



#1 DXCC HONOUR ROLL ON A DUMMY LOAD

Sound like an oxymoron? Our fellow Amateurs have told us for years that a vertical antenna on HF was a dummy load (or at least the next thing to one).

The common comment was “when are you going to get a real antenna”? I didn’t listen and have been using various verticals on a city lot over my ham career at least partially due to the “wife friendliness” of the minimal visual footprint of a vertical. I’ve used trapped verticals, quarter-wave verticals, half-wave verticals, 5/8-wave verticals, so called no radial vertical (like the Cushcraft R-7), a SteppIR vertical with an 80 metre loading coil, and a variety of homemade verticals such as a top loaded inverted L for 160. The bottom line is that every entity I’ve worked has been on some form of vertical antenna. In January 2014, I managed to work my #340 entity, FT5ZM to complete this challenging goal.

Over the years I’ve had many radios all the way from Heathkits to homebrew transmitters and receivers to commercial high end transceivers. I’ve had a variety of linears as well – some commercial and some homebrew – but all of them less than a kW (e.g., a single 3-500 or 2X572Bs).

At present, I run an FTDX-9000D with an AL80A linear to a 43-foot vertical tuned in the shack with an LDG-AT-1000Proll automatic tuner in the shack.

My current vertical began life as a Butternut HF-2V with a 160 base loading coil for use on 80, 40 and 160. It then morphed into a dedicated 160 metre vertical with a bit of length extension and three near top loading wires. At this point I was using a SteppIR with an 80 metre coil for all the other bands. I removed the 80 and 40 metre loading coils, but retained the 160 metre base loading and added a 12-foot section of heavy gauge tubing to the bottom of the old HF-2. I then added a three-foot mobile whip to the top to make up the required 43 feet.

The blue box beside the antenna in the photo on the right contains a couple of vacuum relays to switch the feedpoint to the 160 coil and insert/remove the 4:1 balun (the silver box near to blue one). I find that the balun is only needed in my case on 75/80 metres.



43' Vertical and Switching Box

The 160 loading/feed are the same as was used with the HF-2.

There is a 100pf motor driven (operated from the shack) high power variable in the plastic pop bottle bottom to move the resonance around on 160.

I’m on a city lot on the edge of a big park. No antennas into the park but I’m well away from adjacent

neighbours (a few hundred feet to the nearest) which provides a reasonably quiet receive environment. Our utilities are buried as well. There are about 20 buried radials of varying lengths from 16 to 40 feet. I also add about another 20 radials of varying lengths on the ground for the winter months when there is more DX activity on the low bands.

So, contrary to common beliefs, one can work them all from the black propagation hole of western Canada (and many other black holes) with a near dummy load. I’m sure some would be interested in how this feat was accomplished.



Gerry-VE6LB in His Compact Shack

I found that being either early or late in a path opening served me well. Often when the DX was fading out to just above the noise was when they heard me. One can’t get frustrated when one doesn’t get though. Try, try and try again.

6) One has to think like you’re a QRP station to be successful in working them all. See point 5 above.

7) Most of the entities were worked on CW. Better penetration than SSB in breaking pileups.

8) If you can’t hear them, you can’t work them. Find local noise sources and eliminate them if possible. If you can’t get rid of the noise, try to use the noise reduction tools in your radio and/or use a noise canceller like the MFJ-1026. The key to good noise canceller performance is the right noise antenna(s). Four antennas are used at VE6LB that are oriented to provide a signal that hears the noise but not the wanted signal.

9) Use the DX spot histories to understand the target’s operating habits. Know when the target is being heard in your area and on which bands. A good example is HV0A who is generally only active on Italian weekends.

10) As always, follow the DX Code of Conduct (<http://www.dx-code.org/>).

It’s definitely been a long and rocky road. I was licensed in the mid ‘50s and have been active much of the time since then.

My interest has always been DXing. The first objective was DXCC and then up through the DX awards. Next was 80 metres singleband DXCC, 5BDXCC and followed by 160 DXCC and the DXCC Challenge.

Today, I have 9 band DXCC, 193 5BWAZ and 2400 entities towards the Challenge.

Good luck and I will look forward to seeing more #1HR DXCCs in the listings. You can do it!

Gerry Hohn, VE6LB/VA6DXD
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- 1) An unflinching optimism that it could be done.
- 2) Learning about propagation and understanding forecasting tools so I could be on the right band at the right time, which was often in the middle of my night. This was critical.
- 3) Keep up to date on DXpedition plans and schedules.
- 4) Contests have always been a good source of new ones.
- 5) Bags and bags of patience. Being the little signal, especially on the high bands (no beam), in a big pileup of big signals, one has to wait for the ideal opportunity to be heard.