

A Business Trip to Sweden--With a Bonus

By Joe Tokarz, KB9EZZ

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With just a bit of advanced planning, an overseas business assignment can provide the means to meet foreign hams on their own turf. ARRLWeb gave this ham all the information he needed to transform his trip into a ham's holiday.



Rune Wande, SM5COP, inspects a joint on his rotating antenna tower. [Photos by the author]

Last year I had to make a business trip to Vasteras, Sweden. It was the height of Little League season at home and my son was deeply involved so he was not able to travel with me. But because of Amateur Radio the business trip turned out to be far from lonely. I made the usual preparations for a foreign trip--a travel guide and my passport. But I made one additional contact that made all the difference--I contacted ARRL.

At [ARRLWeb](#) I learned that to operate in Sweden I simply had to bring my original US Amateur Radio license, proof of citizenship and a copy of the [FCC Public Notice](#) on Amateur Radio Service Operation. [ARRLWeb](#) also pointed me to the [Swedish Radio Amateur Society](#). I sent an e-mail to SSA and soon had a hearty welcome from Don Olofsson, SM5ACQ, past president of the Vasteras Radioklubb and SysOp for SK5BB, the club's packet bulletin board station. I also learned there would be a VRK meeting the first week of my visit. The club has about 150 members.



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VÄSTERÅS
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QSL card from club station SK5AA--Vasteras Radioklubb--Vasteras, Sweden.

The extra hours of summer daylight meant more hours for work but Don and I finally met on the third day. He proudly showed me the VRK clubhouse--a two-story building once used for church-community functions. Inside the building, along one wall, are rows of postal-type boxes. Each member has a box in which to store a nametag and the latest haul of QSL cards. DXing, contesting and foxhunting are favorite club activities. Several seating positions in the large meeting room are fitted out with jacks for phones and keys. Students sitting there during code practice can carry on a CW QSO with either the instructor or another student.

The VRK shack, home of SK5AA, contains both old and new equipment. My favorite display was an old homemade rig on wheels. By agreement with his XYL, the original owner made the unit just wide enough to slip into the closet of their apartment, allowing more space to entertain when company arrived. It must be a universal problem--the shack is never big enough.

We then went up the spiral stairs to the reading room. Amateur Radio publications from around the world are on display--including recent issues of *QST*. From the second floor we had a better view of the SK5AA tower and a water tower that supports the 2 meter and 70 cm repeater antennas. Originally there were just a few houses on the bluff overlooking Vasteras, but now SK5AA has many neighbors. Prior to cable TV there were occasions when a bottle of wine was helpful in soothing a neighbor's TVI complaint--just long enough to manage that DX contact. TV is no longer a major problem.



The VRK library has a fine collection of Amateur Radio literature for its members' use.



Michael Parson, SM5WPW (left), and Borje Sagstrom, SM5LSM, inspect the VRK packet station--SK5BB--and antenna.

The next day Borje Sandstrom, SM5LSM, and I attended the club meeting at Jan Pettersson's (SM5FQQ) farm. Each year the club meets there to see what new antenna has sprouted from the ground. Jan started the tour by showing his Four Square Array and switching network. The radials were high enough so farm animals could graze below them without disturbing this portion of the antenna farm. The late afternoon sun helped me see and admire the sturdy construction of four Yagis perched atop Jan's commercial-grade tower. I also had a chat with Bert Sarneman, VK5PS, who now lives in Australia. Bert is originally from Sweden and was back for a visit. After a closer look at the antennas we were treated to demonstrations of packet, APRS, PSK-31 and SSTV. That mentoring between old and new hams really keeps the hobby strong.

On the way back to the hotel, Borje patiently showed me how to bring up their repeater. But I couldn't whistle the needed 1750 Hz tone. Fortunately, after a QSO, the repeater will stay open long enough for a quick call.

Saturday I hitched a ride with Jan Palmquist, SM5FUG, and Lennert Svensson, SM5ENX.

We were all going to a DX grill-party hosted by Rune Wande, SM5COP, and his wife Heide, SM5NZG. Tom Harrell, N4XP, was there with his wife Linda, KB2MFL. More than 20 of Sweden's top DXers gathered to hear of Tom's DXpeditions to Spratley Island and Kingman Reef. I also met Kamel Edirisinghe, SM0/4S7AB, who was visiting from Sri Lanka. His [Website](#), includes pictures of




KB9EZZ demonstrates ARESPACK at LaSalle County, Illinois Field Day 1999.

his visit to Sweden.

This all happened because of my call to ARRL and a common interest in a hobby called Amateur Radio. The next time you are traveling, don't forget to take a radio.

Joe Tokarz, KB9EZZ, is a Volunteer Examiner and an ARRL registered instructor who is authorized to issue Continuing Education Units to students of his licensing classes. He's helped more than 50 hams get their licenses. As Deputy Emergency Coordinator for LaSalle County, Illinois, Joe is very active in ARES. Tokarz says that his biggest ham radio thrill came during JOTA 2001 when his Scout group contacted the International Space Station on 2 meters using a 40-meter dipole. Joe lives in Ottawa, Illinois. He can be reached at kb9ezz@arrl.net or www.qsl.net/w9mks .

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