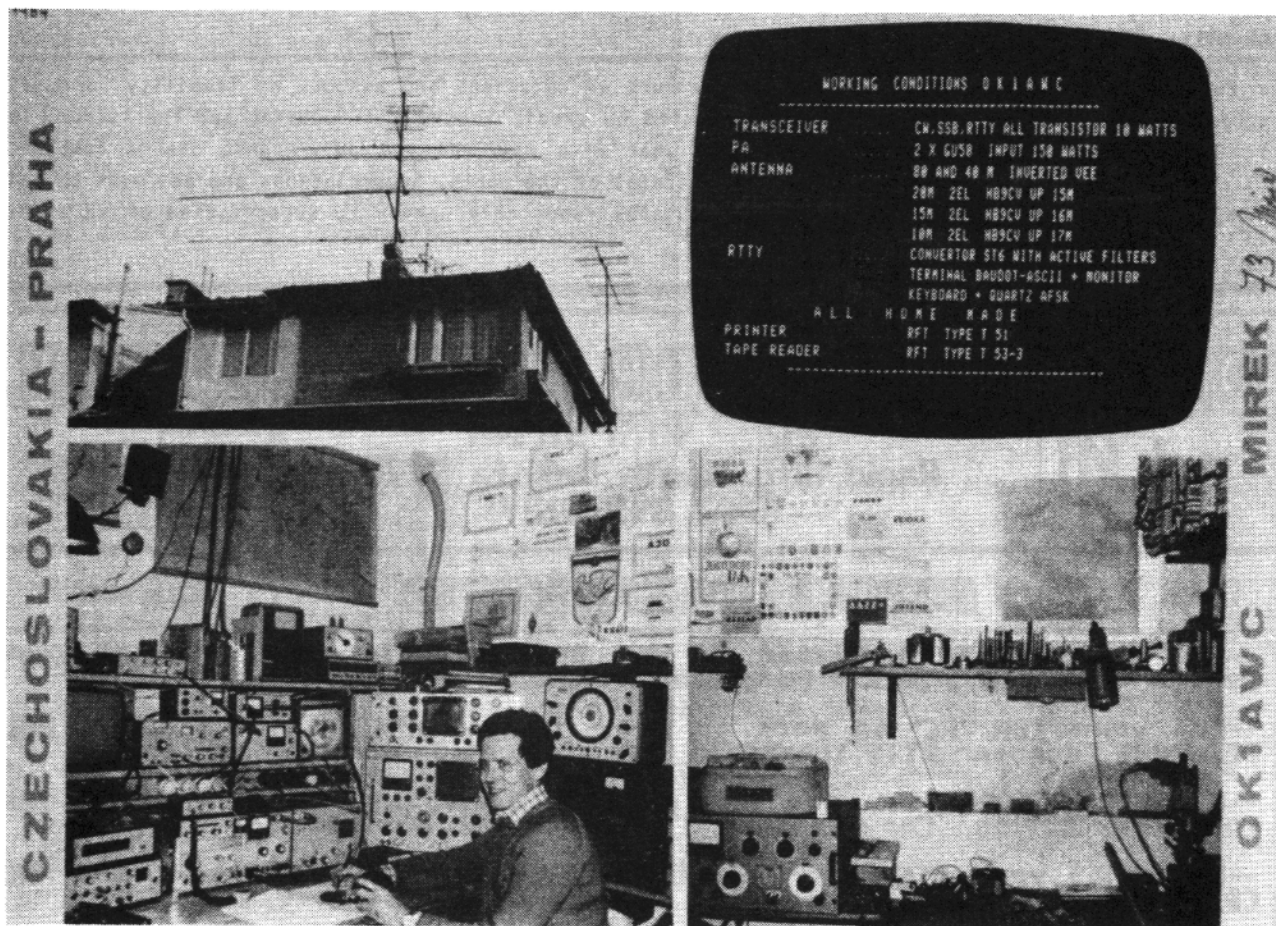
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Journal[®]

VOLUME 33 NUMBER 7

SEPTEMBER 1985

PRICE \$1.50



CONTENTS

CoCo RTTY PART 1

RTTY JOURNAL

DEE CRUMPTON, N6ELP
 Owner-Editor -Publisher
 Post Office Box RY
 Cardiff-by-the-Sea, CA
 92007-0179

