

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 2007

June 23-24, 2007

Prologue:

The annual ARRL Field Day event, always the last weekend of June, involves IARU Region 2, which encompasses all of North and South America. It

is always the most popular operating event in the United States.

This is the first year the event was held since the licensing changes, which eliminated the Morse Code testing, became effective. This year, the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club incorporated elements of the newly formed Dyer County Amateur Radio Club, which made our event much more robust.

Again, the East end of Graham Park in Union City was the scene for this exciting annual event. As will be mentioned in more detail, the event almost became too exciting !

Since this event is designed to demonstrate ham radio's emergency portable capabilities during times when normal communications paths would be disrupted, West Tennessee actually had a bit of warm-up during the previous week. It was then that the Tennessee Emergency Management Association (TEMA) in concert with the Office of Homeland Security held an earthquake disaster drill. Many members of Reelfoot



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Amateur Radio Club contributed by manning emergency operations centers and hospitals and passing damage assessment traffic to the main command center located in Jackson, Tennessee. Many members had never done this sort of thing before and performed exceptionally well. Most of the traffic was passed via VHF/UHF simplex or linked repeaters with HF frequencies used mostly by Military Affiliated Radio Stations (MARS) often by radio email, or Winlink. This was completely successful and truly demonstrated amateur radio's prowess in emergency communications. This year, the ARRL allowed Winlink to be used during the Field Day event.

There was a great deal of preparation that went into this event and that began in February of this year. Again the RARC was out in front with public announcements a week before Field Day.

This included newspaper articles in the Union City Messenger and the Weakley County Press, as well as radio announcements by several radio stations in Obion, Weakley, and Dyer Counties in Tennessee and stations in the Fulton, KY area.

The Setup :

The weather conditions during the lead up week to Field Day were very good with low humidity and temperatures in the upper 80° and lower 90°



Glenn N4MJ Catches CW Beam Antenna for Mounting on Military Mast

recreational vehicle for use as the VHF station location - and the source of further air conditioning !



Chris KI4TRM guarding 'rockets'

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range. However, as Field Day approached, the humidity picked up and the sun was blazing ! As setup is allowed to proceed beginning the Friday before the event, RARC members, as well as Dyer County ARC member Howard Runions W4HLR, met at Graham Park to begin assembly of the stations. The CW station was housed in Glenn N4MJ's two-room tent and the phone station in Steve KQ4UB's screen tent. This year, Wood Communications, headed by RARC member Robin WA4YGM, acquired the former satellite communications van of WHBQ-TV in Memphis. Robin graciously allowed use of this van which sports a 40 foot hydraulically lifted mast. As it was delivered, the air conditioning unit was not functional; however, Pablo, Rose W9DHD's son-in-law, was able to fix this and, just like that, the GOTA (Get On The Air) station location was born. Ray N4SLY and Dolly KN4SLY again provided their camper /

The CW station consisted of Jamie WB4YDL's Elecraft K2/100 with ATU, ICE 419 bandpass filters, and CMOS-4 programmable keyer. This fed a Force 12 C3S triband beam mounted on an AB-577 military mast, and a 135 foot center-fed doublet elevated to 30 feet for the lower bands. Bob K9IL and Glenn N4MJ held down the CW operator's chair. The phone station was provided by Howard W4HLR who brought not only his Icom IC-706 Mark IIG, but also his Mosley Classic TA-36 yagi antenna. Jamie provided an LDG autotuner and Steve KQ4UB again provided his ICE 419 bandpass filters. The raising of the TA-36, which has a 24 foot boom, up on a 30 foot tower (provided by Bob K9IL) was quite a feat !This incorporated a winch on the front of Howard's truck and elevation of that guy pulling point - something invented nearly 6000 years ago by the Egyptians ! The tower and (large!) beam antenna went up smoothly to vertical and also supported a 135 foot



Wood Communications Satcomm Van Used for GOTA Station

center-fed doublet at 30 feet elevation for the lower bands. The latter was graciously provided by Ron W9RVR who was unable to attend this year's



Mounting Mosley TA-36 on Mast at Phone Station

event due to illness. Howard and another Dyer County ARC member, Jim Erickson KI4KHT, held down the phone station operator's chair. Ray and Dolly again set up their camper and once again Glenn N4MJ provided his Yaesu FT-736 VHF radio for operation. New for this station this year was the addition of a 10-element 2M Cushcraft beam along with a homebrew 3-element 6M beam both donated by Howard W4HLR. Both of these antennas were mounted on top of 30 feet of tower, again donated by "Mr Tower" Bob K9IL.

