



Episode 479 – Ante Laurijssen – VA2BBW

Transcription sponsored by: Don Rhodes, KB2YSI

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:00:00](#)):

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Welcome to the QSO today podcast. I'm Eric Guth amateur call sign 4Z1UG, where I demonstrate the diversity and relevance of the amateur radio hobby and its impact on society by interviewing ham radio operators, many of whom played vital roles in shaping our technology through the amateur radio hobby. And while many people might say ham radio, do people still do that? This podcast demonstrates through in-depth interviews just how amazing, diverse and dynamic the amateur radio hobby continues to be.

Ante Laurijssen, VA2BBW, enjoys the simple art of chasing DX and making contacts on CW QRP and low power modes from Gatineau in southwest Quebec, Canada. Ante is a radio amateurs of Canada Awards manager and he enjoys giving back to the hobby. VA2BBW is my QSO today.

VA2BBW. This is Eric 4Z1UG. Are you there Ante?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:01:45](#)):

4Z1UG, This is VA2BBW. I copy 100%.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:01:51](#)):

I'm looking at a beautiful, I thought it was a podcast studio, but it's not. What is it that you're in right now?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:01:56](#)):

So this is my shack, my man cave where I have my radio set up where I do my music as well. So what you see in the background there, the paisley and purple things hanging on the wall are actually sound panels

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:02:11](#)):

To keep the room from vibrating.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:02:13](#)):

Exactly, exactly. I mean it's a small room. This

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:02:16](#)):

Is a basement room. Yeah, no windows. I noticed

Ante VA2BBW ([00:02:20](#)):

There is one, but you can't see it from the

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:02:23](#)):

Up in the top there. Yeah. Ante. Thanks for joining me on the QSO today podcast. Can we start at the beginning of your ham radio story? When and how did it start for you?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:02:33](#)):

Well, my interest in radio began when I was a kid. I'd say maybe about nine years old, nine, 10 years old. I remember just randomly getting a little radio kit with cardboard box, something really, really simple that I got from my dad and it came with a little book. I mean the radio itself was fun to build. It was a very simple little kit, but it came with a little book that talked about radio and in there there was information about amateur radio, right? So they talked about people could talk all over the world that there were people like King Hussein of Jordan and Joe Walsh that were amateur radio operators. And to me, more than the actual little radio itself, I found that part really cool knowing that with these, there were people that would talk to each other across the globe. So that lasted a little bit, but there was no, when I was born in 84, so early nineties, there was no internet where you could just Google ham radio and then know everything there is to know.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:03:38](#)):

So anyways, later on the interest came back a little bit when a buddy of mine got a little CB handy-talkie a few years later. So for a little while, me and my buddies had our CBs and we talked to each other and also I found a little shortwave receiver that my dad had. I don't know if he bought it or somebody gave it to him. It was this little realistic DX 360, a small portable shortwave shortwave receiver. And I remember when I discovered that, that fascinated me again and kind of rekindled the interest in amateur radio. I guess I was

about maybe 12 or 13 and I'd go to bed, I'd turn it on and I'd listen to it until I fell asleep. All these short wave AM broadcast stations from all over the world, but again, at that time you don't have a job, you don't have money. I was reading about ham radio, I found some CQ magazines and things like that, and I thought, oh, one of these days I'll get into this when I'm a bit older and I want to be able to talk to people all over the world as well.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:04:53](#)):

What was the hometown?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:04:55](#)):

So I was born in Gatineau, which is just across the river from Ottawa, Canada, the nation's capital. So I grew up, I spent most of my childhood there. Then I moved around a bit, but I stayed in the general Ottawa Gatineau area.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:05:11](#)):

And your QTH is now in,

Ante VA2BBW ([00:05:14](#)):

It's in Gatineau.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:05:15](#)):

You're in the hometown?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:05:16](#)):

I am in the hometown.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:05:18](#)):

And are your parents still in the hometown?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:05:21](#)):

Yep, they are parents. My grandparents on my mom's side as well. So yeah, my dad is from the Netherlands, so he moved over here when met my mom and they got married and he stayed here ever since. Parents are not together anymore, but my dad stayed here and he lives same town as well.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:05:38](#)):

Is your father handy? Did he have a shop in the garage and all that stuff?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:05:43](#)):

Not growing up. I mean, he's a handy guy, but we weren't exposed to it that much, that much when we were kids.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:05:51](#)):

Did this early interest in radio kind of define the direction that you went in for your later studies and your career?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:05:58](#)):

In a very indirect way? In a very coincidental way, possibly. My job has nothing to do with electronics or radio. I sell mobility equipment, adaptive vehicles for people with disabilities. So I've been working at the same place for the last 15 years and I work in sales basically. And the roundabout way I got there, that has a little bit to do with amateur radio. So my previous job worked for a company that sells physiotherapy equipment and I kind of got re-interested in electronics. They would sell ultrasound machines for therapeutic ultrasound, things like that. And sometimes these machines would break. And so what I did is I took a correspondence course in electronics with one of the colleges here, George Brown College. They do a lot of correspondence stuff. And so I got into that and I started fixing some of these machines and all that. Anyways, long story short, it didn't quite work out where I was working and one day I said, no, I have enough of this, I'm just going to quit. And this, I was I guess 2025. And this was a spur of the moment decision. I'm the kind of guy I will think about something for a long time in my head. And then when I decided I make the decision, it seems like it can be sometimes it could be spur of the moment, but I've been thinking about it for a long time before. Anyways, I got back home that night and I basically told my wife, Hey, I just quit my job.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:07:46](#)):

So in my head a bit naively, I thought it's fine, I'll find something within a couple of weeks,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:07:53](#)):

What was her reaction? I mean, we can only guess those of us listening, what her reaction would be.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:07:58](#)):