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 Associate Editor

BUSINESS OFFICE
 1155 Arden Drive
 Encinitas, CA 92024-5105
 Tele: 619-753-5647

Postmaster send form 3579 to:
 P.O.B. 179, Cardiff, CA 92007

ISSN:0033 - 7161

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

USA \$10.00 per year
 CANADA,MEXICO surf.\$ 9.00 per year
 CANADA,MEXICO air \$11.50 per year
 FOREIGN Surface \$10.00 per year
 FOREIGN airmail \$15.00 per year
 All monies to be paid in US funds.

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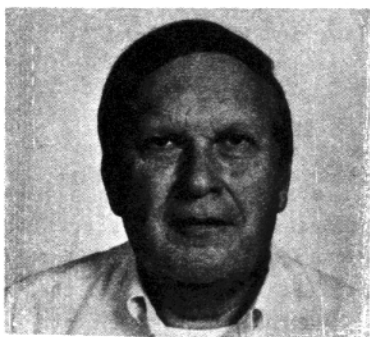
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DX

JOE WOOD, AJØX
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Howdy Gang! Glad to be back in your shack or favorite reading place with you after another two-month lapse. The bands have been very poor and are matching the weather here perfectly. I was of the opinion that conditions could not have gotten any worse during this cycle's declination but I have been wrong before; This has to be the deepest barrel yet because I have lost sight of its bottom if indeed this cycle has a bottom. The lower frequencies have exhibited fairly decent propagation only to be masked in the high QRN levels that we enjoy (?) during the summer months. Late afternoon and early evening thunder-showers/storms occur on a daily basis and this keeps the antennas grounded. Couple this with work schedules, civic responsibilities, raising the kids, appeasing the XYL (with her growing list of honey-do'es) or entertaining the YL, following the Tax reforms and the list goes on...one is hard pressed to find time to turn on the Ham gear or even think about Amateur Radio. All of this is understandable and serves to explain, from time to time, the absence of input from you. Remember though that this column is based on that input and can survive only if YOU contribute.

RTTY WORLDWIDE CONTEST 1985

A parting shot..... I have been comparing the results of this contest with those of 1983 and 1984. If you haven't bothered to compare the years, take a look at the following data summary and decide for yourselves.

YEAR	1983	1984	1985
single op all bands			
entries	43	63	43
high score	15,744	145,520	184,140
multi-op all bands			
entries	10	10	12
high score	10,019	166,950	144,500
single op-20 meters			
entries	4	16	30
high score	2,485	84,240	163,095

Year	1983	1984	1985
Multi-op 20 meters			
entries	02	01	00
high score	12,210	61,920	00
single op-15 meters			
entries	05	06	03
high score	8,319	29,150	4,590
single op-10 meters			
entries	01	01	00
high score	100	1,890	00
check logs			
entries	04	04	06
total entries	69	100	94

In summary: less entries, almost total abandonment of those frequencies higher than 14 MHz, higher scores in some categories. Many stations that were heard and worked didn't submit entries (shame on you), concentration was on the lower frequencies and the higher scores indicate the degree of involvement from those operators that did enter the event. This is an excellent contest and with an up-turn of the solar cycle should provide some interesting results. My thanks go out to the RTTY JOURNAL and 73 Magazines for giving us the World Championship Contest. See you next year! Incidentally, the top scorer in this years' contest, Ed, W3EKT was using the old 28 'mechanical monster'! Old they may be, but useless.....no way!

ABOVE 14.100

For several months this column has contained "short burst" comments from a few of the many that have responded with regard to the needed expansion of the 20 Meter RTTY 'gentlemens' agreement to include a part of the spectrum just above 14.1 MHz. This 'writing' will attempt to deliver the feelings of those respondents along with an appeal to the American Radio Relay League to immediately consider and address it with a published endorsement in "QST". To page 5.

