

President's Corner

April 2009

Like most amateurs these days, the computer is an important component in my shack. Of course I have radio control software, frequency databases, access to callsign lookup, etc. at my fingertips (although I still keep a paper log in addition to my database!). But there's another important use for the PC is my shack – buying equipment!

I certainly prefer to buy stuff in person, especially from local folks, and those who attend local hamfests will attest to my presence at every one of them. But I often seek particular items that do not seem to be available at hamfests, and online auctions (especially, but not exclusively, eBay) provide a far wider range of equipment.

As an electronics hobbyist and experimenter, I'm always looking to obtain bench test equipment (especially since I've been spoiled with the best at work!). Slowly but surely I've been acquiring a nice setup on the cheap, and last week my function generator arrived. Why do I need a function generator? So that I can test out my oscilloscope, of course? And why do I need an oscilloscope? Gotta have the basic tools! (Plus, it was **free!**). It doesn't hurt that all this equipment just *looks* cool in the shop (those of you who share my geeky button/knob/indicator envy will understand).

I took a real chance on this one - it came with the caveat, "It powers up, but I don't know how to test it, so it's sold as-is." But it set me back only \$10 (plus \$20 shipping). I took it to work for a thorough test (got a great 'scope there that's far superior to mine, and much easier for me to use), and lo & behold, it turns out to be fully functional!

I will be utilizing the device soon, when I build my ultrasonic detector kit from Midnight Science. This kit, which takes sound above the range of human hearing (like the ones bats make) and renders it audible to human ears, is built in three stages, with instructions on testing each stage built into the procedure (it was reviewed in this month's *Monitoring Times*, for those of you who receive that magazine). In addition to being a nifty device, it also teaches some fundamentals of electronics troubleshooting, which I'm looking forward to learning.

So that's what I've been up to in my shack lately. Drop a line to Ed (KB2SCF, eplesnar@stny.rr.com) and let him know what you've been up to, so that he can print it in our newsletter and let us all know about it!

73 de allen lutins KC2KLC