

Editorial

Back from WRTC

I recently returned from a week in Boston attending World Radiosport Team Championship 2014. This was my first time attending a WRTC, and it was a privilege to serve as a referee for 9A5K and 9A1TT. Chris and Richard were great to work with. They are excellent station engineers and determined operators. I thought SO2R was demanding, but keeping up with two world-class operators going flat out forced my brain to grow some new neural networks. WRTC-2014 was an experience that I'll never forget, and I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to participate.

Enough cannot be said about the hundreds of volunteers who devoted so much time and energy toward making the event run smoothly. Hundreds of volunteers helped with transportation, logistics, and countless additional tasks. Thanks for creating an unforgettable experience.

Continuing Education

I have always been fascinated by electronics, but I've struggled to comprehend what makes our radio equipment actually function. While I've managed to achieve some specific goals, the gaps in my understanding are so vast that I've never felt as though I had a solid foundation. I had no Elmer in my early days, and no one in my family had any interest in electronics. When I finally did have access to skilled people later in life, I didn't know what questions to ask, so I usually stayed silent — and ignorant. Some time ago, I decided to do something about this and embarked on a path of self-education in electronics.

It turns out that there are more resources than I could imagine available on the Internet and elsewhere. I discovered several channels on YouTube geared to helping beginners understand basic electronics theory and fundamental concepts. A

couple of the channels worth researching are W2AEW's (all about oscilloscopes) and Dave Jones's EEVBlog (an entertaining look at EE design and test equipment). The EEVBlog also has a great user's forum. More advanced techniques can be found on "The Signal Path," also on YouTube. An important part of my learning process has been actually building circuits on the bench. NØAX's "Hands On Radio" series is a great resource for getting familiar with prototyping and learning about different kinds of circuits. The "All About Circuits" website (allaboutcircuits.com) has an excellent electronics tutorial that starts with static electricity and builds from there. I found the site very useful for filling in many gaps in my knowledge base.

So, how will any of this help my contest scores? For starters, the better I understand the fundamentals, the better I can design my station. Electronics knowledge helps me comprehend those useful papers written by folks like K9YC and W8JI, and it allows me to apply their techniques to my station. Even better, instead of just following instructions and seeing that something works (or doesn't), I can now actually understand *why* it works (or doesn't.) My troubleshooting is more focused and efficient. I have discovered things that I've been doing wrong, unnecessarily wasting precious decibels in the signal path. Each incremental improvement allows me to hear better and waste less transmit power. Well-engineered stations usually don't happen by accident. Knowledge and technique can save a great deal of money in both construction and maintenance of station equipment.

Finally, there is a certain form of satisfaction that comes with understanding electronics. For a musical analogy, it's a bit like learning to read music and studying chord

theory after having played music "by ear" all of my life. There is another level of communication available to the musician who can read and write, and a deeper satisfaction from being able to share musical concepts with the symbolic tools available. I have gained a better understanding of concepts which have mystified me since I discovered radio and electronics. Many of the readers of this journal are electronics engineers, and I'll always be a minnow swimming in a vast pool of deeper knowledge. I'm enjoying being a student again, and I'm finding the pursuit of knowledge very stimulating and rewarding. It's all about enjoying the process of discovery.

In This Issue

We return to our regularly scheduled programs in this issue and offer several interesting and entertaining articles. K8MR gives us an idea of what it's like to contest from the beach — and we mean literally from the beach. NØAX (with WF7T, and W4PA) tells their tale of a fun-focused multi-operation from PJ4Q. W9WI shares his funny Field Day fiasco. SMØJHF gives us a glimpse of contesting in Slovakia. K1MGY shares a tale of being part of a WRTC Beam Team. K1XM describes a futuristic alternate WRTC scenario, and K1CC describes the painstaking process used to select and evaluate potential WRTC operating sites. Plus, we have a Dayton Hamvention © 2014 photo spread, courtesy of K8LX and Hamgallery.com.

Our regular columnists provide their usual heaping helping of great tips and information. Included are Sprint tips, 6 meter antenna height considerations, log-analysis tools, station ergonomics, and hearing through the noise. K6MM's profile of K9YC rounds out this issue. Happy reading!