Well, she is very, very supportive. But yes, she actually worked at that same company as well before, so she kind of understood my decision. But we had just bought a house the year before and we have bills to pay,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:08:13](#)):

Right? Mouth defeat, all that stuff.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:08:16](#)):

So anyways, I thought I'd find something in two weeks. Well, the reality is that did not happen. But because I had, I'd done my electronics course, I applied, one of the places I

applied to was the company where I work now. They were looking for a technician to work in the garage to install some of the equipment in vehicles.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:08:38](#)):

So these would be what wheelchair lifts,

Ante VA2BBW ([00:08:40](#)):

Wheelchair lifts, hand controls, secondary controls where you can activate wipers, turn signals with spinner knobs. So I applied there, I went for the interview and then I got a call the next day and they said, well, we really liked you, but we think you'd be more suited for sales. I had never sold anything in my life. I always thought of myself as being very shy as someone that is not good at talking with people. I needed a job. These people seemed really nice. It was a family owned company. People had been working there for 25 years. So talked about it with my wife and we said, well, let's give it a try and 15 years later I'm still there. And so all of this to same.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:09:25](#)):

Did they send you to a sales course?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:09:27](#)):

No. Well, I did training with them.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:09:30](#)):

They would take you on sales calls.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:09:32](#)):

And again, when I say sales, this is not your typical cold call.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:09:36](#)):

These are people that actually need the product that you're selling.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:09:40](#)):

Exactly. I think they saw, I mean, I dunno what they saw in me that told them I would be suited, but it actually does fit very well and I've learned since then to, because like I said, I've always been a shy person. I love meeting all these interesting people and hearing their stories and helping them out at the end of the day,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:10:02](#)):

Well, I live with a handicapped person, so I've found that people like you do amazing things for people that need mobility. My wife feels that because she can drive her car, she has all the freedom in the world that she needs and it makes a big difference.

Ante VA2BBW (00:10:17):

Yeah, when I see people, so from start to finish, when I meet with the client and their occupational therapist and we look at different vehicles, we look at equipment for their vehicles, the smile on their face when everything is done, when they have their equipment, when they sit in their car for the first time and they can actually drive somewhere and they can actually get their wheelchair in their car independently. It's amazing. And it's not something that most people see, people that know about wheelchairs, mobility equipment, it's usually because they know somebody who has a wheelchair or mobility equipment. Most people have no idea how many people are out there that are driving their vehicles with hand controls, some people driving their vehicles with joysticks. It's fascinating.

Eric 4Z1UG (00:11:01):

Well, maybe it's better that we don't know the number of people.

Ante VA2BBW (00:11:04):

Well,

Eric 4Z1UG (00:11:06):

It's a fascinating idea.

Ante VA2BBW (00:11:07):

These people are, they get, I mean here in Canada anyways, they have to be evaluated. It's not easy. And some therapists are very, very strict with the evaluation and these people that are driving on the street.

Eric 4Z1UG (00:11:23):

Is this because these products are funded by the government? It's part of the national health plan?

Ante VA2BBW (00:11:29):

Yeah, there's a national healthcare, but each province has their own system. So this is an interesting situation where I live, because I live in Gatineau, which is in the province of Quebec. I work in Ottawa, which is in the province of Ontario, and we have clients from both sides of the river, but there's a river that separates them. Anyways, in Ontario, there's no funding whatsoever for equipment per vehicles. And in the province of Quebec, there is 100% coverage for the equipment. So I mean, in both provinces, people still have to go through a whole training program for driving. If they don't have the condition on their driver's license, like me, I would not be allowed to drive with hand controls because I don't have that condition on my driver's license. You have to be evaluated, assessed, and then

the Ministry of Transport of Ontario will grant you that condition. Or in Quebec, the SAAQ will give you that permission.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:12:35](#)):

So you deliver a vehicle with new hand controls for a client who trains him how to drive the car.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:12:42](#)):

The occupational therapist.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:12:44](#)):

So the occupational therapist has something on their license that allows them to drive with hand controls or they're sitting in the copilot seat hoping that the,

Ante VA2BBW ([00:12:54](#)):

So they're usually sitting in the copilot seat with a driving instructor from a driving school. The driving instructor is mostly there to make sure that they're following all the rules correctly. But the occupational therapist is the person that will basically evaluate what equipment best fits their needs and assess whether or not physically they're able to do it cognitively if they have the capacity to do it as well.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:13:21](#)):

There's a screening process involved before the order is even made for a van that's specially equipped. The occupational therapist is working with the patient to determine exactly what kind of controls are going to go in.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:13:34](#)):

Oh yeah. Oh yeah, for sure. And for us to be even allowed to install the equipment, we have to make sure that the person has the proper qualifications. So if John Smith walks in and says, I want hand controls in my car, well, we can't just say, yes, we'll do that. We have to make sure that he's got the proper condition on his license or that he has a prescription from a therapist. So there are a lot of rules. So the people that are driving for the most part are safe. I've seen a lot of able-bodied people that are

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:14:14](#)):

Not safe

Ante VA2BBW ([00:14:15](#)):

That they got their license.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:14:17](#)):

Well, I think we all have. Okay, so how did that end up getting you to the point of amateur radio?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:14:23](#)):

So I'll rewind back a little bit. Amateur radio has always been an interest, and when I, pardon me, in my twenties I got into computers, Linux and stuff like that, and all the open source world. And that, funny enough, that kind of brought back the interest in amateur radio. There's a lot of amateur radio operators are Linux nerds as well, and the whole experimenting, tinkering. So that got me interested in amateur radio again. So I decided, all right, well I'll study for the test. And as is typical of what I do, I did everything on my own and I found an examiner on my own and I got my ticket. So I think probably my interest in Linux and computers kind of rekindled the interest in amateur radio. And in my twenties I had the resources and internet was there also. So it was a lot easier to find information

