South African Radio League

Amateur Radio Hall of Fame

Jan Botha, ZS4JAN

Inducted in 2026



Personal Biography

I was born in 1972 and licensed as ZS4JAN in 2003.
I've been shortwave listening from as early as I can remember. Radio was the only electronic medium of receiving news when living in a rural farm community. I've built my first crystal radio when I was 9 years old. The design was obtained from a book **See and make Series. Modern Crystal Sets by RH Warring** at the local town library. To be able to receive a radio station with this simple design got me hooked. I wanted to improve on the crystal radio design and set my focus again to the library. Here I found **The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs**.
The wonderful world of amateur radio got me asking around in town and I've met my amateur radio Elmer Frans Heidler ZS4AE. I joined him in many antenna activities while he explained to me the technical side of the hobby, talking to me as if I was a peer. He gave me my first QSL card.
I was halted by the imposed age restriction of 16 years in South Africa, and the current cost of a basic receiver. Forced military duty followed, and on 3 May 2003 I passed my Morse code test at 18 wpm. The CW test was completed in Welkom under the supervision of Johan Roos ZS4KB, Nico Schoonwinkel ZS4NS and Martin Scwella ZS4MS. I also joined the SARL on this day as advised by Johan ZS4KB.
Two weeks later 17 May 2003 I completed the Amateur Radio examination in Bloemfontein under the supervision of Dennis Green ZS4BS and Martin Scwella ZS4MS. I received the test results on 22 May 2003 and passed as the only ZS candidate. I received my unrestricted call sign ZS4JAN as requested.

A month after receiving my call sign I entered my first contest and won the rookie class in the 2003 SARL CW contest. I was bestowed the SARL Akyab Trophy for winning the CW class

in my first year being licensed. The Akyab Trophy can only be received in your first year of receiving an amateur radio license. This award set the ball rolling in becoming a self-proclaimed Awards Hunter. This personal chase forced me to improve my station with a restricted budget, but with a wealth of technical knowledge.

Award hunting made me start a booklet currently consisting of 188 pages called **ZS4JAN Awards and Certificates** to keep track of various records, medals, plaques and certificates. The total awards count is 9437 awards.

My first amateur radio was a Kenwood TS120S. I found this radio in a scrap box about to be discarded. All the parts needed to complete the radio were on hand in my Wireless Communications workshop.

My first Yaesu was the FT901DM. Since then, I completed the FT901 collection. The FT901DM was also the foundation for my current Yaesu collection. I'm collecting all Yaesu items including logbooks, baseball caps and clocks. My Yaesu collection is listed on https://www.qrz.com/db/zs4jan with an inventory list. My love for valves/tubes got me started in a small vacuum tube collection that is also present on QRZ.com. There is also a book collection of The ARRL Handbook for Radio Amateurs.

Professional Biography

My professional career started in 1990 Bloemfontein as an electrician. I joined the South African Air Force for 21 years. I qualified as an aircraft electrician. After my qualification period I converted to an Avionics Technician qualified in aircraft electrical, instrumentation, radio and radar. I specialized in electronic warfare, Sperry 3D compass systems, Racal navigation, Flight Craft navigation, AMC navigation, and as a vibration specialist for Helitune systems.

Aircraft types on my list of qualifications were Impala MK1 & MK2, Oryx Helicopter, Alouette Helicopter and Sabre Canadair. The restoration project of the Sabre 367 Canadair aircraft took 3 years, running from 1997-2000 and is now resting at Swartkops Air Force Museum. I received a plaque for this project as member no.14. I was also a qualified Civil Air Aviation Technical Inspector (BSPT024) for over 16 years.

I am now working as an Advanced Diagnostic Engineer at a medical device company called Beckman Coulter for the past 15 years. I support, maintain and repair laboratory instruments in five pathology disciplines. I specialize in the Chemistry and Immuno Chemistry fields.

I am also the sole proprietor of Wireless Communications since 1 January 1994, an electronics business in the repair, design, supply environment and licensed ICASA radio dealer. I'm also trading as JB Custom Engineering with a fully equipped machine shop. Here I incorporate electronic and mechanical engineering to the HAM community and private sector.