The "Get On The Air" or GOTA station consisted of new member Chris KI4TRM's Yaesu FT-990 which fed Bob K9IL's Classic TA-32 2-element triband beam and a 135 foot center-fed doublet for the lower bands. This station was positioned in the air-conditioned

comfort of Robin WA4YGM's satcomm van. New for this year's event was the addition of a full featured satellite station. This station was positioned in the second room of the CW tent and consisted of Jamie WB4YDL's Yaesu FT-847 with homebrewed computer interface controlling the Yaesu G-5500 alt-azimuth rotator. The antennas were the M2 2MCP14 14-element circularly-polarized 2M yagi and the M2 436CP30 30-element circularly-polarized 70cm yagi mounted on an 8 foot fiberglass crossboom. Also employed was a Penninger tipping base and 10 feet of aluminum mast. This station also doubled as the demonstration station for APRS, SSTV, and Winlink.

All stations ran on gasoline generator power except for the first 5 QSO's on the CW station, which were solar powered - good for a 100 point bonus ! All stations ran with the RARC club callsign of K4RFT except for the GOTA station which ran with Glenn's N4MJ callsign.



Up to Vertical with the Phone Station Beam Antenna and Tower

The Operation :

All Field Day operations began promptly at 1800Z, the appointed time on Saturday. Due to the absolute rock bottom band conditions, contacts did not go into the log as quickly as in previous years. As usual, ol' Murphy decided to make himself known in a variety of ways ! After the first 5 CW contacts were safely in the computer log, and after about another hour of operating, Bob K9IL's laptop computer had had enough of the heat and went into thermal shutdown. Plan B went rapidly into effect - manual paper logging. No amount of cooling would inspire this laptop to restart. (We did not find out until after the event that this particular brand of laptop has a battery shutoff switch - the battery had to be removed to reset it !). Our newest member Larry KI4UNT came to the rescue by 'volunteering' (more like commandeering!) his XYL Linda's laptop computer to replace the ailing one. There was one problem though - it did not have the logging software nor the drivers for the



Phone Station Location with Mosley TA-36 on 30 foot tower

USB-to-serial adapter installed. Fortunately, the N3FJP logging software was carried on Jamie WB4YDL's key chain USB drive. This led to Jamie's XYL June running home to download and place the serial/USB drivers on her own thumb drive. This was not a small matter for June and she is one of our unsung heroes for this event ! After Bob logged nearly five pages manually (!), a new logging computer took its place and did extremely well. Thanks Larry, Linda, and June !!

The original plan was to offload all the computer logs on to one USB thumb drive, but ol' Murphy would have none of that ! Computer logging was attempted for the first time at the GOTA station using Chris KI4TRM's laptop computer. This started out well but a chronic power difficulty he had been having decided to shut this computer down and manual logging took



Chris KI4TRM at GOTA Station



Jim KI4KHT & Howard W4HLR at phone station

over at this point. The GOTA station was experiencing some front end receiver overload and, without narrow SSB filters, was struggling to 'hear' well. Key clicks from Bob's operation at the CW station didn't help either ! This resulted in slow logging of contacts and lesser participation by visiting children. One bright spot here though was Brittany, Rose W9DHD's granddaughter, making her first radio contact - with Canada ! She was thrilled ! Estevan, another of Rose's grandchildren, qualified for the GOTA bonus points by making over 20 contacts !

Six meters never opened for Ray N4SLY except for one contact with a station in Mexico. This was a consequence of the poor band conditions. The phone station found conditions tough going as well. There were several guest operators at this station, including

one of our newest members, Phillip N4PWG. Jamie WB4YDL made several satellite contacts on VuSat VO-52 on SSB but found the FM 'birds' completely locked up with all the high-powered stations attempting to 'capture' the satellite. The International Space Station was quiet this year due to recent computer and power failures and also the recent visit of Space Shuttle Atlantis. It seems like ol' Murphy was busy up there, as well ! The Winlink demonstration was a complete success with formal messages sent to our Section Manager as well as to more than 20 other Winlink Field Day stations. This easily accounted for the 100 point bonus in sending and receiving formal messages - a first for Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club. Interesting messages were being received Saturday night from the San Antonio area stating that they were forced to abandon their Field Day camp due to torrential rain.



Jamie WB4YDL logging satellites

These messages would prove to be prophetic for our operation.

There were many more visitors this year than in previous years, attributable to our press release push the week before. Mr. Polk Glover of the Red



Satellite Communications and CW Tent

Cross visited and qualified RARC for the 100 point bonus of visitation of a served agency official. Also Obion County Mayor Bennie McGuire visited and was duly impressed by the operation. Visitors also included new member Sherri KI4VXP and her husband (XOM?), Paul. The barbeque pork and chicken provided by Chris KI4TRM with the fixin's was magnificent ! Also there was a lot of great chow and desserts contributed by XYL's June (de Jamie WB4YDL), Linda (de Glenn N4MJ), Barbara (de Steve KQ4UB), Dolly KN4SLY (de K4SLY), and Rose W9DHD. Also contributing was new member Larry KI4UNT and XYL Linda.

