



(Parking) Field of Dreams

For 361 days each year, the bumpy, pothole-filled, parking field around Dayton's Hara Arena is just that ... a bumpy, pothole-filled, parking field. But for four days each May, it is transformed into a ham radio Field of Dreams, as the home of the Dayton Hamvention® flea market. It is here that hams dream of uncovering a great treasure hidden away among rusty "boatanchors," of getting a great bargain on that last item needed for a new project, or just digging through boxes of "one man's junk" to find something they can turn into their personal ham radio treasures. It's been said that if it exists, it's in the Dayton flea market, and a quick perusal of this year's offerings once again showed that to be true.

Dayton's Field of Dreams extends beyond the parking field to the indoor exhibit halls and forum rooms. As you make your way through the five large exhibit halls, you can dream of building your own superstation with the latest and greatest in transceivers, accessories, antennas and towers, all arrayed in front of your eager eyes. Or you can dream of building a portable station that can go anywhere you do, seeing and touching all the possible building blocks as you wander among the booths. And who knows, one of the many dealers at the show might be able to put together just the right deal to make your dream come true.

In the forums, you can hear about DXpeditions to far-off places and other ham radio adventures from the participants themselves; learn about the latest technology, from software-defined radios to Raspberry Pi, and ask questions directly of leaders and experts in every facet of amateur radio.

I recently got an e-mail from a reader who criticized us for not being tough enough on the Hamvention organizers for the rundown condition of Hara Arena. Admittedly, there's a lot to criticize about Hara Arena, but the Hamvention organizers do not own the facility and cannot force the owners to invest in major upgrades. And there is no viable alternative venue in the Dayton area.

But our reader misses the whole point of Dayton. It's not about the facility. It's not about the potholes in the parking field or the real fields around the arena that serve as parking fields and turn to mud when it rains (which it nearly always does). It's not even about what passes for food at the concession stands. It's about the experience of being with 20,000 of your closest friends; about five big rooms (plus the occasional hallway) full of new gear to salivate over; about meeting and talking with manufacturers' representatives, sometimes even including the engineer who designed the very rig that you're salivating over; about rubbing shoulders with the hobby's leaders and about meeting your fellow hams from all over the world. And yes, it's about those dreams, perhaps of winning one of the big prizes at the end of the show and heading home with a whole new station in tow! This is what Dayton is all about. As in the movie whose title we borrowed for this editorial, the actual venue is nearly irrelevant in comparison to the dreams that are dreamed, and that occasionally come true, in ham radio's Field of Dreams.

Speaking of Fantasies...

One of our features this month ("Ham Radio in Prime Time," p. 18) is an article by John Amodeo, NN6JA, on the story

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behind the story of the episode of the ABC-TV comedy, "Last Man Standing," that featured several of the characters talking via ham radio. Among the gripes of the perennial grippers who criticized the show ("It was so fake," one ham told me at Dayton. Of course, it's fake. It's TV!!! It's fiction!!!) was that the principal character in the scene, Mandy Baxter, never identified with a callsign. John, who is the program's producer, discusses this in his article, which was already "cast in stone" by the time of Dayton.

Thanks to in-person updates from John at Dayton, we can now tell you that 1) "Last Man Standing" has been renewed for a third season and at least one more episode involving ham radio is anticipated; and 2) Mandy will either get or be shown to already have her ham license (none of the episodes have yet been written). Through the magic of television, though, we already know Mandy's callsign—KFØXIE—and that she already has QSL cards, which John brought to Dayton on her behalf (see photo).



QSL card for "Mandy Baxter" of the ABC-TV comedy, "Last Man Standing." (Courtesy "Last Man Standing" and NN6JA)

Back to Reality

Effective with the CQ WPX RTTY Contest results in this issue, we are beginning the process of moving the complete score listings from the magazine to the web. In a sense, we are the victims of our own success, as the number of participants in all of our contests has been growing steadily each year, resulting in more and more pages filled with score listings in tiny type that's difficult to read without a magnifying glass. Moving the scores to the web will let us put them in a more readable form and will open up space in the magazine for more articles. Within the contest results, it's our goal to use some of the space that we save to tell more stories about your experiences. So if you operated from a special place or had an experience that made your contest operation unique or special, we'd like to hear about it. If you've got a story to tell, please contact the appropriate contest director for specifics on what to include and how to submit it.

One more change ... in place of our annual "safari" articles on new products introduced at Dayton, which last year stretched into the October issue, we have also moved our Dayton new products report online. Go to the CQ home page at <www.cq-amateur-radio.com> and look for the appropriate link.

Enjoy your summer, and do your best to include some outdoor hamming. 73, Rich, W2VU