

# **A Tribute to “Jack” Leahy – VE1ZZ**

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**By Jeff Briggs, VY2ZM**

**It was a sad day here in the Maritimes recently when I received an email from VE1ZZ’s son, Carl Leahy, telling me of the passing of his Dad. For many of us who enjoy operating on the lowbands, Jack Leahy was almost a legend in terms of what his station was capable of achieving.**

**VE1ZZ was not only a personal friend to many of us, he was probably one of the finest Topband Dx’ers ever to have lived. For many years Jack held the #2 position world in the Topband DXCC rankings. He finished his lengthy 160m career at 334 countries confirmed which is at position #6 in the current rankings. This is only a handful of entities below that necessary to have qualified for DXCC Honor Roll - single band 160M. His mild, unassuming manner was also the measure of the man. He would stop Dx’ing and work anyone who called him - which says a lot as well. He was a special person and I have always admired him and what he managed to achieve in ham radio.**

**His legacy goes back to not long after Stewart Perry, W1BB, returned to 160m after the end of WWII - and was one of the strongest signals I have ever witnessed on Topband. His signal was almost a 'beacon' all over the world. EU stations used to say: "He is almost as loud when he calls in Asian pileups as the EU callers are over here"...and that says it all!**

**On a personal note, Jack Leahy was principally responsible for my emigrating to Canada and was here at my home twice, once in 2002 and once in 2012. I last visited him and Opal (his XYL) in August of 2014 with Mike OE6MBG who wanted to meet Jack and see his QTH .**

**When I finally had the time after building my house here on PEI to visit Jack in 2004, at first blush his location did not make much of an impression on me. What I saw had only a short triangular portion of land at the road in the Head of Jeddore NE of Halifax - and the land rose rapidly behind his home. One initially wondered "How does he get out so well from here down at the road?"**

**The answer came shortly thereafter - Jack took me out behind the house - and we climbed that hill - up and up and up for something like a mile - it was a pizza slice in shape and very wide at the top of the hill in the woods - with only about 100 feet (if that) at the road-front side of the parcel.**

**Some distance up the hill was Jack's 160m 4sq array - which was made of Rohn 6 TV tower - this was sitting on 18 wheeler truck tires as base insulators. The towers were not tall - perhaps 55 feet or so and the rest of each radiator was wire - so it was really a WIRE inverted L 4sq. Jack was the "ultimate scavenger" and his radials were all 1-2" diameter pieces of HARDLINE!!! Hundreds of them all over the hillside I think he had a friend in CATV or at his local dump - but he got most of it for next to nothing he said.**

**From that point of his land, he could reach around the hilltop on 160m to acquire a clear shot to EU and the South was wide open and to the SW was also clear looking over the water. Looking straight up the hill was probably blocked to some degree - but often this does not matter all that much on Topband.**

**The day I was there was shortly after Jack had managed to communicate across the pond on what I think was 600m - I may be wrong about the frequency - but the antenna he used to make the SLOW SLOW SPEED CW contact was something out of this world!**

**It started about 1/3 of the way up the hill - and ran all the way to the rear of the property to near the furthest reaches of his land - and this was a long, long, long walk to get there - through some land that I recall was swampy. It had to have been at least 3000 feet long. He was among the first to work across the pond with that antenna - just one of his many achievements.**

### **Jack's More Recent Station - Inside**

**Jack's station was vintage and used a TS830 driving a HB amp to something around a KW DC input. Jack's operating table gave me a chuckle because there were only about 4 inches of space between the front panel of the radio and the edge of the table. Jack was a "leftie" and placed his paddle parallel to the front of the TS830 and did his best to keep his forearm on the table while he sent.**

### **Jack's last years...**

**I last spoke with Jack in the summer of 2016. He told me he then had COPD and that his amp needed repairs and that his antennas were largely broken. I had heard him sparingly in 2015 and probably not at all in 2016 - and that explained why.**

## **A Jack “Post-Mortem” Note**

**In order to honor his passing, the Boring, Oregon ARC has elected to rename the October Topband Distance Challenge (better known as the Stew Perry Distance Challenge) to what will now be known as the Pre-Stew TBDC – “Lowband Jack” event so Jack will not be forgotten – he thus will always be remembered for his 160M achievements!**

**Website Links: For anyone interested, here are two website links which can be viewed to learn more about Jack.**

**Obituary: <https://www.arbormemorial.ca/atlantic-dartmouth/obituaries/john-william-leahy/25367>**

**CTV January 1993 Video:**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK\\_wtMcRw-k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK_wtMcRw-k)**

**I will close now and stop reminiscing about Jack - but I think it is altogether fitting that we stop and pause a moment to remember this fine 160M operator and gentleman and what he achieved on a challenging band which many of us love to operate. He will always occupy a special place in our memories of Topband!**

**73 and thanks for the bandwidth.**

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