

March 2021

The

Volume 2 Issue 1

# Messenger 2.0



Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club's Quarterly Newsletter

[W1DDD.org](http://W1DDD.org)

# What a difference a year makes!

By RONALD R. BLAIS — KB1RYT

Twelve months ago, the most prosperous, powerful nation in the world, the USA, was brought to its knees by a microscopic virus, Covid-19. Overnight, businesses across the economic spectrum were shuttered, some permanently, millions of workers joined the unemployment lines, schools closed and Americans found themselves prisoners in their own homes. Fear stalked the nation from coast to coast.

However, thanks to high tech wizardry, combined with the resourcefulness of its leadership and members, BVARC refused to buckle and continued to carry out its mission of serving the amateur radio community of the Blackstone Valley.

Monthly meetings were conducted utilizing Zoom technology. In addition, Buddy Kinniburgh, K1CYQ, and Mike Kenney, K1ETA, teamed up to offer practical demonstrations following club meetings.

Bob Beaudet, W1YRC, and Jim Johnson, K1GND, coordinators of the club's popular Consortium series, turned to email to continue their instructional programs.

The VE team conducted license testing outdoors in the parking lot of Our Saviour's Parish, Woonsocket, with Beaudet's Cumberland home also serving as a test site.

A drive through election of officers was held in Our Saviour's parking lot.

Prohibited from gathering together for Field Day, club members let Field Day come to them in their individual shacks.

Nor would the club allow the Covid Grinch to steal its Christmas spirit. The annual Christmas party was held virtually on Zoom, complete with decorations and refreshments.

**Well done, BVARC.**



# From our President

## Hello Fellow BVARC Members,

At this time of year “Hope” is in the air as we are seeing the beginning glimpses of the end of another long cold winter and even longer harsher Covid-19 pandemic. Hopefully soon we will find the end of the 12” snowstorms and an end of ongoing news reports about the pandemic.

With the arrival of spring our thoughts turn to the planning of Field Day which we all know is late June 26-27 and ahead to other activities which we can do individually, as a group or as a family once again. The Field Day committee will soon have their first meeting to discuss all of the aspects of this well attended event. Contact Mickey Callahann, K1WMC for more information.

I’m writing this President’s Message a few days after our first Show & Tell committee presentation. Buddy Kinniburgh, K1CYQ did an outstanding job describing and presenting his version of the PAC12 antenna. I’ve received very positive comments and also requests for his contact information to further discuss this impressive antenna. My plans call for adding one or more of these antennas to my backyard as well. There is also expressed interest in the Show & Tell presentation by Mike Kenney, K1ETA on Bioenno Solar Panels scheduled for March 29th. Please contact Mike if you have a particular item you want to demonstrate during an upcoming Show & Tell.

**My thanks to both Norman Deragon, W1CVC, and Roland Sasseville, WA1RHS, for taking the lead role in creating BVARC’s own “Ham Welcome Kit”.** This packet of information will help new hams start their adventure in Ham Radio on a good solid footing and these new hams will hopefully consider a BVARC membership.

Personal health emergencies and accidents isn’t something we schedule, but being prepared for these unexpected emergencies is something we can do. Toward that end, BVARC Vice-President Marc Caouette, W1MCX, has sent to all members an email asking for your emergency contact name and phone number. Should you ever be at a BVARC event and suffer an emergency we will use this information to contact your emergency contact and advise them of the situation. This information will be safely stored in

the membership master record maintained by our Secretary Ray Vilnit, KC1HQB. I strongly encourage each of you to answer this email immediately so you don’t forget.

BVARC’s newest committee is off to a great start, planning of Field Day-21 will soon begin, work is underway on final touches to our new “Ham Welcome Kit” and we are taking steps to proactively help our members should an emergency occur. As with anything within BVARC, an organization such as ours only achieves through the hard work and dedication of its members. Thank you to each and every member who steps-up and moves BVARC forward.

If we all do just one thing, there won’t be anything left to do but to have fun!

73, N1RGK  
Ken Trudel  
President, BVARC

**Congratulations on Getting Your Amateur Radio License!**  
It's exciting to pass your licensing exam... and it is also a little intimidating.  
**Now What?**  
You're probably asking yourself, "OK, what now? How do I get on the air? Where can I get help and guidance?"  
**Join the Club**  
First, we invite you to join the Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club (BVARC). This will put you in contact with other local hams who are happy to help you get started and answer your questions. It's a tradition for hams to lend a hand to one another. Experienced ham operators called "Elmers" (mentors) help new hams get oriented to the hobby. So take advantage of their knowledge. You'll find a membership application in this packet.  
Here are the benefits of joining BVARC:  
• **Monthly Membership Meetings.** The club meets the last Monday of every month (except July and August).  
• **The Messenger,** the club's quarterly newsletter loaded with club news, interesting articles, helpful tips and a calendar of coming events.  
• **Volunteer Examiner Test Sessions** where you can upgrade your license.  
• **Annual Field Day** with an opportunity to practice emergency operating skills. It's a great learning experience and a lot of fun.

