

# QSLING THE LATINIS

## A View From Both Sides

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So many articles have already been written on how to verify the Latin American stations that it's hard to imagine a new perspective on the topic.

So, what's the purpose of this article? Basically, to add some insider perspectives to Latin American QSLing. I have lived and traveled extensively in Latin America, getting a good feel for the culture. In those travels, I visited over a hundred shortwave stations, plus a number of medium wave broadcasters. In visiting stations, I talked with dozens of station managers, announcers, engineers, and secretaries, and looked at over a thousand reception reports mailed in by DXers and SWLs. I even had the opportunity to serve as the volunteer veri-signer for La Voz del Junco while I was in Honduras. So, let me share some observations from both sides of the radio signal!

### ● DO THE STATIONS APPRECIATE OUR REPORTS?

When you get down to the barebones, Latin American stations would get along fine without our reports. For the most part, we provide them with no necessary technical data - after all they're really only interested in being received locally or regionally.

But, there is more to reception reports than technical details. A report is written by one person and usually opened by another. It is interpersonal communication, and it's on that basis that our reports are judged. Latin Americans are a very social people. How can a station not be impressed to know that someone thousands of miles away struggled through static to hear their signal and then went to the time and expense to write and tell them about it?

Stations are impressed, and value our reception reports. Often reports, and the trinkets we send with them become part of the station itself. Rare is the station that doesn't have a few overseas postcards, pictures of DXers, or bumperstickers from US or European MW stations stuck on the wall someplace. Sometimes an entire wall is covered with our stuff.

Some stations really put an effort into displaying our stuff. Peru's Radio Nuevo Continente built two locked glass showcases to display DX reports. During my '85 visit, their display included reports from Don Jensen, Gerry Dexter, Dave Valko, Jack Perolo, and Olle Alm, plus DXers in Italy, Japan, and Argentina. Other stations, such as Radio Tezulutlan, La Voz de Nahuala, Radio Quito, and Radio Ancash buy looseleaf notebooks to keep reports in. When one fills up, they go buy a new one. All the reports are there, in chronological order, just waiting some future DX historian.

If any station can demonstrate the value which is often placed on our reception reports, it's a small and rarely heard station in Banos del Inca, just outside Cajamarca, Peru. The station is named Radio Inca del Peru, and shouldn't be confused with the more powerful Lima station of the same name. It's located in a decaying colonial style building, with a courtyard in the middle. A very small handpainted wooden sign hangs under the eave over the front door. The co-owner and manager of the station during my '85 visit was Manuel Graciano Terrones. Manuel was horribly crippled; his legs were puny, twisted and deformed, so he walks on his hands. Usually in Peru the only job for the handicapped is begging in the street. Manuel scrapes by with a small radio station.

Radio Inca was simple, even by the makeshift standards of Northern Peru. It occupied two second story rooms in the back of the building. The first room was the office - unpainted, rotting, wooden floor; a homemade wooden desk and chair; two shelves above the desk. The next room was the studio - a wooden table with a homemade console in a rough wooden cabinet, two turntables, a cheap cassette deck, a microphone. The record collection was about three hundred forty-fives and a maybe a dozen LPs.

This Radio Inca del Peru was so rare, that, as of my visit, it had received only two overseas reports, one from Gerry Dexter, and one from a

New Zealand DXer. Manuel was proud that his station could be heard so far away. Above his desk was a certificate, sent by Gerry, congratulating the station for being heard so far away. Manuel had bought an imported picture frame with a glass cover to put the certificate in. Knowing what I know of Peruvian radio and the size of Manuel's station, I would guess on a good day he might net three or four dollars. An imported frame would cost at least twice that amount. The cost of the frame would have feed his family for a week, or bought two more LPs for the station's miniscule record collection. Yet he valued that certificate enough to buy a frame for it.

Probably there are a few stations that do throw our reports in the garbage. It's interesting that at a few rarely-verified stations, there were no signs of foreign reports, e.g. Ecuador's Radio Popular and Radio Centinela del Sur/. Although other such stations, such as La Voz de las Caras and Radio Celendin were plastered with DX souvenirs.