DX COLUMN CONTINUED

Why do we need more space? For most, the understanding is clear and doesn't require an "Ivy League" graduate to interpret the need. The last few years have seen an influx of newcomers to the digital communications mode. The ease of obtaining and interfacing 'personal computers' to existing Amateur gear coupled with the ultimate benefits of total flexibility has been delivered to each of us resulting in a dramatic increase of users in all digital modes - RTTY/AMTOR/Packet etc. One only has to listen between 14.080 and 14.100 to observe the results. If one will consider that we are nearing the bottom of a solar cycle and with the poor band conditions that prevail one can imagine what bedlam will occur during the rise in the upcoming cycle if we continue to be sandwiched.

This frequency range, arrived at and endorsed by the League some years ago, is further restricted by the placement of several propagation beacons (CW) on 14.100. For the most, thoughtful and knowledgeable operators steer clear of these useful operating tools by skirting the low side of the beacons by at least two kilohertz. By gentlemen's agreement we are now down to 18 of an available 150 kilohertz (12%). By contrast, SSB enjoys 200 kilohertz (57%) and CW 350 kilohertz (100%) of the allocated 350 kilohertz on the 20 meter band. In all fairness, it should be noted that virtually all CW operation takes place below 14.080 with occasional operations noted to 14.150, so let's say that CW has pretty much restricted itself to the lower 80 kilohertz (22.8%) of the band. Observation has noted, with the availability and use of today's very selective equipment, far less station congestion in the CW portion. Is improved technology alone the reason for this? Perhaps a number of those that have been addicted to the CW mode are moving into Digital modes which offer some of the advantages of CW with the greater advantage of greater speed in record communication than any other mode. Curiously, the adventure of "new frontiers", those wishing to remain technologically current and "well balanced" along with other unmentioned reasons appear to be a part of the rationale for the inclusion of, or the move from CW (and SSB) to, digital.

What about the other bands? Although the need on 20 meters is immediate and should be acted on now, the other bands will have to be considered as well. The Digital Committee should have this

as a top priority with input from day to day users, as we are of the opinion that there is insufficient day to day operating experience among the Committee members themselves to allow derivation of sound, unbiased proposals in this area for presentation to the League's directorship.

What about special interests? A number of Mailbox (MSO), Sel-Cal (WRU), and Packet operations co-exist with day to day RTTY/AMTOR domestic and DX operations in the now crowded space. No attempt should be made to relocate or channelize these as they are established, and for the most part, well managed operations. The concept of relocation of MSOs, Sel-Cal and Packet above 14.100 MHz., suggested by several writers has to be discarded in that individual operators have the right to operate on "all" frequencies within the limits of their respective licenses and mode limitations as set forth by our governing agency as well as the responsibility to preclude interference to already established communications, regardless of the mode, or whether it be manually or automatically (remote) activated. It is suggested that any new automatic operation be located above 14.100. This, of course, is optional but highly desirable given the fact that many now exist in the present range and the addition of more would only lead to continued bickering and frustration. The key words here have been, and remain, courtesy, self discipline, education and proficiency coupled with a full understanding of why we are permitted our presently enjoyed privileges in the first place.

What to do? Breathing space for our newest of modes should be allocated by way of 'gentlemen's agreement'. Those addressing the issue, in many letters to me, have suggested that the ARRL seriously consider adopting, supporting and publishing a revised agreement that would expand the present 'allocation' to 14.125 MHz with a new lower limit set at 14.075 MHz. The door leading to this added range is bulging with several having already slipped through into 'no-man's land'. The need is realistic but too late in coming; it was needed yesterday. A peaceful expansion will take place IF the League will move on it immediately. If, after a reasonable period, no sanction has come forth, it is suggested that the expansion be made WITHOUT the League's blessing. We appeal to the League on behalf of today's user and for those that are sure to come. To page 6 please.

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BY: Mark Spencer, WA8SME/DA10Y
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INTRODUCTION

"Are you chasing electrons again?," the (X)YL asks with tolerant disinterest as she enters the shack.

"Yes dear."

"What are you working on? It looks like a hedgehog that's being attacked."

"It's a RTTY demodulator and computer interface for the Color Computer."

"Okay, that tells me a lot. What does it do?"