**NEW HAM KIT**  
Courtesy of  
BLACKSTONE VALLEY AMATEUR RADIO CLUB  
BVARC  
WOODSOCKET, RI

**Getting On the Air—Repeaters**  
**Repeater Basics**  
Repeaters extend the range of your VHF or UHF radio by relaying your relatively weak signal to other stations, by using a higher power system that is usually located at a high elevation which maximizes its coverage. Repeating on one frequency and re-transmitting on a second frequency.  
For example, on the 2-meter band, two stations have these frequencies: one 147.180 MHz (or 400 kilohertz) input, and the other 147.185 MHz (or 400 kilohertz) output. As a radio, if the output frequency (frequency) of the repeater is below 147 MHz, then the input frequency (frequency) is, most cases, 400 kilohertz lower. This is referred to as a negative offset. If the offset is 147 MHz or above, then the input is in most cases 400 kilohertz above. This is referred to as a positive input.  
\*Virtually all ham radios sold today set the offset once you have chosen the operating frequency automatically. Either +400 MHz or -400 MHz for the 146.8-147.99 2-Meter Band. Also, either +5 MHz or -5 MHz for the 440-450 MHz Conference Band.  
**PL Tones**  
PL is an acronym for Private Line. It is a proprietary name for a communications industry signaling protocol called the Continuous Tone-Coded Squelch System, or CTCSS. It is used to prevent a repeater from responding to unwanted signals or interference. Tone Squelch is an electronic means of allowing a repeater to listen to a PL tone of any 67 Hz.  
If a repeater is set to listen to a PL tone, it will allow the transmitting station access. If your station (mobile, base or hand held) does not transmit the tone that the repeater receiver has been programmed for, when you key up, then the receiver of the repeater will not recognize your signal and your station will not be usable on that repeater until you set the proper PL tone to your radio to be transmitted when you key your microphone. If a repeater is in PL mode, that means it requires a CTCSS tone (PL tone) to activate the response.  
**Rhode Island Repeaters:**  
Rhode Island has two linked repeater systems on the 2 meter band. These systems provide statewide coverage including parts of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

**How They Work**  
on VHF and UHF bands. That had portable VHF/UHF hand held radios can be so you can get on the air without needing your budget and then upgrade better class.  
A, including information about best operating practices, news updates, special events, you will also find Amateur Radio equipment manufacturers and their prices.  
Rhode Island Amateur Radio's national association. The plan shows you the portions are available to each license class. Technician, General and Amateur Plus are assigned to the various bands, such as CW ( Morse Code), Single Side Band and you only transmit in the bands allowed by your license and to limit their operating.





# Snapshots

## A Peek Through the BVARC Archives

W1DDD  
**Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club, Inc.**  
 Woonsocket, RI

*cordially invites you to its*  
**Golden Anniversary Celebration**

Vermette's Restaurant  
 1347 Diamond Hill Road Route 114  
 Woonsocket, Rhode Island  
 (directly across from Walnut Hill Plaza)

**Saturday, October 18, 2003**

Cocktails 6:00 P.M.    Dinner 7:00 P.M.

Family Style Chicken Dinner    \$10.00 per person - includes tax and gratuity

**Guest Speaker: Steve Gilbert, K1SG**  
 Steve will share with us some of his DX operating experiences on six meters, sometimes known as the Magic Band - and he will tell us why!!


Clip the form below, make your check payable to the  
**BVARC** and mail to:  
 Bob Jones, WB1P  
 49 Farmview Drive  
 Cumberland, RI 02864

Deadline for reservations: **Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>**

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

W1DDD



**The Blackstone Valley  
 Amateur Radio Club**

*Welcomes you to its*  
**Golden Anniversary  
 Celebration**

October 18, 2003  
 Vermette's Restaurant  
 Woonsocket, RI

### Brief History

*The club's years:*

The BVARC was founded in 1953 by a group of local hams whose goal was to maintain interest in, and share their knowledge of Amateur Radio. The group met with a member of the Narragansett Association of Radio Amateurs to discuss how to set up a charter.

The discussions led to a charter, constitution, and by-laws which were adopted and filed with the State of Rhode Island. Thus, the Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club, Inc. was created. The original signatories of the charter were:

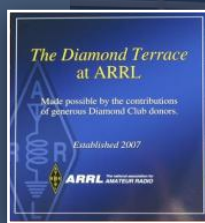
Ray St. Onge	W1HW (W1HW)
Lionel Parenteau	W1ZEZ
Dave Pascal	W1ZTV
Norm Thibault	W1AUT
Warren Greene	W1DNR
Bob Beaudet	W1YRC

The club had its humble beginnings in a garage off Diamond Hill Road. Soon, however, through the cooperative efforts of Lionel Parenteau, W1ZEZ and Montague Greener, the pastor of Holy Family Church at the time, a permanent meeting place was secured. The club occupied the second floor of the church's Stone House which included a radio room, library, sitting room, and a full kitchen. Club station W1DDD consisted of a home brew 500 watt class-B amplifier on 20 meters AM and CW, a home brew 20 meter rig, and a Johnson Viking Ranger. The antenna system included a diamond tubular element (courtesy of Steve Rootock and W1YRC) and mounted on a utility pole.

### Past Presidents

1954	Lionel Parenteau	W1ZEZ
1955-56	Ray St. Onge	W1HW
1957	Phil Bernard	W1WGW
1958	Lionel Parenteau	W1ZEZ
1959	Norm Thibault	W1AUT
1960	Ray St. Onge	W1HW
1961	Roland Tibouss	K1LZW
1962	Joe Desautin	K1ORM
1963	Norm Thibault	W1AUT
1964	Gordon Fox	W1YNE
1965	Bob Beaudet	W1YRC
1966-81	(inactive)	
1982-84	Brian Jacobson	K1AFX
1985	Rick Ferland	K1CR
1986	Leo Lemieux	N1CFE
1987	Rick Fairweather	K1KYI
1988-89	Leo Lemieux	N1CFE
1990-93	Steve Anthony	W1AFX
1994	Dave Reid	A1AIC
1995	Max Reid	N1LYA
1996	Bob Alberg	A1ALR (NBU)
1997-2000	Armand Lambert	K1FLD
2001	Ed Warren	N1NAW
2002-03	Bill Whetstone	W1ARI

From its unassuming inception in 1953 inside a garage on Diamond Hill Road, BVARC has been dedicated to the advancement of amateur radio in the Blackstone Valley. This program was issued to mark the club's golden anniversary celebration in 2003 held at Vermette's Restaurant, Woonsocket. It includes the names of the club's charter members and past presidents, up to that time.



