

The Road to #1 (DXCC Honor Roll that is)

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DXCC Meeting

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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about my favorite activity!

In 54 years as a ham, I have

Contested

Chased zones, states, grids, counties

Been on more field days than I can remember

Handled traffic

Done public service and emergency communications

Dabbled with building equipment and antennas

But keep coming back to my first love of dxing

Every time I work a new one I get the same thrill as I did as a young teen sitting at the radio when I should have been sleeping or studying!

Here is the task

- 340 DXCC “entities” currently
- Must confirm 100 for Basic Award
- Must confirm 331 for Honor Roll
- Must confirm ALL for #1 Honor Roll
- Normally >200 active every week (per OPDX bulletin)
- It takes about 20-25 years for all to be active

Entities – not countries

Basically takes one sunspot cycle for honor roll
And two cycles to work them all

Topics

- Secrets to Success
- Operator
- Equipment
- General Hints and Tips

Going to give you the no-joke, super-skinny secrets to working DX!

The “Secrets” to Success

Bad News! There are no secrets!

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Longevity
- Luck!

Just like any other long term project, you have to stay with it and you have to have a little luck along the way.

Definitely more of a marathon than a sprint

My experience is probably typical. I really didn't start doing it seriously until I retired from the Navy in 1991. I had been active off and on during my military career but just hadn't gotten very far. I guess I was getting close to 200 by the time we move here in '91

By 2000 I had confirmed all but 3 – North Korea, Scarborough Reef, and Yemen

In **2000** for the geophysical year an expedition was allowed to **Yemen**. I worked them a couple times but afterwards the ARRL said they didn't get the proper authorization so it didn't count. Organizers said “don't worry – we'll fix it”. Time went on and nothing happened.

Then in **2002** a Russian was on some kind of mission to **N K** and got permission to operate. Not an expedition – only on from his hotel. I had heard him day before and just turned off rig – came back next day turned radio back on to see if he was back. He called CQ and I got him in about 2 calls. That one counted

In **2007** a big expedition went to **Scarborough Reef** – look at QSL. Barely got them.

Finally, in 2009, ARRL came out with email saying 70 had been approved.

Operator Tips

- Upgrade to Extra class
- Learn CW
- Get Organized
- Network
- Find a DX “Elmer”
- Try Contesting
- Take care of yourself – stay health!

Now don't panic on first 2 bullets

Don't need to upgrade or learn CW right away but you will want to

Many expeditions stay in extra part of band

CW – high percentage for expeditions. VK9MA – 45K Qs, 29K CW, 64%
3COL – 32K, 26K, 80%, S21- 22k, 17K, 77% (may try decoder-don't need
to copy 30wpm solid – just your callsign) CW also more **efficient**

Shack arrangement and layout – **ergonomic** is current word

Paperwork – QSLs sent, ones outstanding, etc. LOTW helps but still a
chore

ETDXA and SEDCO – meet others. At SEDCO you can meet folks on
expeditions. Kind of neat when they call you by name in pileup.

I still use my DX elmer

Contesting makes you better op, learn equipment, and organize shack
Also pick up countries in DX contests – most use LOTW

Can't operate if you don't feel good – contestors call it BIC time (butt in
chair) Back, hearing, head ache, etc.

Equipment Tips

- Physical and Fiscal constraints
- Antennas vs Rigs
- KNOW your rig (split, filters, etc.)
- Try to work all modes
- Try to work all bands
- New technology aids
 - Band scopes, sub rcvrs, skimmers, remotes

Everyone has to make compromises on their station
Won't get into what is best antenna or rig – a lot is personal choice
Any reasonable modern rig will work a lot of DX – main thing is to have two VFOs to work split.

Whatever your rig, PRACTICE with it. Nothing more embarrassing than transmitting on DX freq! Experiment with filters and RF gain in different conditions and bands. Not always “wide open”

Everyone has favorite mode and can get to honor roll that way but want to maximize your odds. I'm CW – 334 – but last two –P5 on RTTY and BS7 on phone.

Same for bands – sometimes it is easier if DX is close to work on high or low bands where EU can't copy

I'm old school but there are several recent equipment enhancements that can help. 599 skimmer

Misc. Tips - QSLs

- LOTW
- Clublog (OQRS)
- Use European style AirMailers (Bill Plum)
- Use \$2 bills
- Use labels (cards & envelopes)
- No calls on envelopes
- K3FN QSL Service
- Logging Software

Sometimes making QSO is easy part – getting QSL is tough part. Juan gave excellent run down on LOTW and OQRS so I'll just ditto about them.

Eventually going to have to send cards to 3rd world countries and places where Post Office employees aren't as good as ours.

