



Second Century

Field Day Thoughts

It's the June issue of QST, and naturally thoughts turn to ARRL Field Day. But just as there is a spectrum of hams, there is a spectrum of thoughts about Field Day.

My thoughts of ARRL Field Day always start with fond memories of my first club. I was a teenager, as were most of the members of the club. There were a few Elmers who really pulled the club together. We operated multiple stations simultaneously across the HF and VHF bands, all powered by the town's 25 kW emergency generator. I operated the 75/40 meter SSB station. But I was able to operate because others in the club kept the generator running, and cooked breakfast, lunch, and dinner for us. We operated as a team where each member's strengths were used to create something better than individual pieces.

Now when I think about Field Day, I think about the new banner ARRL is rolling out. It departs from previous campaigns in that "Radio Communications" takes the lead, not ARRL. If we are to grow Amateur Radio, we need to make Amateur Radio the message. And by growing Amateur Radio, we can grow ARRL.

And what aspects of Amateur Radio are we emphasizing? Skills, Service, and Discovery. These are ideas that should appeal to potential hams. These are ideas embodied in my Field Day memories. These are ideas that will take us forward.

"Back in the day," Amateur Radio required many skills. There was a skill in loading your final amplifier, alternating with dipping the plate, as you tried to coax every bit of power out of a pair of TV tubes not originally designed for that purpose. And to do it quickly so you did not melt the internal parts of the tube. But today, rigs are highly automated, and for normal operating, hams no longer think about changing frequencies from one end of the band to the other end.

But Amateur Radio still requires skills today. And everyone can take pride in mastering those skills. Hams need to understand the relationship between operating bands, conditions, and potential propagation distance. Hams still need to master the rules, regulations, and techniques for proper operating within a community of fellow hams and other competing interests for spectrum.

We are all familiar with "Part 97." Part 97.1 talks about the rules and regulations designed to provide an Amateur Radio Service, and 97.1(c) calls for the "Encouragement and improvement of the amateur service through rules which provide for advancing skills in both the communication and technical phases of the art." The FCC is encouraging us to improve our skills in operating and technology.

But skills to master something are hollow without a purpose. And that purpose is embodied in the second and third idea above — service and discovery. Many people today are motivated by service and discovery.

Discovery and service drive us on. Who can forget the kick they get after mastering something new, or the feeling of satisfaction they get when helping someone in need. Ham radio is a natural avenue for both service and discovery.

So, the next time you talk to a potential ham, talk to them about the skills, service, and discovery of Amateur Radio.

I encourage your comments to me at ceo@arrl.org.



Where to Meet WB2ITX

May 31, June 1 – 2 SeaPac, Seaside, OR

<https://www.seapac.org/>

June 4 IEEE International Microwave Symposium, Boston, MA. Howard will give the keynote address at the Amateur Radio Social. <https://ims-ieee.org/>

June 7 – 8 HamCom, Plano, TX hamcom.org

June 21 – 23 Ham Radio, Friedrichshafen, Germany

www.hamradio-friedrichshafen.de/ham-en/