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:15:27](#)):

By that time.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:15:29](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:15:30](#)):

So you got your first license in what year?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:15:33](#)):

In 2008.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:15:34](#)):

How old were you

Ante VA2BBW ([00:15:35](#)):

Going on 24. But yeah,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:15:37](#)):

What's the first license class there? Did you go for the first one or did you try to go up the ladder? How does it work there?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:15:43](#)):

So in Canada, you've got basically three classes, right? Well, you've got two, and then you can do the morse code. So you've got your basic and your advanced, but you can also do the basic with honors. So in Canada, if you pass your basic exam, you have access to VHF,

the two meters, 70 centimeters, all of that stuff. If you pass your basic exam with, I believe it's a mark of 80% or higher, you get your basic with honors, and that basically gives you access to everything hf, all the frequencies. The only thing is you're restricted in power, so you can't use as much power as somebody with their advanced license, but you're allowed to use a hundred watts

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:16:30](#)):

And you can go anywhere in the band. Like the American Extra Class License for example, has its own little CW portion or its own.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:16:38](#)):

Yeah, we can go anywhere.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:16:40](#)):

You can go anywhere. Okay.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:16:41](#)):

I don't know how, to me, the American license structure is confusing and there are a lot of rules. Canada is a lot freer for that. If you pass your basic with 80% or more, you get access to all modes, all bands. I forget exactly what the power limit is, but yeah, if you're using a hundred watts, well, within the power limits,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:17:04](#)):

Did you get your basic with honors then?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:17:07](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:17:08](#)):

And did you have an interest in CW at that time?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:17:10](#)):

I did not. And that's actually one of the things that I found intimidating when I was younger. So I was saying earlier when I was 12, I was listening to the shortwave bands, getting CQ magazines every now and then, but you still needed to do back then do the Morse code exam, I believe. And I found it interesting, but I thought, how can I learn morse code? That's such a weird thing. So no, I did not have any interest in cw, but that interest came pretty strongly, not too long after.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:17:42](#)):

What drove that interest do you think?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:17:44](#)):

Probably as you tune across the bands and you hear the cw, there was something, so as you can see, I enjoy music, right? So I've been playing guitars since I was nine years old. I play a bit of drums, I play a bit of bass. I dabble on the keyboards a little bit. Music is another one of my passions, and there's something very musical about cw. There's also a lot of good DX to be had on cw. That was one thing that drove me to learning it.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:18:17](#)):

And how did you learn it?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:18:18](#)):

Again, on my own.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:18:20](#)):

You didn't go to one of the groups?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:18:22](#)):

Nope. When I first got licensed, I was not involved really in many of the clubs. I mean, I participated in some of the local nets and I did go to some of the meetings of the Ottawa Club, but I was very much doing all of this on my own. Some people have an Elmer, I just did everything lone wolf style.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:18:47](#)):

How did you build up your code speed? Did you just get on the air and start at a very slow speed and just build it up like you were if you were a novice?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:18:55](#)):

Yeah, basically I found out about the SKCC, the Straight Key Century Club, which is a very popular organization or I guess online ham radio club for lack of a better term. And I got my SKCC number and I just got on the air. They had in January of 2010 is when I made my first CW contact with one of the operators. They have this straight key month every January, so where they have the special K three Y call sign and operators from across the states have K three Y stroke zero or K three K three Y stroke seven. And I just, one day I heard him call CQ and I said, alright, I had practiced enough. I said, alright, you're going to do this. So I hopped on the air and I've just been enjoying CW ever since.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:19:52](#)):

One of the things I like about cw, I mostly listen, but as I'm going up and down the band, it is really hard for me at least on my 7,300 to tune in a single SIDEBAND conversation that I can understand. I don't remember having this problem as a younger person, but the CW conversations are nice and kind of clean. There's space between them. They're nice and

clean all the way up and down the band. I'm thinking this is so much easier than trying to listen to single sideband.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:20:19](#)):

Yeah, yeah, I agree. You and I are of a different age. I have heard this from some older operators older than myself that it becomes harder to tune into a single sideband signal and even here when the bands are crowded or there's a lot of QRM, it's difficult. You really have to strain sometimes, even if the signal is loud, whereas CW, it just cuts through.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:20:50](#)):

Well, I hope I get messages from people that either tell me that, oh, Eric, you just don't know how to set up your 7,300. Which may be true, but I find that on the Kenwood TS-520. I actually can tune in the single sideband, but that radio is almost 50 years old, so that one I can actually hear the single sideband pretty well. But with the 7,300 it seems kind of challenging. And now this mid show break, the future of podcasting and the QSO today podcast is listener sponsorship. It keeps us lean and focused on providing you the best ham radio interviews since 2014. You can keep the QSO today podcast commercial and sponsor free by becoming a listener. Sponsor yourself for \$10 a month or save 20% at a hundred dollars per year. You can become a listener sponsor. I'm now recording the QSO today podcast as video interviews that are available only as a benefit to listener sponsors through our QSO today community website.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:21:50](#)):

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Eric 4Z1UG ([00:22:57](#)):

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Ante VA2BBW ([00:24:22](#)):

I love chasing DX. I've got a really simple setup here at home and I'm very happy with how it performs and chasing DX, getting my DXCC count up. Again, it goes back to that what brought me into radio in the beginning is just these signals from all over the world and to me, being able to contact these people, even if it's just for a ten second QSO during a contest or one of these de expeditions that have thousands of people calling them. Just the magic of, I know we all understand the science behind it now, but there's still something magical I find about somebody on Clipperton Island that can hear my signal that never ceases to amaze me.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:25:11](#)):

Do you have a technique for pouncing on DX in order to be able to get the contact, especially if it's during the expedition,

Ante VA2BBW ([00:25:19](#)):

There's all sorts of stuff you can do. There's actually a really good book that I learned a lot from. What's it called? The complete DXer, I think it's called. I forget who wrote it, but I would highly recommend it to anybody and I mean the techniques in it, they will be valid for forever.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:25:38](#)):

I'll find the reference and put it in the show notes page.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:25:41](#)):

Yeah, it's a really good book.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:25:42](#)):

Somebody told me the other day that what they do is if it's a big the expedition, they don't jump in on the first day.

