

Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club

Western Tennessee • Western Kentucky • Southeastern Missouri

EmComm • Amateur Training • Public Service • License Testing • Special Events

501c4 Non-Profit Organization



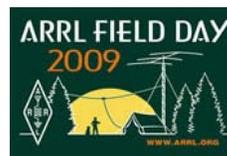
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Field Day 2009

June 27-28, 2009

Prologue:

The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club again deployed for the annual ARRL Field Day operating event at the Obion County Fairgrounds in a building adjacent to the main Activities Building that was used last year. The challenge this year was the placement of antenna vertical supports in a small area surrounded by power lines, transformers, and fencing. This is a very real scenario in an actual emergency and the club membership was up for the challenge. Safety was of primary concern as these power lines carry some 7.5 kilovolts! The accommodations still had the key ingredient for success - air conditioning! Although a bit smaller than the very roomy Activities Building, we still had plenty of room to operate.



In Memory of our Silent Key, Ron W9RVR

This year we operated with a heavy heart after the loss of our fellow colleague Ron Steinberg, W9RVR - Silent Key on June 20th this year. In his memory, our flag stood at half staff for this event. In addition, a memorial display for Ron was set up in the center of the operating floor and during our designated dinner time, a memorial in his honor was attended by all operators and the Steinberg family. We will always remember Ron as an enthusiastic supporter of the Field Day event and our heart-felt condolences go out to Gladys KJ4EKN, his XYL, and the entire Steinberg family.

Setup:

The weather was absolutely oppressive with record temperatures near 100°F and very high humidity. This made construction of the antenna systems a very tough go, indeed. It took time, sunscreen, and lots and *lots* of water to get through it. Because of these conditions, it was decided not to pursue the satellite contact bonus as the construction of the antenna system to ensure success was very time consuming.

As mentioned above, the challenge was spotting antenna vertical supports with surrounding power lines and fencing. Because of the fencing in close proximity to the north side of the building, only one

antenna structure could be spotted on that side of the building. Also, because this year the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club added another HF station for digital operations, another set of HF antennas had to be constructed. With four sets of HF antennas to be raised, three sets had to be on the *same* side, the south side, of the building. This proved to be complicated but doable.

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Cabling Spiderbeam for phone station

Construction of the antenna arrays began on Friday the 26th at 18Z as allowed by the Field Day rules. It was in the heat of the day and the heat never let up. Luckily, we were able to construct the Force 12 C4S beam for the CW station in the shade of a car port-like structure near the operating building. Also, due to the relocation of our operating site, we did not have to temporarily lower several flagpoles in the area. In fact, the main 50 foot flagpole was used as a support for two of the wire 80 meter doublets. Jamie WB4YDL again brought the phone and CW antennas and their vertical supports. The AB-577 military mast was positioned in a nearby field and the Force 12 C4S triband yagi with 40M dipole element was easily raised into position. Unfortunately, the 40M loading 'hairpin' coil was accidentally omitted rendering the 40M element unusable. The wire doublet antenna however played very well on 40 and 80 meters given the near proximity to power lines.

The Spiderbeam was again erected for the phone station and positioned near the CW military mast. The push-up mast was able to be extended to 40 feet. The dipole doublet antennas from the main flagpole were attached to the military mast and the 40 foot push-up mast. The latter had to be back-guyed to support this, but in the end, all worked out very well. The GOTA antenna was again Bob K9IL's TA-32 which was mounted on Robin WA4YGM's Satcomm van. This van



Bryan making contact along with Brandon KJ4FTN at GOTA station

has a hydraulically extendable mast to get the antenna to 50 feet. This year, there was an available rotator that Pablo KJ4CWN was able to mount the antenna to for directional pointing. The 80 meter doublet wire antenna was configured as an inverted-vee. As mentioned above, this year the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club added another HF station specifically for digital points. This placed RARC in the competitive 3A classification. It was decided that this station would concentrate solely on RTTY and each contact was worth 2 points, as with CW contacts. The antennas for this station consisted of Glenn N4MJ's Cushcraft A3S triband yagi and this was mounted on a push-up mast. Unfortunately, we could only mount the antenna a bit over 20 feet tall. The 80M wire doublet was configured as an inverted-vee with this center mast support. As with last year, the 6 meter antenna was Howard W4HLR's homebrew 3-element design and this was mounted on Bob K9IL's lightweight 30 foot Rohn tower.

