

## 86 Countries Through a Window

by [Philip Lazar, K9PL](#)

I was first licensed in 1976 as WD9ADE and, as ham radio tradition prescribes, I set about assembling my station. At the time, I lived in a third floor apartment, so my options were definitely limited regarding power and antennas. After reading some books and magazine articles concerning QRP operation I decided that was the way to go. I believed that QRP was less likely to disturb my neighbors with RFI and was safer for me as I would be operating quite near the antenna.

I purchased the then popular Ten Tec Argonaut 509 (5 watts output) and researched suitable stealth antennas. I experimented with dipole, slinky and mobile antennas, all indoors and all equally ineffective except for the shortest hauls. I was very disappointed and frustrated with my paucity of, and difficulty in, achieving QSOs. One day I pondered this situation while staring out a broad expanse of windows at an unobstructed western horizon and suddenly realized the answer to my antenna problem was staring me in the face. Forty-feet of aluminum-framed storm windows would make a pretty nifty random wire antenna!

Using short wire jumpers and quarter-inch sheet metal screws, I connected all the windows together and tuned them with an L-section antenna tuner. For a "ground," this was on the third floor, I used a quarter-wave counterpoise for each band I planned to work (10-80 meters). The five counterpoises were connected to the tuner at one end and then run around the room's baseboard -- in this manner I was able to achieve an acceptable SWR on all bands.

Once the aluminum storm window antenna was configured, I had all the QSOs I had the time for. Both stateside and DX contacts became daily occurrences, e.g., I collected nearly one hundred JA QSL cards during that period -- it was truly my "window-to-the-world." Over two years of much patience, a cooperative solar cycle, compulsive QSLing and CW-only operation I was able to work, and mostly confirm, 86 countries and 46 states (including KL7 and KH6). It took me another two years, a move to a house and "real" wire antennas to achieve DXCC, but the lion's share was worked on my storm window antenna.

That's my QRP tale and I guess the moral of the story is: no matter your housing situation, with a little ingenuity you can be a happy ham.