"It takes serial RTTY signals, converts them to parallel data and prints the text on the CoCo screen." (Here's where I put my foot in my mouth)
"It does the same thing as my Info-Tech M-200E."

"I DON'T need two sewing machines," the fatal parting shot as she leaves me to ponder the hedgehog.

Well, the subject of this series of articles is not quite the same thing as the Info-Tech M-200E. Here I had all of the latest in RTTY gear, but not really sure how it all worked. I set out on this project as a self tutorial, to teach myself about what goes on in these new "Black Boxes" and even try a few twists of my own to improve the performance.

For the last 15 years of RTTY operation, my demodulators have been plagued with printing garbage during noise. Now with solid state equipment, the problem has become a lot quieter and easier to tolerate, but the problem is still there. While digging into the entrails of my computer and trying to learn "on-off" electronics I came across some digital circuits that could be applied to RTTY and add some noise immunity.

The objectives of my project were to: 1. Get my Color Computer on RTTY for receive only; 2. Experiment with active filters and OP AMPS; 3. See if I could reduce the noise susceptibility of a RTTY demodulator through digital techniques; 4. Learn about machine language programming; and

5. Finally, to apply some of the things that I have learned about digital logic and IC chips.

CONCLUSION (FIRST)

Before I get started with the details, let me describe the outcome (follow the block diagram, figure 1). The demodulator/interface converts serial RTTY signals to parallel data, feeds the data into the game port of a Radio Shack Color Computer, and using a short machine language program, prints the text on the screen. Fig. 1 on page 12.

Hardware: Mark and space active filters follow the input amplifier and limiter. The separated signals are fed into an MC1489 IC RS-232 Line Receiver that converts the audio sine waves into TTL square waves. Some low level noise immunity is provided by the line receivers through turn-on threshold response control. Actual rectification of the audio into data pulses occurs in two NE 555 timers configured as retriggerable one shot timers with a period slightly longer than the period of the input audio signals. The TTL mark and space pulses are then spliced together by an OR gate. The logic of this gate offers some noise immunity by "marking" when interfering signals jam either the mark or space signals. The AY-5-1013 Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter (UART) converts the TTL RTTY stream into parallel data. The internal processing of the UART checks the incoming signal for proper start bit timing; if correct, processing continues, if incorrect the UART awaits a valid start bit. This also offers some noise immunity. The accompanying photos show my finished product. Photo on P.13.

Software: The machine language program first sets the Non Masked Interrupt vector (NMI) to the proper value and then asks whether unshift or space is desired. The computer is then forced into a SYNC state until a character received strobe is sent by the UART. When a full character is received, the UART strobes the NMI input to start the program and presents the received character in parallel form to the gameport. The program first checks to see if the character is RTTY or ASCII, disregards invalid characters (also adding some noise immunity), jumps to the appropriate portion of the program, and prints the text on the screen.

The demodulator does not out perform the Info-Tech equipment during low signal levels, but does have better immunity to random noise. To page 10 please.

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Conventional ASCII Key Arrangement: The keyboard layout is ASCII arrangement with function keys. Automatic insertion of LTR/FIG code makes operation a breeze.

Battery Back-up Memory: Data in the battery back-up memory, covering 72 characters x 7 channels and 24 characters x 8 channels, is retained even when the external power source is removed. Messages can be recalled from a keyboard instruction and some particular channels can be read out continuously. You can write messages into any channel while receiving.

Large Capacity Display Memory: Covers up to 1,280 characters. Screen Format contains 40 characters x 16 lines x 2 pages.

Screen Display Type-Ahead

Buffer Memory: A 160-character buffer memory is displayed on the lower part of the screen.

The characters move to the left erasing one by one as soon as they are transmitted. Messages can be written during the receiving state for transmission with battery back-up memory or SEND function.

Function Display System: Each function (mode, channel number, speed, etc.) is displayed on the screen.

Printer Interface: Centronics Para Compatible interface enables easy connection of a low-cost dot printer for hard copy.

Wide Range of Transmitting and Receiving: Morse Code transmitting speed can be set from

the keyboard at any rate between 5-100 WPM (every word per minute). AUTOTRACK on receive. For communication in Baudot and ASCII Codes, rate is variable by a keyboard instruction between 12-300 Baud when using RTTY Modem and between 12-600 Baud when using TTL level. The variable speed feature makes the unit ideal for amateur, business and commercial use.

