

The content which follows is a transcript of the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast hosted by Jerry Taylor, KDOBİK. This monthly version of PARP is typically released the last week of each month.

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 51.

From the ham shack of KDOBİK, located in Colorful Colorado, this is the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast.

This is show number 51, volume number 5 with a release date of January 25, 2012.

Hello everyone. My name is Jerry Taylor; my amateur radio call sign is KDOBİK and welcome to the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast...Creating Elmers One Podcast at a time. Amateur radio or ham radio is what this podcast is all about. If you are currently studying for your exam or have been in ham radio for years....I'm hopeful this podcast will help you. If it has helped you, I hope you will continue to listen and I also hope you'll tell others. Also, in keeping with our Creating Elmers one podcast at a time philosophy, if you learn something from our podcasts....please share that knowledge with others.

Hello 2012. If you're like me, you might be wondering where 2011 went. 2011 passed by pretty quickly. It really just seems like a few days ago it was summer. I guess this is what happens as you get older and especially as you stay busy. This hobby can certainly keep you busy and I of course want to thank all of you for listening. This episode marks the start of my 5th season of podcasting about amateur radio. I truly look forward to many more years of helping to entertain, encourage, educate and inspire each of you in this wonderful hobby we share.

Those four words I just mentioned are going to become my focus as I navigate both this podcast, my blog and even my own personal involvement in the hobby through 2012 and beyond.

Now as I've done each January, I'm going to talk about New Years Resolutions. Specifically centered around amateur radio. Of course, you are more than welcome to add your own personal resolutions for things like stop smoking, lose weight etc. and I truly wish you luck with those endeavors.

I'm not sure our younger generation really understands the concept. I know when I was young I heard my parents talk about things they wanted to achieve in the new year. Sometimes these were successful and sometimes not. I myself have struggled to stick to goals set early in the year. A perfect example that relates to amateur radio was the goal I set to earn my extra class license.

As I've mentioned many times, I got my tech license in August of 2007 and upgraded to general in January of 2008. My goal of earning my extra class was in my plans for 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. As I've already shared with you. I did finally earn my extra class in August of last year. While general was a little harder than technician and extra is a little harder than general. All upgrade paths are doable if you set your mind to getting it done.

So if you are a tech or general, why not make the decision to upgrade to the next level in 2012? Get the books, read the books and just do it. YOU can do this.

Now regardless of what license class you currently hold. My second recommendation is to set a goal or New Years Resolution to get on the air more. When I cruise through my logbook and look at QSO's I

didn't make for weeks and embarrassingly a few months in a row, I see missed opportunities. Missed opportunities to share a QSO regardless of how short or how long.

If you feel somewhat burned out with the same old mode of operation, why not try something new? Have you tried JT-65? A JT65 QSO from start to finish takes just a few minutes. That's it. You don't have to worry about offending the other operator if you want or need to cut the QSO short as in other modes. If you need more information about JT65, please listen to episode 46 which I released in September.

Certainly one way to get on the air more is to do what Keith, G6NHU did and set a goal for a QSO a day. Keith created a blog site located at qso365.co.uk to document his progress. Of course there were many days where Keith made a lot more than one QSO a day. But the idea (and I've gotta say a rather good one) was to simply focus on making one QSO per day for an entire year. Check out <http://qso365.co.uk/>

Of course I realize most of the month of January is over, but it is never too late to say you'll make at least one QSO per day. One QSO a day....I'm sure that will help keep the Dr. away.

In keeping with the theme of getting on the air more. Have you tried contesting? What about chasing and operating special event stations? Regardless of what others may tell you or what you may read....You don't need to have a huge station to have fun contesting. You also don't have to contest every time a contest is on the air. Pick and choose is what I do. I enjoy working the Colorado and Texas QSO parties and a few of the other contests. Do it for fun or do it for competitive...but do try it.

Speaking of the state QSO parties. Have you earned any wall paper lately? Certificates I'm talking about. Where are you in your progress towards Worked All States, Worked All Continents? You don't know? Now if you say you don't care....well I can't really help you there other than to make an attempt at encouraging you. But if you haven't checked, and especially if you upload your logs to Logbook of the World or eQSL, it's easy to find out what you are missing.