The names of two BVARC charter members and former club presidents, Ray St. Onge, W1HW, and Norm Thibault, W1AUT, silent keys, have been added to ARRL's Diamond Patio in front of the league's headquarters in Newington, CT, courtesy of Bob Beaudet, W1YRC.



# DXing for the Beginner

By BOB BEAUDET — W1YRC

## DXing for the Beginner Part I

Hopefully, you're reading this because you're at least a little curious about what I might have to say about the world of DX. I won't delude myself into thinking that you're interested in becoming a DXer, yet anyway. I'll try not to disappoint you and shall try to make a little progress toward convincing you to spend some time chasing stations far away and less time wasted on repeaters.

Chasing distant stations can be a great deal of fun. Likely most reading this know that I have been a DXer for many years. In this article, I plan to define what DX is and how to easily recognize a genuine DXer. You might be surprised to learn that "DX" doesn't necessarily refer solely to stations that are far away and a DXer isn't necessarily always someone who likes to make contact with stations that are far away. "Far away" is a relative term.

DXing on 2 meters may very well refer to contacts that are 200 miles away or less if you are using low power or even one or two miles when referring to microwave contacts. So, DX doesn't only mean contacts with North Korea or Scarborough Reef. Unusually distant for the conditions being employed and the frequency should define the criteria. Earth-Moon-Earth or EME (moonbounce) requires making contacts on VHF or UHF that are a half million miles or more away. Now that's DX! But, commonly we consider any

contacts with other countries to be DX and for this article, I shall also.

We probably should define what we consider to be the essential characteristics of a DXer before getting too deep into this discussion. I'm immediately reminded of the comedian, Jeff Foxworthy, and his attempts to provide the criteria essential to being a redneck. "You know that you're a redneck if....." If you've never heard any of this, you should Google it when you have the time.

Well, we could say "you know that you're a DXer if you keep track of how many countries you have worked and confirmed". When the news reports that several sunspots have been observed, the first thing that pops into your head is that 20 and 15 meters will be good, you are a DXer.

DX is generally considered working stations that are in a different country, although that isn't necessarily the case. A station in Maine or New Hampshire may consider an opening to California, Oregon and Arizona much better DX on 6 or 10 meters than an opening to Nova Scotia which is a different country.

But for simplicity purposes, we shall consider DX as stations in other countries or entities. If contacting these stations interests you more than sitting on a 2 meter repeater chatting with the same locals every day about what HT they are using, there's hope for you.

When I was a new ham, I had no access to a club or even another

ham. Without Charlie Mellen, W1FH, to whom I was introduced in the early 1960s at the New England Convention in Swampscott, I possibly would have never overcome my feeling of inferiority that I could never be a DXer.

In Amateur radio, there are many different interests. That's what attracts us to it. Emergency service ranks high among many of our new hams. Portable and QRP work is great fun. Mobiling in a car or boat has many fans. But, over the years, being a DXer stands fairly highly as the star of ham radio.

As far as operator performance, nothing brings excellence into focus nearly as brightly as DXing. Top gun DX operators are the best we have. They bring everything to the front and test every aspect of our abilities. The can legitimately copy stations on CW or SSB that most others can't even recognize as being there.

When you feel excitement in working some new entity on the list, you probably are a DXer. When you read DX Bulletins looking to find out when a new one is going to appear on your favorite band, you're a DXer. When you reschedule a family event like a vacation, doctor appointment, wedding or funeral because the announced date conflicts with a major DXpedition, you're definitely a DXer. I am not joking. This is done.

There are several DX Bulletins published. Probably the best and most thorough one is published by

*Continued on Page 10*



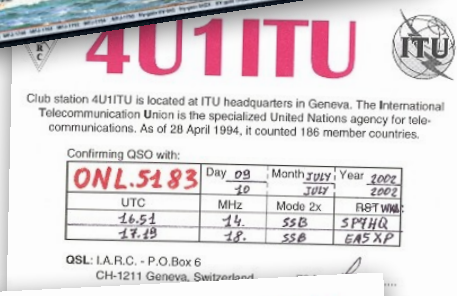
# Where Do You Stand on QSLing

By JIM JOHNSON — K1GND

A short time ago, I received an email message from a friend and fellow Amateur Radio Operator. The thrust of his email was the rather noticeable lack of courtesy generally shown regarding sending a confirmation of a QSO using QSL.

Looking back to earlier times, the QSL was a tedious and expensive clerical process. Many of us remember waiting anxiously for the land mail service to bring those awaited cards that would bring us closer to our goals (WAS, WAC, DXCC etc.).

Times have changed considerably with the advent of electronic



logging. Labels, envelopes and stamps no longer being necessary. No question about it, the QSL process has become much more inexpensive and much easier.

With the elimination of the requirement to maintain a logbook, many hams have simply opted to not sending confirmation via the card. By the same token many hams, for whatever reason, seem to have taken a dim view of the QSL regardless of the process. I hope that this (lack of sending) has not become prevalent within the BVARC community.

