

New Year, New Opportunities

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Happy New Year! The start of a new year is typically a time of new beginnings and with outdoor radio activities on hold for many of us due to cold and snow (except for Winter Field Day and, of course, antenna work!), winter is a perfect time to begin a new shack project or start planning for station improvements when the weather warms up. For some of us, that might mean building a new kit that appeared under the tree. For others, it could be planning out new antennas or discovering a new band or mode. For still others, it can be a good time for refining emergency communication plans with served agencies or planning spring-time exercises (or winter ones, for that matter; emergencies and disasters don't wait for warm weather!).

My plan for keeping warm this winter is to gingerly curl up next to a warm soldering iron and build the Bayou Jumper transmitter / receiver kit I got sometime last year and that has been sitting patiently waiting for me to put it together. I finally got started last weekend by staining the wooden case in which it's going to live. A little more wood-working will be needed before the electronics can start to come together.

Building a kit into a wooden enclosure is kind of retro, but then this kit is an homage to the Paraset radios used by resistance fighters and Allied spies during World War II. Today, of course, 3-D printers have added a whole new dimension to kit enclosures. But there are other options as well. In fact, we feature one of those in this issue. Frequent contributor Hiroki Kato, AH6CY (who coincidentally has written extensively for *CQ* about Parasets), has repurposed LEGO® blocks left over from now-grown children to build enclosures for several pieces of gear. His article is on page 56.

Of course, it's also a great time to sit down in front of your radio and talk to old and new friends around the world. If you're relatively new to the HF bands and think that FT8 is the only reliable way to work DX, say "hello" to sunspots! The quicker- and steeper-than-predicted rise of Cycle 25 is resulting in great DX openings all the way through 10 meters, on CW and SSB as well as FT8. And on the flip side, if you're a longtime CW/SSB operator, this winter might be a good time to give FT8 a try. DXing highlight of this month: The long-planned 3YØJ DXpedition to Bouvet (see <www.3y0j.no> for updates; the operation was still in the future as this was written in early December).

One of my favorite things about our hobby is the breadth of different interests and activities it embraces. You might be a QRPp minimalist, trying to squeeze the greatest number of miles out of just a few milliwatts; or a big-gun DXer or contesteer with big amplifiers, big antennas, and big numbers on contest and DX scoreboards. You might also be a dedicated VHFer, pushing the limits on our underused microwave bands or bouncing signals off the moon; or a person dedicated to serving your community through public service and emergency communications. You might be someone who just enjoys chatting with radio friends on your daily commute; or you might not spend much time on the air at all, preferring



to design, build, and experiment with the technological freedom the FCC has given us to advance the state of the art. No matter what your interest in communication and/or communication technology, there's a place for you under this big umbrella we call ham radio.

One of the things we try to do here at *CQ* over the course of each year (and amazingly, this issue begins our 79th year!) is to cover all of these different pursuits to one extent or another. Some, such as DXing, contesting, building and emergency communications, get more ink than others because they are the bedrock of our hobby. Others, such as QRP and microcontrollers, showcase current and future trends, while still others, such as satellites or MF/LF activities, provide a forum to educate each other on the more esoteric branches of the radio hobby. Plus, we like to share your on-air adventures — such as this month's articles on DXpeditions to the Vatican and to Djibouti — and just plain fun stuff, like recent articles on turning a flute into an antenna or powering a radio with potatoes (it all works, though!). These stories help remind us that for all of the important work we do in areas of emergency communication and technology, ham radio at its core is a hobby and 99% of the time, our main goal is to have fun!

So, no matter which of our hobby's many aspects make you happy as we start this new year, we hope you can make the time to enjoy it and/or to branch out into something new for 2023.

— 73, Rich, W2VU

P.S. There's still time to order your 2023-24 *CQ Amateur Radio* and/or Ham Shack Project calendar! They'll take you all the way through until next March.