



## Your Ham Radio Hobby – What to Do in 2015?

We all have New Year's Resolutions. (Mine in 2014 was to work all of the W1AW portables) Resolutions are, typically, very hard to stick to, as "life gets in the way". But those who do stick to a resolution end up being successful at losing 50 pounds, saving \$2000, running that 13.1 half marathon, working all of the W1AW portables, etc. So why not do something completely different for your Ham Radio 2015 Resolution. I have thought of a few as I was trying to come up with mine and I thought I'd pass them along as a teaser. All require some effort into information research and/or some soldering.

**Have a QSO with the ISS** Get lost in space communications. That would involve tracking the International Space Station -- ISS, using the right antenna, the right frequency and mode, etc. All of which, when you are starting anew, requires you to read all about Earth to Space communications. There are plenty of web sites and groups, like AmSat to help you along with this one.

**Build and use an SDR based radio** There are many Software Defined Radio – SDR kits out there. They are fairly easy to put together. Hone up on your soldering skills. Dig into the technology behind it and find out how they work as compared to that old school, dual conversion, IF based transceiver on your shack desk. Interface it to your computer and load the controlling software like Power SDR or another. Be it a receiver or a transceiver, get on the bands and see what it can do. You might end up asking Santa for a bigger SDR based radio for Christmas next year. Again the web is a tremendous resource for info on SDR's.

**Work a few contests** A contest is just a big game. They are fun. Easiest is to work are the State QSO Parties on SSB Phone. Simple exchange – report and state/county. There are other DX Contests (games) that are just as simple – Report and QTH. No long exchanges or weird modes or CW flying by at 40 words per minute. Stay away from those contests and modes for now, but do participate in a few of the less intense contests. There are one or more games EVERY weekend for you to enjoy for a few hours or the whole weekend. BVARC usually does a joint-member participation on a few of these throughout the year. So jump on in the propagation is fine. One resource is the [ARRL Contesting Newsletter](#) – an excellent source of contest and technical info. Authored by Ward Silver, our 2014 Greater Houston Hamfest Keynote speaker.

**Use a new mode** Most Hams can chin wag, rag chew, ratchet jaw, etc. Talking is built into the human body genome. But what about using the other various modes that are available us as Hams. CW is the one mode that immediately comes to mind, that most new Hams avoid. It takes A LOT of mental effort. Now, the digital modes are numerous and quite popular; starting with RTTY (Radio Teletype) from whence it all came. PSK and the popular weak signal work "JT" modes can be used for fun filled worldwide Q's. It takes some reading up on the how's and why's and it also takes a computer, but most of us have one of those lying around.

There are many more new and different activities in which to partake, but I will stop with these. Whichever new task you resolve to pick in 2015, have fun with it, dig into it, become the expert and the club Elmer of that particular mode. Spread the word by writing a newcomers guide to the mode for the BVARC Newsletter. Do your best with your 2015 pick and remember to always have fun with our hobby.

Happy New Year from **The Radio Hotel**. Rick – W5RH

