

Gotta Do This More Often

I have *got* to do this more often ... get on the radio, that is. One of the few negatives of my job is that with all the reading and writing *about* ham radio that I need to do for work, I often end up devoting my free time to other interests. Every once in a while, though, I do manage to get on the air, and virtually every time I do, I'm reminded of why I fell in love with ham radio to begin with, and why I've remained so enthused by it that I have made it my job as well as my hobby.

I was reminded of it again this morning, when I had a few free minutes before starting work. I fired up the rig and started tuning around. Would 10 meters be alive this morning? Was 15 awake yet? Judging by the lack of activity on either band, I guessed that today's answer to both of those questions was "no." On 17 meters, I heard only two stations, one in Switzerland, the other in Slovenia. I worked them both easily with my 100 watts and a vertical—one of the joys of 17—and then shut down the rig and headed for the laptop (one of the benefits of telecommuting!). What other hobby can give you that sort of experience? Completely random, no schedules or big preparations needed - just flip a switch and talk to people half a world away—and the ham in Slovenia remembered receiving a QSL card from me five years ago during our 60th anniversary CQ/60 event!

A couple of weekends earlier, I put in a little time during the ARRL DX Contest. Again, nothing major, about 50 QSOs over a few hours, mostly on 15 meters. Starting out with D4C on Cape Verde was nice, but the QSO that I will remember for a long time to come was with P40N in Aruba. After swapping the contest exchange, the voice at the other end asked, "Is that you, Rich? This is Scott, KØDQ. Ed is sitting right next to me." For those of you who have missed our interviews over the past couple of years, KØDQ is retired Rear Admiral Scott Redd, former commander of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and, among other things, former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (see interview, February, 2008). Ed is retired Admiral Ed Giambastiani, N4OC, whose last post before retirement was Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In Ed's interview with us (October, 2007), he said he looked forward to getting more active on the radio once he retired. Scott, a life-long contesteer (he is possibly the only person to win the world, single operator, in all six of the major DX contests—see article, October, 2009 CQ), said he had worked for years with Ed professionally but never knew he was a ham until reading his interview in CQ. And now, here they were together, two recently-retired admirals, architects of our modern high-tech military, contesting from Aruba as "Papa-Forty-NAVY" and going out of their way to say hi to me! Is this a great hobby or what? I *really* have to do this operating stuff more often!

Getting Social

At the Carolina DX Association dinner in March in Charlotte, I was talking with my tablemates about our tentative first steps into online social networking through the CQ Facebook page and discovered that at least one couple was already there and quite active (mostly to keep up on what their grandchildren are doing!). It made me wonder how many more of our readers are members of Facebook and/or other social networking sites (as of mid-March, we had roughly 2000 "fans" on our page), so this month's reader survey asks about your involvement with these online activities. I hope you'll take a few moments to respond and mail in the card.

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Of course, social networking is nothing new for us hams. We've been using technology to do social networking for, oh, 100 years or so! After all, what is it we do on the radio? We talk to each other. We make friends. We make connections. Some of us talk with our voices; some talk with our fingers on keyboards, just like on the internet; some talk with our fingers on a Morse code key—try doing *that* on Facebook! Some of us even exchange photos and videos over the air, and use the internet to connect us to each other when the sun and ionosphere aren't cooperating. (Speaking of the sun and the ionosphere, if the whole sunspot cycle and propagation thing is a mystery to you, be sure to check out W5YI's article in this issue on sunspots and why they're important to us hams.)

So, if we have our own social networking space (the ham bands!), why do we need the internet, too? Simple ... the only people we can reach on the ham bands are people who are already hams. On a site like Facebook, when we post something interesting on the CQ page, it automatically appears on the "newsfeed" pages of each of our 2000 fans. When their non-ham friends visit their pages, they get exposed to ham radio. If each of our 2000 fans has 50 friends who regularly visit their pages, then our one message is seen by 100,000 people, 90,000 of whom probably are not already hams. As word gets out that these ham people are doing fun, interesting and sometimes important things, interest will grow and that will translate into additional growth for ham radio. That is why we need to be there!

Harry Potter and the Dayton Hamvention@??

Speaking of online activities, my colleague Richard Fisher, K16SN, the new Editor of *WorldRadio Online* (in addition to being CQ's Public Service Editor), is hitting the ground running with several innovative activities befitting an online magazine. First of all, he is hosting a live monthly chat session with WRO readers, and—this is really cool—the May issue of WRO is featuring a link to live streaming video from the Dayton Hamvention@! Think of the newspapers in the Harry Potter movies in which the photos move, and you'll have an idea of what we're talking about here—a magazine page with live video! So if you can't make it to Dayton yourself, be sure to check out the May issue of *WorldRadio Online* frequently during Dayton weekend (May 14–16) for W5KUB's live reports. (Go to the CQ webpage at www.cq-amateur-radio.com, click on the WRO link, download the May issue and then find the article—I don't know yet what page it will be on.) Just as a print magazine offers certain benefits that an online magazine can't—like being able to roll it up and put it in your pocket—there are certain features available online that simply are impossible in print. We plan to identify and make use of as many of these features as we can to make sure that both CQ and WRO provide the best possible product and that you will find both to be essential parts of your monthly ham radio reading.

Finally, on the topic of your monthly ham radio reading, be sure to check out W1FK's report in this issue on Chile, which Stew and his wife visited just weeks before it was struck by a massive earthquake. Much of their time was spent with local hams, many of whom have been heavily involved in the amateur radio response to the quake and have filled in Stew on their activities. He shares their first-hand reports with us, starting on page 13.

— 73, W2VU