Bloemfontein Amateur Radio Club– BARC (ZS4BFN)

I joined BARC in September 2002 as a member one year prior to receiving my Amateur Radio license.
In 2003, I was elected as the clubhouse manager for BARC at Air Force Base Bloemspruit till ending 2008.
In 2003, I was elected as vice chairman for BARC.
In 2007 & 2008, I was elected as the chairman for BARK.
Under my leadership BARC became the #1 contest club in South Africa receiving several SARL awards as listed in the SARL awards directory.
In 2008 as chairman for BARC we host the SARL annual general meeting in Bloemfontein. An event over 3 days at 4 venues, starting at Boyden Observatory, and ending at ZS9X super contest station. This was an unbeatable SARL AGM never to be matched again.
Together with BARC members I assisted in several Osram motor rallies and Caledon 400 motor rallies by supplying field communications during the events.
Martin ZS4MS and I presented several radio communications classes to the Voortrekkers in support of their radio communications field pin.
I sponsored for several years ICASA licenses for 3 local repeaters, BBS and ZS4BFN club callsign.
In 2023, I presented workshops on the logbook Winlog32 by Collin G0CUZ. The workshop entails installation, setup and basic logbook functions.
On 4 May 2024, I was presented the BARC honorary life membership by the chairman Herman ZS4HJ.
On 5 October 2024 during the BARC annual general meeting, I suggested that club membership must be changed to accommodate new members that cannot afford membership fees. BARK membership will now have different membership levels. Gold status for full membership and enjoy all the club privileges and voting. Silver members at a cheaper rate and Bronze members get free membership with limited privileges. Added to the BARK membership changes is a swop shop that allows for any type of item to be swopped, even non-Amateur Radio equipment. The new changes were accepted, and this makes BARC the first club in South Africa with these 2 unique options.

ZS9X Super Contest Station

In 2006 under the leadership of Bernie ZS4TX, I assisted as a team member in building the super contest station ZS9X on the outskirts of Bloemfontein at De Brug military base.
The team members consisted of team leader Bernie ZS4TX, Jan ZS4JAN, Barney ZS4U, John ZS4S, Dennis ZS4BS. This station played host to several local and international guests and set new world records as an M2 contest station.
In 2006 ZS9X competed in the CQ WW ssb. The team leaders were Bernie ZS4TX, Jan ZS4JAN, Barney ZS4U, John ZS4S, Edwin ZS5BBO, and Dennis ZS4BS.
In 2008 ZS9X competed in the CQ WW ssb contest. I was honored to be part of world class contesters. The team leaders were Bernie ZS4TX, Chris ZS6EZ, Donovan ZS2DL, Jan ZS4JAN, and Barney ZS4U. ZS9X set a standing world record as a multi-multi station.
In 2009 ZS9X competed in the IARU HF Championship ssb. The team was Jan ZS4JAN, Jan ZS6HA, Johan ZS2CX, Ronnie ZS4RY, and John ZS4S.
In 2009 ZS9X competed in the CQ WW SSB. The team leaders were Bernie ZS4TX, Jan ZS4JAN, Barney ZS4U, John ZS4S, Ronnie ZS4RY, and Dennis ZS4BS.

ZS Contest Group (ZT4T)

On 21 September 2008 I started the ZS Contest Group. This group was under my leadership and was not structured as a club. The ZT4T callsign was issued to me permanently by ICASA after a presentation at their Johannesburg head office.
The group was started because I saw the lack of contest experience in South Africa with regards to technical knowledge of hardware, antennas and software, how to do pre-contest planning, during the contest, and after the contest, log submission and statistic data.
I used my contest callsign ZT4T during special events and contests to share my contest skills and knowledge.
ZT4T also received the SARL Club Trophy in 2009.
ZT4T has a total of 15 WAZS endorsements up to WAZS-500.
ZT4T is active every year during the World amateur Radio Day (WARD) special event with special event QSL cards distributed through the SARL QSL bureau.
On 18 April 2020 I demonstrated that the WAZS certificate can be achieved in one day starting 08h00 – 18h32 UTC. I was active as ZT4T during the 2020 WARD and achieved WAZS mixed and WAZS-40m.

South African Radio Relay League (SARL)

3 May 2003 I joined the SARL in good standing with unbroken membership till current.
September 2007 I joined the SARL/HMO (Hermanus Magnetic Conservatorium) 40m beacon project and managed the beacon on behalf of the SARL. The SARL 40m Beacon Project was news bulletined on 9 September 2007.
2007 I wrote a few news articles for Radio ZS:

- QSL kaarte.
- Sukses met Veldstasies.
- Sukses met HF kompetisies #1.
- Sukses met HF kompetisies #2.
- Windows beheerde radios.

