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WAVELENGTH

Official bulletin of
 Scarborough Amateur Radio Club, Inc.
www.ve3we.org

PARTICIPATE – LEARN – ENJOY

June 2010

Volume 4 Issue 6

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 :
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SARC Nets

28.730 Mhz
 CW 10:00 AM
 SSB 10:30 AM
 147.060 MHz (VE3RPT)
 7:30 PM
 Alternate frequency
 146.520 MHz simplex
 28.730 MHz
 SSB 7:00 PM

Everyone is invited to check in on CW before the nets start.

These are open nets. All licensed hams are welcome. Come and join us.

We also want to emphasize that 28.730 MHz is our calling frequency. Please monitor and/or call your friends. 7:00 PM is a good time.

Field Day update

Field Day is coming up on June 26-27. We hope to have stations on every band.

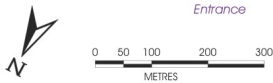
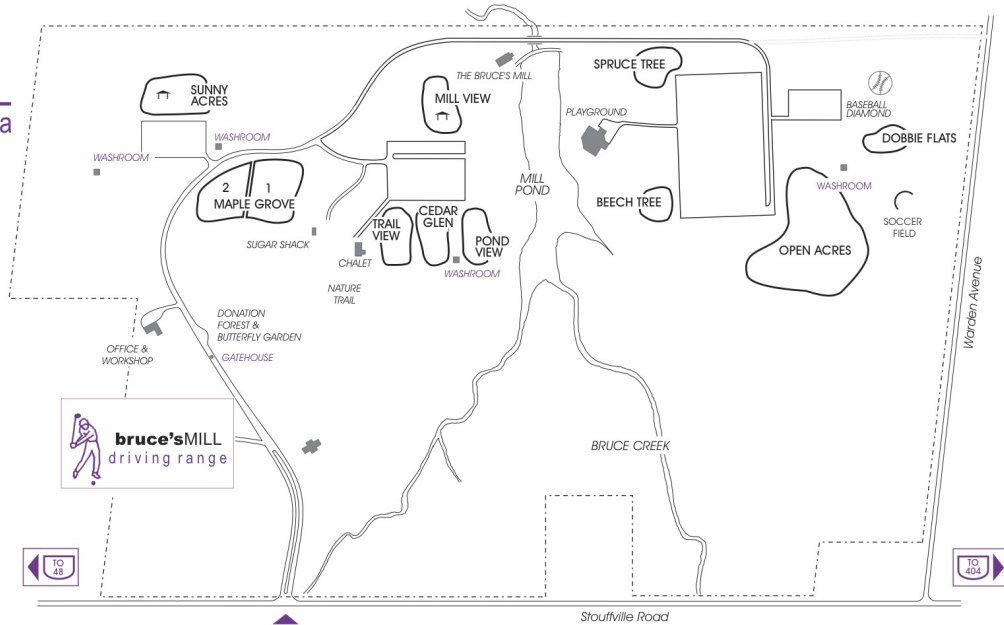
Once again we will be in the Open Acres area at the Bruce's Mill Conservation Area. The side entrance from Warden Avenue no longer exists, so we have to use the main entrance on Stouffville Road between Warden and Kennedy. Tell the people at the gate that you are with the Scarborough Amateur Radio Club – don't forget to bring your membership card, badge, or Field Day guest card.

We have the site booked from Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon, so those who wish to camp out starting Friday night can go up on Friday afternoon. For full details and directions, please visit our website at <http://ve3we.org/>



For picnic or group camping reservations call (416) 667-6295.

To learn about upcoming family events, sign up for our e-newsletter at www.trcaparks.ca.



- Other TRCA Parks and Attractions**
- Albion Hills Conservation Area • Albion Hills Campground • Black Creek Pioneer Village • Boyd Conservation Area
 - Bruce's Mill Conservation Area • Glen Haffy Conservation Area • Heart Lake Conservation Area • Indian Line Campground
 - Kortright Centre for Conservation • Petticoat Creek Conservation Area

Summer Events

Courtesy of RAC

Ontario Hamfest 2010

Sponsor: Burlington Amateur Radio Club

Start date: Saturday, July 10, 2010

End date: Saturday, July 10, 2010

Closest town: Milton, Ontario

Directions to location: Milton Agricultural Fairgrounds, Milton, ON

South of Highway 401; west of Halton Region Road 25 (formerly Hwy 25), or locally known as Ontario St. in Milton

Opening times: Indoor Vendors: 7:00 am - Robert St entrance only

Tailgate Vendors: 8:00 am - Robert St entrance only;

General Admission: 9:00 am - THOMAS ST GATE ONLY.

