

K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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Field Day

CW Rogues—The Next Reality Series?

Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL

Who says Ham Radio is passé, not topical? For decades, we Hams have been living our own, truly unscripted, version of reality television. In the midst of “enjoying” the mundane, early summer, indulgences of lawn mowing, shrub

copying, sending and logging duties by headphone, laptop computer and iambic paddle.

New Antenna Breaks Midwest Drought?

This year, the Robert W. Heytow Memorial Radio Club's Field Day crew, the CW Rogues, went to a multiband (6- through 80-meters) maypole antenna based on a design depicted in the Edward M. Noll, W3FQJ, book, *73 Dipole and Long-Wire Antennas* (Editors and Engineers, Indianapolis, 1976). In the past, with great success, we used two antennas: a Hustler 6-BTV vertical, tripod-mounted, at five feet above ground level with four radials per band and a Zepp. The vertical worked well on 40- through 10-meters and the 135' Zepp provided needed bandwidth on 80.

trimming, house painting and car polishing, some few thousands of us manage to tear ourselves away from such doubtful pleasures to star in our own “Survivor”-type series.

“...dealing with personal hygiene at a primitive level...”

Our weekend-long episode finds us choosing team leaders; parleying strategies and tactics; erecting shelters and spindly communications supports; driving stakes and ground rods in hardened, parched soil; generating electricity; gleaning sustenance from unlikely sources; coexisting with, and sometimes battling, local wildlife; ducking the worst of Mother Nature's fury; dealing with personal hygiene at a primitive level; and, all the while, contacting as many other “tribes” experiencing similar travails throughout North America as we can.

Field Day at Boy Scout Camp Lakota near Woodstock, Illinois was, in no particular order: hot, humid, dusty, sweaty, visited by marauding raccoons, punctuated by rain squalls and beset by hefty stinging and biting insects of myriad species and Biblical proportions. It was also a time of unmitigated pleasure as we lived the essence of what it means to be a Ham Radio operator as we enthusiastically shared 24 busy hours of listening,

Hoping to improve previous scores, and following a thorough perusal of antenna handbooks and Amateur Radio Web sites for applicable designs, we settled on the configuration Noll suggests for “...maintaining multiband schedules, net activities, participating in multiband sideband contests, and

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We Don't Need No Stinkin' Microphones!

The Treasure of the Camp Lakota

Chuck Guenther, NIØC



Chuck, NIØC (L), and John, AAØBP (R)
(Photos by N9BOR)

There was never any doubt that Field Day 2005 from K9YA would be primarily, if not exclusively, a CW operation. After all, my son John, AAØBP, and I were invited to participate by a group that calls itself the CW Rogues. Five of us, including Mike, N9BOR; Phil, K9PL; and Steve, N9WAT, are FISTS members. On our drive from St. Louis to Chicago, John and I remembered we had not

packed microphones for either the primary HF rig, a Kenwood TS-850S, or the backup rig, a TS-440S. We laughed this off, saying, “We don’t need no stinkin’ microphones.” The six-hour drive went by very quickly (as did the drive home). This was an all too rare opportunity for father and son to visit and just talk. Although we’ve operated Field Day together several times, it had been a number of years since our last FD.

Although we forgot the microphones, we did remember to swap filters in the TS-850S. We removed the 125 Hz CW filter that had served me well in pursuing DX on the low bands, and re-configured the radio for a choice of two cascaded 500 Hz filters or a 250/500 combo. This was definitely a good move, for we ended up using the 500 Hz filters nearly 100 percent of the time.

John and I had a pleasant visit and overnight stay at Steve’s home near Chicago. (Steve, N9WAT, is John’s brother-in-law.) Our wake-up call came at 5:07 am; Steve had warned us that FD organizer, Mike, would arrive early and ready to go. Although Mike and I have corresponded and had a couple of brief QSOs, I had only met Mike once—at the

2002 Dayton Hamvention. I think I have never met a more enthusiastic Ham and CW aficionado as Mike. I was also glad to meet Philip for the first time, whom I had previously known only from his articles in the *K9YA Telegraph*. Mike brought the generator and gas, and Philip provided the most crucial part of our station, his homebrew “maypole” antenna, which worked extraordinarily well for us.

After meeting at Steve’s place, we drove for about an hour to the FD site at Boy Scout Camp Lakota near Woodstock, Illinois. Here, we were assisted by scout leader, Art, WB9JKZ, who had made the necessary arrangements for our operation from a picnic shelter in a large open field. Art also provided us with a large sleeping tent and a portable tower to support the maypole. Although Art did not actually operate, he helped us haul our coolers and radio gear to the site, and to erect the tower. He also stopped by frequently to cheer us on and made sure we had food and water.

