

The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast – Episode number 68.

Play theme music.

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

This is show number 68, volume number 7 with a release date of April 27 , 2014.

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.

OK...I know last episode I said PARP might need to go on an every other month release schedule. And this fact might still be true, but the good news is I found some extra time to throw some ideas together and come up with an episode for April. This is a fairly big episode with lots of content and I hope some of you will even find this episode to fit PARP's main mission which is to Entertain, Encourage, Educate and Inspire.

Before I get into all the entertainment, encouragement, education and inspiration of PARP 68, I've been asked time and time again about how listeners can donate to PARP. Longtime listeners certainly know that I have from time to time accepted donations. I've also taken in some small advertising deals. But to be honest, I never felt comfortable with running ads on PARP. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying...I'm not against other amateur radio podcasts running ads, I just don't believe doing that is right for PARP and right for me.

Having said all that, I've turned the donation page on. If you feel you receive some value from PARP and would like to return some value back to PARP, then just go to [MyAmateurRadio.com](http://MyAmateurRadio.com) and click the donate tab at the top of the page. Any amount will be appreciated and it will be used to offset the costs I incur in hosting the audio files. Thank you! I truly appreciate it.

As we are starting to approach the half-way mark of 2014, I wanted to devote this episode to those of you (including myself) who are still on track for the QSO a day challenge and also talk about the ARRL Centennial QSO Party events taking place.

From personal experience of having completed a QSO each day throughout 2012, and certainly my experience as I get closer to the half-way mark of 2014...the overall level of excitement I feel for the hobby of amateur radio and the accomplishments I've achieved have been extraordinary. But for me personally, it's not about the numbers. It's not about the wallpaper (although I'm hoping to add some new wallpaper to my collection this year) and it's also not about the DX numbers. For me, (and

understand not every will have the same outlook on the hobby as I do), but for me....it's really all about one QSO at a time and one day at a time.

Now before I get too far down this path. Let me just say that if you haven't logged a QSO each day this year, or if you started with that goal and something happened and you missed a day. Don't worry. Don't worry. Setting a goal to achieve one QSO a day can happen any day of the year. And if you miss a day, you can easily resume it the next day or the day after. Again, this is more than just about ticking a box and saying I had a QSO today. It's truly (or should be) about the experience.

In recent weeks I've been getting on the air more and more and working more than just one QSO per day. Band conditions (especially on 20 meters) have been in great shape. While most of my QSO's in the first quarter of the year were JT65, I've truly enjoyed working a variety of modes including PSK-31, RTTY and Phone.

Back in December of last year during PARP episode 65, I briefly discussed the ARRL year long events taking place in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the American Radio Relay League. I believe the ARRL website has defined this in the right manner by saying, (and I quote) "The ARRL Centennial QSO Party is a year-long operating event that celebrates hams making contacts". (end quote)

As further described on the ARRL website (I'll post a link in the show notes), the Centennial QSO Party is made up of two main activities: The first being W1AW operating portable in each state and most US territories. The second being the Centennial points challenge which is the accumulation of points from qualifying contacts made throughout the calendar year 2014. Let's talk about the second point first and then I'll discuss the W1AW portable stations.

The centennial points challenge is open to all hams to participate. However, in order to accumulate points you must upload your logs to the ARRL Logbook of the World system. Qualifying points will automatically be assigned and those participating can monitor their point accumulation progress on the new centennial QSO party leader boards. Again, I'll post links in the show notes.

While the centennial points challenge is open to all hams, only ARRL members, appointees, elected officials, staff are worth points. Point values have been assigned based on ARRL membership level. With regular ARRL members being worth 1 point, ARRL Life Members worth 2 points, VE's are worth 5 points etc. I'll post a link in the show notes where you can view the complete points table.

As an example, I'm an ARRL Member, I'm also an ARRL Life Member and I'm also an ARRL Volunteer Examiner. The point value assigned to me is 5 points based on my VE assignment.

Accumulating points is as easy as getting on the air, making contacts and uploading your logs to the Logbook of the World system. Logbook of the World will automatically tally your points and you can view them on the leader board page.

What? Not using ARRL Logbook of the World? Yes....while I know there are a few small hoops you must jump through to get fully setup on Logbook of the World, it's worth it in the end. I'll post a link in the show notes where you can see step-by-step instructions for completing the process. Yes...it will take some effort on your part, but trust me...it will be worth it in the end.

