

"Ides of March" Hamfest 2014

March 29, 2014

Location:

Obion County Fairgrounds Buildings , Union City, TN

The 7th annual "Ides of March" Hamfest will long be remembered for the sudden and unannounced discovery that the Tennessee National Guard Armory, the site of all previous "Ides of March" Hamfests, would not be available since they were in a state of construction and have been *since November of last year!* Needless to say that this set off a mad scramble for a suitable location for the event and to notify everyone involved all within 72 hours of the start ! As luck would have it, quite suitable accommodations were found at the Obion County Fairgrounds. A pair of buildings were used so as to have a facility for both the hamfest proper and the forum and VE testing area. An Urgent Alert was posted on the web site and the change in venue was announced far and wide including the TN Phone Net and the Delta Division Bulletin. Many thanks go out to all those that assisted in getting this change in venue to run smoothly. Our vendors, many in other states, were ready to depart for Union City when they received word to delay coming. There was a point that it looked as if the hamfest might be cancelled or postponed, but all turned out well and the vendors were given the "green light" to come on over.

The Event

Setup began on Friday afternoon before the event, and we quickly determined that many more tables would be needed. The TN National Guard was gracious in allowing the borrowing of about 30 tables. The other item that was discovered was that the main facility had no heat ! Additionally, only about half of the electrical outlets were active. However, we all persevered and everything came together nicely. However, the weather outlook was terrible with rain predicted throughout the night Friday and into the event day. A few of the vendors which drove in from out of state, were allowed to setup this year on Friday before the hamfest. One vendor *Hub City Amateur Radio Sales* from Hattiesburg, MS, had a flat tire on their trailer south of Union City.



Michael KJ4KHX & Jamie WB4YDL

Jim

AE5OG decided to head to the hotel after that and unload in the morning. Yes, ol' Murphy was in rare form !

We had a new vendor in *JMR Sales* from Altoona, Alabama who featured badge making capability - a much desired item at a hamfest. Loretta KJ4ULC was the "badge lady" and remained quite busy throughout the event. Also *Mid-South Amateur Radio Supply* with Steve KI4YOP and Rosalinda KI4ZKW once again made the trip up from Memphis to make the event complete.

Master Chef Second Class Noel KJ4UNX and Harold KJ4FTM fired up the grill once again and concentrated on our new thicker Angus hamburgers. Noel had a bout of acute appendicitis and had surgery just a few days prior to the event but was able to not only man the grill, but took on the talk-in responsibility. The latter was a bit more involved than in previous years as several folks "didn't get the memo" as to the change in venue or who were not familiar enough with the new



Ed AB4IQ & Charles KJ4KVC checking cards

location. In addition to thicker hamburgers this year, *Bad Bob's* barbeque was also offered as well as *Williams Sausage's* sausage-egg-biscuit and the usual coffee, donuts and cookies. Lots of

compliments were heard about the great hamburgers this year. Running the kitchen facilities was Glenn N4MJ's XYL Linda Snow, Jamie WB4YDL's XYL June Hall, Gladys KJ4EKN and Melodi Clayton KK4SJD who did an outstanding job with concessions.

The front gate was manned at various time by several RARC members including Jamie WB4YDL, Phillip N4PWG, Hannah KK4SJF, Samantha KK4NNM, and Samuel KK4SJE. All did an excellent job getting everybody checked in, hands stamped, and getting free prize tickets disbursed.

This year for the first time, a different method of giving away our great lineup of prizes was enacted. In order to not run afoul of the State of Tennessee's anti-gambling laws (which are



Loretta KJ4ULC of JMR Sales making a badge

rather stringent), and after consulting several individuals on the matter, an incentive method to obtaining tickets was invented. Tickets would be earned by the participant based on purchases made from our commercial vendors. Because our three grand prizes were far more in worth than the rest of the general prizes, a two stage ticket system was devised. A general prize ticket was earned with every \$5 spent and a grand prize ticket was earned with every \$25 spent at our commercial vendors' tables. To our knowledge, this is the first time something like this has been tried. We were all relieved that this system came off very well with no complaints heard at all. Of course, Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club does not make a nickel on any of this and is reliant on club dues and vendor donations for the hamfest prizes.