2007 I was a guest speaker at the SARL Intech net. Tjerk ZS6P had an interview with me on 2 subjects:

- Awards
- QSL cards

2008 during the RTA at the University of Port Elizabeth I was chosen as a member of 4 to be on a panel to oversee the SARL vision for the next 5 years.
2009 at the SARL annual general meeting in Cape Town I was presented with the WAZS-1000 and WAZS-500 plaques. This was a historic achievement in the WAZS program and the sponsored plaques from Chris Burger ZS6EZ at Superb Flight Training were presented to me with the one and only WAZS-1000 plaque.
20 April 2024 at the SARL AGM held in Cape Town I sadly announced my retirement from SARL and ZS contesting. The contest and awards committee stated on several past occasions that it is time I granted somebody else a contest win and that I have enough contest trophies. I grew tired of this complaint and the modern way of everybody is a winner.
17 May 2025 I was present at the SARL AGM that was hosted in Centurion at the Royal Elephant Conference Lodge. This event also celebrated the SARL 100th anniversary from

1925-2025 and PARC (Pretoria ARC) 95th anniversary. I was the author for the motivation for the SARL Hall Of Fame for Donovan ZS2DL who was inducted during the celebration event.

Amateur Radio Equipment build under the Wireless Communications logo

Equipment that I have built for Amateur Radio use over the years is as follows:

- Unmanned ICASA licensed 40m beacon pic controlled at 500mWatt. The beacon is solar-powered and controlled from the GSM network with the callsign **ZS0BOT**. This was the second unmanned ICASA licensed 40m beacon in SARL history, and the first SARL beacon to be managed from the GSM network. The callsign **ZS0BOT** was issued to me by ICASA on 21 September 2008.
- SO2R controllers for the ZS4JAN and ZT4T contest stations.
- DigiLink USB interface for digital modes. Bernie ZS4TX has tested my original version on many successful DXpeditions.
- Co-ax surge arrestors – low power, and up to 3kWatt.
- Rotator surge arrestors
- FM radios
- Frequency Counters for HF/VHF/UHF
- CIV interfaces
- LC meters
- CW beacons
- Foxhunt beacons
- Fox Tango International registered Yaesu collector and restorer.
- Optibeam yagi antennas.
- Advanced Amateur Radio station design, development and setup.

<u>Other Achievements</u>

South African Radio League member in good standing since 3 May 2003
ICASA Amateur Radio Operator's Certificate Class A since 7 July 2003
ICASA licensed Radio Amateur **ZS4JAN** since 22 May 2003
ICASA licensed unmanned HF beacon **ZS0BOT** since 21 September 2008
ICASA licensed class A permanent callsign **ZT4T** since 21 September 2008

I was part of the following contest groups:
ZS4BFN_2003 - current
RSGB Commonwealth Team Africa_2008, 2009, 2010
ZS9X_2006 - 2010
ZT4T_2008 - current

RSGB Commonwealth Team Africa – 2008, 2009, 2010
In 2008, I joined Team Africa to compete in the RSGB Commonwealth CW contest.
Team Africa consisted of team leader Andrew Roos ZS6AA, Jan ZS4JAN, Gwyn 3B8/G4FKH, Nick 5X1NH, Brian 9J2BO, Bhavani VU2LYX, Vidi ZS1EL, Donovan ZS2DL, John ZS3/G3LZQ, Joop ZS6WR. The team all received bronze medals.

In 2008, I started the ZS Contest Group and steered SARL contesting and awards hunting to

new heights.
The results are recorded in the SARL Awards Directory under ZT4T and ZS4JAN, and ZS6EZ home page.

In 2009, I've reached the historic milestone of WAZS 1000. At the time I was the only person to have submitted an application for any WAZS level higher than WAZS-500

Building a full SO2R (single operator 2 radio) contest station. The two Yaesu FT1000MP's, antennas, amplifiers, low pass filter stacks, microphone headset and footswitch with station lockout control are controlled by PC software N1MM+ and can be set for full software control or manual control. My SO2R station functionality was tested for many years with proven results in the SARL awards program.