*Continued on next Page*

## ACROSS

- A1 RI radio club
- D5 HAM Radio Organization
- G2 Type of coil shape
- H11 Type of transistor
- I6 Type of cable
- K9 One millionth

## DOWN

- A1 Mechanical keyer
- A3 FM innovator or type of antenna rotator
- C5 Signal-to-Noise \_\_\_\_\_
- G7 Rectifying component
- G9 The "Old Man"
- D8 Obnoxious radio operator
- E11 \_\_\_\_\_ bounce
- H12 Type of oscillator

Answers on page 9

# QSL? Crossword

By Bob Janus—KA1EMH

	1	2	3	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A													
B													
C													
D													
E													
F													
G													
H													
I													
J													
K													
L													
M													

Consider the following situations: You have just made a contact with a ham in Florida, you don't need a contact with Florida because you have many Florida contacts already and adding another is redundant and provides no added value to you. But suppose that the Florida contact was handicapped and made an extraordinary effort to work your state or possibly the contact that would bring one of the awaited awards to the Florida operator.

Being an operator in Rhode Island, we must consider the fact that we're in a fairly rare state. Nearly every day, someone is calling CQ RI on one of the bands. The Worked All States (WAS) award is a cherished prize, sought by our brethren around the world. Then, there are the different "flavors," WAS on each band, each mode, all YLs, only operators named Jim, only two letter calls, etc.

Next, suppose you participate in the many contests or special activities held on weekends throughout the year and your contacts number in the hundreds or possibly the thousands (Field Day being a good example). You may want the score or maybe you don't, but someone on the other end of the QSO might just want and need a RI confirmation. If you were chasing a special call from a DX Expedition you would want the confirmation regardless of the method of confirmation.

A good deal of QSLing is now done electronically. Logbook of The World (LoTW) is the acceptable means of electronic QSLing where no paperwork is exchanged. Everything is issued and authenticated electronically and sent to a central computer in Newington, CT. The computer

matches up logs of thousands of stations and produces "QSLs" for the stations involved. To date, 1.3 billion QSO records have been entered into the LoTW system. Other electronic methods such as eQSL and others are not acceptable for awards since preventing fraud and other cheating cannot be assured.

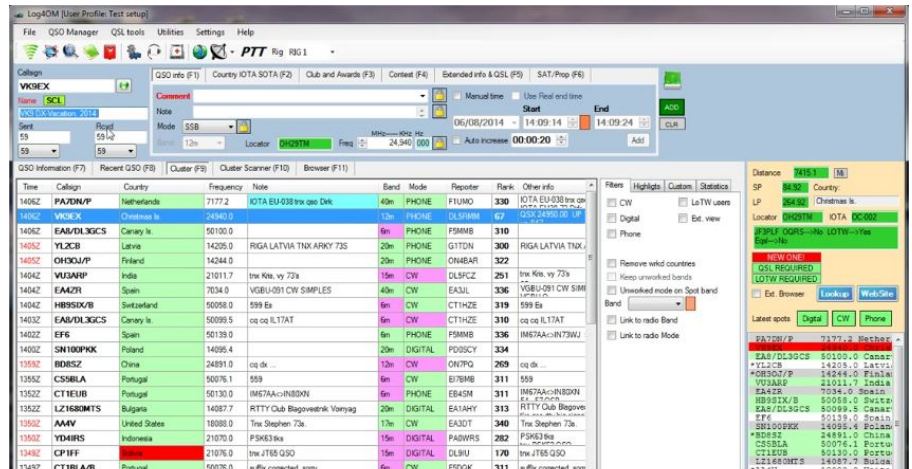
This brings me to the point of this paper. QSLing has become so much easier with the advent of special programs and computers. Let's get in the habit of acknowledging a contact by sending a QSL. Electronic QSLing has become a relatively simple process and if you haven't tried it or don't know how to accomplish it, contact a fellow ham (or join us in the BVARC Consortium) and we will step you through the process.

Over the years, QSLs have generally been in the form of a card, suitable for mailing. But a QSL may be in any form; a letter, a piece of coral, the back side of a bar napkin, a native knife, a flag, even an article of clothing. Just about anything upon which you may write all the necessary contact information and sign it.



Above is a photo of ARRL DXCC Manager Bob White, W1CW, checking the "QSL" from XV5AC in Viet Nam for Bob W1YRC. It was in 1973 and he was their QSL Manager and the crew over there in the Embassy where XV5AC was located didn't feel that he should have to write himself a QSL card. So, they obtained a peasant hat from a Saigon street vendor and wrote the QSO information on it. We were at the National ARRL Convention in New York. Over the years, Bob wrote out over 25,000 XV5AC QSL cards for deserving DXers around the world but doesn't have one himself.

**Remember:** the QSL is the final courtesy of a QSO.





# IS USING FT8

# CHEATING?

By BOB BEAUDET — W1YRC

Unless you've been living in a cave and totally separated from Amateur radio for the last few years, you know that on air HF activity has become completely dominated by the digital modes of FT8 and FT4. You may also know that the far more seasoned modes of CW and SSB have not been very busy at all. Coupled with the fact that we're all still pecking our way across the sparse and wide canyon floor that lies between the end of Sunspot Cycle 24 and the start of Cycle 25, it doesn't take a Harvard scholar to see that the great ship, "Amateur Radio" is rather heavily listing to one side.

