



Beginner's Classroom

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This column attempts to explain some aspect of our hobby each month. The subjects may be technical or they may concern such things as DX practices and traditions. Suggestions for topics are always welcome.

BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM FOR SEPTEMBER 2009

Collectables In The Radio Hobby *(Or, how to fill up space in the radio shack)*

In the 20th and 21st centuries, many hobbies have surfaced as recreational and educational pastimes for people. It seems that no matter what the hobby is, there is a sub-culture within that hobby wherein people "collect" what they believe to be valuable items of that hobby. My oldest son collects figurines from Star Wars, I collect various books in its five manifestations from the Tom Swift science fiction series, and my wife collects artifacts and books from Jane Austin novels.

The radio hobby is no exception. In fact, there are many types of collectables that can be cherished amongst listeners and DXers. These collectables can take the form of Radios, QSL Cards, Station Pennants, Antennae, Taped Programs, and even obscure items such as headphones, station schedules, and the like. This month we'll take a look at some of these "collections" and how to get started on your favourite treasures.

The major item that is collected in radio listening is, of course, receivers. In the past, our ODXA had many books about

particular makes of receivers, including Drake, Heathkit and even the famous Atwater Kent crystal radios. Many hobbyists at hamfests would pick up one of these books and talk about their receiver collection. There was one individual in our club whose sub-hobby was to try and own every shortwave receiver ever made by Sony. Some people collect older receivers because they are reminders of days gone by, or because they know the collectable value of these radios. Others collect these treasures because they are of a certain make, or a certain era, or because they were (and still are) great receivers.

One of the great sidelines in our listening hobby is the collection of QSL cards. "QSL" is one of the amateur Q-codes, and it means to verify. Many of us have sent in reception reports to SW, MW, FM and TV stations hoping to receive a verification in the form of a card or letter. A number of hobbyists keep these cards in plastic covers that adorn walls of a radio shack, or pages in a scrapbook or photo-type album. Along with the QSL cards, sometimes a station would send a station schedule, pen, pencil, bookmark, news tabloid or a pennant. Pennants have always been a favourite collectable for listeners. My first QSL card came from Radio Nederland in 1968, and it came with one of their white, red and blue pennants that is still part of my own collection today.

Some people collect QSL cards to show the number of countries (states, provinces, etc.) they have verified in their DXing. However, some people are not DXers, but rather tend to be program listeners. I know of a number of radio enthusiasts who have taped a number of programs over the years on shortwave or mediumwave, or who have taped station interval signals (IS) or identifications (ID). There are a number of places on the Internet which have audio files on these IS and IDs, and even clips of radio programs from bygone days. Now with the advent of the Internet and archived files kept by a number of international broadcasters, it is easier to store these collectables on files within a CD or computer hard drive.

A sideline collection in our shortwave listening hobby is the gathering of two annual publications: **The World Radio TV Handbook** and **Passport to World Band Radio**. I know a few members of our ODXA who collect the WRTH, and who even have some or all of the summer "addition edition" books that came out in the late 60s and/or early 70s. I have tried to collect all of the Passports, and have all but the 1989 edition, and the 1985-86 Part II edition back when it was called **Radio Database International**. By the way, is there anyone out there who knows when RDI was started? My earliest annual is the 1985-86 edition, Part I.

If you collect coffee mugs, there's even a radio-style collection hobby for you! There have been a number out of mugs produced for stations and clubs (including all the old ODXA mugs we used to produce and sell). I even have a "radio" coffee mug from a station that was never actually on the air. The station's callsign was KBHR from Cicely, Alaska, known as "K-Bear" to people who watched the TV show ***Northern Exposure***.

What's your collecting pleasure? If you have a blank wall/shelf/space in your radio shack, maybe you have room to do a bit of nostalgic stockpiling! If you have a specific type of collection as part of your radio hobby, drop me a line and tell me about it, and I'll post it in a future classroom. Last, but not least, the most important item we all collect in the radio hobby is memories... of shows, stations, hosts and announcers, and, of course, fellow hobbyists. May all your radio memories be good ones!

Until the Autumn sets in,
73, keep smiling and keep listening
J O E