

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Each month one of our members is randomly selected and asked to share their ham radio biography with all of us. Questions or comments should go to Paul, KD2MX.

DISCLAIMER: Any views expressed in this section are those of the submitting member and may or may not be those of the NAQCC or its officers.



JACK WELCH, AI4SV, #4838

Ham radio is the ideal hobby for me because I'm constantly moving, and wherever I go, it goes too. I'm married to a diplomat, so every few years we pull up stakes (and antennas) and set up somewhere new. We just got back from a four-year tour in Madagascar, where I operated as 5R8SV, and this August we'll be moving to Cyprus. In between these assignments, we always end up somewhere around Washington, DC; currently we're in southern Maryland. Whenever I'm back in the U.S., I do try to join an NAQCC sprint. I have tried from outside the U.S., but haven't managed a contact yet, mostly because propagation hasn't been favorable at that time of day.

My career has meshed better than I would have expected with my wife's. By background I'm a research oncologist and I've worked a lot in global health over the last few years. My job has required substantial traveling and it doesn't really matter too much where I am based as long as I have an internet connection. Wherever I go, I pack along my QRP kit as long as I'm sure that I can check all the regulatory boxes to bring the radio into the country and get permission to operate it there. By my count, I've operated from 23 DXCC entities.

In practical terms, packing along a radio has been easier than the many dire accounts I've seen in online forums. I usually toss my FT-817 in my computer bag and make a point of pulling it out for inspection when going through xray. Occasionally I get asked what it is, and the reply "a radio" has always satisfied the inspectors. I stick the rest of the equipment (my palm paddle, mike, coax, antenna) in checked luggage. The only issues I've run into have been with the TSA in the U.S.; on one occasion, they took a 12V 7Ah sealed lead acid battery from my carryon, in contradiction to their own rules. Since then, I've just stuck it in checked luggage and haven't had a problem.

I enjoy operating from the field, particularly SOTA -- you can't beat operating from a mountain top for low background noise. For those outings, my antenna of choice is the LNR end-fed 10/20/40, which has survived many years of being chucked into trees. For bald mountain tops, I bring along a 10m Sotabeams extensible fiberglass mast, which can be either put up with guys and stakes or bungeed to any convenient structure.

Most of the time when I'm at a summit, I only activate CW. Running at 2.5W or 5W, I haven't had a lot of success on phone and I feel less self-conscious twiddling on my paddle than calling CQ on a microphone when other people are milling around the summit. On the other hand, being able to operate on voice FM has saved my bacon a couple times when conditions have been poor and I needed my four contacts to validate the activation per SOTA rules.

When I move to a new country to live, I typically set up the QRP equipment first, and then the rest of the shack follows in a shipment. Four years ago, when I got to Madagascar, it took almost four months for my main equipment to arrive, so my first thousand or so contacts were all 5W CW. In fact, I had more than a few two-way QRP contacts with North American and Europe, although the station on the other end usually had a lot more metal in the air than my end-fed antenna in a tree.

When my shack-in-a-box finally catches up with me, I set up a station and throw up some fixed antennas, mostly dipoles and inverted L's, although I had a rotatable hexbeam in Madagascar. My main rig is a K3, which I run 95% of the time in CW as a matter of preference. My other rig is a TS-2000, which I use mostly for satellite contacts. I am not strictly QRP from the shack; I dial up and down the power as needed, but I do try to keep to a QRP mindset in terms of listening for weaker signals and taking time to fiddle with the knobs to pull what I can out of the ether.

I hope to work other NAQCC members in future sprints, and wherever I end up, I'd encourage you to contact me if you happen to be planning a trip or are in the neighborhood. 73 - Jack AI4SV

Lead Photo - I have managed to wind up back in Virginia on the third weekend in June most years to take part in in ARRL Field Day operations with the Vienna Wireless Society. Here's the 20m/80m CW tent from a few years back.



I can't remember a time when I wasn't listening to to shortwave. In this photo, I think I'm about five years old and listening to a crystal radio kit on the kitchen counter.



A photo of me perfecting my QLF technique in the shack.

