

Hamfests

The big one, the Dayton Hamvention has come and gone. This year it was an excellent event and the weather cooperated fully. Only a few minutes of rain dampened the ground on Sunday morning. Cool nights and comfortable days added to the enjoyment of the weekend. The crowd appeared to be less than last year, but the Hamvention Committee announced that they thought it was about the same. There were more flea market empty spaces than last year. Possibly 25% of the space were empty. Vendors reported sales as good as last year, so it appears that the serious buyers are still attending. The forums and other programs were up to their usual excellence. TCARC was well represented in the KOA Campground, as well as in the flea market and at inside booths. Everyone attending had a great time.

On the first weekend of June, the Starved Rock Radio Club held their hamfest at Princeton. It was again a 2-day event. The crowd was smaller on both days, but vendor sales appeared to be equal to or better than last year. The weather was outstanding. A few problems appeared during the weekend. The major one was a lack of food service. The 4-H group that ran the food concessions backed out at the last minute. The hamfest committee did bring in pizza for noontime and coffee and donuts for Sunday morning. Conflicts with parking for the races at the grounds on Friday prevented many outside vendors from setting up until 10:30 Friday night. In talking with the club president and others, it appears that they are strongly considering going back to a one-day hamfest next year.

Coming up are several over the summer. July 8 is Indianapolis, with one at Aurora IL on the 9th. Peotone has one on July 16 as well as August 13. The Huntsville Alabama hamfest is August 19-20. This is worth the drive and if you can spare a couple extra days, there is much to see around Huntsville, including the NASA Space Museum. Radio Expo at Grayslake is August 26-27, not conflicting with Peoria on September 16-17. Radio Expo appears to be fixed on the

August weekend for several years ahead, even with the construction of new fairgrounds slated for next year. This year, the same location as in the past will be used.

Riley Hollingsworth to Amateur Radio Community: "Lighten Up!"

FCC Special Counsel for Enforcement Riley Hollingsworth advised those attending the FCC forum at Dayton Hamvention 2006 to try kindness instead of confrontation when problems arise on the bands. Hollingsworth spoke May 20 to a nearly full house at Hara Arena, and for the most part he praised the behavior of the majority of Amateur Radio operators, especially those who volunteered in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina last year. But, he noted, radio amateurs still could be more courteous and less inclined to fly off the handle at some perceived on-the-air offense.

"You need to lighten up and not embarrass the Amateur Radio Service," Hollingsworth advised. "All of us make mistakes, especially with the new features you have on radios today. It's very easy to make a mistake, to be on the wrong frequency or be operating split and not know it--there's a hundred ways to make mistakes." Hollingsworth said experience has shown him that at least 75 percent of the interference complained about is absolutely unintentional.

In Hollingsworth's view, radio amateurs all too often are hypersensitive and rude. "We have a radar going to detect offenses at all times, we assume the worst in people, we rarely give people the benefit of the doubt," he said. He joked that if there were three amateurs in a town, there would be two Amateur Radio clubs.

"And there'll be two hamfests with 20 people each, because they wouldn't dare consolidate them," he added.

Hollingsworth acknowledged that "certain problem operators" remain, but the real troublemakers are rarely the newcomers to

Amateur Radio. "If there's a downfall in Amateur Radio, it won't be caused by no-code Technicians or codeless anything else," he said. "It'll be caused by the microphone--no doubt in my mind." He advised his audience to ignore the troublesome operators and not give them the attention they crave by engaging them on the air.

"Now, think about it: If what you're hearing annoys you, or angers you or is stupid, use the 'stupid filter,' which is that big knob--that VFO that will take you somewhere else," he quipped. "It's the largest knob on the radio." He recommended moving to another frequency or even another band altogether.

Hollingsworth praised the Volunteer Examiner program as "outstanding" and noted there had not been a single complaint in the past year stemming from an examination session. He also said the Amateur Radio community should have a greater appreciation for what the ARRL is doing on its behalf.

"Most of you have no idea how much work is done in Newington for you and the Amateur Radio Service generally," he said. "I see it every day, but I think you have no idea of the hard work and dedication that comes out of that office up there, and I don't think we would be there if it weren't for [the League]."

"This country's communications infrastructure needs Amateur Radio," Hollingsworth emphasized, praising Amateur Radio's overall performance following Hurricane Katrina. "You have a tremendous amount to be proud of."

He also suggested that radio amateurs have an obligation to stay informed about what's going on in Amateur Radio that might affect their activities. "You have to not only keep up, you have to lead the way, because it's in your charter," he said, pointing to §97.1 of the Amateur Service rules.

Hollingsworth noted at the start of his talk that he could not address any questions dealing with the FCC's long-awaited decision on the Morse code requirement (Element 1), because he works in

the Commission's Enforcement Bureau. "We don't meddle in rule making," he explained, but added that he didn't expect CW to decline if the FCC does drop the 5 WPM Morse requirement for all Amateur Radio license classes as it's proposed to do.

The FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) handles Amateur Radio rule makings, Hollingsworth noted, including the "Morse code" proceeding, WT Docket 05-235, and the so-called "omnibus" proceeding, WT Docket 04-140. The WTB has said it will rule first on the omnibus proceeding, then tackle the Morse code proceeding, but it has not indicated when to expect either Report and Order.

No representative from the WTB was at Dayton Hamvention this year.

HF Bands Open?

Listening around the HF bands has shown that our summer conditions are here! 10 meters and 6 meters have opened the past week or so, mostly with short skip on 10 and 1000 mile propagation on 6. This is due to the E-Layer, which seems to wake up this time of year. If you hear the short skip on 10, around 500 miles or so, then look for 6 to be open. If you hear long range skip on 10, then you probably won't hear signals on 6. These openings can take place when the lower frequency bands are poor as those bands rely on other layers of the ionosphere for their propagation. The 6 & 10 openings occur mainly during the daylight hours. If you have 6 meter capabilities, look around 50.125 MHz for signals as that is the calling frequency for SSB. The FM calling frequency is 52.525.

VE Exam

Our next VE Exam is Sunday, July 16 at the UI Fire Institute at 1 p.m. We will be testing using the new Technician Question Pool. It is all new and very much different from the current pool that expires June 30. Fees are the same and the General and Extra exams are not changed.