Cost: General Admission: \$6.00

Indoor Vendors: \$14.00 per table + General Admission per person

Tailgate Vendors: \$6.00/space + General Admission per person

Children under 12 - FREE

Talk-in frequency: 146.52 (simplex); APRS: VE3RSB-2; GPS Addresses: Vendors - 120 Robert St, Milton, ON; General - 224 Thomas St, Milton, ON

Description: An amateur radio Fleamarket with the largest outdoor tailgating area in Ontario.

Ontario Hamfest reserves the right to restrict items for sale or display, including: weapons, explicitly sensitive materials, illegal goods, etc. No vendor, tailgate vendor, or other person shall offer any food or refreshment items for sale other than the food services division of the Burlington Amateur Radio Club

FREE Coffee is available throughout the day and will be served to waiting Tailgate vendors and General Admission prior to gate opening.

For more info: Vendors contact: Mike VE3HBN ve3hbn@rac.ca

General Info, email: barc@cogeco.ca

Event Co-Chairs: Ted Thorpe - VE3HPL, Tom Montgomery - VA3TM

Email contact: barc@cogeco.ca

Webpage: <http://www.barc.ca>

Brantford Hamfest 2010

Sponsor: Brantford Amateur Radio Club

Start date: Saturday, August 14, 2010

End date: Saturday, August 14, 2010

Closest town: Burford, Ontario

Directions to location: From Toronto: Take Hwy 403 West to Hwy 24 South. Go South on Hwy 24 to Hwy 53(traffic lights). Turn right (West) onto Hwy 53 to Burford. Watch for the "Hamfest" signs. The hamfest is held in the Burford Fairgrounds.

From London: Take Hwy 403 East to Hwy 24 South. Go South on Hwy 24 to Hwy 53(traffic lights). Turn right (West) onto Hwy 53 to Burford. Watch for the "Hamfest" signs. The hamfest is held in the Burford Fairgrounds.

Opening times: "Prepaid Vendors" - 7:00 am

Other Vendors (tailgaters) - 7:30 am

General Public - 9:00 am

Cost: Tables: \$10 + \$6 admission

Tailgaters: \$6 + \$6 admission

General Public: \$6 (children under 12 free)

Tables must be reserved and paid for by July 31, 2010

Talk-in frequency: 147.150+(131.8) (ve3tcr)

Description: Amateur Radio Fleamarket, "Meet and Greet" Area, Food.

Main Door Prize: 2 Mtr Mobile

For more info: General: Fred Judd ve3sxb (fjudd@sympatico.ca)

Tables: Al Illidge ve3ejm (ve3ejm@rac.ca)

Email contact: fjudd@sympatico.ca

Webpage: <http://www.ve3ba.com/>

Barrie-Orillia Hamfest

Sponsor: Barrie Amateur Radio Club & Orillia Amateur Radio Club

Start date: Saturday, September 11, 2010

End date: Saturday, September 11, 2010

Closest town: Barrie Ontario

Directions to location: Located at the Oro-Medonte Fairgrounds. Go north on Hwy 400 to Hwy 11, north on Hwy 11 to 7th line of Oro-Medonte. Go towards the Airport, and just past the Airport (follow the Hamfest Signs). General public use entrance on 15/16 Sideroad.

Lat/Long N 44 30 12 W 79 33 17

Opening times: Hamfest Start Time is 8AM. Gates open to vendors and tailgaters at 7am. Breakfast

available.

Cost: General Admission: \$5

8 ft table: \$15, Tailgating: \$10, Vendor pass: \$5

Talk-in frequency: VE3LSR 146.850- (156.7 tone)

Description: Annual Hamfest and Flea Market - The Biggest Hamfest North of the GTA. Lots of door prizes, all talk-in contacts will be entered into a prize draw. Super Draw Prizes. (The Annual Fall Barrie Automotive Flea Market is only a short distance away at the Burl's Creek Family Event Park - so bring the family and make a day of it).