Despite the possibility of horrible exceptions, I believe most stations really do appreciate our reports. The level of appreciation will of course vary depending on the individuals at the station and the number of reports they receive. Still, even the large number of reports some stations receive isn't a drawback. While on one hand, receiving five or ten reports a week may make the reports commonplace and boring, on the other hand, the intensity of this international audience may motivate the station all the more. For example, Radio Quito told me they average about three or four reports a day. That's about a thousand a year. Yet they still neatly file each report in a binder, and each one gets answered with a (unfortunately no data) QSL card and pennant. Yet, some stations, however much they may appreciate those care packages of international goodwill we call reception reports, still don't answer.

## ● HOW COME THEY DON'T REPLY?

This is a complex issue. To some extent it can be related to the report itself, and what is enclosed with the report.

Sometimes in the DX press I see comments to the effect that the people at these stations don't really understand that we want a written reply. One fact which might support that view is that some stations (probably more than we imagine) read DXers' names over the air, sometimes in a special 'international friendship' program. This can be seen as an extension of the practice where local listeners write in to have messages or their names read on the air, with no expectation of a written reply.

However, considering the clearness to which the desire for a written reply is stated in most Spanish (and Portuguese) reporting guides, plus the usual enclosure of return postage, I think the people at the stations are intelligent enough to figure things out. I think reading DXers' names on the air is just another way of expressing appreciation for our reports, and more importantly, a great way to impress local listeners.

Look at the issue from this angle. Reception reports to Latin American stations are unsolicited. If you were receiving six or eight unsolicited letters a month - how many would you answer? Especially if they were written in either very mechanical, formulaic English, or grammatically mediocre English. Very few of us would answer them all. For lack of time, some of us might not answer any. Still, each of us would probably continue opening each letter. A few of them might be interesting enough to prompt an answer.

Reception reports can be seen the same way. It's easy to open them, look at the contents, and put them aside until there's time to answer them. Some reports which get put aside obviously do get answered. I believe this is a function of available time versus how interesting the report is.

Another variable is how many reports the station actually receives. Perhaps a station that only receives one a month, for example, might be more likely to reply than the one that receives one a day. However, I suspect that if there is any connection, it is minimal. Manuel's Radio Inca del Peru had only received two reports - yet had not answered either of them. Several other small stations I visited had only received a dozen or so reports in the previous year - but had not verified any. Yet, there are stations like Radio Quito that receive four reports a day and answer them all. Radio Jesus del Gran Poder told me they received about eight to ten reports a week, and tried to answer them all. An order of five hundred pennants was gone in less than a year, with most of those going to DXers.

I believe that it has become more difficult to verify Latins in recent years. A number of factors can be at work here. First, most of the new stations coming on the air are in remote areas. They are far smaller and simpler than the stations which were on the air in the 1960s and 1970s.

Many of those older stations, located in principal cities, are now inactive on SW. The staffs at the new stations are smaller, and often hold other jobs. The stations often don't have the funds to hire a secretary, or to have fancy stationery and envelopes. They are less equipped to answer any letter.

I believe Latin America's economic problems are having a great effect on verification policies. Most Latin Americans, including the stations, aren't as prosperous as they were in the 60s and 70s when the Latin economies were booming. Thanks to its oil industry and diversified agriculture, Ecuador is the one country in South America which has a stable economy. This seems to be reflected in the verification practices of Ecuadorian stations. During my travels, I was given more pennants by Ecuadorian stations, than by those in all the other countries combined. On the other hand, Peru and Bolivia are among the most difficult countries to verify. Their economies have been depressed throughout most of the 1980s.

### ●ANTI-AMERICAN?

One of the more interesting questions which I've been asked is whether or not anti-American sentiment contributes to Latin American stations failing to respond to reports from US DXers.

There is a considerable amount of negative feeling in Latin America towards the United States. Latin Americans in general do not like the way the United States dominates them. Too often, in their view, the US government has put political stability and the interests of American business before democratic rights. Even if some of that has changed, many still are not willing to trust the US.

However, Latin Americans separate the people from the government. Probably because the people themselves in Latin America have so often lived under governments they don't respect or agree with, Latin Americans do not automatically assume that a person agrees with, and is responsible for, the actions of his government.

I can't imagine any Latin American radio station would adopt a policy of not verifying American reception reports because they don't like US political policy. They will look at reports non-politically, unless you give them reason to think of politics. So, I certainly don't advocate discussing politics in reports! Nor do I recommend using stationery or envelopes with U.S. flags imprinted on them. Avoid red-white-and-blue mania. You could be interpreted as the jingoistic American which Latin Americans don't like. No point in missing out on a QSL just because of politics.

