

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

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 52.

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

This is show number 52, volume number 5 with a release date of February 22 , 2012.

Hello everyone. My name is Jerry Taylor; my amateur radio call sign is KDOBIK 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.

Before we get into the entertainment, the encouragement, the education and the inspiration that is the practical amateur radio podcast. I want to briefly (or try to keep it brief) update you on the website changes taking place on MyAmateurRadio.com. As you know, the website MyAmateurRadio.com is the home on the internet for the practical amateur radio podcast.

Sometime back the 2009 timeframe I updated the old website I originally created in 2008 when the podcast debuted to a new site built around the Joomla Content Management System. At that time I had briefly looked at WordPress but decided on Joomla. For the most part, the Joomla site worked fantastic and served as the web structure for about 3 years.

However, in recent months I started noticing some issues. These issues I believe were introduced by perhaps the installation of a Joomla Component which some how allowed some bad people to make edits to certain files. Some of you may remember issues with the RSS feed and this was just one of the issues I encountered.

Sometime after launching the Joomla site in 2009, I also became familiar with WordPress. I currently maintain about a half dozen WordPress sites. Some are my own and some belong to other members of my family. In any event, I found the WordPress system to be easier to work with and I believe a little more secure. It is certainly easier to update.

So to wrap this up, I couldn't delay doing something to fully resolve these attempts to gain control of myamateurradio.com and just this past Saturday, 18 February I shut the old Joomla site down for about 2 hours while I started the work on bringing WordPress up in its place.

That really is the only change really. Everything else still works. The RSS feed for the podcast episodes is the same and of course the URL to access it all is still myamateurradio.com. Also, I'm still with Media Temple for hosting. They do a fantastic job for me and I'm proud to say that I've been a customer for almost 3 years.

So if I could ask a favor. When you have a moment, please visit myamateurradio.com and have a look around. I've tested the site on Windows XP and Windows 7 running Internet Explorer versions 7 and 8

and Firefox versions 4.5 and 8. I've also tested on iPad. Of course, the audio players which I have embedded into each article will not work on iOS devices. But you can just click the Mobile tab and from there you can stream each episode on any mobile device. By the way, the mobile streaming is made available to you by our good friend Graham McIntire, W5ISP. I had briefly mentioned one day to Graham how I would love to have a way for any mobile device to stream episode content without having to download the episode. Within a few hours he had whipped together this page.

Anyway, please visit the site and if you have Mac OS and other browsers I didn't mention, please test if you have some time and report back to me via email. My email address is kd0bik@arrl.net any issues or opportunities you might discover.

The new site is almost done. I guess one can say a website is never 100% complete as tweaks are made here and there. But for the most part all the content has been moved over. This includes both the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast audio and the few video episodes I've created as well as the Become A Ham US Technician Audio program. I promise that one day I will get the general material all complete and uploaded.

Now let's get started with today's full featured episode and our educational topic.

Our topic of conversation today is going to be about QSL cards. Now if you're asking yourself...but wait, didn't Jerry already cover QSL cards? Why is he repeating himself. Ha... This is a good point and thank you for paying attention. Yes, I actually did cover the art of QSL'ing way back in episode 13. You can find episode 13 by clicking on Podcast and Show Notes, 2008 Episodes - Volume 1. I'll also throw the link into the show notes for this episode, episode 52.

[http://myamateurradio.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=66:episode-13&catid=37:2008&Itemid=12](http://myamateurradio.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66:episode-13&catid=37:2008&Itemid=12)

Again, I've not run out of content and having to repeat old episodes. Actually, allow me to explain something first.

While I'm an extra class amateur and been licensed approx. 4 1/2 years and have created over 50 instructional podcast episodes (this is #52 by the way) and about a dozen video episodes and have written over 100 how-to type blog articles....I don't know everything there is to know about amateur radio. Let me repeat that. I do not know everything there is to know about our hobby of amateur radio.

The other important take away is this. I've never professed to know everything. The day I act like some self-centered, egotistical, know it all...please come and take away my podcast studio microphone and get me some help.

Much of what I use as content for podcast episodes are topics I've learned from others. Meaning, I fully subscribe to my own philosophy (and what I constantly say to each of you in these episodes) and that is...if you learn something, share that knowledge with others.

By the way, this is one of the biggest reasons why I took such a long break from podcasting back in 2010 and early 2011. As I've discussed, life became really hectic for me during that time and I was too focused on podcasting and didn't have time to get on the air. I also stopped attending my local club

meetings and I stopped learning. I realized the hard way, Jerry without his time to play ham radio and attend club meetings and interact with fellow hams could not, and should not attempt to podcast.

