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Author: John H. Dilks III, K2TQN

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OLD RADIO

Field Day

The May 1932 issue of *QST* had an interesting article about Bloomfield Radio Club's "Five-Meter" Field Day. The club had been experimenting with 5-meter communications, demonstrating them at club meetings, and wanted to see just how well they would work in the forests of New Jersey. The article had photos and listed the successes of the club's Field Day. This got everyone thinking.

The following year in the 1933 June *QST*, Communications Manager F. E. Handy said, "Elsewhere in this issue is announced the plan for a Field Day test of portable equipment...." He continued, "The idea of a local, national, and international outing ought to be popular. If a sufficient volume of results of portable station work is reported, perhaps we can make it an annual affair."

The dates selected were June 10 and 11, the second weekend in June. In September 1933 the "First Annual Field Day Report" was printed. Field Day was proclaimed "an unqualified success," and it became an annual affair, one we still enjoy today.

Today thousands of hams participate, alone or with their friends and clubs, in the woods, in public parks, in someone's backyard, just about anywhere. Activities run from the aggressive groups that really want to win by making huge numbers of points, all the way down to those who treat it as a social event. Everyone has fun and we all benefit from the experience.

It's actually pretty easy to do today

with our 10 and 20 pound transceivers, designed to work with 12 V batteries. It isn't hard to gather up all the parts to make a portable station, put them into your car, and drive to the site, and then set up. The most work involved may be the erecting of an antenna.

But it wasn't that easy back a few years, when the transmitters typically weighed 100 pounds and up and receivers weighed 75 pounds. And then there was that heavy 5 or 10 kW ac generator that was needed to power everything. It took a lot of manpower to set up a multiple station Field Day site in those days.

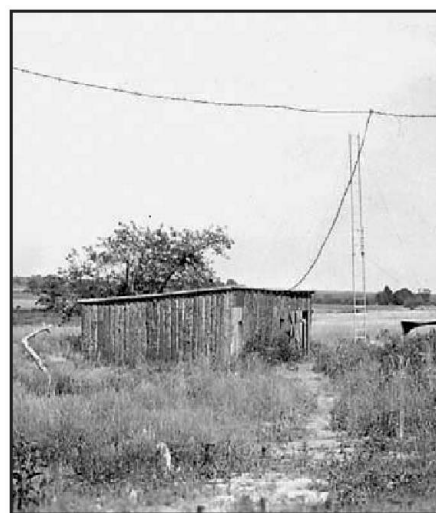
Field Day Circa 1956

I few years ago I was lucky enough to receive a gift of several photo albums from the family of my friend Phil Catona, W2JAV. Phil was very active in the South Jersey Radio Association, SJRA, and participated in all of the club's events. His photo album contained about 20 great photos of their 1956 Field Day, some of which are in this column.

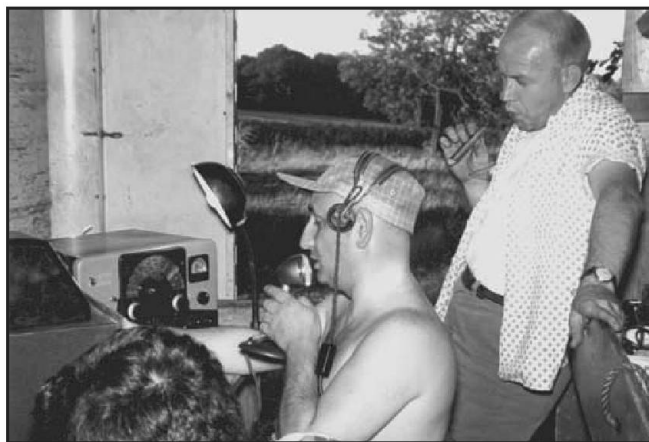
The South Jersey Radio Association claims to be the oldest continuously operating Amateur Radio club in the United States, being incorporated June 12, 1916. The club has been affiliated with the American Radio Relay League since 1920. Their membership is approximately 220 people, mostly from Burlington and Camden Counties in southern New Jersey. The club call sign is K2AA.

In 1956 many of the SJRA members were also employees of RCA, as was Phil. This group always did things in a big way and their Field Days were no exception. As you look at their photos containing so many operating positions with multiple transmitters, receivers and antennas, I think you will appreciate the amount of work involved to coordinate the entire project.

You will see the site is located at a large farm, with an equally large barn and many outbuildings, all of which were used for Field Day. My guess is they had around 100 members participating that year and about a dozen Johnson Ranger transmitters.



SJRA Novice shack, way out in the field.



Phil Catona, W2JAV, at the mike.



Novices at work.



Visit SJRA or Your Club

I talked with some of the members recently. They wanted me to tell you that you're welcome to visit their Field Day this year. The location has changed from the big old farm and the equipment is modern, but the friendly faces and the good times continue. You can get directions and a map on their Web site: www.sjra.org and click on "Field Day." If you don't live in southern New Jersey, remember you are welcome at most clubs.

Vintage Field Day

You can participate with vintage equipment if you want to; it might be fun.

Jerry Barry, K5AXN, Operating VFD in 2004

*Contributed by Ray Osterwald, N0DMS
Editor, Electric Radio Magazine*

Jerry said, "This is my third Vintage Field Day. I set up about 100 feet from Cibolo Creek in Marion, Texas. I had an enjoyable time this year. All the bands were dead until about 7 PM, when I was able to work 20 meters. I made 9 QSOs with FG5FC, W8VG, VE4BX, N6PY/6, K8OHZ, N8QNP, WB4YVO, W9AD, FG5FC again, and N9RJX."

Jerry was visited by the following hams—K5FOU, K5ALX, K5SUZ, AF5D, K15T, K5GE, W5XW, KM5SY, KD5HYF, K5VK, ex-TI2GRO and ex-WA5ERG. He had a total of 20 visitors.

Jerry brought a Johnson Viking Valiant and Ranger transmitters, and used a Collins R388 and a Hammarlund HQ-170A for receivers. Late Saturday night they had a coax relay that became unplugged, so they gave up for the night and went to sleep.

Sunday there was a sudden windstorm. Jerry said, "After chasing our tent to Cibolo Creek with my cousin James Barry's help, I was able to collapse the market umbrella before the wind blew over the picnic table. The weather service later said we had 38 MPH winds with 60 MPH Gusts."

Jerry concluded, "Since this is a Vintage Field Day, we are trying to demonstrate AM and vintage vacuum tube equipment, both on the air, and to hams and visitors at our location. We are not trying to see how many numbers we can get and how fast we can make the contacts; we just make 30 to 45 minute leisurely QSOs, like in the old days."



K5AXN

It certainly will be a challenge. Ask your club if a vintage station would be welcome; I'll bet the answer will be yes. Or you can get together with a few friends and set up your own Vintage Field Day. The great part of vintage is: You can do it twice in June if you want to. Once on the regular ARRL sponsored Field Day, on June 25-26, 2005. And earlier in June you can participate in the "Vintage Field Day" (VFD) where most of the stations

on the air will be vintage. This year VFD will be June 4-5, 2005. For more information and the rules, please visit the *Electric Radio Magazine* Web site, www.ermag.com—they are the sponsors. I have also enclosed a photo and a short story [see sidebar] about last year's VFD.

I will have more SJRA photos posted on my Web site: www.eht.com/oldradio/arrl/index.html. See you at the hamfests.—K2TQN

QST