



Field Day 2004

June 26-27, 2004

Prologue:

Every year on the last weekend of June, amateur radio operators in North and South America take to the field with portable radio and antenna equipment to participate in the ARRL Field Day event. This is the most popular amateur radio event and combines the fun of camping and enjoying the great outdoors with radio operations away from commercial power sources. The event is slated as a public display of radio communications prowess in often difficult and challenging conditions for the purpose of emergency preparedness. In cases of disasters or other emergencies, amateur radio operators are often the only



Terry, KC4YLK at GOTA station

communications link to the outside world. The goal in this event is to make as many contacts as possible in a 24 hour period on various bands and modes in contest style contacts.

This year, the "communications commandos" of Reelfoot

Amateur Radio Club gathered at the east end of Graham Park in Union City, TN for the annual event. Coordinators for the event were James (Jamie) Hall, MD, WB4YDL and Alan McClain, KA4BNI. Many hours of preparation beginning in February of this year paid off with a smooth deployment of antennas, radio equipment, and camping gear.

Additionally, there was much logistical preparation to make the event visible to the

visiting public as well as efficient operation of the stations by participating operators. A nice front page story was printed on this event in the Union City Messenger and Governor Phil Bredesen also proclaimed the week as Amateur Radio Week.

The Setup:

The site at Graham Park was very nice with restroom facilities and an open pavilion. The weather was **incredible** - blue skies, low humidity and temperatures in the low 80's. This was more than unusual for this event ! The pavilion served as the site for the Get on the Air (GOTA)



Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club Field Day banner

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station as well as the public reception and display area. The GOTA station served as an enticement to unlicensed individuals or inactive hams to 'get their feet wet' in the rapid-fire contest style environment. It also served as our digital station for contacts made in the exciting new mode, PSK31. Food was provided by club members and their families - and was great ! Many thanks go to the XYL's (wives) of the operators for all the great chow and to Alan for keeping the coffee pot going in the wee hours.

The VHF / UHF station was handled by Britt, KB4IBW and his brother Alan. Part of the station consisted of a 6 element beam mounted on a pneumatic mast. This was not entirely successful as it repeatedly lost pressure and would descend. This was important



Steve, KQ4UB, Jamie, Jr., and Jamie, WB4YDL at military mast

as it also held up one end of a center-fed 80 meter doublet antenna for the GOTA station.

Many stations were apparently worked during the night with this wire on the ground ! Britt would dutifully reinflate it, often mumbling something about where he was going to *stick* that mast.

The two main contest stations were located about 200 feet from each other in screen house pavilions. One station was the phone station consisting of an Alinco DX-70H to a TA-32 tri-band beam on a 30 foot push-up mast. A 135 foot center-fed 80 meter doublet was also used for the lower bands. The CW (Morse Code) station consisted of an Elecraft K2-100 with ATU built by Jamie, WB4YDL connected to a Force 12 C3S tri-band beam on a AB-577 military 50 foot mast. Another 135 foot 80 meter doublet was also used for the low bands. Band pass filters (ICE model 419A) were used at this

station. This turned out to be fortunate as there were some problems with local splatter and key clicks on the other stations.

All stations were run using 100% emergency power using gasoline generators. Additionally, several contacts were made using solar power to obtain bonus points.

Operations:

Field Day operations commenced at 18 Z (1:00 PM CDT) with the club call sign of K4RFT and the exchange 2A TN. Bob, K9IL got off to a good start on CW and never slowed down. He made over 700 CW contacts for a superb effort. Steve, KQ4UB kicked off with the phone station and Britt had a nice run on 6 meters. Terry, KC4YLK got introduced to PSK31 on the GOTA station and was hooked ! The GOTA call sign was N4MJ (call sign of Glenn, President of RARC). An old Kenwood TS-440S was used here with a KK7UD digital interface built by Jamie, WB4YDL and placed in an Altoids® tin. The software used was the very fine N3FJP Field Day software. Networking of the computers was not attempted this time around.

There were several opportunities to better our score with the addition of bonus points. A maximum effort was made to obtain as many of these as



CW station at K4RFT



Britt, KB4IBW and Bob, K9IL at the 6 meter beam

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Bob, K9IL at the CW station

possible. Don Thornton, the Union City, TN City Administrator, visited the site per our invitation and was good for 100 points for visitation of an elected official. State Senator Roy Herron was invited but could not attend due to prior commitments. He sent a very nice letter to us and promises to make next year's event. A check in was made to the Tennessee Phone Net on 3980 kHz Saturday evening and a formal NTS message was sent to Section Manager Larry Marshall, KB4NCW - good for 100 points. The GOTA station easily reached 100 contacts and was good for another 100 points. Excellent demonstrations were made on the non-traditional modes of Slow Scan TV (SSTV), Packet, and APRS (Automatic

Position Reporting System).

Results:

Overall, 12 licensed operators made contacts and we had 3 non-licensed participants to make supervised contacts. A total score of 5444 points was achieved which consisted of 825 CW contacts, 43 digital contacts, and 311 phone contacts. Additionally, a total of 1350 bonus points were achieved.

Epilogue:

It remains to be seen how we placed in the overall standings for this event. These results will be published in the December issue of QST magazine. But regardless of this standing, a great time was had by all and certainly showed the local community the mettle of the amateur radio operators of the Reelfoot

Amateur Radio Club. A highlight of the event was Britt making contact with Mike, NA1SS aboard the International Space Station (ISS). Britt was all grins as the event wound down and this certainly added an exclamation point to our effort. Next year, we'll do it again and hopefully, we will improve not only our score, but our overall participation and public awareness of the "communications commandos".



Jamie, WB4YDL with Rick and Angela at the GOTA station



Glenn, N4MJ and Jeff, W5VNH at the phone station

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