For more info: Visit the BARC webpage (www.barriearc.com). The vendors registration form can be downloaded from: <http://www.barriearc.com/Hamfest/hamreg.htm>

Email contact: ve3odr@sympatico.ca

Webpage: <http://www.barriearc.com/Hamfest/hamfest.htm>

A Beginner's Guide to Making CW Contacts (Part 6)

by Jack Wagoner WB8FSV

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Editor's note: This guide was written several years ago, so some references may be out of date, but the general principles are the same.

A Typical Evening for Me on 40 meters CW

Choosing My Band

After turning on my rig, getting comfortable in my chair, opening my logbook, and pulling out my scratchpad, I choose my band. I personally enjoy 80 and 40 meter CW, particularly 40 meters, so I will search between 7100 and 7150 kHz. 80 and 40 meters are noted as good rag chewing bands, as are 160 and 30 meters. Starting at 7100 I slowly turn the dial of my transceiver, stopping at each CW signal I hear. I will listen a few seconds, long enough to determine if the station is sending a CQ, or is already engaged in a conversation. I am looking for a CQ to answer, the way in which I usually begin a CW contact. Since I am not a novice or technician, I almost feel like an intruder in the novice bands, and would much rather answer than send a CQ here. Although if I am unable to locate an interesting CQ after searching for 15 or 20 minutes, I may go ahead and call my own CQ. Or perhaps search the general CW frequencies, or switch bands, or go watch TV. HI.

Scanning for CQs

A full scan from 7100 to 7150 kHz for CQs might take only a couple minutes, particularly at night when the 40 meter band will be filled with powerful SW broadcast stations, rendering big chunks of the novice band unusable. Activity on 40 meters at night is usually limited to a few small relatively clear areas in between the broadcast stations. For example, now the regions around 7108 and 7137 kHz are

often clear most evenings. Several years ago 7125 kHz was always available at night, not now- this is because the SW broadcast stations periodically change their operating frequencies and schedules. A scan of the 40 meter novice band in the daytime may take longer with the absence of the broadcast stations and with more hams. Weekends on 40 meters can get quite busy.

In most of the world the 40 meter ham band stretches from 7000 to 7100 kHz, and 7100 to about 7500 kHz is used as a shortwave broadcast band. Only hams in North and South America are able to use the full 7000 to 7300 kHz. And only in the United States is 40 meters divided into different phone and CW segments. Hams in Canada and in South America can use CW or phone anywhere within 7000 to 7300 kHz. This explains why you can hear Spanish speaking SSB phone stations some evenings in the 40 meter novice band. This is a good indication of band conditions, how 40 is often open deep into South America in the evenings. When the band conditions are good, you may even hear European or Asian SSB stations just below 7100 kHz.

Once I discover a CQing station, I first determine if that ham will be able to hear or copy me. If the CQer is relatively weak, chances are they will be unable to copy me. Generally the stronger the station you hear, the greater the chance they will hear you in return. Radio propagation is usually two way. Not always. Sometimes it is fun to call a weak station just to see if your rig can reach them. Perhaps the other ham's signal is weak because they have a less than optimal antenna system, such as a dipole in their attic. Or maybe they are using QRP(low power). After scanning the band for a while and perhaps making a few calls, you will be able to judge the condition of the band. Is the skip long or short? Is the band open to the West Coast, south to Florida, or not at all. Occasionally I will turn on my rig , listen a bit, try to answer a few CQs to no avail, make a few fruitless CQs myself, then give up and go play on the Internet. Particularly true during the last few years with the bottom of the sunspot cycle upon us. The current sunspot cycle, Cycle 23, peaked during Spring 2000 and radio propagation conditions are now slowly declining.

Do I Want to Answer this CQ?