OK...moving along.

Yes, I realize this PARP episode is coming out at the half way mark of 2014. But look at it this way, this PARP episode is coming out at the half-way mark of 2014 and this means you still have SIX MONTHS of time to start working the W1AW portable stations.

Just a few minutes ago I briefly explained that the W1AW portable stations will operate from each state. Each state will be on the air at least twice during the 2014 calendar year. And now....now is the crucial time for those of you who may have missed some states to start looking at the schedule and planning out when and how you are going to work these portable stations as they come back around for their second (and possibly last) time. Yes, I'll also post a link in the show notes for the W1AW Portable schedule.

If you missed W1AW portable operating from New York state in January, they will be on the air for their second and possibly last time the week of May 21st.

Of course, the best way of working these W1AW portable stations is to check the schedule, check the DX clusters. The one I use is DXHeat.com and then go ahead and climb into the middle of the pileup.

But let me give some words of advice and also remind you of the Radio Amateurs Code and the DX Code of Conduct.

Please....Please....listen first. Many times these W1AW portable stations are working split. Working split means they are transmitting on one frequency and listening on another. If this is the case, and if you have not configured your transceiver to operate in split mode, then the W1AW station will never hear you. Plus you'll upset the band police and run the risk of being yelled at.

If you'll take time to listen....and listen carefully..in most situations you'll hear the station say up or up 5. But it all starts with listening.

Also, in many cases these W1AW portable stations will operate by the numbers. This means the operator will specifically ask for stations to reply based on their numerical call sign. Explained simply, if the W1AW portable operator is asking for number 5 stations, if your call sign as any number except 5 then you should remain quiet and not transmit. Likewise, these stations will also take time to work DX only. Again, if you are not DX...then you should wait your turn.

Of course, I guarantee you'll hear stations ignore these instructions. You'll hear US stations calling in when DX is being asked for and you'll hear other call sign numbers in the pileup when they operator is asking for a specific number. Please, please.....don't violate the radio amateurs code and the DX code of conduct. Take pride in being a first class amateur radio operator and I promise you that the fruits of your labor will mean so much more to you.

Want to really take part in the ARRL centennial action? I encourage you to volunteer and operate as W1AW portable when your state is up on the schedule. If you view the W1AW portable schedule, you'll see the host call sign and host name listed. Reach out to that individual and see if they have any openings for volunteers to operate as W1AW portable. These named contacts will be scheduling operators by time, band and mode in an effort to ensure your state is on the air as much as possible. This can't be done by just a few hams. Volunteers are needed and I bet there are many openings

available in your state. This would be a huge honor and you can expect to hear me operating as W1AW/0 representing the Centennial State of Colorado in the ARRL Centennial QSO Party the week of 21 May. And this makes for a great segue into my next piece of advice....

If you are planning to volunteer as a W1AW portable operator AND especially if you would describe yourself as a casual style of operator. Meaning you don't frequently contest and you may not be used to running a large pileup....then take this piece of advice. By the way, a casual style operator is exactly how I describe myself. I typically operate in just a few contests each year and by no means would I describe myself as an expert contesteer.

So....just as I'm planning to operate W1AW portable in May, I've been spending a few hours each week getting on the air and working contacts for the Centennial points challenge. What I do is I find a clear frequency. I listen for a few minutes. If I hear nothing, I ask if the frequency is in use. I listen for a few moments and repeat. If after 3-4 times of me asking if the frequency is in use and about 2 - 3 minutes have passed. I post the frequency I'm going to operate to my Facebook and Twitter followers and I also post my own callsign on the DX Cluster and I begin calling CQ Centennial QSO Party.

While the pileups my own callsign generates will be NOTHING like those W1AW/0 will generate, its still very good practice in working a pileup. Working a pileup requires sharp listening skills and patience. It also requires some leadership skills in the sense that YOU are in control of the situation. Let me repeat...YOU ARE IN CONTROL. It is you who sets the pace. It is you who controls the flow and YES...it is you who must deal with those operators who don't listen and choose not to follow good conduct practices. How do you deal with those rude or mis-informed operators? You simply ignore them.

Finally, if you do volunteer to operate as W1AW portable, you will be required to follow a set of guidelines on how you log your contacts. This information will be provided to you by the host. The important thing to remember is whatever logging program you use it must be able to export the log file as an ADIF file. Something like N1MM logger will be perfect for this and I recommend that you practice with which ever logger you plan to use and become familiar with it.