Introduction of new modes in the past has caused listing to one side also. When the SSB mode was introduced following World War II, there was plenty of howling, asking FCC to remove these weird "Donald Duck" stations (that's who they sound like without using a BFO in your receiver) before it destroys our wonderful hobby. In similar fashion to what we're seeing now, fears were heard that smaller groups such as RTTY had their own small battles to find some space in the ham spectrum that was previously dominated by

CW. "Ham radio is going to be ruined" was the common cry heard at conventions and hamfests. But, somehow we're still here and even growing. When I checked recently, the US had 750,000 license holders and the rest of the world had well over 3 million more. The trend everywhere is upward. It

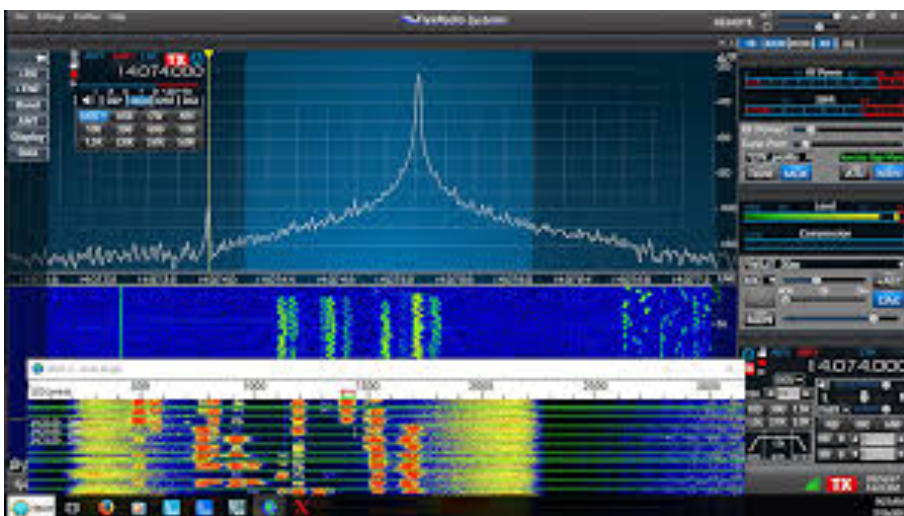
hams in particular, hungry to work DX and attain recognition among their peers as a DXer, are hooked line and sinker, filling the ranks of avid FT8 operators and snub their noses at nay sayers. They are not content with waiting for Sun Spot Cycle 25 to slowly climb its way upward over the next few years.

hardly appears that the hobby is being ruined. For certain, it's changing before our eyes and that appears to be the trigger point that enflames the protesters. Humans never respond well to change. In fact, most all mammals prefer that their surroundings remain the same and not change.

Therefore, from a physiological view, it's fairly simple to understand why we see a good amount of resistance when something as world shaking as FT

They see an answer to the problem immediately. Why wait?

A few years ago, a dedicated Scotsman Pete Parisetti MM0TWX and some of his friends founded the True Blue DXers Club, an international organization promoting the use of CW and SSB. The group is intent on promoting the traditional modes of CW and SSB and is careful not to appear to publicly dissuade the use of other modes such as the new digital modes of FT8 or FT4. They seem



8 suddenly hits the market with little fanfare at the exact time that its weak signal ability provides an overflowing basket of contacts all over the world during a period when little to no DX signals can be heard. At the same time, newer

to promote using the modes that got us here, similar to the old rule of dancing with the partner you came with to the dance.

Careful as they are in trying not to criticize FT8 and FT4, they clearly

*Continued on next page*

are not happy that FT8 has come along. Others beyond the True Blue group feel that FT8 is cheating. After all, the computer is doing nearly all the work. Very little skill by the operator is required on either end of the contact to get the QSO logged. In their day, they had to do quite a bit more to attain Worked All States, DXCC or any other operating award you might suggest. These awards aren't supposed to be easy. They're all designed to be attainable but require dedication and sacrifice and their attainment is worthy of recognition.

DXCC is very popular and is the gold standard around the world among folks who enjoy working DX stations. This has been the case since DXCC was restarted following World War II. Gathering confirmations from 100 or more DX stations is not easy nor should it be.

However, sitting as we are at the bottom of the sunspot cycle, many find contacting 100 nearly impossible without having a tall tower, beam antenna and possibly some high power to bring into play. These things are expensive and because of deed restrictions and covenants, it may not be possible for some to install a tower of any size or a directional gain antenna to put on it. However, using FT8, hams make decent DX contacts regularly, using a simple wire in a tree and moderate equipment.

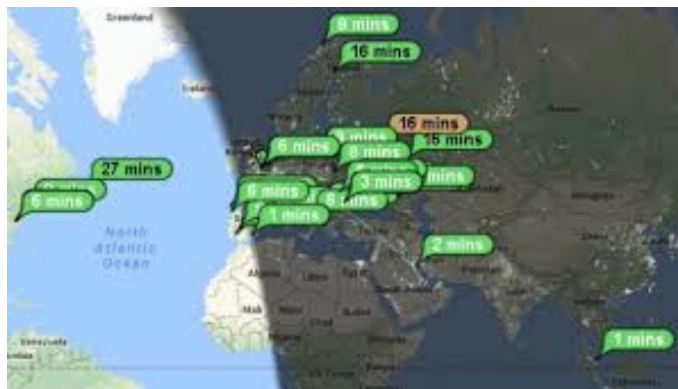
Under the normal weak signal conditions that we experience now, we're making DX contacts using CW or SSB with the stronger signals that we're able to hear. Any DXer will tell you that the best DX lies down there in the mud where you must listen very carefully. That's been true since Hiram Percy Maxim (ARRL founder) was a new ham. So, the DXer understandably wants to get down into the noise

and work those rare DX stations. FT8 came onto the scene and history was made.

Many feel that "dumbing down" requirements make it easy for more ordinary folks to contact stations buried in the noise that no one can hear, let alone work and log. It's a reasonable argument but using FT8 doesn't violate any rules. It's simply the use of latest technology. Is that wrong? Others in authority, including the DXCC awards department at ARRL and the ARRL Board, feel that contacts made using FT8 or its cousin FT4 are acceptable toward the DXCC award. Therein lies the show stopping issue.

