

The Elmer Project Part III

Sponsored By The Oklahoma DX Association
The Fruits Of Your Labor

Edited by Nelson Derks, AC5UP

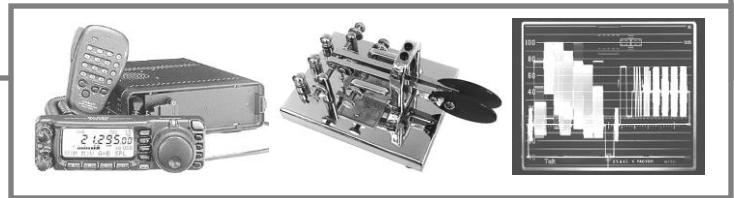
Eventually every Ham reaches for a new plateau in their interests. An example might be when you got your last antenna or rig. If you're like me, you worked with the new gadget almost every night for weeks on end until the newness started to wear off. Then you returned to your normal operating habits, perhaps including the new band or mode. Congrats, you're a step up from before. Hardware tends to have a short learning curve (at least the good stuff does) while other additions to your shack take time to acquire and offer the satisfaction of a lasting reward. This month we'll consider one you may already dabble in: The art of Paper Chasing. If this doesn't sound like fun, keep reading...

Paper Chasing, as it's often called, is the collecting of QSL's and Certificates for operating activities. The variety is endless. Once you get your station working FB, the next step is to put it to use and see how it (and you) stacks up against the rest of us. Hams with a competitive nature tend to migrate toward contesting while DX'ers live for a good band opening followed by the day when a fat envelope arrives from the W5 Bureau. Others seek out the more esoteric Awards featuring the many sub-hobbies within the hobby. Ham Radio is a smorgasbord and we are allowed to have more than one plate. I recently caught a question on www.eham.net asking for a good response to those who see little value in our radio achievements. One reply that caught my eye was to ask: '...name any other sport where a beginner can play shoulder to shoulder with the Pro's?' Amateur Radio works on a level playing field open to all comers. Don't be intimidated by a lack of gear or experience as patience and tenacity can yield impressive results. And, don't forget that Hams usually get better with age.

Golfers just get older and tend to lose their balls on the weekend...


Your first step is to order QSL cards and get into the habit of sending them. You'll also want to set up an account with the ARRL W5 QSL Bureau, Magnolia DX Association, P.O. Box 999, Wiggins, MS 39577. You can visit them on the web at www.mdxa.org for more info, and don't forget to check your QSL in-box while you're there. I know you keep good logs and can QSL as needed (right?) so the next step is to learn more about the Awards you might be interested in. Some of the most popular are sponsored by the ARRL. A visit to www.arrl.org will yield plenty of info. Let's take a moment to read what Clif Sikes, N5UW and ARRL QSL Card Field Checker has to say about applying for your first ARRL DX Century Club (DXCC) Award:

YOUR FIRST DXCC AWARD




number of reasons and it's better to be safe than sorry. There is no more empty feeling than to submit your first 100 and get a note back from the DXCC desk saying one was not allowed. Been there, done that! You should read The DXCC Rule Book (only \$3.00) and the application form available on the ARRL web page. You must be a member of the ARRL to participate in the DXCC program and the application form is required for every submission of cards.

When you're ready, you have two options: You can send in the cards by registered mail to the DXCC desk -or- have them verified by a Field Checker. If you mail them in you must also include sufficient funds for return postage. If the application is mailed to ARRL HQ, they can check ALL cards. This means any band, mode, or entity (current or deleted) plus any card since 1947 when the modern DXCC went into effect. If you opt for a Field Check, we have two official field checkers in Oklahoma. Ross Hunt, K5RH in the Tulsa area and Clifton Sikes, N5UW in the Central part of the state. Both are listed on the ARRL web page. Please, call or e-mail to make arrangements and ask any questions you might have. Your cards are checked against the listing you have on the application and you'll take the cards home with you. There are some exclusions to the field checkable cards: All contacts must be made within the past



CQ ZONE 25
IOTA-AS 26
KDN M12



**ISLAND CHE JU
NAM WON**

HL4HLD

OP : YANG, BONG CHUL
P.O 18 Seo Gwi Po
CHE JU 697-600
E-Mail hl4hld@HITel.Net
016-698-5960

CONFIRMING QSO WITH	DATE			UTC	MHz	RST	MODE
	DAY	MONTH	YEAR				
G0U1H	29	04	2000/1320	21		H/58	

PSE QSL TNX QSL

RIG. FT-1000D, IC-2000, TR-751, HLDH-4, ANT, 7 ELE YAGI, D.P. HL4HLD@HITel.Net

So, you have the coveted 100 QSL cards in hand. 100 Countries worked and hours of time are invested in that stack. What will you do with them? First, and very importantly, you'll wait until you have at least 102 confirmations. There are times when a card will be rejected for any

ten years and 160 Meter cards cannot be field checked. Plus, deleted entities are not eligible for field checking. If you have any cards in these categories you can mail them to the ARRL HQ as a separate submission. But, it's usually best to mail in the entire batch. As for the fees, each

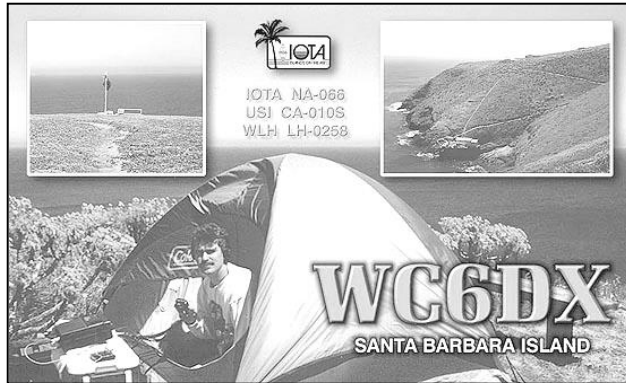
submission can have up to 120 QSO credits in it for the \$10.00 fee. Every QSO over 120 is 15 cents each, up to as many as you want to pay for. The first submission of the year is \$10.00 and every subsequent submission within that year is an additional \$20.00.

