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Second Century

What Is This All For?

In my role as ARRL CEO, nearly every day I see social media posts from people who cause me to believe they've lost sight of what this, this amateur radio hobby we share, is all about and what it's all for. If you've heard me speak before, it's likely you've heard me refer to what might happen if you found yourself anywhere in the world, on your knuckles and knees and in need of help. If you see a house with a tower and a tribander, you're in luck! There's a fellow ham there who will more than likely take you in, share a coffee and some stories, and maybe even offer the couch for the night. Why? It's about the community — and being a licensed ham is all you need to be a part of it.

Beyond community, amateur radio represents a place to experiment, explore, and even earn recognition for what we've accomplished. For ARRL, many of these achievements are found in the different pursuits of radiosport. From my earliest days in amateur radio, I have found myself seeking contacts with new states, new countries, and, on satellite, even new grid squares. Once I knew my signal could propagate, what's the motivation to keep going — to collect all 50 states, or reach 100 or more countries? It's akin to why mountain climbers climb the next higher or next harder mountain — because it's there.

These accomplishments, these goals, are the manifestation of planning, building, and operating a station. It becomes understanding how propagation works around the clock and across the globe. It causes operators to tune the bands, even when they're extremely quiet, listening and calling in search of that new entity. It provides the motivation to build and test new antennas that may give those few decibels to hear more or to be better heard. It provides the desire to use information from the internet including live spots, PSK Reporter maps, DXMAPS, and other announcements and calendars to keep on top of new opportunities.

For many years, ARRL has had award programs such as Worked All States, the DX Century Club, and the VHF/UHF Century Club. For decades, radio amateurs have chased these awards as recognition of their station-building and operating expertise. More recently, the ARRL Board has been thinking about expanding on these awards programs. In 2000, the DXCC Challenge was introduced with levels at 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500, and 3000 band slots. In 2009, Triple Play was introduced, providing the challenge of Worked All States on phone, CW, and digital. 2025 saw the DXCC version of Triple Play, called DXCC Trident. This requires 100 countries on phone, CW, and digital. What's great about those two awards is that they cause those who don't know CW to learn it, and those who hate FT8 to use it! Most recently this year, the 10-Band DXCC and Single-Band DXCC Honor Roll plaques have been established.

Let me combine all of this into a story I'd like to share with you. After taking a brief pause because of my career, I returned to amateur radio and wanted to finish some of my awards. I found that I only needed Alaska on 80 meters to finish my Five-Band Worked All States. Despite my best efforts with a wire in a tree, I couldn't hear any KL7s even though they were being spotted. Having had quite enough of that, I bought a 60-foot Spiderbeam aluminum mast and a DX Engineering heavy-duty vertical base. I poured a concrete base with a pole and gave it a few weeks to harden.

In the meantime, a lifelong ham friend, Bob Naumann, W5OV (SK), was going through a rough time in his life. I flew him up to New Jersey to spend a week visiting with me, and with his parents who lived nearby. We decided to put up the antenna. My friend Noah Gottfried, K2NG, came over, and the three of us got the vertical up and put down some radials. This thing worked! I set up a sked with Dave Patton, KW9A, then NN1N, who was going to be traveling to the world-famous KL7RA station for a week. When the 4 AM sked came, I waited with anticipation and…nothing. By 6:30 AM the sun was coming up, so I made coffee and went back to the radio, and there on 3526 was KL7RA, and he was *loud*! My amplifier was on, so I felt confident he'd hear me. I worked him on the first call, and literally moments later the confirmation was in LoTW to complete my award. This really pulls it all together: friendship, community, construction, operating, and accomplishment.

There are many ways to enjoy amateur radio, and being recognized for your accomplishments is one of

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