

R A R C



Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club



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Field Day 2006

June 24-25, 2006

Prologue:

The annual Field Day event is the most popular amateur radio event nationwide. Each year, amateur radio operators take to the fields and mountaintops to display the ability to operate radios in adverse conditions away from the normal commercial power mains. The event is sponsored by the Amateur Radio Relay League and is held on the last weekend of each June. This year is the first Field Day event since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the Gulf Coast region in 2005. During the aftermath, the Congressional oversight committees recognized amateur radio as one of a few things 'that went right' to provide emergency communications when all other avenues of communications failed. Multiple amateur radio operators stayed behind and operated emergency stations in hospitals and other areas to provide desperately needed communications assistance to federal and state authorities. It is with a higher sense of pride and a determination to be prepared for any calamity that the radio operators of Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club took to the field this year to showcase its communications prowess.

Radio club getting prepared in case of emergency

The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club will be participating in the annual American Radio Relay League Field Day Operation Saturday and Sunday.

Field Day is a way of training and ensuring that procedures, equipment and people are ready for the next disaster or emergency.

This year's Field Day operation will be at the east end of Graham Park. In addition to normal operating facilities, there will be a special "Get on the Air" station for visitors to use to try amateur radio. Operation will begin at 1 p.m.

The event is open to visitors, and government officials at all levels are invited to attend and talk with group leaders about this valuable service.

Dr. James Hall is Field Day chairman.

RARC is a volunteer organization of amateur radio operators who practice communications operations for disasters and emergencies. During emergencies or disasters, RARC volunteers help the community by providing emergency communications until normal communications are restored.

During and after Hurricane Katrina, amateur radio operations provided communications from New Orleans to many places across the country. Welfare and health messages were sent and received by volunteer radio operators in the Delta area, many of whom came from the far points of the country at their own expense to serve.

back in February. Since Jamie was not able to do any heavy lifting at all - under threat of XYL June who was seen nearby with a roll of duct tape "just in case" - plans for vertical antenna supports had to be changed at the 10th hour. The AB-577 military mast which had served us well in previous years, was set aside in favor of a 30 foot Rohn 25 tower with tilt-over base feature. Plans for an elaborate satellite station were also shelved for this year. Fortunately, this all came together smoothly and deployment was

The east side of Graham Park in Union City, TN was again the site for Field Day operations for the RARC. Jamie, WB4YDL was the chairman for the event and received great assistance from Glenn N4MJ, Bob K9IL, and Ron W9RVR. This was fortunate for Jamie, since he underwent lumbar back surgery merely one month prior to the event ! Most of the 'leg work' was already well defined from previous years and it was begun in earnest

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smooth. In fact, we had about an hour left before the start of operations to just get the stations ready.

Setup:

The weather was *much, much* better than it was the previous year with temperatures in the mid to upper 80's and with tolerable humidity. After last year's experience with extreme heat and humidity, an effort was made to have most of the stations in air-conditioned comfort. Alan KA4BNI offered the use of his 'fifth wheel' and this was immediately pressed into service at the CW station. Ron W9RVR's motor home was the site of the phone station and Ray N4SLY and XYL Dolly KN4SLY contributed their camper / recreation vehicle for the VHF station. The only station that remained outside was the "Get on the Air" or GOTA station. This station remained in the pavilion as in previous years.



Up with the tower and beam for the CW station

The CW station, which was positioned in Alan's 'fifth wheel', consisted again of Jamie's Elecraft K2/100

with ATU, a CMOS-4 keyer and ICE 419 bandpass filters. Bob K9IL was the chief CW operator as in previous years, but got a nice assist from Alan KA4BNI. Bob was quite pleased with the air-conditioned accommodations ! The phone station at Ron W9RVR's motor home sported his Kenwood TS-2000 transceiver with ICE 419 bandpass filters donated by Steve KQ4UB. The VHF station positioned in Ray N4SLY's recreation vehicle consisted of Glenn N4MJ's Yaesu

FT-736. The GOTA station was unchanged with Jamie's Kenwood TS-440S transceiver positioned in the pavilion. There was also an APRS station in the pavilion consisting of Jamie's FT-8500 and a Kantronics KAM Plus. The phone and CW stations ran computer logging using the excellent and easy N3FJP Field Day software. Paper logging was performed at the GOTA and VHF stations.