### ●BLAME THE POST OFFICE?

Quite often, Latin American post offices are given the blame for reports not being answered - the reports or replies being either lost or stolen in the mails. Although I don't doubt it happens, I believe the Latin post offices, like their American counterpart, are much better than they are given credit for. During my three years living in Honduras, to my knowledge, only one thing mailed to me never arrived, and only one letter written home didn't make it. In my travels in South America, to the best of my knowledge, all my letters made it to their destinations, and everything mailed to me at various maildrops made it, except a few things lost in Peru due to a mail strike.

### ●GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

It's time to get down to the basics - the actual reception report. It is my observation, having seen many reports at stations I visited, that the people who are willing to put in that extra effort into reception reporting are, by and large, the ones who receive those fine QSLs. The only real secret behind Latin American QSLing is lots of effort.

Politeness is more important than most DXers imagine. Latin Americans are in general more polite than Americans. To the DXer, this means stating things in an indirect and roundabout manner. Don't say "Please verify my reception report with your QSL card or letter". Instead say something like "If it is at all possible, I would be very grateful to receive a letter from your station verifying that my report is correct." The latter is how a Latin American would likely word a similar request. We do the same thing in English - think of how you would handle making a request of a subordinate versus making one of your boss. I think the difference is that in English our normal level of politeness is much lower than it is in Spanish. When

writing reports to the Latins (especially when making requests) be on your best, and most polite, behavior.

Obviously, reports should be written in Spanish (Brazilians in Portuguese) unless the station is known to accept reports in another language (e.g. certain US missionary stations). That can be a problem if you don't speak the language. There are several ways of getting around this problem.

One method of reporting is the fill-in-the-blank report form. Usually these are trilingual (English, Spanish & French), and the DXer simply needs fill in the appropriate data. When asked, station personnel all said these were very cold and impersonal, and they didn't like them.

Many clubs, including NASWA, have four or five page guides to writing reports in other languages. Those are fine except the reports end up sounding alike. Chilean DXer Carlos Toledo Verdugo, who serves as veri-signer of Radio Agricultura and Radio Nacional de Chile, told me how after he had received a number of reports he noticed that many of them seemed to have been written by the same person - because they were almost word for word identical. I brought this up with personnel at several stations and received similar responses.

There are really only two acceptable ways of writing Spanish reception reports: either learn to speak the language with near-fluency, or use Gerry Dexter's Language Lab. Language Lab has so many different ways of saying things, that reports tailor-made with it won't look just like three other ones the station has received this week. It's something that should have been done years ago.

However, there should be more to a reception report than just telling a station that you heard them and asking for a veri. Our writings reflect our cultural values, but we must be aware that they may be very different from those of Latin America. To give an example, a Latin American who wants to succeed in the US soon learns the value of promptness in American culture, a situation quite different from that of his own culture. DXers tend to be like the immigrant latino who hasn't yet discovered that he better be prompt if he wants to hold a job. We apply our cultural standards to reception reports, even though the readers have different standards.

As Americans, we like to get to the point. Our society values "getting down to business". This is reflected in DX reports. All the reporting guides that I've seen, and almost all of the reports I've seen at stations, start out in the same way - by saying some variation of "Hi, I heard your station on XX date, please verify." It's a good American to-the-point approach.

However, Latin Americans are a very social people. For Latin Americans, getting right to the point in a business situation or meeting is considered very rude. Before business can be done, the participants chat a while. Some pleasant flatteries and personal information is exchanged. Some of the topics may seem highly personal to an American, especially if the participants don't know each other well. But, this is the Latin way of doing business.

Unfortunately, reporting guides do not allow for flattery or personal information. Language Lab took a step in the right direction, with sections on personal information and questions for the station. Those are a great beginning, but it would be impossible to come up with enough such sentences, in book form, to fit the wide variety of individuals in the hobby. Something more is needed.

First, let's take a look at flattery. Consider the letters you have received from Latin stations. Note that it often takes at least a paragraph before they say anything. The letters start out with a bunch of flattering phrases which do not convey any real information. Similarly, reception reports should start out with some flowery phrases for the station - something like this:

"Esteemed Sir: My most sincere and heartfelt greetings to you and the entire staff of your great station, Radio Lapequena, voice of the illustrious city/province of Pina Azul. I know you have all worked very hard to make Radio Lapequena such an excellent and enjoyable station to listen to. I wish you continued the continued success which your labors have earned you."