But, let's say I hear a strong CQ. Next I determine if I want to answer this CQ. Since I enjoy working new hams, a ham with a new callsign gets first priority by me. After you are on the air a while, you can pretty well guess how long a ham has been licensed by just their callsign. Usually, I am attracted by certain types of callsigns. For example a one by two call, like W8TZ, is usually an old timer. They often enjoy rag chewing and are full of fascinating ham stories and experiences. Callsigns that form words intrigue me, such as KA4TON or N3HAM, or callsigns that are similar to mine, like KB9FSV. In 33 years on the ham bands I have worked only five other FSV callsigns: W3FSV, KA1FSV, VE3FSV, WB4FSV, and WA0FSV. I treasure those QSL cards. My wife and I love New England and my ears always perk up when I hear a 1 district callsign. From Ohio I seem to have a pipeline into New England, meaning I find it quite easy to work New England hams.

Often when I hear a CQ, I will quickly look it up in the Callbook, to discover what city the ham is calling from. Perhaps it is a city or state I have visited or vacationed in, have friends or family in, have a favorite sports team in, in other words have some connection to that we can talk about in our potential QSO. My computer is upstairs and my radio room is downstairs, so I cannot access a CD callsign database. Therefore I use a printed Callbook. Even a Callbook a couple years old helps I believe. It enhances my ham radio operation by allowing me to discover a little more information about a ham before I decide to answer their CQ. Unfortunately 1997 was the last year that printed Callbooks will be available. Too bad, it is the end of an era. Of course after I have completed the contact, and am filling out the QSL(I try to QSL every contact), I use a callsign server on the Internet to get the ham's current mailing address.

Not having a printed Callbook or access to a callsign server is perfectly OK. It just means you will wait a few moments longer to discover to whom you are talking. The suspense can be exciting. You can still QSL the other ham by asking them to send you their mailing address over the air, or to send you their card first.

Making a Contact

So now I've decided to answer the CQer and establish a contact. A one by two call should be sufficient on my part. Although if band conditions are lousy, something like a one by three or a two by four might be more appropriate. I have already made sure my rig is tuned up and ready to transmit. Your ham transmitter must be tuned so that there is an impedance match between the transmitter and the antenna, ensuring the best possible transmitted signal. Many modern transceivers include an automatic antenna tuner which makes tuning a breeze. When tuning up your rig do it as quickly as possible so you don't cause unnecessary QRM to others. Even if you use an automatic antenna tuner you are transmitting a weak but audible CW signal over the air. Tuning up without an automatic antenna tuner usually means you are transmitting a very strong carrier over the air. Make it short please. Actually you should be using a dummy load to tune into, so that you are not heard over the air. If you must tune up on the air, try to do so on a clear frequency, or perhaps on top of one of those 40 meter shortwave broadcasting stations.

And the CQing station comes back to me. Hooray! It's a KF4 station in North Carolina, a ham I worked about a month ago. The callsigns in this story have been changed to protect the innocent. HI. He doesn't remember me, but his callsign and QTH seem familiar, so I look in my logbook and find him. On the average I make about 20 CW contacts a week, mostly on 40 and 80 meter CW, so I commonly hear and work the same stations more than once. After we exchange the standard name/location/RST, I ask him if he has received my QSL card yet and how many states he has worked so far. He remembers our previous contact. During our first QSO the KF4 had only been on the air for a couple weeks, and at about 10 wpm and with lots of mistakes, the minimal name/location/RST was enough to deal with. Now on our second contact we are able to find out more about each other. Hey neat, he is into computers also. We swap e-mail addresses and I tell him about my homepage. I will e-mail him tomorrow and send him the address of my homepage. Sending http addresses on CW is not easy. I am forever having to explain what a tilde is. My KF4 friend in North Carolina says thanks for the FB QSO but it is almost his bedtime. I send him some of my famous personalized QSO ending lines, and we both sign.

Some hams on CW soon develop several of their own personal phrases or expressions to liven up and personalize their QSOs. There are the standard CW phrases that everyone uses such as, "HOPE TO CUAGN, NICE TO MEET U, BEST 73 TO U ES URS". These are perfectly OK, but I like to use some of my own unique CW expressions, "RAIN HR, GREAT STAY INSIDE ES HAM WX or ENJOYED QSOING WID U or HELP QRM ATTACK!". To hear my best ones you will have to work me on the air. QCWA magazine(Quarter Century Wireless Association) regularly prints many of the humorous CW expressions that its members have heard on the air.

