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Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club



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Field Day 2005

June 25-26, 2005

Prologue:

Once again, the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club displayed its prowess at demonstrating the capabilities of amateur radio during the annual



ARRL Field Day operation. Each year on the fourth weekend of June, amateur radio operators in IARU region 2, encompassing North and South America, take to the field to demonstrate their ability to communicate in non-standard and often difficult operating conditions. During this time, portable equipment is set up away from commercial power mains utilizing gasoline generators and/or other means to power their equipment. It is a time of camaraderie and fellowship among club members and is the most popular amateur radio event nationwide. The purpose of the operation is to demonstrate to the public ham radio's emergency preparedness. During times of emergency and crisis, normal channels of communication are often disrupted. It is during those times that amateur radio may be

the only avenue of communication to the outside world. Field Day is a chance for the amateur radio community to show off its abilities to communicate in adverse conditions to the general public. It is also a *lot of fun* ! The goal is to contact as many stations as possible during a 24

hour period.

The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club again set up camp at the east end of Graham Park in Union City, TN. Coordinators for the event were Glenn, N4MJ, Ron, W9RVR and Jamie, WB4YDL. Preparations

Amateur radio club conducting field test

The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club will be conducting its annual Field Day Operation Saturday and Sunday.

This operational test will be held at Graham Park, on the east side. Visitors are welcome to come, see and participate in the operation.

On these dates amateur radio operators in the 50 United States will be testing their ability to contact each other while using emergency powered equipment. It is an opportunity for developing skills to meet the challenges of emergency preparedness as well as to acquaint the general public with the capabilities of amateur radio.

Portable antenna systems and auxiliary equipment will also be used; tents and motor homes will house equipment and personnel. The club will have several members in the field at any given time around the clock, as a real emergency would require.

Actual operation begins at 1 p.m. on Saturday and will end 24 hours later. There will be stations for various modes, including voice, morse code, digital modes, slow-scan television and satellite communications. A special station will be available for visitors to view and talk on; this station is known as the GOTA or Get On The Air station. This station is provided as an introduction to amateur radio for those interested in the hobby.

In conjunction with Tennessee Amateur Radio Operators (Hams) Field Day operation, Gov. Phil Bredesen has proclaimed this week as Amateur Radio Week.

The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club meets at the Obion County Public Library on the fourth Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. The next meeting will be Thursday.

All interested parties are invited to visit the field day site and/or club meetings. Help is available for anyone wishing to obtain their amateur radio license. For more information, contact Glenn R. Snow at (731) 479-1971.

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for the annual event began in February and it certainly paid off this year. With all the logistical details that had to be considered, we had a very smooth deployment. Again, Tennessee Governor Bredeesen declared this week as Amateur Radio Week and a fine article was written by Glenn, N4MJ and printed on the front page of the Union City Messenger.

City Messenger.

The Setup :

There are three words that describe the weather conditions for Field Day this year, and they all start with the letter H - **Hot, Hazy, and Humid** ! The weather was definitely a challenge with ambient temperatures in the mid 90°F range and heat indices easily in the triple digits. The challenge was met, and met well, with the addition of W9RVR Ron's mobile home and N4SLY Ray's recreation vehicle. Both had air conditioning and a place to sleep during the



long night. W9RVR

Ron's mobile home was the designated location for the phone station, consisting of Ron's Icom IC-746 transceiver and a set of ICE 419A bandpass filters (provided by Steve KQ4UB). N4SLY Ray's RV was the location of the VHF station, consisting of N4MJ Glenn's Yaesu FT-736R. The important thing during set up was to remain hydrated and protected from the sun's damaging UV rays. We took our time during the set up phase and actually began this year on Friday afternoon. This had many advantages, but with the high heat conditions, the obvious was that we wouldn't all be worn out trying to beat the clock the next day. The Field Day event actually gets kicked off on 18Z (1:00 PM CDT) Saturday and lasts 24 hours.