Sure, attainment of the DXCC award in any of its iterations should not be "easy". If they were, it wouldn't properly represent the major achievement that membership in DXCC is. Gathering up 100 qualifying contacts on any band requires knowledge and ability to be on the air at the best time and follow the practice that will complete making the contact. The operator must know propagation, when and where to make a call, know and follow the process to exchange reports and acknowledgements, etc. True, the computer program correctly copies the call sign and determines the signal report. It even keeps the log for you. So, you really don't need to know and do much. But as some suggest, you can't sit back with your favorite beverage and watch the station fill your log with DX, hardly requiring any attention at all. That's simply fallacy.

Making contact with many of



today's DX stations using CW or SSB is not possible at all. In days gone by, after listening to hash for a while, we would have found a good book to read or write our friends letters and we wouldn't work any DX at all. Dozens of stations are in there, but we can't hear them. They're 5, 10, 15 or more db below the noise floor. Despite our most intensive listening, we would not hear a peep. But FT8 can hear many of them easily. So, is it better to install the WSJT program created by Dr. Joe Taylor and his merry men and start adding them to your DX worked list or decide that the band is dead and not to make any contacts? It's your call.

I earned my first DXCC in 1965, long before FT8 was even an idea in Joe Taylor's remarkable brain. My qualifying 100 contacts were a mixture of CW and phone contacts and is the Mixed DXCC award, currently standing at 371. None of them were made using FT8 or FT4. I also hold a DXCC award on Phone and on CW with totals of 367 and 324, respectively, and obviously none of those were on FT8. Finally, I hold a Digital mode DXCC award with a count of 214. Nearly every one of these was made on FT8 with a few on RTTY.

I'm stating all of this to indicate that I have true understanding of what the True Blue people are saying. They tried to recruit me into

*Continued on next page*



their club but I prefer not to take sides. The TBDXC emphasizes the point that they do not wish to discourage anyone from using FT8. They want to claim that the basic spirit of our operating awards such as DXCC is being undermined and diluted and we should be mindful of that.

It's not clear to me that they don't care to discourage hams from using FT8. Read their website at <https://www.tbdxc.net/> and see if you can dance through their carefully worded text and conclude that they are unbiased. I cannot.

I very well understand the attraction to FT8 and its advantage, particularly during weak signal times such as we have now. Of course, I understand and love the thrill of chasing DX in a CW pile-up and to a lesser extent, a Phone pile-up. Both CW and Phone DXing require a good deal of skill to be successful and after making the contact, reward us with a great deal of satisfaction. I honestly must admit that I feel greater satisfaction making the contact on CW or Phone than on FT8. But a contact is a contact and will count toward the various DXCC awards.

There are plenty of ways to get on FT8 using most any HF radio but the easiest by far is to buy an Icom IC-7300 transceiver, which often is available new for under \$900 after rebates and promotions and a common A/B USB printer cable. Plug the small Type B USB plug into the back of your IC-7300 and the other end, a type A into one of your computer's USB ports. Download the free WSJTx program from <https://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/k1jt/wsjsx.html> and get on the air.

Just about any other transceiver can operate on FT8 by using an inexpensive accessory called "Signal Link". The IC-7300 does not need to use the Signal Link. It can

operate on FT8 out of the box because it has a built-in sound card. One must adjust some basic settings on the WSJT software program to accommodate the operator's preferences; call sign, grid square, IARU region, baud rate, com port, etc. But, after that, it's contact after contact.

As I pointed out earlier in this article, there are quite a few reputable Amateurs who strongly feel that FT8 is a terrible invention and destroying the fabric of the wonderful hobby that we love so much. They feel that by delivering a method to find an easy way to attain awards like DXCC and WAS, we have taken away the fun and excitement that operators feel by struggling to make contact with a rare country or county. They feel that contacting a DXpedition is reduced to typing in the wanted call sign, clicking the enable button and sitting back until the red bar appears saying that contact was made. Then all that remains in the task is clicking the logging button and look for something new. I can surely understand their point. Being an old timer who attained all these awards the hard way long ago, I appreciate all of this better than most others can.

Making contact using FT8 is a little bit more involved and challenging than is portrayed but I'll admit that the mechanics of making a QSO have been made a good deal more simple. QRM and QRN are still a problem today just as they were to operators decades ago using CW with a J-38 hand key in World War II. Propagation still presents its own set of challenges. FT8 doesn't make that part of chasing DX any easier. The most significant advantage of FT8 is its unique ability to receive intelligent copy when none can be heard using the normal hearing that God gave us.

*So, what do you think?*



## QSL? Crossword Answers

By Bob Janus—KA1EMH

	1	2	3	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A	B	V	A	R	C								
B	U		R										
C	G		M		R								
D			S		A	R	R	L					
E			T		T			I			M		
F			R		I			D			O		
G		T	O	R	O	I	D		M		O		
H			N				I		A		N	P	N
I			G			C	O	A	X			I	
J							D		I			E	
K							E		M	I	C	R	O
L												C	
M												E	

## Noteworthy

Text - H.Res.1201 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Expressing support for the designation of April 18, 2021, as "National Amateur Radio Operators Day".

| [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) | Library of Congress | Link Below:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/1201/text>

Bernie McClenny, W3UR. Details may be seen at <https://www.dailydx.com/>. ARRL publishes its DX Bulletin also, OPDX publishes a weekly bulletin. See <http://www.papays.com/opdx.html>. I'll publish more details about DX bulletins in Part II of this article.

DXpeditions are trips made by groups of adventurers to an entity, usually in a remote place on earth for the purpose of setting up a station or two for the purpose of making thousands of contacts around the world. They generally are frightfully expensive and often dangerous.