For Worked all States, the state QSO parties are one of the best ways to pickup those missing states. You can earn a Worked All States award in multiple ways. You can earn the award by mixed modes and bands or you can do it all in one particular mode or one particular band. I think most will go after the mixed versions first. Then go back and fill in the blanks for either a mode or a band. If this is something you think might interest you. It'll certainly get you on the air more.

In previous years I know I've talked about joining a club and attending club meetings on a regular basis for a new years resolution. I still think this is important. But I won't dwell on it too much. I'll just say give a club a chance if it's been a while since you've been involved. I made a change a few months ago and must say that I'm so much happier than I was before. It's a small club, but the membership is made up of likeminded individuals who genuinely care about the hobby as much as I do.

I would be remiss if I also didn't just quickly mention the importance of the national organizations like the ARRL, RSGB etc. Please also give these national organizations another look if it's been a while.

OK....what else? Oh....when is the last time you shared information about the amateur radio hobby with someone not currently licensed? Well that's probably been too long ago. Here's the deal. Why not

make a new years resolution to share the hobby with at least one person who isn't already licensed. Of course, more is better. But let's start with one and go from there.

Perhaps share with them all the many different facets of the hobby and just as importantly, the service side as well. While Field Day is still many months away, invite them to stop by. I'll come back to Field Day in just a minute.

Similar to sharing the hobby and service with someone new. How many licensed hams do you know who aren't active? Or who only spend time on the local repeaters etc? Could it be they only operate on the local repeaters because they don't know what all else is out there? I know....it does sound hard to believe that these guys don't know about the digi modes or just how hot the bands have been lately. But make it a new years resolution to reach out to them. Start off by saying hello and then take it from there. Who knows...they might see how much you enjoy working PSK31 or JT65 and try it themselves. This could be the turning point of taking a non-active ham and turning them into radioactive.

Field Day. Now be honest. How long has it been since you participated in Field Day? If you say just last year....great. But if you didn't make it in 2011 or 2010 or beyond....why not make it a plan to make field day 2012. Don't have a lot of time on the weekends? Just go for an hour or two. Get on the air and have fun. If you are a young person or new ham, do try to spend some time at your local field day site. As I've said in past episodes. What you'll learn from hanging around some of the old timers at a field day site is priceless. You'll learn more in just a few hours than you'll get from any book or magazine.

For all these contacts you are sure to make by getting on the air more in 2012, how many of these do you send QSL cards to? While eQSL and the ARRL Logbook of the World are both excellent methods of confirming contacts, these don't have the same feeling as walking to the mailbox to find an envelope containing a QSL card from a fellow ham. Regardless if the contact was just a few counties or states away or half way around the world. The paper QSL card process is in my opinion a fun and enjoyable aspect of my participation in the hobby.

Now I've given you several areas to think about. These may be of interest to some of you....perhaps even all of you. How much focus you give to any resolution is of course a mixture of how interested you are and of course how much time you have to devote.

Just before I conclude with the final new years resolution idea, I wanted to share a few submitted by listeners of the podcast.

Doug Thompson - N6LTU

My New Years Resolution will be to build a portable emergency communication set up for HF. Also to be used when camping.

Anthony Brooks - KU4RG

My resolution is to get active again. I haven't been on the air as much, if at all in the last 3 years. It's time to reconnect to what brings me joy, outside of the family.

Phil Hayden - KD0OYR

My amateur radio resolution will be to get the local Scouts together for JOTA 2012

Justin Martin - VE3XTI

Improve his CW skills enough to man the CW station during field day.

Martin Kirby - W3MLK

His New Year's Resolution is to upgrade to Extra.

I would like to wish each of these gentlemen the very best of luck with your plans for 2012.

There is one final new years resolution which I hope each and every one of you will take serious. Unless you've been hiding under a rock the past few years, you have probably heard about what some believe will happen in late December of this year. Yes I'm talking about the 2012 end of days prophecy. Movies have been made, books have been written and just about every person on the planet has an opinion on what will happen.

Now before I proceed, I just want to say for the record that I believe December 21, 2012 will be just another day....a Friday to be precise and Saturday the 22nd, followed by Sunday the 23rd and of course Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will follow. I plan to talk about new years resolutions in the January 2013 episode just as I've done for the past several years.