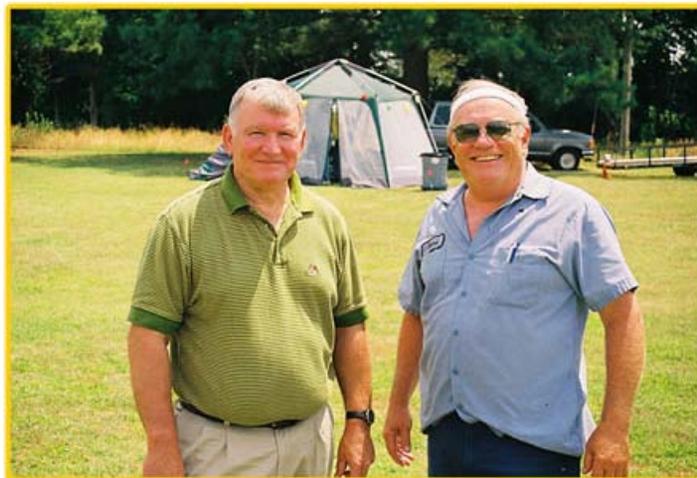
Murphy made his final stand on Sunday morning when a severe thunderstorm cell decided to stand right over our position and dump some 2 inches of rain. This was associated with high winds, lightning, and claps of loud thunder. It was decided that conditions had become too dangerous to continue and Field Day operations ceased at this point - some 6 hours prior to the event's finish. The stations were rapidly broken down and antennas disassembled in a very orderly, if not wet, fashion. As safety was of paramount concern at this time, ending the event prematurely did not bother anyone. Jamie WB4YDL loaded up 4 laptop computers, two of which were ailing, and manual logs to be compiled at home.

The Results :

This year the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club had 15 total participants including Howard and Jim from the Dyer County Amateur Radio Club. There were two children that qualified for bonus points this year. The following are the 'Bottom Line' results:

Score Summary:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
Total QSO's	619	0	355	974



Obion County Mayor Bennie McGuire & Glenn N4MJ

Band / Mode QSO Breakdown:

	CW	Digital	Phone	Total
80M	40	0	17	57
40M	290	0	109	399
20M	287	0	195	482
15M	2	0	1	3
10M	0	0	0	0
6M	0	0	1	1
GOTA	0	0	32	32
TOTAL	619	0	355	974

The bonus point total was 1530 including the first time passing of 10 formal NTS messages. This all combined to a total claimed score of **4828 points**. Considering that we had to call it quits without operating some 7 hours due to inclement weather, and also considering that the band



Ray N4SLY's Camper VHF Station and Tower

conditions reflected the rock bottom of the sunspot cycle, this was a very respectable result. Digital contacts were not made this year and this will be something to improve upon for next year.

Epilogue :

An event of this magnitude requires "care and feeding" and support of our XYL's. Special thanks go out to XYL's Linda (de N4MJ), June (de WB4YDL), W9DHD Rose (de K9IL), KN4SLY Dolly (de N4SLY), Linda (de KI4UNT) and Barbara (de KQ4UB). Their support certainly contributed to our very good result even when ol' Murphy was spanking us good ! Ultimately, the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club learned that through adversity and difficult operating

conditions, we can be counted on to provide emergency communications should that time arise. This certainly impressed our visiting officials !

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, and ultimately, the emergency preparedness of the Reelfoot Amateur Radio Club.

See you on Field Day 2008 !

When all else fails ... Amateur Radio.



Soapbox :

Glenn N4MJ:

A Tri-County affair. Welcome Howard W4HLR and thanks for the breakfast. Hope you had as much fun as the rest of us. Many visitors. Two elected officials and front page coverage in the media. The food was the "best"! Thanks to Chris and Larry for the BBQ. Thanks to the XYL's for the side dishes that were delicious ! The CL-36 is a BIG HUMMER ! Hmmm ... Murphy strikes again (Sunday morning). Tents aren't necessarily water-proof, as we learned. Murphy struck again on the Magic Band - only one contact, albeit a DX contact. Maybe not a Picasso per se, but a work of art of which we are very proud.

Rose W9DHD:

A comment about Brittany. This was the very first time she ever had a microphone in her hands. She was just thrilled when she contacted Canada. Made her day !



SSTV capture of satellite antenna array through tent screen