

John Dack, W7KH was 91 years old when he passed away on January 1, 2013. He had held his ham license for 74 years, originally licensed as W7GUV at the age of 17 in 1938. Although he lived on a small lot in West Seattle and had a modest station and antenna, he was number one in the world for the number of DXCC countries he had worked (398), which includes all 340 of the current countries and 58 that are now deleted such as Manchuria and French Indochina. After his death, the Western Washington DX Club obtained his entire QSL card collection of 3,863 cards and the decision was made to put the cards into a database. The process started with the scanning of all cards, front and back. Those card images were then uploaded to an AI system known as Claude. Claude then read all of the info on each card and saved it as text in a file using a standard format.

The next process was to have a team of folks go through each card and compare what was written on the card with what Claude had extracted. Rob, N7QT developed a program that displayed a card's images on the left half of the screen and Claude's data for that card on the right. The reviewer could correct the data as appropriate. While Claude did a great job, almost every card had at least one item that was wrong. The most common problem was having a frequency of 14 Mc interpreted as 40 meters. Claude also had trouble reading the callsign if it was printed over the top of a graphic. Since the cards were handwritten, it was really hard to make out some of the information, requiring the use of some tricks such as a color reversal to make item readable. It was really fun to read those old cards, with cards from famous and infamous hams like Don Miller, Don Wallace, and Gus Browning among the operators. Some of the cards had interesting notes from Claude, such as "Handwritten note on the back: Thanks for the great QSO" The most common station in the 30's and 40's seems to be a 6L6 crystal controlled oscillator driving an 807 final paired with a Hallicrafters receiver. Popular antennas were windoms, zepps, dipoles and long wires.