Can you imagine starting out a report to a MW station in Des Moines this way? They would probably look at your return address to see which institution you were living in. But, this is typical of Latin American letters.

After a bit of flattery, tell something about yourself. A report to a Latin American station should be chatty and personal. A good rule of thumb is to tell about yourself as you would in your first letter to a new foreign penpal. For Latin American stations, it's probably impossible to tell too

much about yourself. The restriction is how much postage you're willing to pay!

Reports embedded in a chatty, personal letter are more likely to be answered than short and to-the-point reception reports. I've looked at over a thousand reception reports, and it's not just coincidence that those DXers best known for receiving Latin American veris tend to write long chatty personal letters with the reception report coming towards the end. That does not mean you have to take a lot of time to write reports, either. For the most part, these DXers send the same stock formulaic paragraphs to every station.

To put this into practice, I highly recommend that you compose a couple of stock sentences of flattery to have translated into Spanish. Make up your own - don't use my example above, because probably everybody else will, and then you'll just all sound the same. Yes, I know it's hard if you're not used to writing that way. Also, write up a page or two about yourself, your family, and your community - any kind of personal information. If you don't speak good Spanish yourself, get someone who does to translate it.

Connected with the idea of personal information, is the role of titles. Like most of us, Latin Americans find titles impressive. In English we don't use them that much - for the most part, just for doctors, clergy, and politicians. Fortunately for some of us, Latin Americans are more liberal with the use of titles than we are in English - and if one of these fit you, you certainly should use it in your return address on LAm reports. Latin American lawyers usually preface their name with "abogado" (e.g. Abogado Jaime Castillo). Similarly, if you are an engineer of any type, you can use "ingeniero" (Ingeniero Ana Fernandez), and if you are a teacher (any grade, kindergarten to adult ed), you can use "profesor" (Profesor Tomas Valencia).

## ● VERIE SIGNERS

Addressing reports to specific veri-signers has often been very useful. At some stations a specific person is designated to answer reports, at others one person just happens to be inclined to answer them. Generally, I recommend addressing letters to specific veri-signers whenever possible. However, if the v/s is a secretary or announcer, and the QSL report that names the v/s is over a year old, I might hesitate before using that name, unless there is a long history of that person issuing veris from that particular station. Staff members do change jobs and move on. If the v/s is an owner or manager, they are less likely to have changed.

One thing to keep in mind, regarding veri-signers, is that Latin Americans are more status conscious than Americans. In several instances, I was unable to verify a station during a visit because the person in charge, a director, or a manager was absent. At Radio Nacional de Mendoza, in Argentina, for example, a secretary refused to verify my report in the manager's absence. He was due back from a meeting, but although I stopped by the station five times that day and the next, he had still not arrived by the time I left town.

At other stations I was more fortunate. Although the secretary or announcer would not verify my report - it being far too important for her to take care of, I was able to see the manager and get my report verified. However, what usually happened in these situations, is that the secretary verified my report in the end. I would have a nice chat with the manager, and then when the topic of verifying reports came up, the manager would have the secretary or an announcer take care of it. There were only a few cases where the manager actually did the verifying. There, in fact, were a few isolated cases where secretaries went ahead and verified reports on their own, without consulting the manager, but at most stations they would not.

It can be deduced, therefore, that sometimes even though a secretary or announcer signs a veri, they do not do so because they wanted to verify our report, but rather because the manager told them to (although in some cases, the manager would probably have the secretary type up the letter, and then sign it himself). In this case, a letter addressed to the veri-signer would not likely get a reply. Therefore, while I would send the first report to any known veri-signer, if the v/s is a secretary or announcer (or other non-administrative staff), I would probably address at least some of my follow-ups to the manager. After all, he might still be the one calling the shots, as to which reports do or do not get answered.

An alternative approach is to address your report to a particular program. Most Latin American stations, especially those in the smaller cities and towns, do not have set formats, but have programs of different types of music throughout the day. For example, the first program after sign-on for most stations is one of folk music aimed at the campesinos or

peasant farmers. Later in the day the station will have programs of romantic music for housewives, and rock or pop music for teenagers, with a radio soap opera thrown in for good measure. A Central American station may have separate programs of ranchera and tropical music, a Peruvian of huaynos and pasillos.