Ante VA2BBW (00:25:49):

I agree.

Eric 4Z1UG (00:25:49):

They let all of the big boys get in on the first day and then they go in on later days.

Ante VA2BBW (00:25:54):

Yeah, I've learned also, especially for me, I run a hundred watts with a hundred foot long doublet up in my attic. Right. I'm not a big gun station by any means, and for sure on the first day I don't bother even trying usually and a lot of the expeditions, I was able to get them on the very last day or a couple of days before and then all of a sudden, oh, I've worked them on three, four different bands. Whereas if I had tried on the first day, I mean, forget about it

Eric 4Z1UG (00:26:24):

Now you have an attic doublet though. That's very interesting. Do you live in a neighborhood where you can't have antennas?

Ante VA2BBW (00:26:29):

No,

Eric 4Z1UG (00:26:30):

No maintenance. It's up there. You don't have to worry about the snow taking it out.

Ante VA2BBW (00:26:33):

Exactly. I only recently got, so I got my license in 2008. I was pretty active until 2015. Then we moved to this place and I kind of took a break from the hobby. My kids were young. I wasn't sure what to do for antennas and there was other stuff going on, and when I got back into the hobby last year, I just wanted to start simple. I didn't want to have this big wires outside and all that, so I said, I'll just put something up in the attic, we'll see how it works, and again, don't have to worry about the elements, don't have to worry about wind, stuff like that. And yeah, it works well. And the a hundred foot length, I mean, I'm a simple guy, right? I had a roll of 50 feet of speaker wire and that's why my doublet is a hundred feet, so 50 foot each leg. I just took the roll of wire, split the wires apart and yeah.

Eric 4Z1UG (00:27:30):

Do you have an antenna tuner at the bottom of it?

Ante VA2BBW (00:27:32):

I do. So the antenna is fed with 450 OHM lateral line that goes into a manual antenna tuner.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:27:41](#)):

Oh wow. That's your all band?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:27:43](#)):

All band. Simple. Like I said, I'm a simple guy. I like having one antenna. I know how my tuner works. It's reliable. I can get it to work on 80 meters to 10 meters even six, and it does everything ladder line. I love ladder line, especially if you're feeding a multi-band doublet and you're going to have high SWR on different bands. Get a good manual tuner, low loss feed line, just simple doublet and you'll be able to work the world.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:28:18](#)):

It's almost what I have here. I actually have an electronic tuner out in a box on the side of the house and it goes straight up on. We're using 450 ohm ladder line up to an inverted V that's about 60 feet high.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:28:31](#)):

You don't need much.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:28:32](#)):

You don't need much. Right. And 20 meters looks just fine. So what is the current rig then that you operate from home with this doublet antenna?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:28:40](#)):

So the current rig I have is a Yaesu FT four 50 basic all bands, all mode hf, HF rig, and I've had that for quite a while now and it works well. You always get the desire for the latest and greatest, but at the prices that things are right now and the fact that my radio does everything I needed to do, I don't see the need to change it for anything, anything new at this point.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:29:12](#)):

There's some pictures of you operating QRP out in the field. Do you also operate POTA? Are you doing anything like that? Parks on the air?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:29:20](#)):

I do. I enjoy POTA. I'm not the most active POTA operator. I mean, there's these people that are, I mean they're out almost every day. I mean, some of them are retired, so they have a bit more time than I do. But yeah, I do enjoy operating portable. I have a group of local amateurs that we try to get together every now and then to do a POTA activation. Some of these guys, I've been doing stuff since around 2010 when I started being active on hf. When I was active back then we did some, POTA was not around, but we did do some summits on the air. There's also this group I'm part of called the Polar Bear QRP

group. They're the original, I'll say they were POTA before POTA existed. Basically it's a group of amateurs that they get out in the winter month. They have their Polar Bear Moonlight Madness event every month. So on the Saturday closest to the full moon, this group gets out somewhere in the field Right now, a lot of times it's in conjunction with the POTA Park, but back in 20 10, 20 11, it was just anywhere portable. You'd go out in the woods and we'd try to contact each other with five watts or less.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:30:36](#)):

When you hear about polar bears, you normally think that you have to jump into a frozen lake first before you operate.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:30:43](#)):

No, but I'll tell you here in Canada it gets pretty cold. You don't have to jump in a frozen lake to feel the cold

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:30:51](#)):

Before go ice fishing with the rig.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:30:53](#)):

Yeah. Well it's funny you say that. One of the groups here in Gatineau, they did a few activations on the river with ice fishing activities and amateur radio back in the day.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:31:07](#)):

So the river freezes over.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:31:09](#)):

Yes, there certain areas I wouldn't venture onto, but along the edges. Oh yeah. There's people that have, once it's thick enough, they have their ice fishing cabin on the river. You hear stories every year about somebody losing their cabin. It went through the ice or something. But it does freeze over thick enough in areas to be able to do that

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:31:33](#)):

For people like me that are at much lower latitudes where it seems to be relatively warm even in the winter months. That seems very interesting. I should actually go up there. I've been in Montreal once during a snowstorm. I thought that was interesting. The airport didn't close. I thought that was even more interesting that we still landed in the airport and they still gave me a rental car even though the snow drifts were high.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:31:55](#)):