There were two 30 foot Rohn 25 towers in operation this year supporting Bob K9IL's classic TA-32 for the phone station and Jamie WB4YDL's Force 12 C3SS tri-bander on the other for the CW station. These vertical supports were in closer proximity than in previous years which was a concern regarding inter-station interference. As it turns out, this concern was not a



Patrick and Jamie, Jr. helping Dad WB4YDL & Glenn N4MJ



Wax on, wax off, grasshopper !

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factor. The phone station also had an 80 meter doublet wire antenna for the low bands which was modified to include 450-ohm ladder line and a 4:1 balun for optimal performance. The CW station had a 260 foot off-center



Jamie WB4YDL & Ron W9RVR at phone station

"Natural Power" bonus points.

The Operation:

At the 18Z 'kick off' to the operation, all stations were manned and ready. This was a first !! After the stations were cobbled together, all began on time. The first five CW contacts were made by Bob K9IL on 5 watts and a solar panel without difficulty. The panel and battery were then taken out of the circuit and power was increased to 100 watts. Bob then proceeded to log CW contacts at a torrid pace. Ron W9RVR began phone operations on 20 meters and had good runs in the log. Heather N4SIS began work on the GOTA station. Jamie WB4YDL was designated as "GOTA Coach" and oversaw contacts made on this station. With just an 80 meter doublet

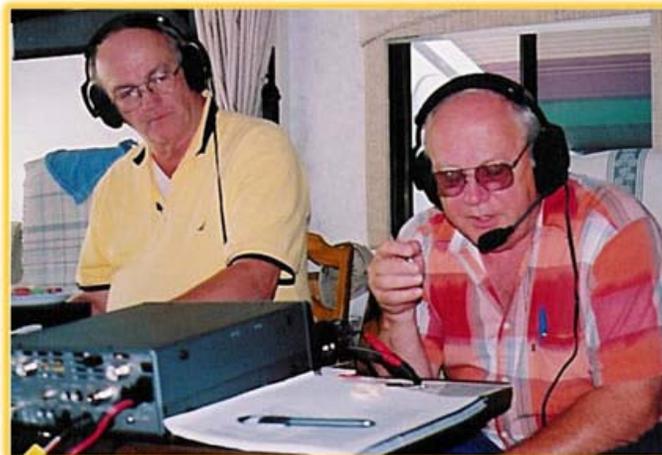
fed Carolina Windom antenna. This antenna loaded great on

160 meters, but this was academic, as there was very little activity on this band. The GOTA station antenna consisted of an 80 meter doublet and utilized coaxial stub filters. The VHF station made use of Glenn N4MJ's 6-element 6 meter beam and a Cushcraft AR-270 vertical atop a 30 foot pushup mast.

All stations ran with the RARC club callsign of K4RFT except for the GOTA station, which ran with N4MJ. Generator power was used throughout except for the first 5 CW QSO's which were run on solar power to capture the



Estevan and grandmom Rose W9DHD at GOTA station



Jeff W5VNH & Glenn N4MJ at phone station

antenna, contacts were made at a

slower pace. The technique of making contacts was emphasized. Also, Rose W9DHD added her expertise at this station and assisted with contacts made by youth operators. Ray N4SLY found conditions on 6 meters to be "wide open". Good runs into the northeastern states were logged. As the event progressed, conditions on 6 meters correlated to truly excellent conditions on 10 meters - a totally surprising event ! It was a real pleasure to work on a relatively quiet 10



Raymond Phillips of Red Cross & Jamie WB4YDL

meter band rather than fight the static crashes of the lower bands.