Now while I don't buy in to the end of days prophecies as described by those who believe the world will end in December. For the record, I follow the guidance of Matthew. But I do think about contingency and disaster planning and of course recovery (this by the way is part of my job where I work) but I also think about what I need to do to take care of my family in a crisis type situation. This of course is my most important job for my family.

Our world...at least as we know it, IS changing. This is regardless of whether you have a giant target circled on the calendar for December 21st or not. While I don't want to cause anyone to panic. Just reflect back on the past decade. Terrorists attacks, natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, floods and also civil unrest....these have all been topics making headline news over the years.

The point I'm trying to make here is we all need to be prepared. I believe amateur radio operators for the most part, do actually get the whole "being prepared" philosophy. If you're like me, you have made provisions to be able to operate your shack "off the grid" for a temporary period of time. If you haven't done so and you rely fully on what the public service utilities provide you....then you might want to look into alternative forms of power.

Alternative forms of power might be a few 12v batteries or even a gasoline powered generator. I have discussed before how I've setup an emergency power connection inside my basement. This really is just an electrical line running from the outside where my small gas generator would connect in. Then in the basement I would have power to run the radios, recharge batteries, operate a small microwave oven and even a small electric space heater.

I chose to setup this space in the basement for a couple of reasons. One, this is where my ham shack is located. Two, the basement will be the easiest area to keep warm in the winter and will also be naturally cooler in the summer.

But being prepared to keep our shacks running is only part of what our overall preparedness truly needs to be. I have also spoke about home preparedness kits and what I have in mine. To be honest with exception to some of the freeze dried (just add hot water) meals I have, my wife and I have almost depleted our on-hand storage of backup food and water.

We just recently starting buying more items to restock our basement emergency pantry. Items like bottled water and juices, canned soups, canned vegetables and even canned tuna and chicken will store for several months and if you rotate through them as you should...you can be certain to keep enough on hand to get you through whatever amount of time you plan for.

Also, don't forget to keep prescription medications and such on hand as well. It will be important to rotate these items so they remain fresh. Finally, please don't forget your pets. If you are like me, our pets are part of our family. I will protect them just as I would protect my wife and myself. Keeping extra food and water on hand for them is extremely important. Just rotate everything as you do your own supplies.

Again, it's not my intention to scare you. But as you begin thinking about items you want to add to your list of resolutions.....think about your own preparedness. Are you Ready????

Featured Website Segment

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None

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Featured Gadget Segment

Amateur Radio is all about gadgets. Some gadgets may directly relate to amateur radio and some may not. However, in most cases the featured gadget will at the very least be something that may help you in some capacity around the shack.

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None

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Ham Adventures Segment

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Before I get into all amateur radio activities I've personally done since the last podcast, I wanted to touch on one very small non-amateur radio subject and offer an explanation. Last month in episode 50 I announced I was going to start a media project titled OurTechLife. I asked you to check out the website I had created as well as the Youtube site.

I had every intention on kicking things off on the first of January. Just after releasing episode 50 and I mean within hours....I started feeling sick with cold/flu like symptoms. My wife had been battling the same thing for a few days and I suppose it was inevitable I would eventually catch it. My wife and I spent most of Christmas Eve and some of Christmas Day in bed. I actually lost my voice for a few days...it was nasty.

In the final days of 2011 while I was out of commission, I had some time to think about my life's priorities. My involvement in amateur radio, this podcast, my blogging and writing that I do is all part of the hobby. However, I earn my living in the world of Information Technology. So when I was feeling at my very worst and trying to think about the new media project....that project and my full-time job began to have no separation. In other words, I began to have trouble seeing where one left off and the other started.

So for that reason, I decided to place the project on the very back burner for now. I try very hard to never say never. But I don't plan to do anything with OurTechLife in the near future. So with that, I wanted to thank everyone who went out and followed the OurTechLife twitter account and also those who have emailed asking where to find the content. I hope you understand....