Oh yeah. Well, it's all relative. So I have family in Holland, my uncle cousins and all that, and last time I went to visit, they were showing me these pictures of a snowstorm they

had, the thermometer showed minus five and they had an inch or two of snow on the ground and the whole country had shut down.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:32:18](#)):

They're not used to the snow.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:32:20](#)):

They're not used to it. Yeah,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:32:21](#)):

We get snow here once every couple of years. It'll snow up upward at the elevation that I'm at. In the past we had no idea what to do. We just didn't do anything. And now we kind of know that maybe we should strategically position tractors around the city just to be able to keep the main roads open. It's an interesting thing to have a change in weather when you normally don't have weather.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:32:44](#)):

Right.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:32:44](#)):

Let's move on a little bit. I ran into something that I thought was interesting. You said that you're a Linux user. I am too. That you like open source? I love open source. I came across S-D-F-A-R-C. The SDF Amateur Radio Club. I was looking at the website and it didn't look much like amateur radio, but it sure looked a lot like computers. What is the S-D-F-A-R-C?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:33:07](#)):

So SDF Super Dimension Fortress. It's basically a shell provider community. So you can set up an account and you can SSH into this Unix computer. They have a bulletin board system. They have a community of users where you can chat share stuff. You have your own space, people who want to learn about Unix and Linux but are running Windows at home and they can create an account and log in and you're in a UN shell. I think they run net BSDI forget. And they have a community there. They, there are a few amateur radio operators on there. I haven't been very involved with that group, but I'll SSH in once in a while I'll check the bulletin board, maybe post a message on the amateur radio subject there and chat with some users. But yeah, I got on SDF when I started getting into Linux again in my twenties. I learned about that and I thought, oh, that's pretty cool. You can SSH into this machine and you've got your own little home directory and you can do stuff.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:34:23](#)):

Right. SSH is a terminal mode, right, using putty or something like that.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:34:28](#)):

Exactly, yeah.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:34:29](#)):

When I was looking at your QR Z page, I noticed that you actually have multiple QR Z pages and you have your call sign, which is VA2BBW, but then you've got QRZedages for VA2BBW/home, VA2BBW/p. I'm assuming that's for portable. So you've got a few of them up there and why do you do that and how does that work exactly?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:34:51](#)):

I do that because, so it's not a requirement in Canada to add, let's say I'm operating in Ontario, so for those who don't know, so the VA two or VA two is the call sign prefix for the province of Quebec and VA three or VA three is the call sign prefix for Ontario. So the way the call signs work in Canada is you've got, each province has their own number. So it's not a requirement in Canada to, I think it might be in the states, I'm not sure, but it's not a requirement to add stroke portable if you're portable or stroke VE34ME, for example, if I'm operating in Ontario. But it's good practice where some people think it's good practice, including myself, and I just like to separate out one of my pet peeves with the US call sign structure is that the numbers are kind of meaningless. Now they're loosely associated to a call area, but nothing makes me,

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:35:56](#)):

No, it used to be that if you were operating mobile, like I was WA6IGR, that if you were operating HF mobile or something, you'd say WA6IGR mobile six or mobile four or whatever, depending on where you were or portable six. So that at least people knew that you weren't in your QTH and that your call sign actually meant that you were from California.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:36:19](#)):

To me, there's nothing more infuriating than working at KL seven and realizing they're in Florida.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:36:26](#)):

Right. I also think that the remote control rules don't seem to be right in that is that somebody could operate from Florida, a station in six land, a remote control station in six land and use their four call and you don't know that they're actually operating through a remote base station. It seems to me that maybe there needs to be some way that people actually know that they're operating through a station and where that location

Ante VA2BBW ([00:36:51](#)):

Is. And that's sort of why I did it. I know some of my ham radio buddies that I do the POTAs with, and again, because we're right on the border between the provinces, I have friends in Ottawa with VE3 call signs that when they come and operate in Quebec, they'll use their regular call sign without adding the stroke, which is fine. There's nothing legally wrong with that. It's just my personal preference. I like when things are structured and all that. So same thing with the slash QRP or slash p, this stroke P, whenever I'm operating in the province of Quebec portable, I always add the stroke P, I don't have to, it's not a requirement. I just like to do that. And the stroke, QRP, I mean that's even less of a requirement. That's just when I operate at five watts, I will sometimes add the stroke QRP. Sometimes that can get you a contact quicker. Sometimes it doesn't. Some people don't care and they find that annoying. They don't care how much power you're running, so don't add the QRP. So I don't always add it, but I also notice that when I put my logs into logbook of the world, sometimes some operators will just, when I tell them I'm running QRP, they automatically enter my call sign as stroke QRP for some reason.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:38:11](#)):

Are you running different logs with each of these different QRZ pages? Are you managing the bookkeeping differently for each one of these modes? Do you have a logbook for P and a logbook for QRP?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:38:23](#)):

I do, I do. And I cause myself a lot of extra work because I'm old fashioned for a lot of stuff. So I do a paper log when I'm in the shack and when I fill one of my pages with about 20 contacts, I'll sit down with a cup of tea and I'll enter my log into the computer.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:38:45](#)):

You're not using optical character recognition as an open source Unix sky?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:38:50](#)):

No. I don't know if any system could recognize what I write. And then I keep track of which for every QSO I write, the power I use and it's usually either a hundred watts or five watts. I rarely play around with 50, 75, 76 watts. It's usually either full power or five watts. So I put my log in the computer, then I take my QRP QSOs and I put them also in another log. So all my contacts from my home QTH will be under VA2BBW. And then the QRP contacts, I will also take them and they're in their own separate lock because as I said, even if I don't use the stroke QRP during the contact for some reason, some people when they know I run QRP, they will add that. So I've gotten confirmations on Lab of the World for my stroke QRP when I was not using that call sign, but they just added it. So there you go. And plus it gives me a way to keep track of my DXC count with QRP power. So that's another reason why I do that. Now