Now that I've re-prioritized things...I have plenty of time to participate in the hobby of amateur radio. I joined a new club a few months ago and not only am I learning via the club...I'm also actively participating to help share knowledge and develop new hams. Bottom line is I'm having so much fun with amateur radio....and I think it shows through this podcast and my blog articles.

Anyway....thanks to my involvement with my new amateur radio club, I've learned something new which I want to share with all of you.

As you all know, I've been licensed since the late summer of 2007. I'm approaching my 5th year. When I got my ticket I really didn't know about the electronic QSL processes like eQSL and the ARRL Logbook of the World. While I quickly learned and began using both within days of getting on the air. It was my childhood memories of thumbing through my uncles stacks of QSL cards which I remembered and what I also wanted to collect.

I read about the QSL etiquette of sending self-addressed stamped envelopes or SASE for short. I learned about what a greenstamp and IRC was. But there was one area of QSL'ing which I must admit was greek to me. I'm not sure why....after all I figured out the convoluted logbook of the world process....but the QSL Bureau just scared me.

To date, I have about 20 or so QSL cards from stations I've worked outside of the US as compared to over a hundred QSL cards from US and Canadian stations. While I have many more logged QSO's for DX stations, I've typically only sent QSL cards to honor my first contact. When you consider most DX stations request up to 2 Greenstamps (a greenstamp is a US one dollar bill) and prior to the postage increase in January it cost .98 cents to mail the envelope, each of my DX QSL cards represent an investment on my part of approx. \$3.

I wanted the ability to send more QSL cards to those DX stations I work without the need of getting a second mortgage on the house. Thankfully, the January club presentation given by Bob Witte, KONR included a discussion on using the bureau for QSL card exchange with DX stations.

Now because I know the practical amateur radio podcast has listeners outside of the US, the process I'm going to discuss is specific to the US. How your QSL bureau functions may be different.

Let's first break things down in a practical manner. For US amateurs, there is an incoming QSL service and an outgoing QSL service. The Incoming QSL service routes the QSL cards from the ARRL to you the radio amateur. The outgoing QSL service is what you will use to get your card into the ARRL DX Bureau system and eventually into the hands of the DX radio amateur.

The two services work together, but are also very different in how we as radio amateurs access them and benefit from them. One of the major differences is you do not need to be a member of the ARRL to use the Incoming QSL service. However, in order to take advantage of the outgoing QSL service....you must be an ARRL member.

Now think of both services (incoming and outgoing) as essentially manual sorting processes. Cards come into the system and are sorted and when enough are received, they are forwarded on along through the system. As you might can imagine, the process is not a fast one.

First let's start with the incoming QSL service. Remember, Incoming QSL service is how you receive QSL cards from the bureau. I'm starting with the incoming service for a reason. Why? Because there is a good chance, especially if you've worked some DX that you may have cards waiting for you. Now unfortunately, these cards (if in fact you have some waiting) will not just automatically arrive in your mailbox.

When a DX station sends his or her card into their QSL bureau, their QSL bureau will sort the cards and when enough have arrived they will forward that stack of cards to the ARRL. The ARRL serves as the central post office if you will.

The ARRL sorts these cards by call area and once again the cards are packaged and sent out again along their journey to you. However, before arriving in your mailbox...these cards will make one more stop.

Within the United States, the Incoming QSL service is broken down into 15 different Incoming QSL Call Areas. These include zero through 9 land, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands and Guam. By the way, this is an all volunteer group comprised of your fellow amateurs. Another important item to understand is, your incoming QSL service area is based on your call sign and not where you live. For example, if you live in Colorado (zero land) but kept your call sign from California (6 land), you will need to register yourself with the Sixth Call Service area.

You can find more details on these 15 different incoming QSL call areas on the ARRL website. I'll post a link in the show notes for this episode, episode 52.

<http://www.arrl.org/incoming-qsl-service>

While I didn't read the details for each of the 15 different QSL call areas, I'll explain how zero land works. But of course, please do your own research based on your call area.

In zero land, my incoming QSL service is handled out of Missouri. All it took to get setup with zero bureau was to print a form from their website and return that form along with return address labels and a check. I found everything to be well documented and explained on their website.

Since I'm more of the casual DX'er at this time, I signed up for their option #1 which cost me \$5.00. What I get with that \$5.00 is 5 envelopes (each with a forever stamp) and 8 extra .20 cent stamps. Again this was the suggestion for the casual DX'er who anticipates 0 - 10 cards per quarter. So this means I have paid for five envelopes and postage to cover receiving around 50 or so QSL cards.

There are also options for the serious DX'er. Thanks to the United States Postal Service, "If it fits, it ship" flat rate priority mail boxes. In zero land, the serious DX'er who might expect to receive over 150 cards a quarter, can spend \$6.00 and have anywhere from 250-300 cards sent in the USPS Priority Mail envelope.