Pre-load Function: The buffer memory can store the messages written from the keyboard instead of sending them immediately. The stored messages can be sent with a keyboard command.

"RUB-OUT" Function: You can correct mistakes while writing messages in the buffer memory. Misspellings can also be erased while the information is still in the buffer memory.

Automatic C/L/F: While transmitting, C/L/F automatically sent every 64, 72 or 80 characters.

WORD MODE operation: Characters can be transmitted by word groupings, not every character, from the buffer memory with keyboard instruction.

LINE MODE operation: Characters can be transmitted by line groupings from the buffer memory.

WORD-WRAP-AROUND operation: In receive mode, WORD-WRAP-AROUND prevents the last word of the line from splitting in two and makes the screen easily read.

"ECHO" Function: With a keyboard instruction, received data can be read and sent out at the same time. This function enables a cassette tape recorder to be used as a back-up memory, and a system can be created just like telex which uses paper tape.

Cursor Control Function: Full cursor control (up/down, left/right) is available from the keyboard. Test Message Function: "RY" and "QBF" test messages can be repeated with this function.

MARK-AND-BREAK (SPACE-AND-BREAK) System: Either mark or space tone can be used to copy RTTY.

Variable CW weights: For CW transmission, weights (ratio of dot to dash) can be changed within the limits of 1:3-1:7.

Audio Monitor Circuit: A built-in audio monitor circuit with an automatic transmit/receive switch enables checking of the transmitting and receiving state. In receive mode, it is possible to check the output of the mark filter, the space filter and AGC amplifier prior to the filters.

CW Practice Function: The unit reads data from the hand key and displays the characters on the screen. CW keying output circuit works according to the key operation.

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WHAT NEXT ?

In the next installment of this series, I will present the input OP AMP amplifier and limiter. The following article will describe the active filters (I have included a program written by B.E. Taylor, WD4HPC and adapted it to make the calculations a breeze with the CoCo). Next comes a discussion of the detectors, metering circuits and splicer. The last hardware article will cover the UART, clocks, and connections to the computer. The last in the series will briefly discuss the programs. Details of the programs are documented on the programs themselves in comment lines.

For those who want all the diagrams and the program listings (programs won't be printed in the JOURNAL because of the length) can obtain copies from Dee, N6ELP, c/o the JOURNAL office for \$1.50 postage and handling, foreign add appropriate postage. A word about the programs. I have made the programs in two forms; 1. A basic tape loader; 2. An editor/Assembler listing for RAM with instructions to modify the program to allow burning it into a ROM for game cartridge like performance. Feel free to hack away and adapt the circuits and programs that I have authored. I hope you will read on, will find some insight into the "Black Boxes" and find some utility for portions of the circuit in other projects. CUL.

OH NO! Not another RTTY program for the Heath H8 (Z80) and H89 running on HDOS (Version 2)! But this one is different - it has a built-in screen editor tailored for editing text and PIX files (handles overprinted lines!) Compose your PIX, save it on disk, and send on the air! Edit and receive RTTY simultaneously! Split screen conversation modes with full buffering! Features too many to mention here. Write for free info. Sells for \$35 (5 1/2" hard-sectored disks.) Price may be low, but what the heck, I am having fun! 73! Richard E. Lucka, W8BBNR, 64 Fanchers St., Pickerington, OH 43147. 614/837-8446 weekday nights and Sundays.