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:40:03](#)):

You got DX CCC I think in what, 2016?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:40:07](#)):

2013? I think.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:40:08](#)):

So you're at the bottom of the last sun cycle. Right.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:40:11](#)):

Funny story, when I first got my license in 2008, again, I was not active really until 2009, partly because we were living in an apartment at that time. The other reason is because I didn't really know anybody on amateur radio. And again, I was doing it lone wolf style, which I don't recommend, but when I bought my first rig, so my first rig was a Yaesu 857, and I was so excited when I got the rig, I said, I'll be able to talk to these people all over the world. This will be awesome. And I get it home, I plug in my very basic dipole antenna. I think the first antenna I made was a 10 meter dipole. And of course at that point in the sunspot cycle, 10 meters was dead. So I was tuning across 10 meters. I couldn't hear anything. I'm like, okay, there's nobody there.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:41:01](#)):

Tune across the other bands just to hear if there's something. And there really wasn't much. And I thought, I went back to the store, this was when I started. So very naive. You don't know much when you're starting out. You read all the theory, but until you practice. So I go back to the store and I talked to the guy, nice guy. I said, can you check? I don't know if my, I think my rig might not be working. I'm not hearing anything. So he plugs it in and of course he knows all the WWV stations and the local here in Canada, we've got these CHU time signals as well. So he tuned into those and said, no, it's working fine. But keep in mind this is sunspot cycle is at a low point. Yeah, it was at that point, yeah. I thought just starting out, I'm like, oh, I think my rigs broken. But no, was just HF was at a low point.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:41:59](#)):

What are QRP zombies? Are you a zombie?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:42:02](#)):

Yes. So QRP zombies, it's a yearly activity. It's basically once a year you get on the air, you can get your zombie number and it's just a zombie shuffle. So slow speed CW QRP, and you just try to make contacts with other zombies. And a lot of people in the QRP community are part of different groups, so you get familiar with some of the call signs. There are quite a few local operators as well that are into QRP. So amateur radio is a hobby of hobbies. And QRP is one of those. And it's a small community of users that you recognize the call signs after a while.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:42:50](#)):

Do you have a ham radio workbench?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:42:51](#)):

So I'm not the most technical of hams, right? So my interest is not in the designing or building or fixing or anything like that. My main interest is and always has been operating. So I'm not the biggest tinkerer, but I do have a workbench in my garage where play around. I'm building a six meter Squalo antenna right now. So I replaced some connectors in one of my radios that were those phone jacks, they were defective. But I do a bit of stuff. But the workbench is not the busiest place.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:43:35](#)):

It's not your busiest place.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:43:36](#)):

No, no, no. The busiest place is my shack here. For sure. For sure.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:43:41](#)):

In terms of audio gear as an audio file, I mean with all of the soundproofing and everything like that, do you run a tube amplifier?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:43:50](#)):

No.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:43:51](#)):

Your ears aren't that discerning yet.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:43:53](#)):

Well, not that discerning or maybe I have a hard time believing some people's ears can be that discerning sometimes. So I like to keep things simple.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:44:05](#)):

I want to take a minute to tell you about my favorite podcast, the Ham Radio Workbench podcast with George KJ6VU, and now joined by Rod VE3ON, Mike, VE3MW, Mark N6MTS, and Vince VE6LK. Every two weeks, George and Company offer up a status report on the many amateur radio projects on their workbenches and explore projects on their guests workbenches. This group is project active and prolific covering many technical areas of amateur radio. So the next time you want a deep dive into ham radio, electronic project building or to learn about technology tools, test equipment, construction techniques, and the rest, listen to the Ham Radio Workbench podcast available on every podcast player and channel. Use the link in this week's show notes page to get to the Ham Radio

Workbench podcast directly. And now back to my QSO. It's my understanding that you've decided to be the radio amateurs of Canada operating Awards manager. That seems like an ominous job. What is the job and how big is the responsibility?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:45:12](#)):

It's a very fun job. So basically, I'm sure a lot of your listeners will be aware of that. Their operating wards you can apply for DXCC work, tall zones, stuff like that. Radio Amateurs of Canada, which is, you can compare it to the ARRL in Canada, right? So it's our National Amateur Radio organization. They're the voting IARU member for Canada. So they've had some awards, they've always had awards in the past. The Canada Award, which is, I guess you could compare it in a way to the worked all states award. So if you are able to show proof of contact with operators in every province and territory of Canada, there's the Worked All Rack award, which, so in the states you've got the W one A W station, and a lot of times you'll hear W one A w stroke zero, stroke six, so they can use the call sign in other areas.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:46:12](#)):

So radio amateurs of Canada, what they did is they were able to, I guess, acquire most of the RAC suffix call signs. So for example, VE3ARC, and VA3ARC. So all those call signs in every province you'll have, I think the only one that radio amateurs of Canada does not yet have is the V two A RC. But I think all the other ones they were able to acquire over the years. So the work All Rack award is for showing proof of contact with at least 10 of these RAC stations. And basically the job of the awards manager is to look after the awards I received the applications from those who want to get the awards.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:47:03](#)):

Part of the job also is coming up with either new awards or ways to promote the RAC operating awards. So I recently introduced the Canadian Century Club Award, which people can apply for if they've proof of contact with a hundred different Canadian amateur radio stations. There are a few rules there for how many per province you can have. But that was introduced recently and I've had a few successful applications already. And I also recently introduced the worked all North America Award. So for the more DX oriented people, I came up with that. So there are currently 50 entities that are in North America, 50 DX entities. And what I did is there are three levels, bronze, silver, and gold. So if you work 30, you can apply for bronze, silver or 40. And if you work all of them, you can apply for the gold.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:48:08](#)):