It is almost my bedtime also, but I would like to squeeze in one more CW contact. So after logging my KF4 contact I begin another band scan for CQs. 40 meters tonight is pretty noisy and filled with three very loud SW broadcast stations, normal. I've been looking now for fifteen minutes after my contact with the KF4 station, and found no CQs. Each time I have scanned across the novice band I noticed the area around 7145 kHz is clear. Perhaps I will call CQ here myself if I can't find any other CQs. But then I do hear a weak CQ from a new ham, a KC2. He is pretty weak, meaning I may well be weak to him as well, but I answer his CQ anyway. There isn't much else going on. Low and behold, he comes back to me.

He does not have a very good fist, his CW spacing is way off, he makes a lot of mistakes, and his CW operating technique needs work. But I am still able to copy about 75 percent of what he sends, and make a good guess at the rest. I copy, "THIS S TY FERST QSO". I am his first contact. Infinitely cool. My favorite kind of contact. I live to make first contacts. My new KC2 friend only sends his QTH once, half of which I lose in the QRM, and he forgets to send his name and my RST. Still I believe it was a fairly successful first QSO. The contact took about 45 minutes, mainly since we were working at less than 5 wpm and I sent many repeats of my information.

I have a great deal of patience with new hams. After all we were all new hams at one time. Most hams will remember their first contact. My own first contact was at 5:30 pm on Feb 6, 1970 on 15 meter CW with a WB8 station. It was a local ham across town. I had to telephone her to ask her to listen for me on the air. I had been calling CQ for two days with no answers. Later I discovered that a vertical antenna mounted on the roof needs to be grounded. This was news to me. After I put some radials on my vertical I began to get lots of answers to my CQs.

It is getting late and the KC2 and I both sign off. I fill out my logbook and a QSL card for the KC2, including a short letter congratulating him on his first contact. Time now to QSY to bed. I turn off my Kenwood TS 450, and disconnect the antenna. The end of a most successful ham radio day. In two evening hours I have renewed acquaintances with an old ham friend and made a new ham friend. What a neat hobby!

Slow Speed CW Traffic Nets

Handling traffic is a time-honored tradition in amateur radio. "Traffic" refers to messages or radiotelegrams and "handling" means generating, relaying, and delivering these messages. Since CW was around a couple decades before phone, CW traffic handling dates to the very beginning of radio. Handling traffic, particularly during a disaster such as a hurricane or flood where normal communications are down, is often cited as one of the main justifications for the continued existence of amateur radio and our occupation of all of our valuable radio spectrum. The public's impression of the usefulness of ham radio is often reflected in the vital public service we perform during emergencies and public events.

Thousands of US and Canadian hams meet daily in nets to send and receive much of this traffic. A number of CW traffic nets operate in the novice bands, usually 80 meters. They purposely operate at a slow speed so as to encourage the participation of new hams. Many of these nets are primarily intended to be training nets in the proper techniques of handling CW traffic. It's really quite easy to do traffic handling. These slow speed CW traffic nets provide an excellent opportunity for you to increase your code speed. And perform a public service, give a little back to amateur radio, at the same time. Should there ever be a natural disaster, such as a tornado or major flood, in your area, knowing how to send and receive emergency messages is an important skill. An asset for you, for your community, and for amateur radio.

Not every state has a slow speed CW traffic net, but you can probably find one in a nearby state that will welcome you. I learned my traffic handling on OSN, the Ohio Slow Net, that meets daily at 6:10 pm local time on 3708 kHz. I have been a net control station on this and other traffic nets, and I am now the Ohio Section Traffic Manager. Just look around 80 meters CW in the early evenings for a group of hams using the QN_ signals found on traffic nets. Or contact the ARRL(American Radio Relay League) for information on these slow speed CW and other traffic nets.

The Central Ohio Traffic Net(COTN) is the local 2 meter FM traffic net that I frequent. And here is the

ARRL Great Lakes Division homepage. You can find me in there someplace.

Straight Key, Electronic Key, Bug, or Computer Keyboard?

There are basically four types of devices used by most hams to send Morse Code. The straight key, also called the hand key, as well as the electronic keyer, the bug, and the computer keyboard. My favorite is the straight key, which I use 90 percent of the time. The straight key is more natural, more organic, and so is the resulting code. Learning to use a straight key well is not easy, it takes a great deal of practice. Pounding brass well with a straight key is an art. I am far more impressed when I hear an excellent "fist" on a straight key than I am with near perfect code sent with an electronic keyer.

