

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 62.

Play theme music.

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

This is show number 62, volume number 6 with a release date of August , 2013.

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.

Thank you all once again for listening to PARP and thank you for your understanding during my long 6-7 month break. Did you know PARP recently turned 5 years old. Yes I know if I hadn't been on hiatus I could have told you back in May. But yes, PARP is old enough to start kindergarten this fall and I'm very pleased and humbled that so many enjoy listening.

The hobby of amateur radio is extremely special to me and of course, so is this podcast. But this podcast has never just been about me sitting in front of a microphone talking just for the sake of talking. It's always been important to me for PARP to help others and of course, help encourage others to share knowledge.

Besides the magic of radio, the one element of this hobby which fascinates me is the spirit of sharing our most valuable asset and that is knowledge. I think this is evident when you look at the number of professionals we have in our hobby. I'm not just talking about broadcast type individuals. The number of highly educated individuals who are also hams and most importantly use the skills and their vast knowledge to help further the hobby and service of amateur radio. Of course, like so many...these individuals owe much of their professional careers to amateur radio.

I really do not know of another hobby where the professional side so openly and willingly shares knowledge, wisdom and just overall help and support. From my experience, this doesn't really happen with photography as an example. Sure, you can find forums and other online resources where professional photographers share tips and tricks of the trade to amateur and would-be professional photographers. But in so many times, this knowledge shared is not their entire playbook. Generally to get all their secrets, one must pay to attend a seminar or lecture.

Now I'm sure you must be saying there are fundamental differences between professional photographers and professionals in broadcasting, engineering etc. I do understand what you mean...but

in some aspects there are no differences. It all boils down to openly sharing knowledge and wisdom with those who are just learning and doing so without hesitation.

Yes...there is that bit of financial gain the amateur photographer might receive from the extraordinary tip received from the professional photographer. And of course, in amateur radio we can't monetize what we do. But where I'm going with my discussion isn't necessarily how the new ham uses the knowledge shared from the professional in the hobby of amateur radio.....I'm talking about how that bit of knowledge develops into a seed which that new ham uses to shape and form his or her career for the rest of their life.

In this hobby, you'll find example after example after example of how amateur radio helped influence and shape an individual's career. Of course, in many cases the individual was a teenager when they first became interested in radio. As in the example of my uncle.

When his father, my grandfather returned from the second world war he went to college and studied television and radio repair and owned a small repair shop. My grandfather built my uncle a basic shortwave receiver and introduced him to the magic of radio. A few years later (still as a young teen) my uncle along with some of his childhood friends all received their novice amateur radio license. Just a few years ago my Uncle retired after a long career working in various aspects of the broadcast industry. Many elements of my uncles long career in broadcast engineering can be tied back to that shortwave receiver AND his amateur radio hobby.

I certainly know things are different in this day and age. We often discuss the challenges faced in attracting youth to the hobby of amateur radio in today's "always connected" society. But is it really that different?

I realize my situation is unique. I grew up knowing about amateur radio before the days of 100+ television channels, cellular phones and our "always connected" society. Through my uncle, through a neighbor and my high school band director (all hams by the way), I experienced ham radio before the golden age of the internet and all the goodness it brings to us today. My point in all this....(and by the way, I had one of the original Pong video games) , but my point is this. What I saw as magic back in the 70's and early 80's from spending time with my uncle and watching him work the world on amateur radio....is still magical to me today.

When I am in my ham shack, or driving down the road or sitting high on a mountain top....the experience of a QSO with a distant (or even not so distant) station is magical. It's an experience....my own experience which brings me back to the days of my childhood and watching my uncle and his friends work field day or the times when on vacation my uncle would throw a wire into a tree and work the world from the Grand Canyon. Or he and I would be driving along in his red 1970 something honda civic across scorching west Texas (somewhere between Eldorado and Irran) and he would have a CW key strapped to his leg checking into a net. It was magical then....and it still is today.

Again, I fully understand my situation is both unique and also fortunate. However, I believe the magic of radio and the magic of our hobby can still become a powerful experience to our youth of today as well as the older generation. Of course, I also believe it depends on how we present the information.

First, a good example....

Up the road from me in Boulder, Colorado a lady by the name of Ellie, N0QCX has helped introduce the hobby and service of amateur radio to over 200 of her students in the Boulder Amateur Radio club Jr's or Barc Jr's club. Those who frequently attend the Dayton Hamvention may note that many of the BARC Jrs members appear annually at the youth forum.

When you have a minute, I'd like to direct your attention to a Youtube video which I'll place a link to in the show notes. This short video was made by our friends over at HamRadioSchool.com. Stu, W0STU had an opportunity to visit with Ellie and the BARC Jr's up in Boulder and he recorded a short video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcJeLKb4BZc>

Now for a bad example....