In June 2021, I was interviewed by Seiji Okumura JK1KSB from Tokyo. He is the columnist for DX World-High Band DXing in the JA CQ magazine. The interview was conducted for the August 2021 publication on page 179. The interview scoped on personal background, interest in Amateur Radio and current equipment in use.

In 2021, I was interviewed by Bill AJ8B from South West Ohio DX Association (SWODXA). The interview and article were about me, my station and DX in general, and was conducted for the March 2023 publication on page 51.SWODXA are also the sponsors for Dayton Hamvention, various DXpeditions and the DXpedition of the year award .

In May 2022, I was interviewed by Anette Jacobs for the SARL 100 book to be released at the SARL 100 year's celebration in 2025.

On 10 January 2022, I was inducted to the Ernst Krenkel World Amateur Radio Hall of Fame #190 for my contribution to Amateur Radio.
In 2023, I started with workshops on the logbook Winlog32. This led me to write user guides to assist Winlog32 users.
There are currently 3 user guides named:

1. Winlog32 – Introduction and Basic Guide
2. Winlog32 – Advanced User Guide
3. Winlog32 – Contest User Guide

Contest Records

2004 CQ WPX all band low power Rookie ssb (record for South Africa)
2005 CQ WW DX _ SO LP10m ssb (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2005 CQ WW DX _ SP LP 10m cw (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2005 CQ WPX 10m low power Rookie cw (record for South Africa)
2006 CQ WPX all band low power Rookie cw (record for South Africa)
2006 CQ WW DX _ SO LP 40m (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2007 CQ WW DX _ SO LP 40m (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2008 CQ WW DX _ SO LP 40m (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2009 CQ WW DX _ SO LP 40m (All Time Winner by Country and Category)
2009 CQ WW DX _ SO LP 20m (Records for South Africa & Zone 38)

Awards summary

My award hunting made me start a booklet consisting of 188 pages called **ZS4JAN Awards and Certificates** to keep track of various records, certificates, awards, plaques and medals. The total awards count is +9437.
Some highlights are:

- ET Krenkel Medal #190 (hall of fame)
- RSBG Team Africa bronze medals 2008, 2009, 2010
- ARRL 8 band DXCC plaque, mixed, cw, phone, digital
- QRZ awards: reference QRZ.com/ZS4JAN
- SARL Top Band: phone, cw, QRP (cw and QRP are the only endorsements to date) 3 times endorsed
- SARL AAA – 6 band 9 times endorsed
- WAZS-500 plaque (there are only 3 recipients for this plaque. I am #2)
- WAZS-1000 plaque (I am the **only** recipient for this plaque)
- WAZS TOTAL – 81 times endorsed (top runner)
- WAZS-2300 MIXED (1st to reach and top runner)
- WAZS-2100 SSB (1st to reach and top runner)
- WAZS-2100 40m (1st to reach and top runner)
- WAZS-1200 80m (1st to reach since 1959 and top runner)
- WAZS-300 Digital (1st to reach since 1959 and top runner)
- WAZS-200AM (1st and **only** AM issue ever since 1959)
- Jack Twine Award
- Akyab Trophy 2003 (1st year cw winner. You can only receive this in your Rookie year. A 1 shot trophy)
- SARL Contest trophies TOTAL– 56 trophies (top runner)
- SARL August Premier contest consist of 7 categories with trophies. (I have won all 7 categories in 2019 & 2022. I am the **only** person to ever win all 7 trophies in this single event)
- Pretoria Award #175
- PEARS QRP (max endorsed up to 100)
- PEARS cw award (max endorsed up to 1000)
- PEARS HF Century award #001 Gold (1st and **only** issue since start in 2004. This award took me 22 years to complete. Reference PEARS QSX May 2024 p.13 newsletter)
- Highway Amateur Radio Club Award
- ZS4BFN – Honorary life member since 4 May 2024
- ZS4BFN – various club awards

Web links

1. www.krenkelmedal.org (ET Krenkel hall of fame #190)
2. https://www.qrz.com/db/ZS4JAN (QRZ awards)
3. sarl.org.za/public/ news/read arch.asp?file=../../bulletins/sarlnews 20070908.txt (SARL 40m Beacon Project & BARC chairman)

4. CQ WW Contest - All Time Phone Records - Africa (kkn.net) (ZS4JAN & ZS9X CQ WW all time phone records)