I own two electronic keyers which I use mainly when I want to send faster speed CW. 15 wpm is about the top speed you can send intelligible code with a straight key. Although I have heard hams send good CW at 20 to 25 wpm with a straight key- it amazes me they can send that fast. Learning to use an electronic keyer, while it takes practice too, is easier than learning to use a straight key well. Once you have mastered the electronic keyer, using it can be a real pleasure. To effortlessly and gently squeeze those two paddles and produce near perfect code is one of the great joys of CW. I still prefer the organic/natural sound of a straight key fist to the mechanical sound of an electronic keyer. Hams using a straight key have a fist with personality. On an electronic keyer your fist sounds like everyone else's. Usually. Some new hams have difficulty sending with a keyer. I believe learning to send CW first on a straight key before switching to an electronic keyer is a wise method.

Speaking of personality, that to me is the biggest advantage to using a bug. Although a bug also produces code mechanically, the operator has complete control of the length of their dahs. This gives the ham the ability to send with their own distinctive fist, or "swing". Unfortunately, learning to send well with a bug takes years of practice, and a bug is notoriously difficult to adjust. Using a bug well is a challenge, almost like playing a musical instrument. After practicing on my own bug for five years, I developed a passable fist, until last year when my cat knocked my bug off my desk onto the floor. It hasn't sounded right since then. I hope my cat Rasta is not a no-code cat. After listening to CW stations for a few years, identifying the distinctive "swing" of a bug user is easy. When you hear someone sending good code with a bug, you are listening to a CW Master, a highly trained expert who has honed their CW skills through years of patient determined experience. In the hands of such a CW Master, a bug is capable of producing beautiful enchanting Morse Code.

A quick word about sending CW with a computer keyboard. Some Morse Code challenged hams use this method to generate and send CW. But for the most part I don't like computer generated and decoded CW. For me, using a keyboard is not "real" CW. Even worse is to use a Morse Code reader that decodes and prints out the code for you. A traditional amateur radio operator sends and receives CW using their own senses and faculties. I find computer generated and decoded CW too mechanical and impersonal. But at least it is CW.

FISTS - A Cool Club for CW Operators

There is an international organization dedicated to promotion of the use of CW in the ham bands. This group or club of hams is called FISTS, and is also known as the International Morse Preservation Society. I have had great fun since I recently joined FISTS. At times it is difficult to find another ham to talk with on CW. The FISTS club promotes several ham radio frequencies, those for example ending in 58: 14058, 7058, or 3558 kHz, as places to find other FISTS members to rag chew with. Another aim of FISTS is to encourage friendship within the club membership, which they do in part with these CW

calling frequencies. I love to rag chew on CW and it is great knowing where to find others with the same interests. They also offer several awards for working 100 members and for working at least one member in each of the 50 United States. There are over 9000 FISTS members now, but finding one in each of the 50 US states is quite an undertaking. Very few hams have achieved this award so far.

Not long ago I worked my 100th FISTS member and qualified for my Century Award. Cool. Took me seven months. As much fun as working new FISTS members and adding to your total, is running into folks you have already worked and deepening friendships. After a couple QSOs you learn each others' names without having to look them up in your log. Of course you do not need to be a FISTS member to do this, but FISTS folks seem to me to be friendlier and more likely to rag chew. FISTS also has its own excellent QSL bureau.

Neat FISTS Story - I was lucky to have been able to attend the 1998 Dayton Hamvention, May 15-17. Actually since I only live 72 miles from Hara Arena in Dayton where the Hamvention is held, I have attended every year for nearly 24 years now. I know how fortunate I am. This year I made it a point to attend the FISTS party Friday evening, hoping to put faces to some familiar calls. There I met Geo, G3ZQS, the founder of the FISTS organization, FISTS number 01. He came all the way from England to the Dayton Hamvention and to meet FISTS members. Neato. I drove home later that evening, and, still full of radio enthusiasm, I got on the 7058 FISTS frequency about 10 pm. After one FISTS QSO I heard a weak CQ FISTS and discovered it was Geo, operating as W8/G3ZQS. Using a friend's rig Geo was operating from his hotel room with a whip antenna on a truck bumper. It was quite a thrill to finally work Geo on the air, particularly since I had just had an eyeball QSO with him. A mini FISTS pileup on Geo thereby ensued.