Here are a few observations from my first year as an ARRL Field Checker... The applicant is responsible for bringing with them a completed application and listing of the cards. The Rule Book explains how this should be done. Group your cards by band, starting with the lowest band. Within each band, group all SSB cards together, followed by CW cards, followed by any other mode you worked. Please read the Rule Book. If you fill out the application by hand, make your entries in pencil, not ink. We all make mistakes and pencil is easier to correct. If you want to use a print out from your logging program or spread sheet, the field sequence must match exactly with the official form! (especially the dates) HQ is very picky about that. I like the rule book and the official forms. They have been refined through years of experience and the field checkers' job is to compare your cards to what is on the form. We do not give you credit for entities worked; only the DXCC Desk can do that. It is also the applicants' responsibility to furnish a #10 business sized envelope addressed to: DXCC Desk, ARRL HQ, 225 Main St, Newington, Ct. 06111 with adequate postage. There are several pages mailed to the ARRL and that requires two stamps. The checking process can be fun for all those involved if you take just a few minutes to organize your cards and do it right. You might make a new friend, too... I know I have! Good luck and good DX!

— Clif, N5UW

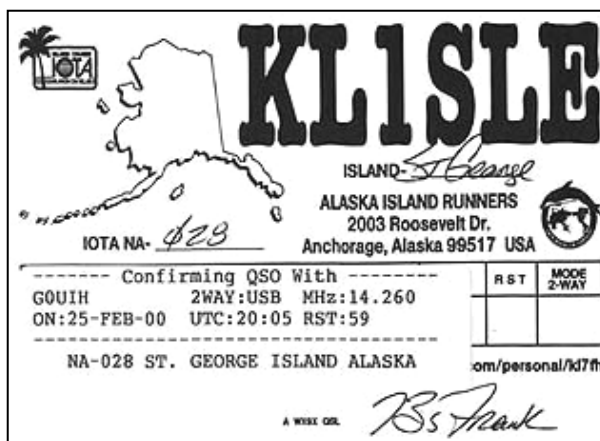
If that sounds a bit ambitious, don't worry. There are many other Awards worth your attention. Once you organize your logs you may find you're not too far from Worked All Continents (WAC), Worked All States (WAS) or DXCC on one or more bands. Maybe a little QSL work can get you there, and the Internet is a huge resource for doing just that. I've had good luck with Internet search engines like <http://www.google.com> by simply entering a call sign to see what comes back. Try it with your own call; you could be more

famous than you realize. You can find US and International calls at www.qrz.com



plus links to QSL Managers and other resources. As for your DX cards, the W5 Bureau is extremely cost-effective if you have the patience for the bureau system. They run a good shop at MDXA, but some bureaus are remarkably less than prompt. Domestic QSL's are usually sent direct

Lest you think the ARRL is the only show in town when it comes to Awards, visit the *Ohio-Penn DX Association* web site at <http://www.papays.com/opdx.html> for the weekly DX Bulletins posted there. That's the source for the DX News found in the OKDXA Newsletter with many Awards mentioned (if you've always wondered what 'CBA' means in the listings, that's Call Book Address). Another good source of current info is in the announcements



section of *CQ Magazine* online, www.cq-amateur-radio.com, especially for Special Event Stations. I've run a Special Event and I can guarantee you there's plenty of interest in wallpaper. You'll also find *CQ* sponsors the Worked All Zones (WAZ), Prefix (WPX) and CQDX Awards. For something completely different, check out the RSGB's Islands On The Air (IOTA) page at www.rsgbiota.org where you'll find US cards proudly displayed as "Rare DX". Before I started editing the OKDXA

Newsletter, I had no idea how popular Island Hunting is. Nifty QSL cards too... Maybe that's the attraction?

Now, I don't want you to think all Ham Radio Awards deal with the number of Q's or geographic locations you've worked... The concept of Special Events needs to be considered. There are State QSO Parties almost every weekend plus a shipload of events commemorating everything from Lighthouses to the founding of some profoundly old cities in Europe. In some cases, the award is for something so 'odd' it becomes attractive in its uniqueness.

You can prove this for yourself by a visit to the Awards page at the DX Zone site: <http://www.dxzone.com/catalog/Reference/Awards>. An example of this might be the 'Alexander The Great Award' sponsored by the Contest Team Of Northern Greece. You work a few SV calls plus a number of QSO's from countries where Alexander The Great conquered the hearts, minds, and armies of his neighbors. I consider that 'different'. There's also The Native American Counties Award, featuring Q's from places with names like Pottawatomie and Okfuskee. Heck, you could almost do that with your HT and a freshly charged battery. The point here is that chasing Awards needn't be a huge challenge to be fun. If you've envied the pictures of Ham Shacks where you can't tell what color the walls are painted, get one of your own. It could be the easiest, longest, most rewarding (or the most frustrating) thing you've ever done with your Ham License... But it could also be the most fun. Make it your next plateau. You can't enjoy the view until you get there!

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— 73 and Good DX!