

“Field Day” for Tyler County Radio Goes Over Water

Tyler County Booster, Feb. 6, 1B, by Michael G. Maness



Tyler County Amateur Radio Association kicked off its winter “Field Day” on B. A. Steinhagen Reservoir at precisely 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25, running 24 hours straight concurrent with others around the world. Pictured (L-R) are Jim Caruthers, TCARA President Bob Caruthers, Jon Hartfor, Mark Budro, Chris Fortenberry, TCARA Secretary Chuck Petri, and Chester Mayor Floyd Petri. This year they reached as far as Belize. See WD5TYL.org for more.

Winter “Field Day” kicked off for the Tyler County Amateur Radio Association at precisely 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 25, and it ran for 24 hours to Sunday at 1 p.m. concurrent with many others all around the world. Their farthest connection hit Belize, 950 miles away.

They met at the campground in Martin Dies Jr. State Park on the west side of B. A. Steinhagen Reservoir. Several RVs and camp trailers made for a family affair with bar-b-que pits smoking, kids playing games and cards, and fishing as the radio experts monitored their menagerie of radio configurations.

They had largest variety of antennae this year with six unique stations. One had a high-tech vertical pole. There was the typical wire strung in a tree, the most common and most ready for emergencies that can be set up in ten minutes. One took their antenna over the water to a stump which allowed for “100 percent reflection of the signal skyward,” said TCARA Secretary Chuck Petri. Normally the ground absorbs some of the signal.

However, they were only able to make 103 contacts, as they had some technical difficulties with stations that normally operate digital. Petri said the power supply on a laptop generated too much noise and “drowned out” their signal. Yet, this was precisely why they meet like this and get extra association Field Day points, for it helps all of them test and learn more about their systems.

They had nine full-time operators, meaning nine stayed up all night monitoring for the full 24 hours. Seven other Ham operators dropped by.

The youngest contacts were made by a six-year-old and nine-year-old. The youth were working on their licenses under the watchful eye of the “extra class” license holders who are legally allowed the largest range of band widths.

TCARA’s President this year is Robert Caruthers and V.P. is his brother, Jimmy Caruthers. TCARA began over seven years ago, and today Chuck Petri maintains their

vast website, WD5TYL.org. They support their sister association, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) group that provides support in emergencies.

There are three levels of FCC licenses for radio operators: entry-level Technician License, mid-level General License, and the top Extra Class License. You will see some older hands with the “Advanced License” that is now superseded by the Extra Class. Long time ago, one had to learn some Morse Code to get the Advanced License. The FCC extends operating privileges commensurate with each class extending the band width for higher licenses and helping ensure that operators understand the laws and operate safely.

TCARA is part of the American Radio Relay League, est. in 1914, hosts ARRL Field Day every year for a 27-hour marathon of international communication that crisscrosses the globe. The goal is “To work as many stations as possible on any and all amateur bands ... and to learn to operate in abnormal situations” (from ARRL.org). Always on the fourth Saturday in January and in June at precisely 1800 or 6 p.m. Zulu or Greenwich Mean Time, which is set at the Prime Meridian in Greenwich, England, and in Woodville at 1 p.m.

The TCARA meets every first Thursday at 7 p.m. at 201 Veteran’s Way in Woodville, Texas, in the same building as the Nutrition Center. Visitors are welcome, and for a load of info see WD5TYL.org.