How to Get Zillions of QSLs

My second favorite ham activity, after rag chewing, is collecting QSL cards. Guess it's because I love to collect stuff. I average one or two QSLs in my mailbox every day. One important secret to successful QSLing, at least among US hams(not DX), is to send your QSL card out first. If you wait for the other folks you work to send you their cards first, you can expect to receive at best one QSL for every ten contacts you make. One out of 20 is more likely. I try to QSL every single contact I make. I realize that can get expensive postagewise, but to me it is worth it.

Another important secret to QSLing is, I believe, to personalize your QSL card. Be sure to put a note from you on the QSL, with as much personal information as space permits, about what you discussed in your contact. My own QSL card contains all the required information just on the front of the card, leaving the back free for me to fill up with my personal notes to the other ham. My own QSL cards are homemade. Here is my QSL card. I drew the picture on the front, and I print them on the copier at my workplace(don't tell my boss). This further personalizes my cards. I always mail my QSL inside of an envelope, thus ensuring my card arrives relatively unfolded, smudged or otherwise mutilated. I think folks appreciate a QSL in undamaged condition, and I seem to get more returns that way. Again the postage costs more for an envelope, but that is the reason I go to work every day. To make money to pay the electric bill so that I can ham, and so that I can pay all that postage. HI.

Finally, if there is a ham station from which you really need or want a QSL card, such as in Vermont or Hawaii, I would include a first class postage stamp with the QSL inside the envelope. Thus the other ham has one less reason not to return his or her QSL to you. An SASE(self-addressed stamped envelope) sent to the other ham is also a good idea, saving them the trouble of writing out your address. I myself do not usually send an SASE, because hams occasionally have oversized QSL cards that may not fit inside the SASE envelope you send them. Hams who live in rare states like Wyoming I'm sure are

overwhelmed by QSL requests, and sending them return postage or an SASE increases your chances for their card. A connection to the Internet and a callsign server is an asset. An up to date address to which to send your QSL is a must.

Some hams who live in a small town regularly give the name of their QTH as that of a nearby larger city so that other hams will know where they are located. Not a good idea. Be proud of your own small town. If the QTH you give over the air does not match your mailing address(the address in the Callbook or callsign server), you may confuse hams when they later try to mail you their QSL card. They may decide not to send you their card.

Keeping accurate records of to whom you have sent, and from whom you have received QSL cards is important. Your logbook is a convenient place to do this. Sometimes I receive two QSLs from a ham for the same contact. They first mailed their card to me. But when they later received my QSL they could not remember, or had poor records, of whether they had sent me their card. So they mailed me a second card to be sure. I suggest filling out the QSL card that you intend to mail very soon after you make the contact. The QSO will still be fresh in your mind so that you are better able to write personal comments on the card, and so that you are more inclined to fill out and mail the QSL. Don't wait until you have a large stack of cards to send. QSLing then becomes more of a chore than a pleasure, and less likely to get done.

When you first begin to receive QSL cards, it is fun to display them up on your wall, in those clear plastic containers commonly available. After you have received a large number of QSLs, it becomes necessary to store them in a convenient place. Convenient because you well may wish to look up an old QSL card months later if you work the station again. Finding an old friend's QSL while you are QSOing them can enhance the contact. I keep my QSL cards in shoeboxes. I have filled six shoeboxes now. For quick easy access I keep the cards organized by US call districts 1, 2, 3, etc., and then by callsign type, KA1s, KB1s, N1s, WA1s, WB1s, K1s, W1s, etc. This is the next best method for keeping your cards organized and findable, short of keeping a computer log.

I feel my QSLing methods are fairly successful. I get about a 75 percent return rate on the QSL cards that I send out. New hams generally QSL better than more experienced hams. CW operators generally QSL better than phone operators.

Did I leave out any important aspect of beginning CW operation that you would like to see covered? Did I make any major mistakes? Please e-mail me, or sign my guestbook, and let me know.

Jack Wagoner WB8FSV