Since last year, Bob K9IL caught the bug - the Elecraft K3 bug ! After his purchase of a fully constructed Elecraft K3/100, he was made responsible for the CW station for Field Day. Bob has had a lot of fun with his new baby and it showed with his result. Bob still likes to use an outboard keyer and Jamie WB4YDL brought one suitable for this purpose. Jamie's Elecraft K3/100 was pressed into action at the new digital station along with Rose W9DHD's laptop for rig control. The phone station again consisted of Tracy N4IL's fantastic Kenwood TS-480AT with built-in antenna tuner. This time, after Jamie trimmed the wire antennas, the tuner worked perfectly on the low bands. Tracy unfortunately was still not able to attend Field Day due to his work



Jamie WB4YDL finishes cabling CW antenna



Brittany KJ4FBW, Estevan KJ4ETW, & Kole at GOTA station

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Brandon KJ4FTN & granddad Glenn N4MJ at phone station

obligations. ICE bandpass filters were utilized on the phone and CW stations to help with inter-station interference. The GOTA station consisted of Bob K9IL's vintage Icom IC-730 transceiver. This radio was used last year and required a tuner for the antennas. Glenn N4MJ had to run home to get his vintage Johnson Matchbox for this purpose; however, the tuner was not performing as advertised. Jamie WB4YDL ran home to collect his LDG Autotuner and discovered to his amazement, that it also was not performing - at all. It was noticed at this time that the radio was not putting out hardly any power ! Luckily, Jim KI4HRT had recently bought a new Yaesu FT-897 and he brought it with him as a reserve radio. Excellent ! Everything hooked up easily and the autotuner responded well. The GOTA station was in business ! As with last year, the VHF station consisted of Jamie WB4YDL's Yaesu FT-847. As mentioned above, satellite communications was not attempted. However, the station played a key role in gaining bonus points by connecting to the local Winlink node for passage of NTS messages and a message to our Section Emergency

Coordinator, Lowell Bennington, WD4DJW.

The software for Field Day logging was the very easy N3FJP software except for the digital RTTY station, which used the NIMM Logger software with MMTTY engine. All stations had computer logging. Power was provided by two 2 KW Honda generators and one 5 KW generator. The exception was the first 5 CW contacts which were made on a 15 watt solar panel and battery for the alternative power source bonus. Also Ray N4SLY used their generator for the VHF station.

The Operation:

At the start time of 18Z, it was a real challenge to get four HF stations fully functioning. The education bonus was done on the fly as Jamie WB4YDL demonstrated application of Powerpole connectors for DC -powering such things as tuners and bandpass filters. The solar panel and battery were applied to Bob's Elecraft K3 by using some hemostats that Jamie WB4YDL, being a physician, happen to have on hand ! In the end, with a little luck and some ingenuity, things got



Kole attempts GOTA contact with Faith KJ4ETU & Bryan

started more-or-less on time.

The GOTA station got to the slower start due to the trouble with the IC-730. After this rig was replaced by Jim's FT-897, things improved somewhat. Pablo KJ4CWN brought two of the kids, Estevan KJ4ETW and Brittany KJ4FBW, and a couple of their friends, Bryan Roberts and Kole Bennett. Young Kole and Bryan had a ball getting in the log with assistance from Estevan and mother, Faith KJ4ETU. Jamie WB4YDL acted again as "GOTA Coach". Unfortunately, reception at this station was hampered by the power lines and transformers in close proximity to the antennas. However, Estevan did quite well and completed a double bonus.

