

Doin' It Wrong and Gettin' It Right

*"I didn't know it was impossible when I did it."
(Source unknown)*

Back in high school, I had constant battles with math teachers who insisted on marking questions wrong even if I had the right answer because I "didn't solve the problem correctly." Process was more important than results. With all due respect to the math teachers of the world, I disagreed then and I disagree now. In real life, finding a new way to solve an old problem is called creativity or innovation. In high school math, it's called "wrong."

I bring this up because if any of my high school math teachers had been grading my latest radio adventure, it would be marked wrong. If you've been reading this editorial regularly, you know that my latest ham radio interest is QRP (low-power) and portable operating, and that I've been assembling the necessary gear for "trail-friendly radio." The closest I'd gotten to "hitting the trail" by the time this year's Dayton Hamvention® rolled around was one morning in my back yard spent testing the combination of QRP rig, end-fed half-wave antenna, and mini-tuner.

I tossed a length of nylon rope over a tree branch and pulled up the antenna's active element. I laid out the counterpoise in the opposite direction, hooked up a 9-volt transistor radio battery to my MFJ-9200, and started listening on 20 meters. When I later described the setup to my colleague, Richard Fisher, KI6SN, he about had a cow. It seems the counterpoise is supposed to go directly *underneath* the active element, and the 9200's 5-watt transmitter draws far too much current for me to be able to do anything but listen with a transistor-radio battery.

Nine out of ten QRP "experts," KI6SN said later, would tell me that making any contacts with that setup would be impossible (Obviously, Richard is the tenth out of ten!). But, as a person whose name is now lost to history once said, "I didn't know it was impossible when I did it," which is why W4MQC in Florida is now in my log. True, the battery died very quickly, but Alan later confirmed that he had copied enough of my transmission to get the necessary info for a valid QSO.

Ignorance can be a wonderful thing ... as long as you recognize it for what it is and use it as a springboard for learning ... and perhaps for doing things the "experts" say cannot be done. And in real life, if not in math class, "gettin' it right" counts even if you're "doin' it wrong." By the way, KI6SN was so impressed with this "doin' it wrong, gettin' it right" QSO that he's writing about it in much more detail in his "Trail-Friendly Radio" column in the July issue of *WorldRadio Online*.

[Dayton purchase: 5 amp-hour gel cell with charger. Next mission: Try a QSO with enough power to make more than two transmissions!]

Dayton

As usual, Dayton was an exhausting but wonderful experience. We got to meet hundreds and hundreds of happy readers. A special thank you to those folks who stopped to tell us how much they're enjoying our digital editions as well as the traditional print versions. And depending on when you stopped by the booth, you got to meet various members of our editorial and business staffs, as well as at least a dozen columnists, award managers, and contest directors. Thanks to all who helped out at our booth.

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There was not a dry eye in the house, certainly not Gail's, when she received a plaque of appreciation from the CQ WW Contest Directors and Committee for over 30 years of service to the contest community. (Photo courtesy of Ward Silver, N0AX)

Speaking of contest directors, nearly all of them were on hand at the Dayton Contest Dinner to present a special plaque to CQ Managing Editor Gail Sheehan, K2RED, recognizing the wonderful work she does, issue after issue, year after year, in taking the contest results information that they provide—often in bits and pieces—and assembling it into the cohesive articles you see in print, as well as coordinating the trophies and certificates sent to the contest winners. Congratulations, Gail! It is well-deserved.

We also made our Hall of Fame announcements and presentations over Dayton weekend (see page 34); congratulations to all the new inductees. And a special welcome to our newest columnist, Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH. The first edition of "Riley's Ramblings" appears on page 52 of this issue.

While many of us were at Dayton, CQ's "Ham Notebook" editor Wayne Yoshida, KH6WZ, was waving the flag for ham radio at the original Maker Faire in northern California. He writes about the demonstrations he had planned in his column on page 65 of this issue.

Also at Dayton, we debuted the third edition of the *DX World Guide* by Franz Langner, DJ9ZB. It is the first edition to be published entirely in English and in full color. I saw it for the first time as I was unpacking cartons at the show, and was very impressed. This is a great shack-table reference book (also available on CD) and I highly recommend it.

W2ML

As this issue was going to press, we learned that Steve Mendelsohn, W2ML, had become a Silent Key after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. Steve is probably best-known as Communications Director of the New York City Marathon, a post he held since 1976, and through which he regularly brought ham radio into the national spotlight. He was also an ARRL Director and First Vice President, and was responsible, back in the '80s, for putting together a group of people (this writer included) to prepare ARRL recommendations for a major re-write of the FCC's Part 97 rules. The vast majority of those recommendations are now part of the FCC's amateur radio rules. Steve's contributions to our hobby were recognized earlier this year by the CQ Amateur Radio Hall of Fame committee. I called him just before I left for Dayton to let him know he was being inducted (and he was overjoyed). We were supposed to get together after I got back. Unfortunately, that never happened. 73, "old boy." Rich W2VU