Sorry...no Youtube video evidence. But.....I believe the attitude we as fellow hams show towards both young and older new hams or those interested in becoming hams, actually hurts our hobby more than any video game system, smart phone technology or social media platform ever will.

Said in another way, a bad attitude towards the no code requirement or the licensing process or the nature of appliance operating does more to send prospective new hams running than any whiz-bang electronic device will.

I know I've highlighted this fact before on previous episodes. But the code requirement elimination, the licensing process and the way some modern transceivers are operated is just simply the way things are today.

Each one of us should assume the role of Hiram Percy Maxim and serve as ambassadors and perhaps even protectors of our hobby. The no-code, the licensing process are simply the way things are today. Regardless if we like it or not....our world is changing. How each individual adapts to change is of course different. But creating YouTube videos, blog postings or other new media forms of communication and bashing the changes to our hobby is not helping. Likewise, running an amateur radio club with much the same attitude is also not helping.

Think of it this way. The next big medical breakthrough or perhaps the information needed to better predict a tornado or perhaps better battery life and performance might just come from someone you helped introduce to the hobby and service of amateur radio.

In closing, I'm absolutely for the historical preservation of our hobby. While we embrace all the new modes and new equipment and new whatever, we also should continue to teach those who are just starting out the ways of those who pioneered before us. As an example, I believe sharing knowledge about CW or Morse Code to those who do not know CW, is a far better approach to gaining interest in the mode than sitting around complaining about no-code hams. Think of it as reverse psychology.

We should all assume the role of ambassador of the hobby. We all have something to share...to teach others. I'm not saying you must start a podcast, start a YouTube channel or start a blog. These are all fine platforms to help share....but not necessary.

Do you have school age children? How about contacting the school and setting up a show and tell with the class. While this might be awkward for your children....(just promise them in advance that you won't hug or kiss them in front of their fellow students), but something as simple as a brief show and tell session might spark an interest.

Is there a scout group in your area? Do the same...contact and setup a show and tell session and perhaps volunteer to assist those scouts who are interested in earning their radio merit badge.

What about your work? Do you have an electronic message board or even an old fashioned cork message board where you can post a friendly message to say..."Hey I'm a ham, you can also become a ham and I can help you". Or something less corny than that may also work.

I can't tell you the number of times I've been in conversation with someone and when they find out I'm a ham, they say..."Oh yes...I wanted to get my license back when....." (silence) Let them know it's not too late, let them know how to get started, tell them about PARP and offer to help them out.

I've perhaps rambled on enough and will just wrap up this segment by saying, "Anyone can Elmer" and I encourage those who are to continue and those who haven't tried spreading the news about our great hobby and service to try it.

Featured Website Segment

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Want to know a secret? How about a ham radio secret? The featured website for episode 62 is simply titled Ham Radio Secrets .com. HamRadioSecrets.com is owned by Claude, VE2DPE. Of course, Claude states "There are no secrets in ham radio. However, there are aspects that are not well understood or even not known at all by many."

With exception to some of the licensing discussion which is obviously directed to Canadian Hams, visitors to his website will find a forum, blog and information broken down in the following categories of Antennas, Propagation, Equipment, Software, Operations and more.

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<http://www.hamradiosecrets.com/>

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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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If you listened to episode 61 which I released in July. I provided an update on some of the reasons why I was AWOL for so long and one of those reasons was to focus on my health. I stated during that episode

that I wasn't planning on starting a podcast dedicated to being healthy and I also stated I wasn't going to start a new segment on PARP about healthy ham radio. However.....

When I was in my twenties and thirties (and perhaps even part of my forties) I had this indestructible view of myself. While I had been on the statin drugs to help lower and control my cholesterol....my view of it was a magic pill. A magic pill which I took daily and continued to live my life more or less the same as I had been doing for most of my adult life...and I'll turn 47 in October.

Something that I have began paying closer attention to is the individuals I hear about who are close to my age who die. I'm not talking about celebrities who live a wild lifestyle. I'm talking about ordinary people. Some of these ordinary people are fellow members of our hobby.

Anyway, what I've realized is there is no magic pill which allows you to simply live how you want to live regardless of what is going on in your body.

Now, one of my goals is to control my cholesterol naturally without the need of taking medication. I'm doing this through diet and exercise. Most importantly...I'm seeing solid results. This of course is good news and I'm challenged to continue to see good results. However, the challenge has just simply been a gauge of the bathroom scale each morning.

I had been seeing Tweets on Twitter and posts on Facebook, and even my friend Paul from the UK asked me if I was using Fitbit to monitor my daily exercise levels. I hadn't been...but had done some early research on the devices and decided to look into it again.