All of us participated in raising the tower and deploying the maypole antenna. Special credit goes to Steve, who risked exposure to chiggers, ticks and poisonous plants to tie off each of the six ends of the maypole wires in the trees that surrounded the field.

Because Philip had pre-assembled the antenna, we

*“...chiggers, ticks
and poisonous
plants...”*



John, AAØBP



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anticipated adjusting the wire lengths. We were pleasantly surprised that, thanks to Philip's precise measurements, the antenna presented an acceptable SWR match (at most, 2:1) on the bands we planned to operate (80-, 40-, 20- and 15-meters). We used the auto-tuner in the TS-850S on a couple of bands to touch up the SWR so we could obtain the full 100 watts.

We had the station assembled and ready to go by about 10:30 am, as John promptly worked several European stations on 20-meters and I practiced using the TR Log program. I'm not a touch-typist, and I felt that sometimes my QSO rate was limited by my ability to log the contacts. In order to place first in the 1A category, a QSO rate of around 120 per hour is required. Although at times we achieved and exceeded this rate, we could not sustain it.

We used two headsets, one for the primary operator, and one for an assistant. The primary operator controlled the station and logged the contacts on the laptop computer, while the second operator assisted in picking out calls from the pileup. Grabbing call signs quickly from the pileup is crucial in maintaining a good rate. The relatively wide 500 Hz bandwidth helped us in this regard. When Philip and I were working together, I noticed he would consistently pick out a higher pitched caller, while I would go for a low pitch. Sometimes we'd get two on the first call.

The five of us rotated through the two operating positions, changing places as frequently as every hour. All went well until about

"...the fireworks show was an impending thunderstorm."

10:30 pm; I was in the primary operator position sailing along, ignoring the mosquito-fogging in the field around us and booming noises in the background, which I attributed to a fireworks show. It turns out the fireworks show was an impending thunderstorm. Mike and John had trouble getting my attention to tell me we were shutting down immediately. I clicked off another couple of QSOs before they literally pulled the plug. The generator was turned off and carried from the field to the picnic shelter; the coax was disconnected from the rig, with the PL-259 literally tossed into the field toward the tower. Then we proceeded to cover the radio gear with tarps. After watching the lightning show briefly, we headed for the tent and the trucks to take shelter. We ended up falling asleep until about 5:00 am

Mike got us going again by dragging the generator back out in the field and starting it up. We lost about six hours of operating time. Some of this, of course, was due to the storm, but some was due to our collective fatigue and lethargy during these late hours.

The maypole antenna performed remarkably well. We got calls from west coast stations well past our sunrise on 80-meters. I was impressed by the generally good CW operators who called us, some sporting flawless sending with a bug! Mike and Philip carried us across the finish line with a valiant effort to break 1,000 QSOs. Our final total was 949.

Art assisted us with taking down the antenna and station. This was a remarkably efficient operation, as it was just one hour from our final QSO until we were driving away with our gear all packed up. I learned a lot working with such a fine group of operators experienced at working Field Day, and I hope to be able to participate in next year's event. ■



Chuck, N1ØC



Art, WB9JKZ (L); Steve, N9WAT (ctr.); Philip, K9PL



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K9YA Field Day

Building a Better Mouse Trap

Mike Dinelli, N9BOR



Sgt. Andreus (L) and
Mike, N9BOR (R)

This is our third year operating a 1A station for Field Day (one-transmitter, emergency power). Each year we aim to upgrade our station and this year marks our most dramatic improvement—although our score belies it.

We assessed our performance at last year's post Field Day meeting and noted areas needing improvement. The most significant were: 1. Contest quality rig; 2. Additional operators; and 3. Improved antenna(s).

Thanks to John, AAØBP, we were able to use his Kenwood TS-850SAT. It is equipped with cascaded CW filters and an external DSP filter. We now had the selectivity and dynamic range required for crowded contest conditions. A radio of this caliber not only gets the job done, it is less fatiguing for the operators. Problem one solved.

Last year our Field Day team consisted of four participants. Between the heat, cold, long commute, physical stress of setting up a station and late night operating—we needed help! Our first pick was Chuck, NIØC. Chuck is a skilled Ham, DXer, CW operator and nice guy. Chuck lives in St. Louis—a six-hour commute to Woodstock, Illinois. We weren't confident we could pry him away from a local effort. To our good fortune, Chuck enthusiastically agreed to join us and asked if his son, John, AAØBP, could come along. Problem two solved.

It is incredible how quickly an entire year passes between Field Days. At many of our social luncheons, the subject of Field Day antennas was discussed. As with many things, no definitive changes were decided upon until very close to zero hour. Philip,

K9PL, researched this in earnest and came up with an ideal antenna for our location. Philip describes this simple, multi-band, one feedline, omnidirectional antenna in his editorial. It works. Problem three solved.

