

I Hate Magic!

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Did you ever have one of those occurrences in life where something really weird happens, and you use every logic you can imagine, talk to your peers and mentors, trying to figure it out, but then the problem "fixes itself" and you never really understand what just happened? I call that 'magic'. My two favorite Wikipedia definitions of magic are "*the use of paranormal methods to manipulate natural forces*" and "*attributed to extraordinary beings or objects*". Most engineers are very familiar with the variations of Murphy's Law, but even Murphy's infamous Law has some boundaries ... but not so with magic.

For almost a year, I have been deaf on 75m absolutely *stone deaf*. I have two radios, an Icom 756P^{III} and an old Collins 75S-1 receiver, which exhibited the same characteristics. I looked at my radio setup (which has not changed much since I first got it, and at which time 75m worked just fine). It (or whatever I chose to call it at them moment - most of which were rather uncomplimentary) behaved quite well on 15, 20 and 40, which did not help my troubleshooting direction.

I tipped my antenna over (commercial multiband vertical dipole) and went through every single connection with nothing visible. I ordered and changed the capacitor at the TOP of the antenna in my process of "Easter-egg troubleshooting" (which 'Doug-ikipedia' defines as 'I have no idea what I am looking for but I will change some parts and see if I get lucky'[which I didn't]). No change: *deaf as a stump*. I *hate* magic!

My Elmer, N7TLL/ZL1TV, had blown a cap in his antenna some time ago, and what he had learned was that resonance for 75m on that antenna shifted from 3.8MHz up to 4MHz when it blew, and told me to check that. I dragged out my AIM 4170 antenna analyzer, downloaded the latest version of software for it, spent a half day re-learning how to run the thing, swept the antenna on all of its frequencies, ran the TDR (time domain reflectometer) on the coax, and basically did not find anything too out of normal for the antenna, based on its history. Resonance on 75m is dead on 3.8MHz. *Growl ... growl ... grizzle ... groan ...* maybe a little bit of whining thrown in for good measure ... so nothing seems to be wrong with the antenna. I even called the antenna manufacturer and sent him copies of my frequency sweeps of the antenna and he offered up, "Looks good to me ..." More growling ... more grizzling *I hate magic*.

Antenna ok ...

Coax looks good....

Radio seems to be normal on all other bands.

Whiskey Tango Foxtrot?!

Gotta be magic!

Another ham friend of mine, K6YNP, who is a fairly accomplished DXer, came down from Orange County (hundred miles away) and poked and twiddled at it for a while, and could come up with nothing ... absolutely nothing ...

So I gave up and just figured I would run 15m to 40m did I say how much I hated magic?

I had just helped a ham friend of mine, who is approaching 80, put up a beautiful horizontal dipole cut for 75m so he can ragchew with friends in the evenings, and invited me to join, since I know about half

of them ... and it was with total humiliation that I admitted to him that I had never found out why I was deaf on 75m. Dogs occasionally go deaf for no definable reason other than perhaps advancing age ... wonder if I can use that excuse? No? *More growling ... more grizzling*

Finally one day I am sitting here in the shack while the XYL is traveling for work for a week, and this is just bugging me to death ... it does not go away. It nagged at me ... confusticating (confusion + frustration = confustication) me because I cannot figure out what paranormal activity has invaded my shack! My whining is now reaching a fevered pitch and the pugs are looking at me with no small hint of fear in their eyes. Maybe it was my drooling; I don't know. As an extreme variant of my Easter-egg troubleshooting (totally abandoning myself to having *no* idea what I am doing), I decide I will do a factory reset on the Icom, so I dragged out the manual on it, and it instructs to hold two buttons down and cycle the power switch. Now, the Icom is powered by an external Icom power supply, and I had developed the (bad) habit of shutting the radio off by shutting off the power supply, so I hold down my two buttons and cycled the power supply just like I always do ... and nothing happened ... no reset ... just turned itself on and same operation as before. Now I am doing a loud growl and more than a little grizzling. After trying to reset it more than a few times, it dawned on me that the instructions did not say to cycle the power; they said to cycle the power **switch**! In my last breath of hope before I swear off ham radio, I held down my two buttons and cycled the power switch - and it WORKED! The radio reset itself to factory defaults

and then it came alive on 75m

The magic gremlins woke up! In fact, the Collins also came alive (which makes absolutely *no sense* to this day)! I'm back! **WOW !!**

Here I am, in control of my shack again! I don't know what happened, or how it happened ... just *gotta* be magic! I was pretty happy about that, but it nags my very soul to not know how or why the radio got into this lockout mode and like I said, I hate magic! I sent an email to Richard VK3TXD, and went through this whole scenario with him, and lamented about how I missed almost a year of playing on 75m, and his response was classic:

"Doug, Doug, Doug. You should know that as soon as you stick a computer in a radio [and a few kind words to make me feel better but not really]What made you think it needed a factory reset? I doubt I would have considered that....."

I really wanted to go back to him with some exotic explanation of how I figured it out using some esoteric differential diagnostic process (ever watch "Dr. House" on the television?), but in all honesty, the only answer I can give him is just dumb luck based on an illogical approach to a problem that I never really understood brought on by the only thing I can find reasonable: *pure magic*.

So now that I am radio-operational, I am going to (again) tackle that computer sound card that refuses to work even though all of the diagnostics say it it working fine

I really hate magic