Each of these programs has a name. A morning program may be called something like "Mananitas Campesinas" or "Buenos Dias Campesino". Usually the same announcer does the program daily, so addressing a report to the specific program name is as good as addressing it to the announcer. Of course, this requires having good enough Spanish to pick out the program name, usually given at the beginning of the program.

Check the log sections of hobby publications to see if other DXers have reported a program name at that particular time. As stations very rarely change program names, taking one out of a log column two or three years old is probably not a problem. However, be sure to check the day of the week. Programs on Saturday and Sunday are usually different from the Monday to Friday ones. (On a very few occasions, I have actually heard announcers give their names on the air - obviously if you can pick one out, that can also be helpful, even if all you have is the first name. You could try addressing your report to "Rafael, el locutor de Mananitas Campesinas".)

## ●PROGRAM DETAILS

While v/s at La Voz del Junco, I verified about twenty reports for the station. Since La Voz del Junco was my local station, I was familiar enough with the station's programming, the canned ID announcements, the advertisers, etc, that for most of the reports I received, simply reading the DXer's program details was enough to convince me that they had heard the station. There were a few reports I wasn't sure of, and I showed those to owner/manager Antonio Hasbun. He read them and nodded his head. He didn't check any program log - to my knowledge, they didn't even have one.

I think this pattern is true of most Latin American stations - no one compares our reports to detailed station logs to see if they are accurate. Instead, they read the details, and if the details seem to agree with what they know the station airs at that time, they assume you heard them. Because of this, logging minute by minute accounts, telling them the exact minutes they played "musica tropical" and the exact minutes there was a man talking, are probably a waste of time. General program details will probably do the trick. Specific things which will be useful are ID texts, time announcement texts (if there is a consistent pattern), and details about ads or other announcements. All of these impress stations - possibly because they require some knowledge of Spanish and are rather rare in DX reports.

Unless your details are clearly contradictory to their programming (e.g. you say they play huaynos when they really had on Julio Iglesias), they will probably assume you heard them. It's sort of like innocent until proven guilty. However, because of this, LAm QSLs seriously can not be taken as absolute proof that the station was heard.

Remember that small Latin American stations do not understand UTC and SINPO. Time should be given in their local time (if in doubt for multiple time zone countries, give time of capital city and clearly mark it as such). Comments on reception quality should be written in clear concise sentences. I was always amazed by how many reports that I saw used UTC and SINPO.

While at La Voz del Junco, the only report I never verified was a one page letter/report printed on a word processor. The only details given were "station ID and folk music". The DXer, whom I had never heard of before, enclosed three IRCs. Less than a week later, an identical report arrived from the same person, also with three IRCs. A few days later I received a third copy, again with three IRCs. I responded, explaining that I couldn't verify the report due to insufficient details, and suggested that he send a tape or another report with better details. Within another week, before he could have received my reply, I received two more copies of the report, again with three IRCs each.

I never heard from him again, although I did see several copies of the same report, identical except for station name, frequency, time, and date at several stations I visited in South America. I feel that his reports were probably fakes, he had a lot of money to throw around. With all those IRCs, he spent about \$15 on La Voz del Junco in just three weeks. If I had not written back, I wonder how many more he would have sent. This is not the only case of faked reports that I know of. At Honduras's Radio Luz y Vida and Ecuador's Radio Bahai, I had station staff point out to me obviously faked reports they had received.

## ● RETURN POSTAGE

DXers probably differ in attitude more on return postage than any other aspect of QSLing the Latins. Some DXers claim that including return postage is of utmost necessity, while others claim to get just as many replies by not including it. There is disagreement as to what type of return postage to include - IRCS, mint stamps, or a US dollar bill.

The necessity of enclosing return postage is more a function of the size of the station than anything else. Large prosperous stations, such as most of the stations in Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, probably should not need return postage. Sending a few letters or cards overseas each week is not a drain on their finances. What is more important is just getting someone on the staff interested in answering your letter. For that, other enclosures are more important.

Yet, even though I have received QSLs from many of these stations without enclosing return postage, I hesitate to say that return postage should always be skipped for larger stations. Enclosure of a SASE may make it easier for an announcer or engineer to respond to your report. Unlike the secretary, people in these positions may not have easy access to the station's petty cash. Replying may require extra effort on their part. Also, the economic crisis in Latin America is probably affecting the large stations too. If the manager wants to cut corners, he may prohibit unnecessary expenditures - such as buying stamps to answer reception reports.

