

Shortwave broadcasters provided the gateway to ham radio for thousands of amateurs in mid-20th century. Longtime SWL Ronald Kenyon has assembled his collection of QSL cards and other shortwave souvenirs into a collection that will bring back fond memories for many of us and provide a window into radio history for others. Bart Lee, K6VK, has our review

CQ Book Review:

QSL: How I Traveled the World and Never Left Home

By Ronald W. Kenyon

REVIEWED BY BART LEE,* K6VK

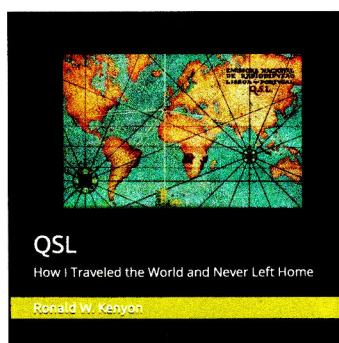


Photo A. Ronald Kenyon's illustrated history of shortwave listening (Photos courtesy of K6VK)

Shortwave radio, especially in the early Cold War era, opened the eyes of many a young person to the world around us, by opening our ears to that world. Ronald Kenyon has preserved and pulled together much of the colorful ephemera ("here today, gone tomorrow") of that period, especially the stations' QSL (verification of reception) cards.¹ They make for a multi-faceted cultural and technical history both for those who enjoyed it all at the time, and for newer radio-interested people.

Many of the big stations, such as Radio Moscow got into everybody's radios. But Kenyon also turned a sharp ear to so many of the smaller stations. He wrote for QSL cards from them all, diligently. His devotion to his hobby resulted in a superb world-class collection of shortwave radio QSL cards and more, which he has now published in a revised edition (Photo A)

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His alphabetical arrangement creates a mosaic of the visual traces of the aural experience of shortwave radio. The book encapsulates the whole world of shortwave broadcasting from the late 1950s into the 1960s. Every image (Photo B) presents an artwork from a bygone time. These stations set out to persuade. With their QSL cards (Photo C), colorful and often charming, they wanted to create a regular audience, all the better to persuade. For stations like Radio Moscow they also wanted a mailing list for their printed publications, such as *Soviet Life*.

For a listener "back in the day" the smaller stations, especially from Africa and South America, opened the mind. Just after local sunset, they rolled in on the ether. The game of snatching them out of the ether made for its own reward. Getting a QSL card to boot made for extra points (Photo D). But shortwave radio's true meaning came to the fore in the comprehension of the whole world talking to the rest of the world, for better or worse available with a little antenna and at the turn of a little radio's dial.

The internet now gives us worldwide access. Nonetheless, shortwave stations still broadcast. Radio New Zealand covers the Pacific. China covers the whole world, but mostly in Chinese. Cuba still preaches revolution in Spanish but also in English, and carries China Radio International in English. Burma's broadcasts can be heard on the West Coast. Romania presents an English program and some interesting music.

For anyone who has enjoyed shortwave radio, Ronald Kenyon's book is a treasure. Buy it at Amazon.com. *QSL: How I Traveled the World and Never Left Home*, by Ronald W. Kenyon 4.8 out of 5 stars Paperback \$31.50.

Note:

¹ The California Historical Radio Society Archives have acquired all of Mr. Kenyon's original collection, for display and preservation. 22 V '22, v2.1



Photo B. International broadcasters sometimes sent listeners souvenirs beyond QSL cards, such as this pennant from Radio Peking. (Illustrations are from K6VK's collection; you'll have to get Kenyon's book to see his!)

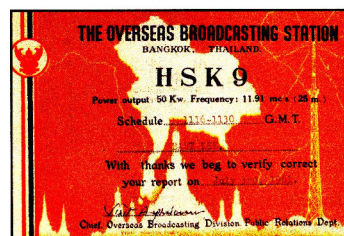


Photo C. HSK-9 in Thailand is an example of one of the smaller broadcasters eagerly sought after by dedicated shortwave listeners. This card is from 1961 the heyday of international shortwave broadcasting.



Photo D. This confirmation from Radio Berlin International provides a footnote in history still labeled "DDR" (German Democratic Republic), the card was issued in 1991, the year after the reunification of East and West Germany.