How do you verify? Are you using logbook of the world or do they actually send you listings or how do you verify that these contacts were made? Or are you just kind of trust one side and not the other, or how does that work?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:48:21](#)):

So that's part of what I have to do is verify that these contacts are actually legit. And again, I trust most of these people hunting the awards. They're not making up bogus, but there is a process for each award. There's an application form. They have to fill out all the details of the contacts. And the way we do it is instead of sending us the cards or scans of the cards is they have to have the application signed by two other HEM radio operators to say that yes, we've seen, he showed us the cards, he showed us the logbook of the world confirmations or one of the things I did is also decided to allow people to use EQSL confirmations as well. Basically they have to show us the two other hands have signed, stating that we've seen, we've seen the cards, we've seen the confirmations, this is legit. And then always with, if I have a doubt for anything, it says that I have the right to ask for further proof if needed.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:49:27](#)):

So how much time does it take for you to do this every week if it gets popular? You could be quite busy.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:49:33](#)):

I could, and my hope is to have this become more popular. To me, my biggest thing is to get people on the air and this is why. So the reason I decided to take on this position is because I enjoy paper chasing myself, and I was working towards one of the RAC awards and I checked on the website and I saw that the awards manager had decided to retire from their position and they were looking for a volunteer. So I contacted them. To me, I saw it as an opportunity to be a bit more involved and it seemed very interesting. And to be a part of promoting our national organization, I'm sure it's the same all over the world. It's hard to get members.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:50:20](#)):

Yeah, it's hard to keep members too.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:50:22](#)):

Exactly, exactly. So

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:50:23](#)):

You have to continually show value.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:50:25](#)):

Yeah. So that's what I wanted to do and that's why I kind of wanted to revamp the RAC awards program a bit myself and the graphic designer, he's done a great job designing new awards. The ones we had before were mean they were fine, but they were kind of plain looking. And so we designed really what I think are really, really nice looking awards.

We also have the text on the award in both French and English, which for listeners that are not in Canada, well, I mentioned it before. So I live in the province of Quebec, which is a francophone province. The rest of Canada is Anglophone and Canada. The two official languages of Canada are French and English. And at radio amateurs of Canada, there certainly is a desire to promote RAC in both languages. And as a francophone myself, it was important to show that. And for people in other places applying for the award, the fact that the CO, there's French and English, they might be interested in learning. Well, why is that? Part of the ham radio hobbies is learning about geography, history, politics. So maybe by, I don't want to say raising awareness, but just by having people see, oh, French and English, why is that? They might learn a bit more as well.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:51:54](#)):

They may not know about Francophone and Quebec being a French speaking province.

Ante VA2BBW ([00:52:00](#)):

Exactly, exactly. And again, also for Quebec amateurs who are looking at radio amateurs of Canada, there's always been, without getting too political or into that quagmire, there's always been, as in all over the world, when you've got two different language groups or ethnic groups, whatever, there's always a bit of a split. And historically problems of Quebec, they have, well, they have Raki, which is a provincial organization for amateur radio, kind of similar to RAC. But what they've done now is they're basically an organization for the Quebec clubs. So there's been less membership from Quebec in Iraq, partly because language issue. So it's just my little part in try to get, everybody can get along. We can.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:52:56](#)):

What do you think the greatest challenge to amateur radio is in your part of the

Ante VA2BBW ([00:53:00](#)):

World? In this part of the world? I don't know. I think maybe getting hams from Quebec and the rest of Canada together. There's still, again, it's not horrible, but there's still a little bit of the two solitudes we call them. One of the things, so I'm a member of the radio club here in Gatineau, and I'm also a member of one of the clubs in Ottawa, and I have friends in both provinces. I'm bilingual and one of my things I want to do is try to get those groups more involved together. We've got such a dynamic on both sides of the river. We've got really, really dynamic groups, active people, technical people, and there are some that kind of switch around and are involved with both. But yeah, that's something for me locally that I think would be great if we can get even more integration between Ottawa and gat. No.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:54:01](#)):

Do you find Canada, that there's a big separation between say your province, Quebec province or the Ontario province and British Columbia on the other end? I mean is it two different countries?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:54:13](#)):

There is some difference. Yes, for sure. I mean, Canada is huge. It's a huge country. Each province have their own little, it's also very decentralized for certain things and each province has their own laws for different things and all that. So yeah, there is a difference. But maybe not as much.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:54:31](#)):

I'm thinking that maybe British Columbian hams might think of going to the California ham fests versus going east for a Canadian ham fest just because it seems like it's in the same hemisphere for all

Ante VA2BBW ([00:54:45](#)):

Time. Yes, for sure. And there is also a difference in, so the reason that people get their amateur radio certificate, the reason is also different depending on the province in a lot of cases. I know in Quebec here, for example, there was a while where a lot of hunters would get their amateur radio license so they could communicate while they were out in the woods. There is a large, and this one of the RAC section managers for BC was saying there's a large Filipino community out in BC and they have their repeaters. So a lot of them will get their ticket as well, so they can talk with each other. So depending on where you are in the country, yes, there are different reasons to get your license. There are different for sure. In that regard, yes, it can be quite different.