Bonus points play an important part in adding to the bottom line. I'm always impressed with how Steve, N9WAT, sends NTS traffic on the Illinois Training Net. I had the privilege of listening to Steve on the second set of headphones. CW traffic nets are efficient and professional. If you've never participated in a CW traffic net or even listened to one—try it. You'll be impressed too.

This is the second year we've operated from a Boy Scout camp in Woodstock, Illinois. It is an ideal setting for Field Day. There is plenty of room for antennas with a built-in audience of interested kids and adults. We are fortunate to have Art, WB9JKZ, on our team. Art is devoted to scouting and is trustee for W9BSA. For years Art has introduced Ham Radio to Boy Scouts in Illinois and at the K2BSA National Jamboree. When we arrived at Field Day, Art had already been camping there for over a week, training Boy Scouts for leadership roles.

*"Field Day tests
our abilities
to the max."*

Last year I wrote, "When Life Gets in the Way of Ham Radio..." and this year was no exception. Steve, N9WAT, had to churn out a report for work. So, between manning the key and other field day responsibilities, he worked at his laptop computer. John, AAØBP, studied for a CISCO certification exam between his Field Day duties. It's getting so Hams can't even escape for a Field Day weekend without addressing real work. The rest of us elected to play catch up afterwards!

Field Day tests our abilities to the max. There are several ways of assessing our performance, but an important one is the bottom line score. Had it not been for a lightning storm shutting us down for over

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Steve, N9WAT

Field Day this year seemed less strenuous than previous years. My small pickup truck was filled only to the top of its bed with discrete plastic containers, not to cab height as past Field Days required. Our cadre of CW Rogues increased this year with Chuck, NIØC, and John, AAØBP, joining our gallant effort. The addition of extra operators and setup/takedown assistance was great. This year also brought us a contest-class radio, John's TS-850S, and a new antenna—a maypole. Our version of the maypole comprised three inverted-vees spaced 60 degrees apart and fed with a single line.

In addition to the extra manpower, better radio, and antenna, I was able to bring a new factor into play to give us a competitive advantage. The Hindu god Ganesha (occasionally depicted on television's "Simpsons" [see *K9YA Telegraph*, February 2005]) is reputed to bring good luck to new ventures. What could be more appropriate for Field Day? From a source in the UK I obtained a beautiful "genuine resin" figurine of Lord Ganesha. On Field Day, I placed the precious deity in a prominent position atop the audio DSP unit which, in turn, sat on the TS-850S.

This year the weather was great. OK, it was hot, but isn't that what we wish for all winter? The maypole went up easy and we were able to tie off all the lines into the trees surrounding

our open field, thus eliminating the trip hazards from simply tying off to ground stakes. We were ready hours before start time, and John worked some Russian and eastern European stations as we tested the antenna/rig combo. The contest kicked off and we found the Kenwood with its mechanical filters and outboard audio DSP sounded sweet; hearing weak stations was no problem as we received good signal reports up and down both coasts and into Canada. I sent our Field Day NTS messages that evening to the Illinois Training Net where net control station operator, Woody, WD9E, expertly took our traffic in minimum time

so we were able to quickly turn the radio back to making contacts. This year we had two people on the radio at all times, one doing the actual operating and logging and one as a "safety" listener. This seemed to work out well as many times the listener was able to fill in a call the operator missed while logging or sending.

Late that evening, while two operated, three of us stood outside the shelter watching and listening as a line of thunderstorms approached. Our 40-foot tower was on the highest hill around so we called it when the thunderstorms came too close. (This turned out to be a wise decision, although we were not aware of any near strikes, we found out later that lightning struck two people in the area that weekend, one fatally.) After securing the site and putting the coax out by the tower in case it took a strike, we retired to the "napping" tent. The storms rolled by us in about two hours, but, alas, the long day outside in the sun caught up with us and we ended up sleeping well be-



Steve, N9WAT

*"...hearing
weak stations
was no
problem..."*



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My Accidental Beam

Blundering Into Directivity

Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB/W9BRD

When the 80-meter band was finally reopened to amateurs in the spring of 1946, I was fortunate to be able to erect an unobtrusive 132-foot, single-wire-fed, Windom between Chicago apartment chimneys. It was great to be back with the traffic gang's old familiar callsigns after the long wartime QRT. The skyhook did well enough from coast to coast on sixty watts.

Later in the year, I returned home from an out-of-town job to find the far southeast end of the wire off its perch, flat on the roof. Its shiny insulator must have been too tempting a target for urchins with BB-guns. Repair was delayed by inconvenient access, but the antenna was still sufficiently effective for the nets.