Centennial QSO Party details <http://www.arrl.org/centennial-qso-party>

Centennial QSO Party leader boards <https://centennial-qso-party.arrl.org/index.php>

Centennial QSO Party Points Table <http://www.arrl.org/centennial-qso-party#Table>

LoTW Instructions <http://www.arrl.org/instructions>

W1AW Portable Schedule [http://www.arrl.org/files/file/On%20the%20Air/W1AW\\_2014\\_sked.pdf](http://www.arrl.org/files/file/On%20the%20Air/W1AW_2014_sked.pdf)

## **Featured Website Segment**

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Our featured website for this episode is not really a website, but you'll need to visit a website to take advantage. Some of you may know Jeff Davis, KE9V. Jeff has been blogging and even podcasting about amateur radio for many years. I introduced you to his Corn Bread Road podcast a few years ago.

Anyway, Jeff recently started Quintessence (Quin Tess Sence) which he defines as his weekly personal letter about amateur radio. It's not a blog or some new age form of social networking. It's just a letter, distributed via email and it's free.

Before I go further, allow me to explain the meaning of the word Quintessence. Or at least how the Webster Dictionary defines it.

Quintessence - The essence of a thing in its purest and most concentrated form.

I believe if you take that definition, this is exactly what Jeff has done with his personal letter about amateur radio. But please...don't just take my word for it. Head over to KE9V.net Kilo, Echo, Nine, Victor dot NET and look for the link to sign up for his new Quintessence letter.

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## **The Healthy Ham**

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This is a new segment to the Practical Amateur Radio Podcast which I hope will at the very least fit the category of inspiration to those who may feel like you want to get in better shape and even leverage our hobby to provide the motivation. For this segment to really be successful, I would truly like to task each and every listener to share how you are staying fit and especially how you might be leveraging the fun, challenge and excitement of the amateur radio hobby to accomplish your fitness goals.

I've discussed my own transformation and the benefits I've experienced with losing weight and getting into better shape. For me personally, it had health benefits tied to it with the attempt of lowering my cholesterol. But of course, I also wanted to make it a little easier on hiking up the hills of Colorado for SOTA activations. I'm truly excited to learn that other hams have also decided to make an effort to get in shape.

I'd like to introduce you to TJ Campie, Whiskey, Zero, Echo, Alpha from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. TJ was inspired by a blog posting he read regarding "Ham Radio and Fitness" and it got him thinking about how he could get in better shape while having fun with ham radio. Of course, TJ would love to combine SOTA or Summits on the Air, but Iowa is a bit flat for that activity. So he's come up with his own plan which he is calling 100 Days of Summer.

In TJ's own words, 100 Days of Summer is his way of melding physical exercise with ham radio, as best he can in the flat lands of the Midwest.

TJ's goal is to operate portable 100 days this year. Additionally, he's decided to place some simple requirements into how he measures the day as being a success or failure. First, in order for the day to count as one of the 100 Days of Summer, he must walk 10 minutes before he sets up his station. Then he must make at least 4 contacts. This after all, is very similar to the minimum SOTA requirements of carrying all equipment the last 100' and making 4 QSO's to score points.

I've got to hand it to TJ, this is a fantastic idea and this is absolutely something that just about anyone could accomplish. While TJ plans to primarily operate QRP CW, even a technician class ham who wants to get in better shape, could grab the hand held, walk 10-15 minutes (or more) make some contacts (even if they are repeater contacts) and then walk back home. The object is to get yourself moving and get yourself on the air.

As I began preparing the content for this episode, TJ has already (and most importantly) successfully kicked off his 100 Days of Summer. His Day One consisted of a walk to a nearby park with his dog and trusty Mountain Top'er QRP rig, a newly built end fed half wave antenna and a fresh 9v battery which he says will give him a whopping 2.5w signal. While the overall effort of getting his 4 QSO's in the log was slightly greater than getting to the park and setting up, Day One is in the books and he's looking forward to day 2.

You can follow TJ's progress of his 100 Days of Summer via his blog page located at [www.w0ea.us](http://www.w0ea.us) that's www dot whiskey, zero, echo, alpha dot US.