What kind of return postage to include? Surely not IRCs. On my station visits I saw dozens of reception reports with IRCs stapled or paperclipped to them. Even some otherwise authoritative articles recommend the use of them. Yet sending IRCs to Latin America is like throwing your money away.

In most Latin American countries, exchanging IRCs for postage stamps is nearly impossible. In many countries, such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Honduras, they can only be exchanged in the main post office in the capital city, making them virtually worthless in communities elsewhere in the country. In at least two countries, Ecuador and Honduras, one has to go to the philately office in the main post office and fill out some official forms first. In Ecuador, the post office only accepts a certain quota each month. If one arrives after the monthly quota has been filled, they are rejected. One small station in Quito told me that HCJB takes IRCs to the main post office for redemption on the first of every month, and accounts for a sizeable share of the quota. I have heard of difficulties in exchanging IRCs in Bolivia, Chile, and Brazil also.

There are a few exceptions to the "No IRCs" rule. Some stations, especially a few missionary stations, are willing to go to the extra trouble to exchange IRCs. At least one, HRVC in Honduras, sends IRCs to its main office in the USA to be exchanged there (which, they say, is easier than trying to exchange them at the main national post office, just six blocks away). Additionally, there are a few stations where the veri-signers are DXers, and they appreciate IRCs, since they can then enclose the IRCs in their reports to other radio stations. But, unless it is known for certain that a particular Latin American station accepts IRCs, they should not be included. Knowing for certain does not mean that another DXer received a QSL from Radio La Pequena in Peru for 2 IRCs. Those IRCs are probably still clipped to his report. Something else prompted them to answer.

Mint (unused) stamps from the country to which your report is headed - or better yet, a SASE - should be the preferred form of return postage. If you put the stamps on an envelope, not only does it save the station from having to address an envelope to you, but, it makes it more difficult to use them on another letter. This means, of course, that you won't receive your reply in an official embossed station envelope. However if writing to most of the small stations in the Peruvian hinterlands, that won't be a problem. These stations often have a difficult time just scraping up enough money for a rubber stamp and ink pad. Embossed envelopes? Dream on! In fact, these stations may not even want to spend the two cents it costs to buy an airmail envelope, if you don't include one.

For larger stations, such as most of those in Venezuela and Colombia, it's probably ok to put the stamps in loose. Still, I personally prefer using a SASE even for the larger stations.

The main problem with mint stamps is the relative cost. There are two organizations in the US which sell mint stamps (Bill Plum, 12 Glenn Road, Flemington, NJ 08822 and DX Stamp Service, 7661 Roder Parkway, Ontario, NY 14519). They do a good job, and I believe they sell at fair prices. When one realizes that the entire stock for a particular country can become worthless overnight due to a currency devaluation and rise in postage.

However, buying mint stamps from them has the same problem as buying IRCs - vastly inflated prices over real terms. Mint stamps for a particular country may cost the DXer anywhere from \$1.00 to \$1.50, yet be worth U.S. 20 to 40 cents. Additionally, there is the problem that if you buy the stamps too far ahead, you may be stuck with worthless stamps.

Sending a dollar bill seems to be growing in popularity. It has several advantages. First, at least for American DXers, they are easily obtainable. Also, they have a fixed value - unlike mint stamps and IRCs which cost more than they are actually worth. For the station, dollar bills are nice, in that not only will they pay for verifying the report, but there's enough left over that the v/s can go out and have a beer afterwards. However he could decide to forego the verifying and have two beers. There's also the possibility that enclosing a dollar bill might make your report more likely to be stolen in the post office.

I have heard rumors that some DXers have begun including \$5 bills with their reports. I firmly believe that this will be bad for our hobby. Sending out or promising such sums only promotes a negative image of the greedy, rich American and encourages "selling" verifications. Those DXers who are willing and can afford it, may wish to offer financial assistance to a small station after it has QSLed.

## ● ENCLOSURES

It is often useful to include a small gift, a picture postcard or two, cancelled stamps for collectors at the stations, local tourist-site pamphlets, or a Christmas card at the appropriate time of year.