The CW station was positioned a bit further out this year - approximately 250 feet from the nearest station - to help alleviate key click interference to the other stations. Ray, N4SLY provided a very nice screen cabana to house the

station, consisting of WB4YDL Jamie's Elecraft K2/100 with ATU and CMOS-4 keyer. Additionally, there was a set of ICE 419A bandpass filters for interference protection. The Get on the Air (GOTA) station was again positioned in the pavilion for maximal public display and consisted of WB4YDL Jamie's Kenwood TS-440S transceiver. Additionally, an Automatic Position Reporting System (APRS) station was set up in the pavilion with



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WB4YDL Jamie's Yaesu FT-8500, Kantronics KAM+, and an old Toshiba Tecra laptop running the UI-View software. As it turned out, this was the station also responsible for our satellite bonus contact.

Antennas for the operation consisted of 80 meter doublet wire antennas for the GOTA, CW and phone stations used for the low bands of 40 and 80



meters. Also the Force 12 C3S was again positioned atop the AB-577 military mast for the CW station. K9IL Bob's classic TH-32 was again positioned atop a 30 foot push-up mast at the phone station. The VHF station antennae consisted of N4MJ Glenn's 6-element 6 meter beam and a 440/2M AR-270 vertical atop a push-up mast.

All stations again ran 100% emergency power with gasoline-powered generators and bonus points were obtained for running off of solar power for a brief time at the CW

station.

The Operation :

At the 1800 Z start of the event, we found ourselves slightly behind. We quickly regained our 'footing' and proceeded to make contacts on all four stations. Bob, K9IL took a quick start off the line and never looked back, burning up the bands on CW. Ron started off with some technical difficulties with antenna matching which was quickly resolved and then resulted in good runs. Glenn, N4MJ found the conditions on 6 meters quite limited but did manage a handful of contacts. This year, the emphasis for the event was Youth Participation. The public reception area included some handouts provided by the ARRL entitled "Leap into Amateur Radio". Several kids were on hand to take a shot at first contacts



on the ham radio with the assistance of licensed control operators. Bonus points were maximally obtained for this youth participation and they all had a ball. In fact, KQ4UB Steve's young son, John went home to read the radio manuals in the late hours - out loud ! Yes, he was excited ! In addition, Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club's newest member, 14 year old Heather N4SIS, daughter of Stan W4KKK, made several first HF phone contacts. She plans on upgrading her license shortly.



This year, we did not add PSK31 to our event repertoire, simply because everybody was getting a kick out of talking on the GOTA radio. Opportunities to add bonus points to our final score presented themselves in several ways. In addition to reaching over 100 QSO's on the GOTA station, many with the children, a formal message was sent to Section Manager Larry Marshall, WB4NCW who was present on the Tennessee Phone Net on 3980 kHz.

Additionally, the

WIAW Field Day message was copied and posted at the reception area along with propagation news. It should be noted that HF conditions were predictable given that we are at the bottom of the 11 year sunspot cycle. In the end, it boiled down to two active bands - 20 and 40 meters.

Jamie WB4YDL set up for satellite communications by mounting a simple Arrow antenna on a camera tripod, along with a 6 turn helix antenna for 2.4 GHz receive. The 'feeding frenzy' heard on the FM satellites, even AO-51 (Echo) which was configured for V/S operation, was too daunting to snare that contact.



However, after reconfiguring the APRS station for packet communications,

contact was made with a station in Minnesota by utilizing the International Space Station packet digipeater. This contact was worth 100 points ! The Expedition crew members of the ISS were heard on voice on a couple of passes, but their signal was too weak to attempt contact.



Unfortunately, invited elected and appointed officials were a 'no show', so we could not claim those bonus points. The heat was quite sweltering and may have convinced them to check it out next year. The problem is that this hot humid, weather is the

norm, not the exception for Field Day at this latitude !!

The Results :

This year, we had 10 licensed operators and 5 non-licensed individuals making contacts. All 5 of these were less than 18 years old, and one licensed operator, Heather KI4KPB (now N4SIS), also fit this category.

We had several licensed and non-licensed visitors that came away duly impressed with the possibility of joining the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club at a future date.