All in all, at the bottom of the present sunspot cycle, the Reelfoot

Amateur Radio Club got off to a great start. The Youth Participation bonus, which debuted last year, was also a factor this year. Of particular note was Estevan and April who logged many contacts under the watchful eye of grandmom Rose W9DHD. The RARC Field Day site was visited by both elected and appointed served agency officials this year. Shea Riley, Union City School Board official, and his son Will visited and had many pointed questions regarding amateur radio. Bob K9IL took time out from his operation to relate some of the many interesting experiences he has had from nearly 50 years in ham radio. The 'nickel tour' of the operation brought smiles to Mr. Riley's face. Also in attendance was Mr. Raymond



Jamie WB4YDL with Shea Riley III (UC School Board) & son Will

Phillips

of the Red Cross. He was also duly impressed with the operation. Ron W9RVR and Jamie WB4YDL discussed with him future relations with the club as relates to emergency communications needs and a "Memorandum of Understanding", or MOU. This MOU is presently before Obion County Emergency Services. Both officials were quite aware of the utility of amateur radio as demonstrated during last year's hurricane disaster. Both received copies our new club brochure and the ARRL "Hello!" brochure.



Man, the mosquitoes are huge!

When it came time to take a break and settle down for some Field Day chow, there was no disappointment on anybody's face. Jamie WB4YDL had delivered barbeque and ribs with all the fixin's. There were also great deserts. Also, after about 3 hours of sleep, it was good to see Steve KQ4UB with a sack of McDonald's breakfast food and coffee. Steve also supplied a portable packet node in his truck which was used to snag another 100 bonus points with a demonstration of Packet communications. Also of

interest, was an APRS (Automatic Position Reporting System) setup that designated our Field Day site on a map visible on the internet or directly via radio. In fact, we had one ham visitor that found our location by the GPS coordinates given by that system. Other bonus points were obtained with

origination of a NTS (National Traffic System) formal message to our Section Manager, Larry Marshall, WB4NCW. This year, extra bonus points were possible at the GOTA station. With a designated GOTA coach (WB4YDL), operators at



SSTV Capture - Cute !

this position could double-double their points if they made 50 contacts, and again at 100 contacts. This year, Rose W9DHD managed to make exactly 100 QSO's to qualify for 200 bonus points ! Congratulations, Rose !



Alan KA4BNI in lift truck at VHF array

As the event wound down, a final push for bonus points was made in the last 15 minutes of the contest. Ron W9RVR sent pictures via SSTV to the GOTA station for all to view. There were two pictures sent - one, a photo of our club Field Day banner, and two, a picture that I inquired of Ron if it was a self-portrait. He replied, No - it was one of my (Jamie's) baby pictures !! So ended

a very successful 2006 Field Day event for the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club.

The Results:

This year we had 12 licensed operators participate in Field Day operations and 4 non-licensed operators. The maximum Youth Participation bonus was obtained by 4 non-licensed and one licensed (Heather N4SIS) operator. The following are the 'Bottom Line' results:

Score Summary:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
Total QSO's	803	5	649	1457

Band / Mode QSO Breakdown:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
80M	87	0	5	92
40M	386	0	199	585
20M	307	5	85	397
15M	23	0	85	108
10M	0	0	108	108
6M	0	0	38	38

GOTA	0	0	129	129
TOTAL	803	5	649	1457

The bonus point total was 1650 - this was 300 more points than last year. This all combined to a total claimed score of **6230 points**. This is a 186 point improvement over last year. *This is a tremendous result* considering that it is at the absolute rock bottom of the sunspot cycle and that one of our leaders, Glenn N4MJ, was unable to participate in about half of the event.

Epilogue:

Overall, the radio operators of Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club proved that they could overcome adversity, adapt to the elements and conditions present at the time, and have a really good time doing it ! This impressed local and district officials and will pay dividends in the future. As for the future, Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club plans to continue the tradition of Field Day in preparation for a day when all of this may be needed for real.

When all else fails ... Amateur Radio.