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:55:41](#)):

What excites you the most about what's happening in amateur radio now?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:55:45](#)):

I'm happy to see, there's a couple of things I'm really interested to see where all this software defined radio stuff goes in the future. There's lot of the main manufacturers also that are basically making software defined radios. That's where things are headed. And that to me seems quite interesting. I see some potential to the new technology, new interesting, fun technology. I'm also excited about, again, all this POTA stuff, parks on the air. I mean there's beaches on the air, there's summits on the air. I'm excited about all of these because again, for me, the most important thing is to be get people on the air. And I think this is all these different groups. It's a really fun way to get people on the air, get people active, which I think is the most important thing. I mean, you can have different interests in radio, you can be more of a builder, you can be a tinkerer, but in the end, the hobby is amateur radio, right? Hobby is not called amateur electronics. It's not. So the radio part, I think it's important, very important that we get on the air, whether it's HF,

VHF, the microwave bands. I mean those are very underutilized, but there's a lot of potential there. And if we don't use what we have, the risk is always there of losing

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:57:16](#)):

Ante. What advice would you give to newer returning hams?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:57:19](#)):

I would say get involved. So again, like I was saying earlier, when I first got in the hobby in 2008, I did everything on my own. And looking back, I think I would've had more fun being more active with the local clubs or being more involved. I would've learned more sooner. So I was active, like I said, from 2009 to about 2015. I was fairly active on my second go this time. So I got back on the air last summer. I'm a lot more involved, so I'm more involved with the clubs. I'm involved with radio amateurs of Canada and it's been, I think maybe COVID has also kind of pushed me to be more involved during COVID. I mean, nobody could see anybody, right? I was lucky because at work I was still able to go to work. I could still see people. But I think to get involved and really get out there and meet people, I've met some really interesting people in the local clubs here. I've met people my age also. Do

Eric 4Z1UG ([00:58:32](#)):

You see many hams in your area who are younger people like yourself or even younger who are finding ham radio and getting into it? And what is the reason that they're getting into it? Are they getting into it for the same reason that you're getting into it? Or do they find something else that seems to capture their interest?

Ante VA2BBW ([00:58:50](#)):

So that's a good question. And then that's another thing I was thinking about as well. We always talk about the age of ham radio operators and oh, we need young people in the hobby. And I think, I don't know that that's necessarily the right mentality or the right mindset. I don't think age should be a factor. It doesn't matter whether the majority of hams are over 50 or under 30. The goal is to get people in the hobby. And whether you're 50, 80, 20, it doesn't matter. We want active interested people in the hobby. So that being said, so for example, the president of the Ottawa Valley Mobile Radio Club that I'm a member of, he's in his late seventies and he's a super active him. He's involved in all this new stuff, this new technology. He's always experimenting, so it doesn't matter in my eyes that he's 77. I'd rather have that than have a 20-year-old who's not very active or just casually interested in the hobby. I have met people my age, so I'm going to be 40 next year.

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:00:03](#)):

I think that's kind of the right age. 35, the new kids.

Ante VA2BBW ([01:00:07](#)):

Yeah. Well, it's odd to think that I'm considered one of the young ones in ham radio, but it's also a kind of demographic that we, not to complain or anything, but we kind of glance over it. We focus on the fact that so many hams are older, and we focus on the fact that we want 20 year olds to enter the hobby, and then in between it's like,

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:00:28](#)):

I know, at least for me, it's almost like feeling that this need to propagate our species. It's almost Darwinian that we feel that we have this need to do this, and I think part of it is because we feel that as old people, I hope I'll get a lot of messages from listeners that say, define old people. We have years of experience in doing things, whether it's building technique or it's the way we handle ourselves on the air or the way that we construct and build our ham radio stations or all that stuff. I guess we feel that this need that we've got to pass this on to somebody. Otherwise, it's kind of like all of this knowledge gone to waste

Ante VA2BBW ([01:01:09](#)):

To a certain extent. That's true. So for example, there are a handful of hams in the Ottawa Club that are around my age, which is awesome. We get together during the meetings and we chat, but we also chat with the older guys. We learn a lot from them too. Right, and I got no club as well. There's a whole range of ages. Some are my age as well. Yes, it's great to get younger people in the hobby, right? It's wonderful. But all these older guys, in air quotes, they have a lot of knowledge and a lot of the, I'll say the older generation grew up with ham radio as being very technical, so a lot of them got into it because they were interested in the electronics, and that's really awesome. So I learn a lot from these people because again, like I said, I'm not the most, my main interest is not necessarily in the building and the designing, it's in the operating. That's what I love to do, but you learn a lot from these older guys. You learn tricks, you learn, even just basic building stuff, like for antennas, these guys, they've built antennas for 50 years, so they can give you tips. They can give you advice and teach you stuff. Having young people doesn't necessarily mean that they're going to magically make the hobby dynamic because they're young. You need people no matter what their age. People that are passionate about the hobby, people that want to be active.

Ante VA2BBW ([01:02:46](#)):

There's some people here that enjoy doing the parks on the air stuff, and some of them are young, like me and others are in their fifties, and it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter, and when you're on the air talking to somebody, I could care less how old they are.

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:03:01](#)):

I think that's a very good point.

Ante VA2BBW ([01:03:03](#)):

Get people on the air, get active, interested people

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:03:06](#)):

Justify our use of the spectrum, all that

Ante VA2BBW ([01:03:09](#)):

Stuff. Exactly, exactly.

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:03:11](#)):

Ante. I want to thank you so much for joining me on the QSO Today podcast. Now, the listeners don't know that we spent an hour talking before we even pushed the record button, but we certainly talked about a lot of things and I really enjoyed the conversation. I enjoyed meeting you. I hope that you're representative of the young people that are coming into the hobby who also want to get on the air and make it good for all of us. With that, I want to thank you so much again and wish you 73.

Ante VA2BBW ([01:03:37](#)):

Well, thank you very much. It's been a pleasure to be on.

Eric 4Z1UG ([01:03:40](#)):

That concludes this episode of QSO today. I hope that you enjoyed this QSO with Ante. Please be sure to check out the show notes that include links and information about the topics that we discussed. Go to www.qsotoday.com and put in VA2BBW in the search box at the top of the page.

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