Details of what they are all about may be found at <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/DXCC/dx-basics.pdf>. The author is Wayne Mills, N7NG. Wayne has participated in many DXpeditions and for a time, was manager of the DXCC department at ARRL. He knows what he is talking about. This booklet is rather detailed, so I advise that you copy it as a file and use it as a reference. There's an awful lot of information contained in this piece and much of it will fly over your head unless you have some basis for understanding what is being talked about.

Feel free to call me or any experienced DXer if something you read doesn't make sense. It's rather important that you understand DXpeditions before you move along in the DX world. They are a basic happening when Covid-19 isn't in control of our lives.

The basic objective that most DXers claim is to make and confirm a contact with each entity in the world. Currently, there are 340 entities in the world. A list of them is shown at <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/DXCC/2020%20DXCC%20Current%20.pdf>. They're called entities rather

than countries because many of them are not countries. Some are simply reefs or piles of rock that in the middle of nowhere but far enough from the "parent" country that permits them to be a legally separate place on its own. True, these are little more than reefs and rocks that serve to give us more places to chase as DXers and obviously, places for DXpeditions to travel to, etc. My garage is bigger than a few of them.

Size of the entity is not an issue as long as it's large enough for a table or bench holding radio gear and a generator and antenna somewhere on "dry land" at high tide.

The DXCC office, the DX Advisory Committee and the Board of Directors must agree that every entity meets the requirements set forth in the rules which are shown at <http://www.arrl.org/dxcc-rules>. Every contact claimed for DXCC credit must be confirmed by some sort of QSL item, not necessarily a card, or an electronic confirmation by Logbook of The World.

We have some who refuse to accept the criteria or rules of DXCC and question why contacts must be confirmed at all. They claim that they are offended by the DXCC, calling them a liar by suggesting that they have not contacted a particular entity. Why must I prove it? I said that I made the contact. What's the problem? They know that I made the contacts. That may be true, but DXCC has rules that everyone must follow. Every contact must be confirmed.

These people are simply showing ignorance. College degrees must be confirmed for employment, a football touchdown must be confirmed by officials even if a million people saw it on TV, military fighter pilots must have the enemy planes that they shot down confirmed. Authorities do not

accept your word as factual in the real world.

In chasing DX confirmations, getting a QSL card is often much more difficult than chasing the DX station and making contact with him. When someone finally has 100 or more entities confirmed, he or she is eligible to be granted membership in the DX Century Club or DXCC. DXCC is recognized around the world as the gold standard for DX operating excellence. It's a certificate that most DXers want on their wall.

When your score reaches 331, ten fewer than the maximum of 340, your call sign is added to the DXCC Honor Roll and when all 340 are worked and confirmed, you'll sit at the top of the Honor Roll, a very significant achievement.

CQ magazine has divided the world into 40 zones for purposes of their Worked All Zones award or WAZ. The zones are defined at [https://cq-amateur-radio.com/cq\\_awards/cq\\_waz\\_awards/cq\\_waz\\_list.html](https://cq-amateur-radio.com/cq_awards/cq_waz_awards/cq_waz_list.html). Some zones in the world are quite a challenge. They have limited activity and sometimes no hams on the air. Like DXCC, earning WAZ is not supposed to be easy. You must have all 40 to obtain the certificate. Having 38 or 39 will get you nothing.

The WAZ map of the world in .pdf format may be downloaded at: [https://cq-amateur-radio.com/cq\\_awards/cq\\_waz\\_awards/cq\\_waz\\_map.jpg](https://cq-amateur-radio.com/cq_awards/cq_waz_awards/cq_waz_map.jpg)

If you are a new DXer and are trying to collect important tips to be successful, start with this one. It's probably the simplest one to follow. Listen, listen, listen and when you've done that for a while, listen some more, then some more. You will spend 90% or more of your operating time listening. Then, when the time is right, bang, you'll



make one call, maybe two and enter the DX call in your log, hopefully. Doing all this listening will teach you how propagation changes during the 24 hours of a day and how it changes during the different seasons.

It's important to realize the relative importance of your station assets. The most important tool in your DXer's tool box is your operating skill, followed by the effectiveness of your antenna system, followed by your radio/amplifier. Your radio is not the magic bullet that will make you a DXer. This might not be what you want or expect to hear. Many new hams read the advertisements and reason that if they spend \$5,000 or more on a radio with lots of knobs and features, they will be a sure bet to become a big DXer.

Listen very carefully boys and girls: **that is a big fat lie.** Of course, you must have a good radio but an IC-7300 that you bought on a special deal for \$899 with free shipping will do the job just as well and possibly better for you than an IC 7851 that the salesman wants over \$12,000 to put into the trunk of your car. Simply, you aren't ready to use the features that the IC-7851 can give you. In fact, you may never need them.

Your operating skill is what will bring you to the DXCC Honor Roll, not your radio. My main "go to" radio is 20 years old and is a 28 year old design. I use an effective antenna system but I rely upon my personal ability and lots of experience to find and bag the DX station, not a computer program, spotting network or any tricks. Old fashioned listening works fine for me. My advice to all new DXers is practice operating with patience. Don't let yourself get frustrated or annoyed by poor operators. You'll see it every day on just about every band and mode. Stay clear of all that to the

best of your ability. While they're arguing over whose frequency it is, you're up 10 KHZ working the DX station.

DXing is like most other specialties within hobbies in that you must climb up a learning curve before you truly appreciate it. Find yourself someone to buddy with to share your accomplishments and goals. Doing it alone is not fun. You will probably learn from one another as well. If you are not already a club member, consider joining BVARC, the club behind this newsletter. You'll quickly meet others with similar interests to yours and together, you can solve your problems. If you don't already know Morse code, learn it. <http://www.justlearnmorsecode.com/> It will serve you well in chasing DX.