The phone station was manned by many operators and Art WA4EQO got things kicked off with James KJ4KIM assisting with the logging. Also Brandon KJ4FTN gave his relatively new license a good bit of exercise with his granddad Glenn N4MJ assisting. Last year, Glenn was recovering from coronary bypass surgery and is now doing quite well. Other phone operators included Phil N4PWG, Jim KI4KHT and Jamie WB4YDL. Bob K9IL was again the main

CW operator with some help from Glenn N4MJ and Gregg KB9E. Gregg and his XYL Robyn made the trip down from Illinois to be with us for Field Day. Another visitor was "the other"



Art WA4EQO & Jim KI4KHT at phone station



Danny KJ4HRM & James KJ4KIM at phone station

Glenn KD5EZM visiting from Camden, TN with his grandson.

The VHF station was manned primarily by Ray N4SLY, Phil N4PWG, Danny KJ4HRM, and Jamie WB4YDL. The HF stations were only able to make sparse contacts on the higher bands of 10 and 15 meters, but 6 meters yielded 15 phone contacts. In addition, Jamie handled the Winlink duties and sent 10 NTS messages to various Field Day groups across North America as well as the SEC. He received back 11 NTS messages !

Excellent pork barbeque was brought in courtesy of Jim KI4KHT and so many fixin's were served up by our XYL's. Many thanks again go out to Rose W9DHD, June and Linda, our officer's XYL's. Our Saturday dinner became a memorial for Ron W9RVR (SK). The Steinberg family joined us in celebrating Ron's exuberant life and indomitable spirit. Each of the RARC officers gave eulogies on Ron's behalf with many humorous anecdotes recalled. We all admired



Randy KI4OAS and Robert KI4WKW manning Information Booth

Ron and he will be greatly missed. Rest in peace, OM.



Phil N4PWG at phone station

The night was very muggy but in the air-conditioned comfort indoors, QSO's continued to be churned out. The new RTTY station performed well but there was less activity than in other modes. Also operators needed on the fly training with the N1MM contest software. Jamie WB4YDL finally got a chance to sit down at this station and get things rocking. Jamie enjoys RTTY contesting at home. After quickly putting 50 contacts into the log, Pablo KJ4CWN and James KJ4KIM took the controls and made a *lot* more contacts. This turned out to be our most efficient station in terms of contacts made and band activity. After the finish bell sounded, breakdown went very smoothly. The temperatures had greatly moderated and the humidity that was so oppressive just the day before, was now non-existent. Breakdown took 3 hours. All logs were collected by thumb drive by Jamie WB4YDL who will put the finishing touches on the entry to the ARRL.

The Results:

This year we had 18 licensed operators participate in Field Day operations and 4 un-licensed operators. The Youth Participation bonus was obtained by 2 licensed and 2 un-licensed operators -Bryan and Kole. The following are the 'Bottom Line' results:

Score Summary:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
Total QSO's	576	135	372	1083

Band / Mode QSO Breakdown:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
80M	112	0	1	113
40M	260	20	104	384
20M	158	115	144	417
15M	46	0	51	97
10M	0	0	6	6
6M	0	0	15	15
GOTA	0	0	51	51
TOTAL	576	135	372	1083

The bonus point total was 1510 - this was primarily due to originating NTS messages and site visitation by the Obion County Mayor, Bennie McGuire and the Obion County EMA director, Danny Jowers. Also elements of the Crockett County Amateur Radio Society set up a very impressive display and information booth. This included display of emergency communications 'go kits'. Thank you Andy KJ4CLS, Robert KI4WKW, and Randy KI4OAS ! This all combined to a total claimed score of **5098 points**. This is a good result with the club's first effort in class 3A and particularly given the challenging circumstances.

Epilogue:

Given the challenges of this year's Field Day event, the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club performed very well. Ol' Murphy had a hand in keeping things, um... interesting, but in the end, the club proved it could persevere and come away with a respectable score. We had several new operators that had a *lot* of fun and, after all, that is the whole point ! I think Ron W9RVR (SK) would have been very happy and proud to see these new operators in action, many of whom he helped train and test.

The final results are usually posted in the December issue of QST. Next year hopefully we will build on our experience, obtain more operators, and earn a more competitive score. We certainly now know the key ingredient for enjoyment and success - air conditioning !

See you on Field Day 2010 !

When all else fails ... Amateur Radio.