Our prizes this year included those from vendors such as Wal-Mart, Radio Shack, Elecraft, MFJ Enterprises, ARRL, DX Magazine, John K1XN GOWIN QSL manager, N3FJP Software, Volunteer Computer, R&L Electronics, Ten Tec, Vibroplex, and Monogramming & More. Also our commercial vendor *Mid-South Amateur Radio Supply* donated one of our grand prizes, a heavy duty 20-amp switching power supply and *JMR Sales* donated a wireless weather station.



Samuel KK4SJE wins handi-talkie

Also Don Daso K4ZA donated a signed copy of his book *Antenna Towers for Radio Amateurs* and TN Section Manager Keith Miller N9DGK donated a copy of the *2014 ARRL Radio Handbook*. Thank you all !!!

Can you hear me now ?! Over previous years of the "Ides of March" Hamfest, the most consistent complaint heard was the PA sound system wasn't up to stuff. This year there were no such complaints ! The Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club made a concerted effort to fix this situation and purchases were made to significantly beef the PA system up. A new 1500 watt audio amplifier was added as well as a pair of 15" Seismic Audio speakers. A very nice wireless microphone was also provided by Phillip N4PWG for our use. The result was clean, easily heard audio.

VIP's:

We were honored to have on hand ARRL Delta Division Director David Norris K5UZ and ARRL Tennessee Section Manager Keith Miller N9DGK. Keith also got a surprise when David announced that it was Keith's birthday - reportedly an undisclosed anniversary of his 39th birthday ! Our new Section Emergency Coordinator Daniel O' Donovan W4DOD could not make it to the hamfest as he was recovering from some health issues. Hopefully we'll get to meet Dan at next year's event. They gave an update on happenings within the division and Tennessee section at the secondary fairgrounds building.



Jamie WB4YDL & Charles KJ4KVC giving advice

Thanks again for attending !

VE Testing Session & DX Card Checking:

The Crockett County VE testing crew headed up by Randy KI4OAS and Richard KI4PWM again gave several their licensing exams.

Successful Candidates Testing at the VE Session :

- **James N. Roberson** : passed Technician Class
- **Samantha Jo Roberson** : passed Technician Class
- **Eugene G. Slaten, Jr., KDØYPL** : upgraded to General Class
- **Josh A. Kerr, KK4BKD** : upgraded to General Class

Ed AB4IQ once again was our ARRL DXCC QSL card checker and several took advantage to have their cards checked for DXCC credit.

Grand Prize Winners:

1st Grand Prize	George Rob KK4SRR	Icom IC-7200 Transceiver
2nd Grand Prize	Harry Elder WA4Q	Ten Tec 777 Headset
3rd Grand Prize	Randy Smith KI4OAS	HD 20 amp switching power supply

Epilogue:

This year the Ides of March Hamfest had to struggle just to happen. However, with the perseverance and persistence of the members of the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club and its president, Glenn Snow N4MJ, the show went on. Ol' Murphy sure had a say about many things including the lousy weather. We are grateful that the commercial vendors, including our newest one, *JMR Sales* coming all the way from Altoona, AL, made their presence known and made this 7th annual Ides of March Hamfest a success. We look forward to seeing them all again next year !

Soapbox :

Gene Summers N4FZ :

I really enjoyed the Hamfest. A TS700A ca. 1976. followed me home, needs new p.s. caps, no problemo. Lots of good stuff to eat, good fellowship, made some new friends, saw some old friends, a great time. For music, may I suggest "Raindrops keep falling on my head" by B.J. Thomas, it seemed Saturday, hi. 73 Gene

Ed Pflueger AB4IQ

Enjoyed the Hamfest; I actually like the new location better even though Mr. Garmin took me on a real shortcut. My riders didn't win any prizes to my knowledge but I think you were giving them away at 1pm. Enjoyed the event and got to see folks that I had not seen in over a year. Especially enjoyed the donut and coffee that one of your hostesses generously gave to me and only charged me \$5. Now if the donuts were steaming hot just out of the grease would be better. Hi... CUL Ed...

Glenn Snow N4MJ :

Murphy's timing is extremely good, as evidenced by this year's hamfest that almost wasn't.

As usual, I contacted our Armory people about setting up on Friday. I do this on the Wednesday prior to the Friday of setup. Surprise!!! We can't use the building this weekend or anytime in the near future ...construction, actually on-going construction. Seems the project has been on-going since November of 2013, yet no one notified me. So at 2 PM on Wednesday before the hamfest, it is suddenly scramble time. My immediate



George Rob KK4SRR wins Grand Prize



Pat Lane W4OQG & Jamie WB4YDL

messaging. Another phone call. By 10:15 AM, I was beginning to settle down. A deal was closed for the Fairground's buildings. Whew! Make that a giant WHEW!!! I was less than two hours from canceling the 2014 Ides of March hamfest. That was too close for comfort.