Most serious DXers are also capable CW operators. Why? They have learned over many years that CW is useful in getting through during poor propagation conditions when SSB will not. The new FT8 mode does well also. It will get through when conditions are poor. In a separate earlier Messenger article, Jim Johnson, K1GND, and I talked about FT8 at some length. Don't discount it before you realize what advantages it might provide for you.

Sitting on one frequency and calling CQ DX is not advisable, at least by me. You should be lots more selective with your calling. Make a list of the 340 entities and keep it handy. Mark them as you get them confirmed. You might want to keep a copy of the list for each of the bands you operate. Later, you may want to take part in the DXCC Challenge and in that, you'll need to know if you have already worked entity XYZ on each particular band. Trying to remember info like that is not a good idea.

Obtain a copy of Bob Locher,

W9KNI's, book, "The Complete DXer." It's a very complete and helpful reference manual. He has written three editions to date. Any of them are very good to have and are somewhat scarce or hard to find.

Bob disagrees with me regarding calling CQ DX. That's fine. Obviously it works for him, but I feel that the quiet search and pounce method is less stressful and produces more wanted DX and less of the common ones. Calling CQ DX will often result in some possibly unintended consequences. Bob lives in Oregon. An hour or two calling CQ DX here will produce a long list of common countries and eventually, a large stack of QSL cards from them seeking your QSL in return. We in RI must remember that many of the stations working us will want a QSL because RI is a fairly rare state. Of course, using Logbook of The World diminishes that problem somewhat. Details of LoTW may be reviewed at <http://www.arrl.org/files/file/LoTW%20Instructions/LoTW-New-User-Guide.pdf>

While you're tracking down reading material, download <http://www.ncdxc.org/misc/K7UA-NewDxersHandbook.pdf>. This is a thorough manual written by K7UA for the Utah DX Club. Save it as a file for reference. Reading through it completely would be useful to do initially.

Spend some time studying the different prefixes and the entity they belong to. Being a DXer is a good test of the geography that you learned in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Learning what the bearing (direction) is for different countries is important even if you don't have a rotating directional antenna. Different bands are open to certain directions at certain times of day. It's valuable to you to know this sort of thing.

What does DXing cost? It costs no more than any other ham radio activity. You have probably seen the big towers of the big DXers and thought that you could never afford this. They can be expensive. A 100 watt radio and a wire antenna in a tree will do the job very well for starters. In time, you may want to consider a tower and beam antenna. But, that's a different chapter, not something that we should cover in Beginner DXers.

If you are a new ham, you will soon discover the different nets that run just about every day on different bands, usually 20 and 40 SSB. Some call themselves DX Nets. If you have any respect for playing this DX game ethically, please do not ever join one of these DX Nets. They will not lead you down the honest path to working DX.

Usually, one or two fairly powerful stations act as control stations and ask for stations to check in. Let's say that you check in. Then they ask for DX stations to check in. Then they go down the list and ask each of you who you wish to contact. Let's say you choose YB1ABC in Indonesia. You call him, he replies but you cannot hear him. The control station asks you if you caught your report. To which you

say no. The DX station is told to call again. You still can't hear him. The control station tells you that he hears you very well. Try again. In the noise, you think you might have heard one letter of your call and say that to the control. He asks you if you heard your report and with some imagination and wishful thinking, you reply that maybe you heard 3 by 5. Control tells you that you have the 3 correct but the signal strength is a little too high. You guess 3 by 4...no, 3 by 3, Bingo. You have it and the control station proclaims to the net that you had a good contact.

Of course, you didn't make a good contact. If they hadn't relayed everything for you, you never would have made anything from it. That's not a contact at all. A good contact doesn't contain ANY relayed information.

Some other "nets" use IRLP or Internet to connect with DX stations. That's purely illegal for DXCC. Internet is not radio and for DXCC, all contacts must be made using radio both ways.

If this article were being presented in a Consortium format, you could ask questions along the way. But of course, that's not what we're doing.

If you have questions of any kind involving DXing, please send them to me at [w1yrc@arrl.org](mailto:w1yrc@arrl.org). I'll summarize the questions, omitting the author's names, answer the questions and include them in a following article, titled "DXing for the Beginner" Part II.

If you absorb much of the material presented so far, you'll be far ahead of others who just graduated from the CB world and considers contacts he makes on the ham bands to be similar to what he was considered a master on the Charlie Brown band. That fellow is carrying a large handicap with him.

Hams do not have much affection for CBers. The FCC took the 11 meter band away from Amateur radio to give it to this new radio service which turned out to be Citizen's Band. There's no love for CBers from hams who remember what moved FCC to take away a perfectly good ham band only to give it to these "good buddies" who proceeded to make fools of themselves using it. We find these CB folks now and then who have obtained Amateur licenses but kept their CB operating practices. In time they either change their ways or get tired of being ignored and go elsewhere.

*There is much more to be covered in a basic review of DXing.*

*This will be covered in DXing for "Beginners Part II" which will be published in the BVARC Messenger. Watch for it. You won't want to miss it.*

*In the meanwhile, listen to the bands. Solar Cycle 25 is on its upslope and conditions will be gradually improving.*

*This will be the finish of Part I of DXing for Beginners. Let me leave you with a final thought, listen, listen and then listen some more. Try not to call CQ DX. Instead listen, listen and listen some more.*

## Just a FYI

### Bob B — W1YRC received his Joe Knight Distinguished Service Award Certificate.