TJ also recommends you follow him on Twitter. His Twitter ID is his call sign, Whiskey, Zero, Echo, Alpha. TJ plans to post his intentions on Twitter and have a pileup of stations to operate.

From one healthy ham to another, I certainly wish TJ the best of luck with his 100 Days of Summer. Along with TJ, I seriously encourage you to start your own 100, 50, 25...or whatever Days of Summer project. If you do, please contact me and let me know what you're doing and how you are doing it. I'll share your story on a future episode of PARP so it may serve as inspiration to others.

Again, follow TJ's blog at www dot whiskey, zero, echo, alpha dot US. I'll post the link in the show notes and I'll be sure to update you on his progress down the road.

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### **Jerry's Commentary**

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I really hadn't planned on having a commentary segment in this episode. However, there is something I feel I really need to discuss in the hopes more hams will hear the message and gain a better understanding of a problem I'm seeing with the JT digital modes. I'm talking about JT-65 and JT-9.

I personally work a lot of JT-65. According to my logbook, I've made over 1700 JT65 QSO's since I found out about this wonderful mode. I fully understand some of our fellow hams have a dislike for the mode and consider it more of a robot style of operating. To a certain degree, I do understand their point. After all, the only requirement for operating the JT modes is a correctly synced computer clock and the ability to click the correct buttons in the correct order.

Again, I say this is a wonderful mode. The JT65 mode (for me) has helped me make contacts with hams in countries which may have otherwise been impossible with my stealth antenna setup. Especially as I'm a no-code extra.

But in recent weeks I've noticed a trend which I must say completely gives credit to those hams who dislike the mode for the reason I mentioned about it being a robot type mode.

Now please allow me to better set the stage. When I operate JT-65 (and JT-9 for that matter), the majority of the QSO's I'm making are those I initiate. Meaning, I'm the station calling CQ. As I discussed earlier in this episode, with operating a pileup situation....the station calling CQ is the station in control.

Now what do I mean about being the station in control when it applies to the JT modes. Well...first, you must understand the flow of a typical JT mode QSO. In most situations, the flow looks like this:

A station (like myself) will begin calling CQ at the top of a minute. This might be an odd minute or an even minute. Anyway, another station running the JT software receives my CQ transmission and if they want to QSO with me, they will Answer my CQ at the top of the next minute (this is why a perfectly synced PC clock is required). Their answer (or their transmission for a better example) consists of their callsign and their locator.

Now if I receive their callsign and locator, I will click the "Answer Caller" button. This process will send to the other station the received signal report which my station detected.

Before I proceed, let's talk about what the minimum requirements are for a valid QSO. Unless this is a contest situation where a specific piece of information should be communicated and received. Typically a valid QSO consists (at a minimum) of an exchange of call signs and an exchange of signal reports. This makes sense, after all we need to know, understand and confirm who we are communicating with and we need to know how well our signal is being received.

So now that we understand the minimum requirements, allow me to get us back on track.

The station calling CQ (remember....the station in control) answers the calling station by sending them their signal report. Upon successful receipt and most importantly decoding of that signal, the other station sends their signal report back.

Now the JT software is pretty darn good about decoding signals. However, there are times (and if you work the JT modes you know what I'm talking about) the software fails to decode. When this happens, I will typically resend the other stations signal report again. This indicates that my station has not successfully received and decoded their report. I may also send "sorry no decode" or "Need Report".

Now the point I'm attempting to make here today is this. The answering station, should never proceed to send their 73 unless they have successfully received the controlling stations (the station originally calling CQ) RRR transmission. The RRR confirms back to the other station that the exchange of information has been received and the QSO can be completed by both stations sending their 73.

The trend I'm seeing in recent months is the other station...the station responding to my CQ is just simply pressing their buttons regardless of whether I have confirmed a successful completion of information to complete a valid QSO.

When this happens, I try my best to communicate back to the station that I need their signal report. But many times the station has already signed off, or moved on to another station. When this happens and I'm still left without my signal report....I simply do not log the call.

So if I'm honest with myself, I 100% get why some hams look at the JT modes as just being a robot type of mode. However, I still very much love what this mode can do with very little power and I still operate with this mode on an almost daily basis. I will also continue to do so.

Thanks for listening to my commentary.

