

That “Special” Feeling

Welcome to our first annual “Take it to the Field” special! I’m really excited about this issue, our first special topic issue in several years and the first in a new series of specials, looking at topics of particular interest to hams of the twenty-teens (or whatever we end up calling this decade). Among the hottest of these topics right now, thanks in part to the availability of high-quality gear that is small and lightweight, is operating “out there”—away from our home stations—whether it’s on foot on a hiking path, with friends in a local park or on the road passing out contacts in a contest.

We picked June for our “Take it to the Field” special because the weather is great for heading outside and of course, because it’s the month for Field Day, that annual ham radio tradition that’s equal parts contest, emergency preparedness exercise, public relations event, cook-off and outdoor social activity. But there’s much more to “taking it to the field” than joining your club on Field Day, and our goal for this issue is to paint a picture of the many different ways in which hams all over are getting out of their houses and taking their ham gear with them. I hope you’ll agree that we succeeded.

From the front cover—with Bob Curry, KC3VO, riding off into the sunset with his motorcycle-mobile kilowatt station (see “On the Cover” on page 14)—to NW7US’s Propagation column in “the back of the book,” we take you all over the world of ham radio away from home. From the shores of Long Island Sound to the skies over Guanajuato, Mexico and the earthquake-shattered streets of Christchurch, New Zealand, this issue is crammed full of articles showing hams having fun and helping their communities while operating “in the field.”

We’ve got stories on makeshift stations on an island, a radio club that does high-altitude ham radio balloon launches and community outreach with its “Digital Mobile Library,” and a group of hams in Arizona that loves to head out to the park and play with antennas—even loading up metal lawn chairs and pizza pans! Plus, we have a review of three portable single-lever keyer paddles for sending Morse code from who-knows-where, two looks at different kits for portable operating, tips on being prepared for just about anything in the field, Rover operating in VHF contests, upcoming DXpeditions and a guide to likely propagation conditions for Field Day.

In fact, we had so many good stories that we couldn’t fit them all in the issue. So we added a *special web supplement* with two more features—a project article on a battery discharge meter to let you know which power packs are ready for field use, and a look at a hamfest just for RVers in the middle of the Arizona desert! Our web supplement also contains expanded results of the 2010 CQ DX Marathon (main article is in the issue, on page 28) and “overflow” from our Kids’ Korner, Public Service and QRP columns. Be sure to check out the web supplement to get the maximum value from this special issue. Details are on page 86.

I must admit that when we started gathering articles for this issue, I was a little concerned. Would we be able to get the word out in time to get a broad selection of articles on a wide array of outdoor activities? I

needn’t have worried. At least half the articles that landed on my desk over the past few months had some outdoor connection, so I think we hit on exactly the right topic at exactly the right time.

Looking Ahead—and Looking for Articles

We’ve got three more special topic issues planned over the coming months, and we’re starting to collect articles for them now. Here are the topics:

- Public Service (October)—looking at different ways in which hams are continuing to innovate in providing emergency and public service communications;
- Cutting Edge (November)—exploring how hams are continuing to contribute to the advancement of the radio art; and
- QRP (next April)—the lure of low-power operating is stronger today than ever, and we want to help you succeed if you decide to give it a try. Plus, we’ll be looking at articles on new twists and ideas for experienced QRPers.

In each special, it is our goal to include a mix of operating and technical articles, to give readers a taste of the broad spectrum of available activities and projects within each specialty area. So if you’ve got a story that you think might fit in, please send it along (but please check out our writers’ guidelines first; they’re on our website).

Herr Professor...

One other quick item before I let you loose on our “Take it to the Field” articles: We’ve had more than our usual number of letters this year from readers who can’t quite figure out whether to believe what Professor Heisseluft wrote in his April article. All we can say is that the professor has been out standing in the field for years (speaking of taking it to the field), and comes inside just frequently enough to write an article for our April issue each year.

Now, I don’t normally do this, but if you’re one of the readers we heard from who is upset about this article, I recommend that you read the Op-Ed in the May issue of *QST* (yes, *QST*). It’s on page 97 and titled “The Serious Business of Ham Humor.” What the author says about that magazine’s humor writers applies equally to those who have graced our pages over the years, from Hashafisti Scratchi and Snorlock Ohms to Dr. Jerzy Ostermond-Tor and his protégé, Professor Emil Heisseluft. The author of that op-ed is Eric Nichols, KL7AJ, who coincidentally has written a book that we are publishing called *The Opus of Amateur Radio Knowledge and Lore*, a light-hearted look at just about everything about ham radio. It should be available by the time you read this.

Read ... then Get Out!

I hope you enjoy this “Take it to the Field” special, and then “take it to the field” yourself. Whether you’re hiking, biking or RVing, operating from a vacation spot or the middle of the woods somewhere, or just joining your club for Field Day, make sure ham radio is part of your outdoor action this summer. We hope this issue will inspire you to get out and get on the air!

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