Fitbit is a small little gadget which monitors a multitude of things as you wear it throughout the day and even evening while you sleep. The Fitbit device comes in three different models. The model Zip, is the least expensive followed by the Fitbit One and Fitbit Flex. Basically the One and Flex do the exact same thing and offer the same functionality, but you wear the Flex like a watch or bracelet.

I decided on purchasing the Fitbit One so that I could wear it clipped to my waist and I wear it pretty much 100% of the time. It tracks the number of steps I take, the number of stairs I climb etc. Then when ever I want, I sync the data either via my laptop or via a Bluetooth connection from my Android phone (also works with some iPhone models) to the Fitbit website.

Through the Fitbit dashboard I can view previous history or view the real-time data after a sync. Also, through the Fitbit website, I can link to friends who are also using Fitbit. It sort of serves as a support base for encouragement etc.

Of course, you can accomplish much the same thing with a simple and inexpensive pedometer. I've owned several of the basic type. I forget to reset it and generally have no idea of how many steps I've taken etc. I also used various smartphone apps which using the GPS features of the device, track your progress. The problem with this is it doesn't work well indoors and the battery life of the phone was also poor.

The Fitbit automatically resets at midnight based on your local time zone and is rechargeable and a full charge seems to last me 5 full days .

Now please don't confuse this as an infomercial for Fitbit. I'm just simply sharing the gadget I happen to use to make sure I meet a daily goal of 10,000 steps and 10 flights of stairs each day.

Of course, I also think it will be fun to use Fitbit to monitor just how many steps it takes to reach the next SOTA summit.

But how accurate is the Fitbit? While I'll throw out the fine print to say "your mileage may vary". I've tested on three different days by wearing both the Fitbit and running my Android phone with the Trimble Navigator App while walking through my neighborhood. The end results and comparing miles logged from each device is within an acceptable range. Especially considering the Fitbit is calculating mileage based on steps and the Android phone is using GPS technology.

My health is important to me and my family. No, I'm not going to constantly discuss my health on this podcast. However, if occasionally mentioning it encourages others and helps others live longer...then I'm OK with that.

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Ham Adventures Segment

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In just a few days my wife and I will board a British Airways, Boeing Triple 7 jet and fly from Denver to London Heathrow. We'll then quickly take a trip across town to London City airport and fly from London City to my wife's hometown of Antwerp, Belgium where will spend about 8 days visiting family and playing tourist. If all goes as planned, I'll add a new country to my list of countries visited when we take a day trip via train to Germany.

As we make our way back to England, we'll spend one full day sightseeing around London and then spend 5 days in the English Countryside of Kent and yes...do more sightseeing. This will be my 4th visit to Belgium and my 8th or 9th visit to the UK.

As I briefly spoke about during episode 61 in July, I've wanted to take along an HF rig when visiting Belgium and the UK and operate as Oscar, November (stroke) KDOBİK in Belgium and Mike (stroke) KDOBİK while in the UK. However, I must admit that the amount of free time I usually have on these vacations is rather limited. I'm just not entirely sure it would be worth it to pack along my KX3, power supply and wire antenna to operate for just a few hours. After all, I fully subscribe to the Radio Amateur's Code which states "The Radio Amateur is Balanced...Radio is a hobby, never interfering with duties owed to family, job, school or community.

So what I've decided to do this trip is just take a long my hand-held and of course the required paperwork and see what I can hear on VHF/UHF in the local area. I know from listening via the Echolink App on my iPhone that the local repeaters in Antwerp are often busy and many times English is spoken. So I'm excited to have an opportunity to make a QSO or two as time permits. Most importantly...I'm wanting to experience something new in the hopes of returning and sharing it with all of you.

Once I return to the US, I will still be in vacation mode through the Labor Day holiday. I plan to once again operate during the Colorado QSO party which will take place Saturday, 31 August (1200 UTC 31

August, through 0400 UTC 1 September). I'm hoping if I have any energy left from 2 1/2 weeks in Europe that I can beat my QSO count from last year of 138 QSO's. Fingers crossed...

Finally, once I'm back, settled and all that stuff from vacation and when the weather cools just a bit, I do plan to lace up the hiking boots and throw the pack across my shoulders and head up a mountain for some SOTA or Summits on the Air action. This has perhaps been one of the things I've missed most about my long hiatus is being able to get out and activate SOTA summits. As I'm in better shape than last year, I'm hoping the ascent will be easier and provide me more time on the summit for radio.

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Mailbag

Mail goes here

Well this wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. PARP will return again with episode 63 sometime in September.

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Until next time, 73 to all from KDOBİK.

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.

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