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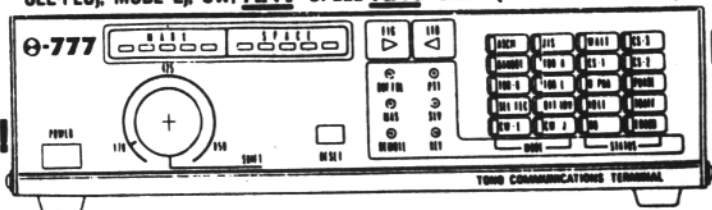
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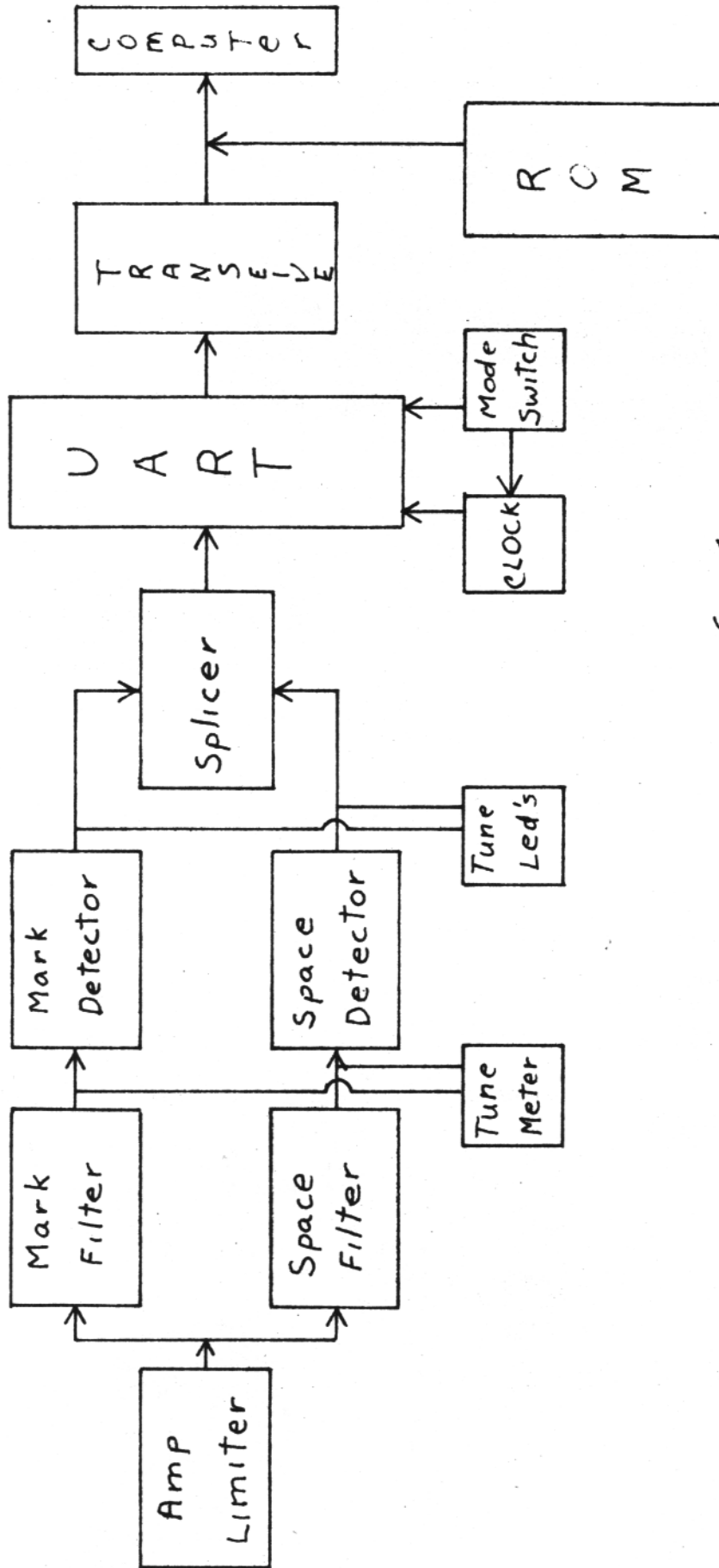