Plum also has stamps

Save money on QSLs – one sided plain card that will accept label
DX stations and managers don't care – save pretty picture cards for friends, etc.

Don't make manager turn card over – have everything on one side

Calls on envelope are red flag – money inside!!

K3FN took over from Les Bannon, WF5E. No experience with him

Make sure logging program can help with printing and tracking

Misc. Tips – Intel

- Bulletins (ARRL, OPDX, 425)
- W3UR Daily DX Bulletin
- DX Cluster
- Websites (Clublog, DX-World, DX Univ.)

So how do you find out what is going to be on the air?

Free bulletins are weekly

W3UR daily – How's DX editor – about \$50/yr

Cluster is double edged sword – used to have to tune to find

Now it is instant pile up

Also verify calls – many wrong or get wrong station if several expeditions on at once.

Misc. Tips – Propagation

- SFI, A & K index
- Prediction programs (VOACAP, W6EL, DXLab)
- Greyline
- Longpath
- UTC
- ARRL web site has wealth of info

Don't need to be astrophysics major – just basics
Can tell a lot just from 3 numbers
Check out Tamitha Skov on YouTube

Magic happens on greyline
15 min before and after sunrise and sunset
Geochron maps

May hear slight echo – indicates longpath
If directional antenna, try flipping

Not directly propagation related but need to “Think” in UTC
Understand what international date line means

Go to “technology section” of their web site and there are
articles on all of these topics. Also bulletin from K7RA

Misc. Tips – General

- WFWL!
- Consider Donating (NCDXF, INDEXA, expedition)
- Above all –
RELAX, HAVE FUN, ENJOY THE CHASE –
IT'S A HOBBY!

Pirates, no qsls, busted calls, etc. -- work 'em and sort it out later!

Why donate? Good to do – expensive (most cover high percentage themselves).

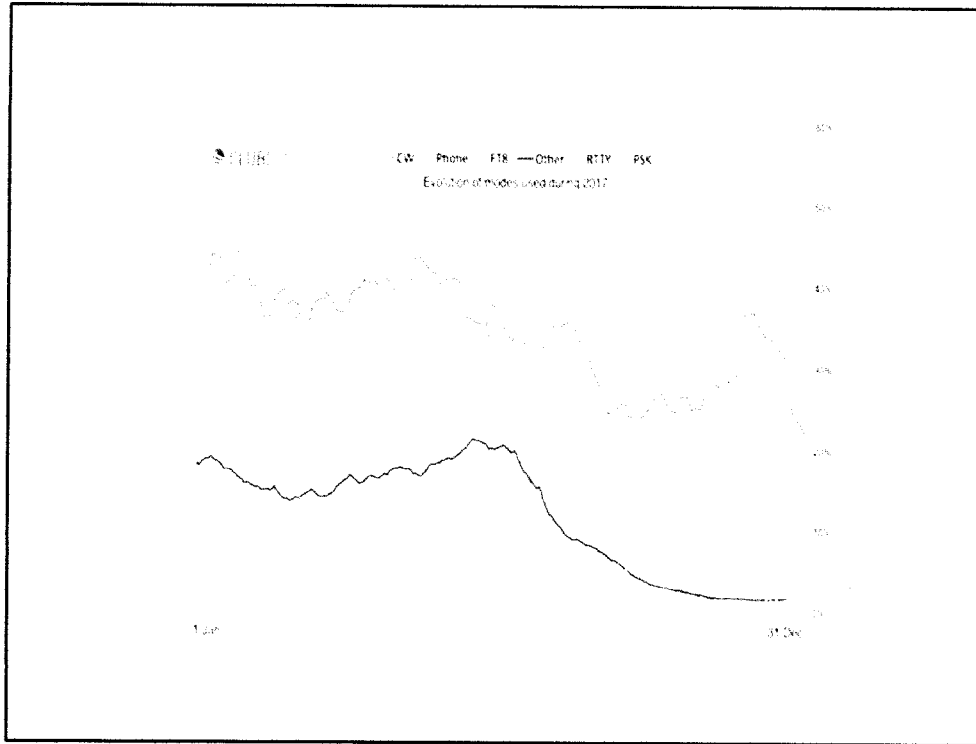
QSLs faster

May help get in log

What will work in the future?

Everything I have talked about is based on my experiences.

Things are changing rapidly so who knows what Dxing will be like a few years from now.



FT8 mode is certainly going to be a factor based on these numbers.

Hard to say if it is just “new car smell” right now or lasting trend.

Developers are finishing up a mode for FT8 that will allow expeditions to work up to 5 stations at a time which will put their QSO rates similar to CW. In a test last weekend they generated rates around 150/hour.

QUESTIONS?

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