Ok...now let's talk about the Outgoing QSL service. Again, this is how you get your QSL into the Bureau system. As previously mentioned, in order to take advantage of this service, you must be an ARRL

member. I will post another link to information on the ARRL website specifically for the Outgoing QSL service.

<http://www.arrl.org/outgoing-qsl-service>

While I stated earlier that the incoming and outgoing services work together. Your outgoing cards will be sent directly to the ARRL Headquarters. Cards should be pre-sorted alphabetically by parent call sign prefix. The use of paperclips, rubber bands etc. to separate the groups are not required and should not be used.

Once you have your stack of cards ready, you'll need to calculate the fee. I recently sent in about 20 cards in one envelope and included \$3. There is a price calculation table on the ARRL website that will break down the fees. A serious DX'er who might need to send in around 450 cards (about 3 pounds in weight) will expect to pay a fee of \$36.00

Again, you need to do your research. In order for the ARRL to forward your QSL card to the DX station, that DX station must have a counterpart bureau service in their country. Many do not. There's approx. 75 or so countries which the ARRL can't send cards to for this reason.

In addition, there's a list of about 14 countries who will only deliver QSL cards to members of their national radio society.

As with sending direct QSL cards, it is probably in your best interest to check the DX stations QRZ bio to see if they indicate they accept cards via the bureau.

Now to wrap all this up. If you need a QSL to confirm a new DX entity and you need it fast, then the QSL Bureau is not designed for that purpose. It is probably best to send the QSL direct, include the green stamps if required and hopefully within a few weeks you'll have the card. But for repeat QSL'ing to an already confirmed DX entity...I really believe this is the way to go. Just be prepared for it to take a while.

How long is a while in QSL Bureau terms? Well...I've heard stories of other hams getting in a batch of cards through the bureau service for contacts taking place a year or two ago.

Now what I'm going to say next is 100% an assumption on my part since I myself am just starting out using the bureau. But I would think cards sent via the bureau to hams in Japan (with over 1.3 million hams) will probably move through the system much faster than say with hams in Uganda where there's only 20 hams. But as I said...this is merely an assumption.

I'm going to still attempt to QSL direct on new DXCC entities worked. Then QSL through the bureau on others.

The QSL card process is still one part of the hobby that truly delights me each and every time I visit the mailbox and see a small envelope. Another way of saying this is I truly love receiving QSL cards. Many of the cards in my collection are from some of you, my loyal listeners of the podcast who we've managed to schedule contacts or just found each other on the bands. I'd love to work many more of you and of course add your QSL card to my growing collection.

## **Featured Website Segment**

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The featured website segment is one that I've mentioned before, but want to get the word out again. How many of you have heard about the Ham Nation podcast or netcast over on the TWiT network? How many of you watch or listen? Do you watch live or do you catch the recorded version once it is available for download or stream?

Ham Nation is hosted by Bob Heil, K9EID - Gordon West, WB6NOA and George Thomas W5JDX. Occasionally Leo Laporte, W6TWT will stop by. He's featured in more of the earlier episodes. A few months ago Ham Nation introduced the Ham Radio Newslines segment and features Robert Sudok, WB6FDF reading the amateur radio news of the week.

Anyway, Ham Nation is up to episode 36 or 37. It's produced on an almost weekly basis and while I've never watched the live stream with interactive chat room, many do catch it that way. I usually catch the recorded version once it is made available.

Regardless how you watch it...I do recommend the show. George's "Smoke and Solder" segment is usually my favorite. However, Bob and Gordo usually also share some important words of wisdom which I've also found extremely useful. I've also enjoyed the various segments where they've introduced other of our fellow amateurs either during kids month, couples month etc.

Finally, before I venture away from the featured website segment. Have you watched the new ABC sitcom on Tuesday nights called Last Man Standing? Last Man Standing stars Tim Allen of Home Improvement, Toy Story and The Santa Clause series. Tim plays the character Mike Baxter. The show is depicted to take place right here in the Mile High City of Denver, Colorado. Mike is the director of marketing for a large outdoor sporting store. While all that is interesting enough....Mike Baxter is also a ham.

Mike's call sign is KA0XTT. If you will watch Ham Nation episode 34 which was recorded and released in early Feb. it features an interview with the producer of Last Man Standing, John Amodeo who is NN6JA. John describes how they went about getting Mike's call sign setup and more specifics about the show itself.

Now if you are so inclined, you may send one of your QSL cards into the studio and receive in return Mike's KA0XTT QSL card. It's even autographed by Tim Allen himself. Just search for KA0XTT on QRZ just like you would any other ham and send your card into that address. Perhaps you might also be so kind as to say you heard about this from the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. After all, I'm sure Mike Baxter KA0XTT listens to PARP.