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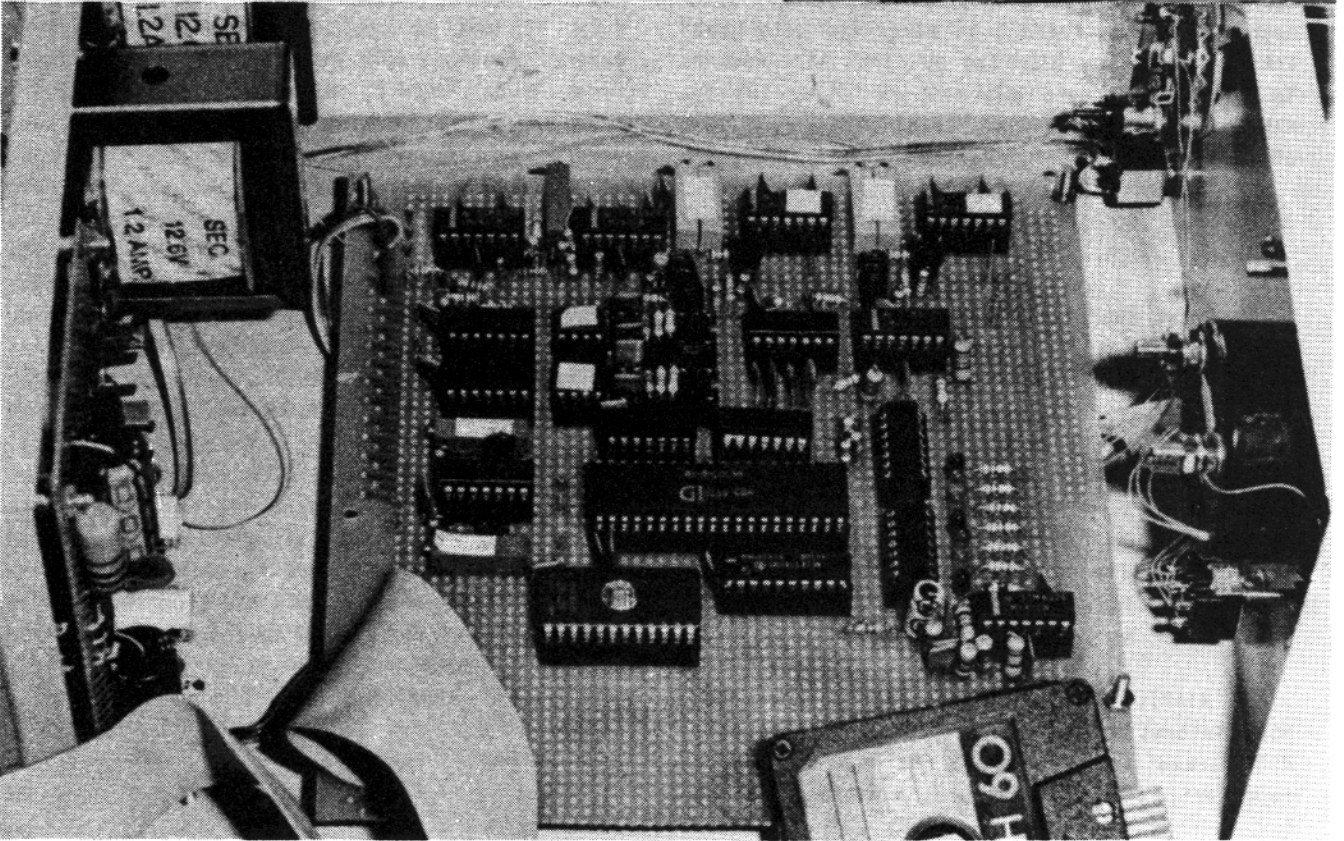
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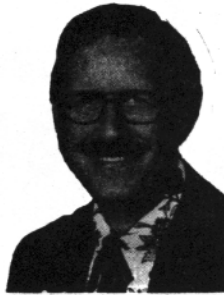