For other enclosures, clip from any good (and positive) article about the station's country from newspapers and magazines. Even if no one there can read English, it may impress them. Send a picture of yourself and your radio equipment, or your family. Some stations do hang those up. Of course if you have ever been in that country send a picture from the trip. For example, all my Peruvian reports now include a copy of a picture of Theresa and I with Macchu Picchu in the background.

If one is really serious about QSLing a particular station, and cost isn't a factor, there are all kinds of things to try. At times I have sent university pennants, 45 rpm records, and on one occasion a Pennsylvania Dutch Hex sign. My reply was apparently hexed; I never received one!

A taped report is one way to combine a gift and the reception data. A letter should still be included, but for program details about five minutes of the reception, preferably including an ID, is recorded on the cassette. If reception is not of a quality that your non-DXing friends or spouse can understand, it is likely that the station staff can't either. A quality recording is necessary. You might complete the cassette with some recorded music, possibly the latest rock.

I'm not particularly fond of prepared card veris, preferring a letter or card that originates with the station. Based on my experience in Latin America, my view changed. I now believe a prepared card should go with every report, with the exception of those stations known to issue their own cards, e.g. Ecos del Torbes, Radio Quito.

So many stations include letters, their own cards, etc, along with the ppc that I can't imagine any station decides to verify with the ppc in lieu of sending its own veri. I think in the cases where the returned ppc is all that is received, then the station decided to verify with the ppc in lieu of not verifying at all. Basically, a SASE and ppc make it quick and easy to issue a veri if the station likes you, but doesn't have time to do more. I know that some DXers send blank ppcs, but, to make things easy for the station, I suggest typing in relevant data on the card, so that all the station has to do is sign and seal it and maybe write in the power.

For LAm stations, I recommend using a standard no frills card. I don't believe picture postcards will work as well in Latin America. My experience using viewcards as ppc QSLs, with rare exceptions, has been poor.

## ● FOLLOW-UPS

No matter how good your reports, there are always a number of stations that don't answer. The key to verifying them is followups. I used to try to hear the station again and type up a brand new report each time. That is probably the best way, but it is time consuming. Later I started making a photocopy of each report and filing it, for follow-up use if needed. Now I use a word processor for reporting, with separate disks for reports to stations in different areas and regions.



Even if you give up on trying to QSL a station after several tries, keep some record of the report. You never know when an opportunity to QSL the station might come up. I've had some luck with sending old reports to stations long after they've left shortwave. Also, there's always the chance of having a veri picked up in person either by yourself or a third party.

Once that sought for QSL arrives, there is still one more step, although way too many DXers ignore it. That is a thank you. It is an extra expense, yet there are many reasons for doing so. Some stations, such as Radio Popular have even stopped QSLing because they never received thanks and assumed that no one appreciated their efforts. All the Spanish and Portuguese sentences you need to thank a station with, are in "The Thank You Lab" in Fine Tunings 1989 Guide to Latin American DXing. These and other language editions of "The Thank You Lab" will become widely available in the upcoming months, thanks to cooperation between Fine Tuning, Tiare Publications, NASWA, and other radio clubs.

## ● CONCLUSION

As noted above, there is no magic answer to Latin American QSLing. Hopefully this article has put things into some perspective. However, taking local cultures, economic factors, and day-to-day living patterns into account in sending reception reports should help edge return rates up in the short run. But, more important, in the long run it should improve the perception stations have of DXers. This article has dealt only with Latin America, but the principals should hold true for most of the "Third World". John Bryant says everything here applies equally to Southeast Asia, except that reports needn't be quite as flowery. Based on discussions I've had with non-DXers familiar with Africa, much of this article could easily transfer to that region too.

A final bit of advice: Be a bit of a gambler. No matter how hard you try, you're going to win some and you're going to lose some. Just when you're ready to say "No more!", some little Peruvian you've long given up on will come through with a veri that'll have you riding in the clouds for weeks. But, if it was predicatable, it wouldn't be fun, would it?

## ● ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING

Berg, Jerry. "Latin American QSLing Made Easy (?)". FRENDX, September, 1985.

Dexter, Gerry. Secrets of Successful QSLing.

Moore, Don. "Peru: Radio Where Foreigners Never Go" in Passport to World Band Radio, 1989 edition.

Perry, Ralph. "Domestic Shortwave Broadcasting in the Andes", in Shortwave Radio Listening with the Experts, Gerry Dexter, ed.