More phone calls. This time to vendors and individuals who I know don't read emails. More emails shot-gunned out. Thanks to Bob, Rhelda, and Jamie for helping get the word out that it was "hamfest on".

Last year when I scheduled the 2014 hamfest I purposely tagged the last weekend in March, thinking that the later the date, the warmer and better the weather. Murphy was there and patiently waited until the last minute to create havoc.

The weather during the weekend before was very good; this weekend was a mess. Cloudy, windy, cold, and lots of rain(drops falling on my head). No favors there for attendance. So far we had two strikes against the hamfest - new venue at last minute and lousy weather. What else could go wrong? What else could go wrong? Did I ask that? For one thing Jim AE5OG, of Hub City had a trailer tire blow-out on Friday afternoon. That prevented him from getting to Union City in time to unload and setup. Ronald and Loretta of JMR Sales did make it and they got setup Friday afternoon.

7 AM Saturday morning - Hub City begins unloading in the cold rain. With help from several RARC members, everything got unloaded and set up promptly. Rosalinda and Steve of Mid South Amateur Radio Supply also got set up quickly. By 7:30 AM people were swamping the back and front doors with used equipment and looking for a table. At around 8 AM, everything was beginning to fall into place rapidly. Attendees were coming in at a good clip. Finally, I could relax and enjoy the event.

The new ticket system seemed to work quite well and as intended. Feedback has been positive and comments passed that we've started a new trend in hamfest prize drawing. Most RARC members know why the change occurred. I'm hoping those who sponsor other hamfests realize why we changed or if they have questions they may ask us.

Jamie did a super job with the sound system this year. We've spent a good chunk of dollars to improve the audio and it worked. Boy, did it work!!! Thanks, Jamie for all your effort.

We had a great line-up of prizes this year. The Icom IC-7200 is by far the best and most expensive Grand Prize we've been able to give away. I hope the lucky winner is enjoying it.

Our other top prizes were quite nice and would be a credible addition to any ham shack. The Ten Tec 777 stereo headphone/boom microphone combo with an adapter for a Yaesu transceiver was a super second Grand Prize. The power supply donated by MSARS certainly would come in handy in anyone's shack.

Thanks to all who donated prizes.

reaction was, "this can't be happening" but it was. Now what? I'm sure my blood pressure was elevated considerably by the time I drove around and ended up at my cardiologist's (WB4YDL) office. Fortunately he wasn't too busy to stop and do some counseling.

Two options - find a new location soon, very soon or cancel the hamfest. With people coming from several states and knowing vendors had bought inventory to bring to the hamfest, canceling was not my first choice.

After leaving my cardiologist's office, I made a phone call and left a message for a call back that never came. ARGH!!! What now??? Thursday morning and I had already set a deadline for canceling the hamfest. Pressure's on!!!

Thursday, 8 AM - another phone call. This time I got a person and some info. Another phone call, no person, just an answering machine. Ouch, doesn't anyone answer their phone? Text messaging. Fingers crossed. Finally, a response came at about 9:30 AM. More text



Randy KI4OAS & Tracy N4IL



Randy KI4OAS scores 3rd Grand Prize

73 and a BIG THANKS to ALL, except Murphy, who worked and helped at this year's Ides of March hamfest - June, Linda, Gladys serving delicious and hot food and hot/cold drinks, the Clayton kids (Sam KK4SJE, Samantha KK4NNM, Melodi KK4SJD) and Hannah, KK4SJF for working the admissions table, Phil, N4PWG, Todd, W4TZX, Mike, AK4VU, Jamie, WB4YDL, Rhelda, N5BSE, Ottis K5BSE, Harold, KJ4FTM for grillin' the burgers, Noel, KJ4UNX for supervising it all.

N4MJ//Glenn

Pres RARC

With Murphy doing his best to wreck the hamfest and discourage people from attending, it turned out well. Murphy has had his say but he just couldn't keep RARC down.

Hope everyone enjoyed it as much as your truly. I'm looking forward to the 2015 Ides of March hamfest. Where and when?, you say ...don't know yet, but we'll find a spot and time before long.