

# Of Mice . . . and Hams

Orlando, Florida ... home of sunshine, warm temperatures, a giant mouse named Mickey, and in mid-February, the second-largest hamfest in the United States. We were there as usual this year—"we" this time consisting of our new Ad Manager, Chip Margelli, K7JA; his wife Janet, KL7MF, and me. We managed to avoid giant mouse encounters as well as most of the warmth and sunshine (it was cloudy and cool until it was time to leave on Sunday!), but I was happy to be someplace where there wasn't a foot or more of snow on the ground ... after a few days of melting.

The Orlando Hamcation® was its usual excellent self, bringing with it several signs of a slowly improving economy, here in the U.S. and beyond. There seemed to be a larger contingent of hams from the Caribbean and Latin America than we've seen in several years, and those dealers selling lower-priced items did very, very well. Big-ticket items didn't really seem to be moving, though, suggesting that hams—like many others—are starting to spend money again, but slowly and carefully. As the economic picture continues to improve, I think we'll see resumed growth in the higher-cost items as well.

Another good sign was the number of new or newly-upgraded hams who came over after their test sessions for our special goodie bag. We regularly make this offer at hamfests and ask VE teams to direct successful candidates to our booth for their welcome packs. Typically, we'll get six to eight people showing up with CSCEs (Certificates of Successful Completion of Examination) in hand, asking what it's all about. This time, we had at least 20, and about half were upgrades to General, the perfect audience for our *HF Operator's Survival Guide*, which is part of the package. Another sign of solid and steady growth within our hobby.

Final Orlando note: Thank you to our Facebook friends who stopped by (and got a special discount). Look for special Facebook offers at future hamfests where CQ is exhibiting. Speaking of Facebook, as I write this in mid-February, we are closing in on 5000 "fans" on the CQ page there, 80% of whom are under age 55. Just some food for thought for those of you who believe we're all a bunch of old codgers.

## More Food for Thought

Back in November, I wrote about "unimportant decisions" I'd made about ham radio in my younger days, and how they've influenced my life ever since. Apparently, I'm not alone. I heard from several readers who said that my story was very similar to theirs.

"Introduced to ham radio while in HS, it has influenced my entire life since 1953," wrote Bob Linker, W5SQA.

Joe Schroeder, W9JUV, writes:

I got intrigued with ham radio, and became W9JUV in 1946. When I graduated from college in 1953, didn't

know if I wanted to continue as a geologist, so thanks to a close high school ham radio friend (W9ZPK) I went to work for Motorola Military instead. A fellow engineer (W9DDN) owned a Cessna 140 and invited me to tour the UP of Michigan with him one weekend; a year later I had a pilot's license and owned half the Cessna!

When W9ZPK announced he was getting married, my mother decided we had to throw a party for Jim and his fiancé. He mentioned his fiancé knew this cute gal from Ohio, and since I was between girlfriends maybe I'd like a blind date. I would, and 52 years later she still puts up with me and even has a license (N9LGI)!

And on and on... *Ham Radio* magazine and *hr Report*, ARRL and AMSAT positions; great life, great friends, great luck. Just had to share this with you: Thanks ham radio!!!

In that editorial, I also wrote about the impact of ham radio on those around us. William Cooper, NU9DE, responded that back in 1974, he made a presentation on ham radio to a group of Cub Scouts, a few of whom were interested enough to get their Novice licenses. "One of the young men developed such an interest in electronics he went to college and got a degree in electrical engineering," he wrote. That young man, William reports, is now Vice President for Technology of a major sporting goods firm, is still an active ham, and his wife and three children are all licensed as well.

Even among those family members who do not become hams, our hobby still can have a tremendous impact. On page 26 of this issue, you'll find an article titled, "Next Tuesday." Written by Clair Hyde, the adult granddaughter of W6EUF, who became a Silent Key last year, it shows the extent to which our hobby, our stations and our callsigns become wrapped up with our identities and how we are perceived by those around us.

Soon after getting Clair's story ready for publication, I attended the funeral of an amateur here in New Jersey who was probably a lot like W6EUF—prominent in the local ham community, well-respected and well-loved by family, friends and acquaintances from ham radio and other activities. At the service, one of his adult granddaughters delivered a lovely tribute to her grandfather. She managed to remain well-composed as she described how he was known to different people in his life—family members, friends and people he engaged with in different activities. She lost her composure, though, when she got to his ham radio callsign, and never really regained it. Realizing that she would not hear that callsign again became emblematic of her loss.

I thought about it on the way home, her reaction so similar to that expressed by Clair in her story, and I realized what makes ham radio unique as a hobby. Other activities in which we engage are things that we *do*. Ham radio becomes part of who we *are*. Maybe it's that unique callsign. Maybe it's something more. But clearly, we have something very special here. We need to nurture it and appreciate it. As W9JUV says, "thanks ham radio!!"

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