Block Diagram fig 1



MSO'S



by Dick Uhrmacher, K0VKH

Hi Gang! The Dayton HAMVENTION for 1985 is behind us, Summer is proceeding in an orderly fashion, Fall will be here before you know it, and band conditions are still horrible! I hope that each one of you have had an exciting Summer, great vacations and good times.

The 1985 Dayton HAMVENTION was once again a plethora of new equipment, crowded booths, and meetings with old acquaintances. The weather man co-operated fully this year, and a nicer convention I couldn't imagine. The 14097.5 Autostart Group hosted the "Annual RTTY Dinner" at the Imperial House North Motel this year, and a grand time was had by all. This once-a-year gathering of friends and acquaintances is altogether too short, and it wouldn't surprise me to see a "mini-convention" evolve in the future. Next years' "RTTY Dinner" will be hosted by none other than Dee, N6ELP, (and the RTTY JOURNAL), and, of course, we look forward to attending with great anticipation. How blocking out that last weekend in April 1986, and planning on attending the HAMVENTION? And attending the RTTY Dinner instead of the Banquet?? You'll certainly enjoy yourself.

MSO RAMBLINGS

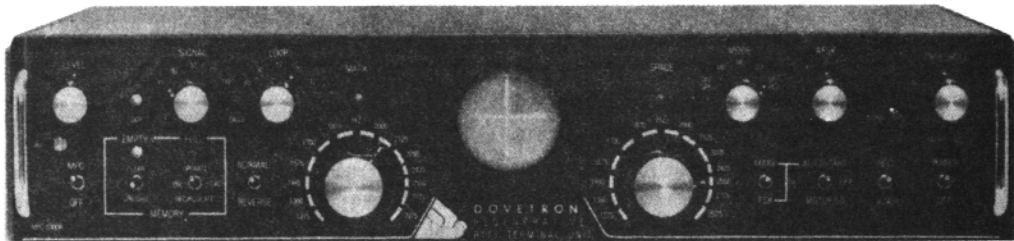
The Great Society of "OHWHATAH" met once again this year at Dayton, in all of its' regalia, and this author was once again privileged to attend its' conclave, with of attendant rights and ceremonies. Included this year was the bestowing of significant head gear, designed to portray the inner workings of this society. Thanks again to Jerry, W1IUF, for all of his consideration in this area! (Those wishing more info on this society should contact Dick, K0VKH or attend the RTTY Dinner at Dayton, preferably the latter. ED)

Al, N1API, SYSOP of the Meridan, Connecticut MSO, informs me that he is leaving his two-meter MSO parked on 146.955/355 MHz, on the "Morris repeater", in his area. And additionally, that

there is an "Apple" based RBBS system also on this repeater, with the access code of ":W1IMVJ". AL's HF MSO continues to serve the Northeastern corner of this country in fine fashion, and if band conditions ever improve, we might be able to hear him out West! If, by chance, you can QSO AL, he'll send you a QSL card that really shows the inside story at N1API. A finer Ham station would be hard to find!..By the time you read this, the K9KUW MSO, (presently in Kenny, IL), will most likely have been off the air for a couple of weeks, and, hopefully, back in operation at Red's new home in Bloomington, Illinois. Red and Charline had planned on moving permanently to Mesa, Arizona, but have had a change of plans, and are now moving to the Bloomington, Illinois area permanently. Red will have a forty foot tower, with a Cushcraft R-3 vertical antenna for the HF MSO system, a Hustler 4BTV vertical for the HF phone station and a HAL MSO on two meters with which he hopes to communicate with friends in the Champaign/Urbana area. We wish Red and Charline all of the luck in the world on their new adventure, and look forward to seeing his MSO up and running from the new location. Joe, AJOX, has not returned to the air since his difficulties with a storm, which damaged his HF antenna system. We hope that Joe gets things repaired soon so that he can rejoin us. (It is in the process and will soon be up. :ED). John, TG9VT, has been on an extended vacation in Europe, and should be returning to Guatemala in July. We look forward to his booming signal from Central America, and hope he had a super vacation.--Dick, WD4MTC, has been involved in a physical rehabilitation program for the past several months, and I'm happy to report that he is doing very well. Dick tells me that he feels better now than he has in the past several years, and we all hope that he continues to improve! Dick's MSO will be returning to active service later on this year, and after the lightning season ceases to cause problems in Southwest Florida. -- Both Ernie, W6ZRR, and Brownie, K5FL, have the new Kenwood TS-940S transceiver, in MSO service, and have been duly impressed with its' abilities on RTTY. Sems like the Kenwood folks have solved the 'power drop off' problem, (with the TS-930S), and with the additional cooling in the TS940S, it should make a super RTTY rig.--- Don, W5QXK, has removed his MSO from service for a couple of months, while he and Marie build and move into their new home north of the Dallas area. We'll miss that big signal from down his direction!

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