The 10-meter band was also available. At the time, I wasn't much of a DX hound but strange exotic prefixes do have their attraction. I gave my impromptu sloper a try. Big surprise. The band was teeming with the strongest South Americans I had ever heard, many booming through like locals. They even responded to my CQs, including the Falkland Islands, VP8, military gang who had always ignored me in the past. A couple of weeks of this merriment thoroughly cleaned up South America on my meager DXCC list. Neighborhood ham buddies thought I must have splurged for a high Yagi and/or a QRO amplifier.

After its usual summer hiatus, 80-meter sport beckoned once again. I got around to repairing the Windom's southeast chimney mounting. My wire returned to horizontal—no more 15-degree catenary droop. That brought another surprise I might have expected. I was no longer 10-meter King of the South. Like throwing a switch, all

those super transequatorial signals were back in my city noise level, as tough to work as ever. Evidently, I had unwittingly confirmed what I had read about the enhanced directivity of a sloping longwire. I then toyed, of course, with the idea of lowering the northwest end to clean up on Asia. Alas, we moved to another part of town before I got the chance.

Years later I discussed my tilted-longwire episode with ARRL antenna guru By Goodman, W1DX. Byron agreed that my good DX luck was a happy combination of some fairly critical variables. Such antennas are far more complex than they look. He also recalled 20-meter fun with the same concept in his younger days out on the coast as W6CAL. He and some pals jerry rigged a 50-foot mast on a secluded beach, the high end and feed point of a 300-foot sloping wire. The low end's insulator was tied to a movable bucket of wet sand.

You have to hand it to those Californians. A sunny surfside field day, a tilted-wire rotary beam, and all the DXercise you could ever desire. ■

Ham Quips



I Don't Understand Why They Always Park on an Incline When it's My Turn to Operate!



for general all-band operation it is convenient to have a good single antenna that requires no changes when changing bands.”

To create the 2005 version of the W3FQJ-inspired, CW Rogues FD antenna set aside a couple of hours on a warm afternoon; employ two Hams, in this instance, myself and Mike, N9BOR; toss in a 500’ spool of 14 gauge wire, a W2AU balun and a half-dozen ceramic insulators; measure carefully, add some light labor and admire the finished radiator.

New antenna in hand we arrived at our site, a large open field surrounded by low trees. Our 25 feet of aluminum tower topped with 15 feet of television mast went up easily and was quickly guyed. We then hauled up the antenna halyard, strung out the three inverted-vee dipoles and secured their ends to convenient tree limbs.

Using recalculated antenna leg lengths for CW operation, we found that not only was the SWR per band right on, but so was Noll right on, we rarely needed to resort to “search and pounce” operation, but found ourselves “running the frequency” as the subject of repeated mini-pileups. The antenna worked great!

As midnight ticked near, all this activity ground to an abrupt halt. As fate would have it, weather conditions conspired to toss us a brief respite from the long drought bedeviling our area. We watched, with growing concern, as lightning neared in a 180-degree arc of flashes. It was time to pull the plugs!

We spent the next six hours dozing fitfully in a rain drenched and wind buffeted tent as a train of thunderstorms passed. Early Sunday morning we were back on the air and striving to make up for time lost to the deluge. Via a valiant effort, and despite the many hours lost, we came very close to matching last year’s score harvested over the entire 24-hour operating period.

Well, our new antenna exceeded all our expectations and our harmonious FD crew made K9YA’s signal a force to reckon with by creating and wielding a powerful QSO-making machine. Now, to find an agent to hype our FD reality show to the networks. ■

K9YA Field Day Box Score

Class: 1A | Section: IL
Power Multiplier: 2 (< 150w)
Participants: 6
Hours Worked: 17.5

QSOs

949 CW QSOs x 2 = 1,849 pts.
0 SSB QSOs x 1 = 0 pts.

Total QSO Points 3,796

Bonus Points:

100% Emergency Power	100
Media Publicity	100
Set-up in Public Place	100
Information Booth	100
NTS msg. to ARRL SM	100
W1AW Field Day Message	100
(10) Formal NTS msgs.	100
Site Visit Served Agency	100
Submitted via the Web	50
Total Bonus Points	850

Claimed Score 4,646

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six hours, we would have put in our best effort ever. This year’s score was just slightly down from last year, with over six hours less operating time. Safety first, but oh how we will talk about this for years to come—the fish that got away—until next year. ■

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yond when we could have started operating. In total, we lost about six hours!

Sunday morning was another beautiful day and mindful of time lost, we all put forth extra effort to work as many contacts as possible. Changing operating teams every hour seemed to keep everyone fresh and operating snappily. We closed the contest with almost the same number of contacts as last year and, given the six hours lost, we all felt good about the results. In the end, I believe a good radio, good antenna and skilled operators resulted in our respectable score; but just in case, I am giving Ganesha a permanent place of honor in my Field Day kit. ■

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