As I mentioned, I really felt rough the last week of 2011. But I did manage to accomplish something I had been working on for some time and that was my Worked All States award in the mixed mode category. I had made this a 2011 New Years Resolution and was starting to wonder if it would happen. I was having a difficult time working South Dakota. Thankfully for the digital modes and JT65, I arranged for a scheduled QSO with a fellow ham and was successful at earning WAS in both eQSL and Logbook of the World. Once all was confirmed in logbook of the world I applied for my certificate and it is now proudly hanging on my shack wall. Now I'm working on other elements of WAS such as all digital, PSK, RTTY etc. 20m, 40m etc. etc.

With regards to Summits on the Air, as also mentioned in episode 50 I had planned to do an activation the week between Christmas and New Years. However, as you can imagine this just wasn't going to be possible...especially if I didn't want to end up in hospital with pneumonia. The weather was awesome...but considering I wouldn't walk more than 5 steps without coughing....the risks outweighed the desire.

Fingers crossed I am going to plan one very, very soon. I'm finding successful SOTA activation planning is more than just available time and good weather. With all the recent solar activity, a SOTA activation can easily be a bust versus a boom.

Now before I venture too far away from the subject of SOTA activity. I also wanted to say I'm honored to work closely with Steve, wGOAT who is the Whiskey Zero Association Manager. Steve has asked me to assist him as the regional manager over the central portion of Colorado. Steve and I both belong to the same amateur radio club and the amount of work required for this position is relatively minor. Well that is after we get the website built to showcase the Whiskey Zero Association.

So if you are wanting to come out to Colorado for the purpose of Summits On The Air and plan to activate peaks within the central portion of the state, please drop me an email. I'd be happy to help answer any questions and who knows....if time permits I might even tag along.

In addition, I've really enjoyed writing and blogging the past few months. I have two amateur radio blog sites. One is my old blog which can be viewed by visiting www.kd0bik.com/blog This blog site is where I share some of my own activities in amateur radio and also blog about various topics in an educational manner. Think of the audio podcast as my audio Elmer program and the blog site as the text Elmer program.

The other blog site is all about SOTA. This site can be viewed by visiting www.kd0bik.com/sota On the

SOTA blog site I'm going to announce upcoming SOTA expeditions and also Elmer on the topic of SOTA. I've already released a couple blog articles in the category of "How To". I have many others already written and in the pipeline to be released on close to a weekly basis. Also, please note the SOTA blog is not just about activation. It will equally showcase all elements of SOTA from Chasing to Activating with helpful tips and topics to either help you get started or round out your experiences.

Again, my blog sites are www.kd0bik.com/blog and www.kd0bik.com/sota

Finally, I must share this story with you. Just as the clock struck midnight to say goodbye to 2011 and hello to 2012 here in Colorado. I gave my darling wife a hug and a kiss. She said to me, don't you want to go down and make a ham radio contact to mark the new year? Of course without any hesitation I said Yes.

I made it down the basement steps and turned on the 897 and tuned over to 80 meters and started up the JT65 software. I heard activity and began calling CQ. On my first CQ I had a station come back to me and within another few minutes the very first QSO of 2012 was in the log.

I decided I would try for a QSO a Day in 2012. However, unlike the QSO365 which Keith in the UK successfully completed with a blog site etc. I'm going to go a little lower tech in my attempts. It's not because I feel a QSO a day isn't worthy of blogging about, but mainly because I already have so many irons in the fire with the podcast and my blog sites.

Anyway....I'm happy to report that as of the 24 of January, I've successfully made at least one QSO per day. Yes.....I know I have a long way to go. Due to 2012 being a leap year, there are 366 days on the calendar and with only 24 in the books I've barely scratched the surface. As a matter of fact, I'm not even sure I can see the surface yet. So...wish me luck. I'll admit that most of my QSO's made during Monday through Thursday will mainly be JT65. But I want to keep it mixed up and making QSO's on other digital modes like PSK31 and RTTY. Of course, SSB phone contacts are also important to me and will be making my share as the year progresses.

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Mailbag

Mail goes here

Well this wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. We will return again with episode 52 sometime in February.

Until next time, 73 to all from KDOBIK.

This has been The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast is written and produced by Jerry Taylor. You may contact Jerry by email at kd0bik@arrl.net or by visiting his website at www.myamateurradio.com. The practical amateur radio podcast and myamateurradio.com are protected under the Creative Commons license. Please see myamateurradio.com for details.