## **Featured Gadget Segment**

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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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Our featured gadget for this episode proves that not all gadgets have to be filled with technology and powered by a battery of some kind. Our gadget is also extremely fitting with our topic of QSL cards.

A few months ago I received a QSL card from a contact I had made and it had a little red stamp on both the card and the envelope which read QSO Verified by and listed the call sign of the station. I thought this was a novel little idea and began looking into these little stamps.

I found W9XR's Xstamper website which is located at [www.qth.com/stamper](http://www.qth.com/stamper). Don't worry I'll put the link in the show notes for this episode, episode 52 located at myamateurradio.com.

Anyway, I ordered my little stamp which reads QSO verified by KD0BIK and try to remember to stamp my outgoing QSL cards and envelopes.

You'll find all sorts of other amateur radio related stampers on his website. By the way, these stampers are the self inking kind. No need to have the little pad of ink which is messy and requires a two step process for stamping. These also are made by Xstamper and are very well built.

<http://www.qth.com/stamper/>

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If you are in need of a QSO verified stamper or perhaps any other self-inking stamp related to the hobby, please take a look at W9XR's website. Again the URL is [www.qth.com/stamper](http://www.qth.com/stamper)

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### **Ham Adventures Segment**

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And now for the ham adventures segment. In two days the sheetrock for my basement ham shack, podcast studio, home office and just general man cave will arrive. The truck from the big box store will arrive and hopefully the driver will place the rock in my garage. It will then be the arduous task for my wife and I to move the sheets (hopefully two at a time as they come bundled that way) into the house, down the hall and then down into the basement and stacked in the unfinished area. This may be all that I accomplish this next weekend, but hopefully the next weekend I'll start the hanging process. I'll keep you updated and would love to be able to report in episode 53 (the next episode released sometime in mid to late March that the sheetrock is done. We'll see.

I'm also hoping to be able to mutter a few other words in the March episode about having in my hands a new Elecraft KX3. Yes, I ordered this new QRP rig from Elecraft the day the pre-order process was made available. The reviews for this rig are so exciting for QRP and especially QRP SOTA or Summits On The Air operation that I couldn't pass it up. For now, I'll still hang onto my FT-817 which has served me well for several years. But I can't wait to get the KX3 in my hands and start learning all about it and how it can help me on a future SOTA activation.

Speaking of SOTA activations. Well....sadly I have to report that there hasn't been any for now two months in a row. The weekends where we've had nice weather, I've either had to work or had other things going on. Plus I'm really wanting to get the new ham shack ready. The mountains are not going anywhere and I'd love to get most of the work done on the new ham shack before summer gets here. While the Colorado QSO party is still several months away (6-7) I have plans of operating the Colorado QSO party in early September from the new shack. It should be doable with time to spare if I keep up the pace.

While I mentioned the work I completed on MyAmateurRadio.com. I also a few weeks ago moved my kd0bik.com website over to WordPress. Check it out if you have time. You'll find links of course to all my websites along with a tab displaying my online logbook, data from my QTH weather station, a Find Me tab where you can see my APRS position when I'm out and about and a shack cam tab. Also, the very last tab is labeled at 2012 Challenge.

My 2012 challenge is well under way and as I record this episode, I've made at least one QSO per day since Jan. 1st. Most of my QSO's Monday - Friday are made via JT65 as it is a quick and easy mode to almost be guaranteed a QSO. But I've been making SSB and even PSK31 and RTTY Q's on the weekends and really enjoying the time in my shack. Of course the new ham shack is going to be awesome. By the way, I know many have been asking for pictures and I'll try to get something on my blog site soon.

Speaking of blog sites. Please visit and bookmark all my websites. The podcast website is myamateurradio.com, my main amateur radio website is kd0bik.com. My main amateur radio blog site where I try to blog about something weekly is kd0bik.com/blog and finally, my blog devoted to my activities in Summits On The Air is kd0bik.com/sota. Confusing? I'll add these URLs in the show notes.

Again, my blog sites are [www.kd0bik.com](http://www.kd0bik.com) [www.kd0bik.com/blog](http://www.kd0bik.com/blog) and [www.kd0bik.com/sota](http://www.kd0bik.com/sota)

Finally, I've started getting serious about learning Morse code or CW. I'm going to refer you to my kd0bik.com/blog website to read the blog posting titled My Morse Journey and soon there will be an update to that posting. I'm sure I'll provide updates on my success and perhaps some of my headaches as I get further and further into learning and hopefully mastering this new language.

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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 53 sometime in February.

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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](mailto:kd0bik@arrl.net) or by visiting his website at [www.myamateurradio.com](http://www.myamateurradio.com). The practical amateur radio podcast and myamateurradio.com are protected under the Creative Commons license. Please see myamateurradio.com for details.

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