### **Ham Adventures Segment**

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Not to sound like a broken record, but life has been busy for me. However, I've been doing a good job of keeping a good work/life balance where it comes to time management. As I've shared in the previous discussion regarding the ARRL Centennial QSO party, I've spent my share of time on the air making contacts and earning points. I've even managed to break some personal records for the most number of QSO's in a given month. But I stress...it really isn't about numbers. It's about fun and each time I get on the air...his ham is having fun.

To say I'm not nervous about operating W1AW Portable and getting a chance to represent Colorado would truly be an understatement and out right lie. You might say I'm just slightly less nervous than a long tail cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Ok...perhaps not really. I have been practicing and I'm prepared to follow my own advice of, I'm the one in control. I really think that is what will both help me and also help you should you choose to operate this year as well. I'll be certain to let you know how this turns out on the next episode.

Finally, I've made a few upgrades to my ham shack. Some of these were planned and a few were unplanned. If you follow my blog site, you may have read a blog article a few weeks ago about my plans to purchase the Elecraft amp for the KX3. This was something I originally did not have plans to do. I purchased the KX3 when it was released as a replacement for my Yaesu 817. The KX3 has performed well on SOTA and other QRP operations.

However, I must admit with the news of the future availability Pan adapter for the KX3, I was starting to think about ways of using the KX3 more inside and outside of the ham shack. I did place my order for the amp, but I cancelled it in the end. Why? Why did I do that?

Well.....(Yes I know...deep subject). But I truly loved my Yaesu FT-950 ( I say loved in the past tense and I'll explain more about that in a minute). Anyway....I loved my FT-950. I used it exclusively for phone operations. Perhaps call it a slight case of ego, but I've had guys tell me my audio quality was so exceptional from the 950 that they hardly could believe I was running less than 100 watts into a ham stick dipole.

For those who own the 950, I'm sure you already know what I'm talking about. It's a great rig. Yes, I know the KX3 is also exceptional. But at some stage I may want to run a little more than 100 watts and between the price of the KX3 and the amp and the pan adapter....it would be a significant investment.



Again for those of you who follow my blog, you may also know that I started having issues with my 950. A long story short, I found I no longer had full power output on 10 through 20 meters and had ZERO output on 30 meters and below. I conducted testing and even took my 950 and set it side-by-side of a co-workers 950 and his would perform as expected and mine would not. We reset and compared menu settings...something was wrong.

So I boxed up the 950 and sent it to Yaesu for emergency repair. Of course, the timeline of events between me ordering the KX3 amp, cancelling the KX3 amp and the 950 failing was over a span of about 3 weeks.

Back to the 950. Yaesu provided me an estimated turnaround of about 10 days. I also own the Yaesu FT-857 and 897 HF rigs. However, I keep the 897 setup for digital modes so I grabbed the 857 and set it up for HF phone. I connected my headset and started operating.

After having used the 950 for phone contacts for the past 3-4 years...I felt as if my ears would start bleeding from the excessive noise I couldn't do much about with the basic filtering of the 857. I kept looking at the calendar...10 days, 9 days, 8 days....I just couldn't take it.

So what did I do? Well I got in my car and I drove to the candy store (that's Ham Radio Outlet for me) and looked around. Within a short span of time I became the proud owner of the Yaesu FTDX 1200. And I love this rig.

I had it up and running within about an hour of getting it home. My very first QSO was made on the 20 meter band to Poland. I thought the 950 was easy on the ears....this FTDX1200 is even better. I love the added features as well.

So what was the final verdict on the 950? According to Yaesu, the issue was.....

At the time I recorded this episode, I just don't know yet. But I'll be sure to update you next time.

Speaking of next time....

This wraps another episode of The Practical Amateur Radio Podcast. We will return again with episode 69 sometime soon. I'll certainly try to get back to you in May, but if that is not possible I'll most certainly get an episode out prior to field day.

In the mean time, please follow me on Twitter. My twitter username is my call sign, KD0BIK. I plan to continue getting on the air and operating in the Centennial QSO party. I usually tweet my frequency out and I'd love to work you. If I do work you, please tell me you are a PARP listener.

And before I close out this episode. YES...I do have plans to record the Become A Ham 2014 - 2018 Technician Class Amateur Radio exam audio review series. This will be for the new question pool which will be active starting on July 1 of this year. At the present time I'm waiting for the new ARRL study guide to be released. This usually happens around the Dayton timeframe. Once the study guide is available, then I can begin recording the material.

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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](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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