The final tally of points reached 6044. This includes 930 CW contacts and 470 phone contacts - including 192 GOTA phone contacts. Bonus points were 1350, the same as last year. The final claimed score surpasses last year's fine effort by 600 points ! *Outstanding result !*



Epilogue :



An event of this magnitude could not have been accomplished without the support of our XYL's. Special thanks go out to XYL's Linda (de N4MJ), June (de WB4YDL), "NØWAY" Gladys (de W9RVR), KB9CEX Rose (de K9IL), KN4SLY Dolly (de N4SLY), and Barbara (de KQ4UB). They certainly kept us all fed and watered and contributed mightily to our final outstanding result.

Final standings will be printed in the December issue of QST. The July dinner meeting of the RARC will celebrate our fine effort and ultimate result. Plans are already underway to further improve our scores, but ultimately the emergency preparedness of the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club.

See you on Field Day 2006 !

Soapbox :

Field Day 2005 was the best ever for the RARC. More people participated and more new ops got on the air for the first time. The introduction of a new member of the fraternity to FD ops is always exciting. That first tense moment of actually speaking into the microphone and then hearing someone reply to your words adds exhilaration to the moment - a moment that will be remembered by the new op in his/her introduction to communications via amateur radio. Even those who weren't licensed but made a contact or two under the careful eye of a control op at the GOTA station, will recall that instant of communications with someone far away as a favored moment. For those of us who have been around awhile, well, we still enjoy the contacts, the logging, the hard work to construct stations in the heat, but most of all, I think we enjoyed the camaraderie of being with someone with a similar background and interest in furthering our hobby. I certainly enjoyed helping Heather, N4SIS, Rose, KB9CEX and another visitor named Heather (KD4MSE Wayne's daughter)

get on the air via phone and make their first FD contacts.

Other memories of FD 2005:

Waking up at 01:30 local, looking out the window of my truck and seeing Ray, N4SLY with his cowboy hat on, sitting under the pavilion roof at the GOTA station making contacts. Because of the lighting, it was more of a silhouette of Ray that caught my attention. Nonetheless, he was making contacts when most everyone else was sleeping.

This was the first FD I have attended where we had the "comforts of home" via motor homes. That made FD 2005 'uptown' ! We could actually have some comfort while working all those contacts. Thanks to Ron, W9RVR and Ray, N4SLY for the use of their traveling homes.

I always think of Bob, K9IL sitting out in the CW tent working away and I wondered if I should check on him to see if he needed anything - or would I be bothering him ? I took the chance a couple of times and went visiting. It is difficult to take a photo of someone working CW contacts and make it interesting, so I took a photo through the screen and then sneaked inside to sit beside Bob as he worked contacts. Bob was having a good time as we sat there in the tent working and listening to the CW stations he was working. I enjoyed our momentary chat but kept quiet, as I know how difficult it is to copy CW when someone is talking near you. Bob has his routine down pat - push the button to call CQ FD, answer manually on the key paddles, push the button on the keyer to give the required info and say 73 and thanks, log the contact, push the button to call CQ FD again, ... all that and he's left-handed, too !!!

This year we had visitors who helped construct and tear down the antennas. Pablo and his children were a BIG help. Thanks, Pablo !- you and Estevan and April are welcome to visit us anytime, whether it is FD 2006 or at a club meeting. I really enjoyed talking with you about your experiences in Mexico. And I will always remember what you called my favorite knot - a pig knot, as it is known in Mexico.

How can I stop without saying how much I appreciate the ladies helping with the food ? Your efforts were well organized and the food was outstanding. We had plenty - actually more than plenty. I think everyone brought drinks of one flavor or another and Harold Sheridan, KI4HAI and Steve, KQ4UB brought breakfast sandwiches, as well as my wife, Linda. Jamie, WB4YDL made the early morning coffee, which helped me wake up with the sun.

It was a great experience, a lot of work on everybody's part, and the camaraderie was super ! I am already looking forward to FD 2006 and hope you are too.

73, Glenn N4MJ
President RARC