

# LINE OF SIGHT

## A Message from the Editor

### Wireless Field Day

It was the weekend of June 28–29, 1961 when I had my first exposure to Field Day.

True to its name, the South Bay Amateur Radio Society had located on the edge of the southern portion of San Diego bay in the suburb of Chula Vista.

As a young teenager of 14 years, I was present for two reasons. I had become licensed as a Novice only six months earlier and was sporting the callsign WV6PDE. Over spring break I had upgraded to General class, thereby changing my callsign to WA6PDE. As a member of the club, I qualified for a long-standing policy—that of the club using the callsign of the newest General class licensee. Therefore, my first reason for being at Field Day was to be the control op for my callsign.

The second reason was that Field Day had been billed as an exciting event that combined camping and ham radio. As a Boy Scout I was into camping, and I certainly wanted to see and be a part of ham radio being used in such a unique way.

How well I remember the winds off the Pacific Ocean. One effect of those winds was the near blowing away of some of our paper log sheets! Speaking of those paper log sheets, post Field Day log deciphering proved a bit challenging, as those responsible for the scoring had to wade through others' hen scratching in order to make sense of what stations had been worked.

Let's roll the calendar forward 41 years later and consider the following quote posted by Frank Kibbish, WB6MRQ, of the High Sierras Field Day Group, WN6I, to the ARRL's 2002 Field Day Contest Soapbox website, <[http://www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox/index.html?con\\_id=13&ofst=10](http://www.arrl.org/contests/soapbox/index.html?con_id=13&ofst=10)>:

"Thanks to Alan, WB6ZQZ, our logging computers went wireless. Alan put together a new logging program (using Python) that not only logged the contacts for each station, but sent every contact to every other station as well. The program interfaced with each laptop's 802.11b network card and shared data with the other stations in quasi-real-time over a peer-to-peer network. This enabled any station to work any band and mode, because they already had the logs."

In this issue as a way of introducing the world of wireless we commissioned Al to write an article describing his Field Day setup. Also pertaining to wireless are a white paper by Paul Rinaldo, W4RI, and John Champa, K8OCL, and a basics article by our newest columnist, Neil Sablatzky, K8IT, plus a contrary view on the use of power by Ron Curry, N6QL, via the "Op-Ed" page.

Speaking of contrary views, one of the important components of research, develop-

ment, and discovery is a healthy dialog. *CQ VHF* magazine is increasingly becoming a venue for this type of dialog. In keeping with this effort, also included in this issue is a response from Shelby Ennis, W8WN, to Rex Moncur, VK7MO's description of WSJT in Australia, which appeared in the Winter 2003 issue of *CQ VHF*.

#### A Horn of Plenty

Featured in this issue on page 6 is a simple design for a horn antenna that SETI columnist Dr. Paul Shuch, N6TX, describes. Shuch informs us that it's via the use of this antenna that more of us can participate in the discovery of extraterrestrial intelligence. Taking off on the idea of the mythological creature *Argus*, whose physical claim to fame is having 100 eyes, Shuch gives a relatively easy way for us to become one of the more than 100 ears of the program.

#### A Flashbulb Moment

A flashbulb moment is when we experience an event that causes us to remember everything about that event and even seemingly trivial information related to it. The term *flashbulb* comes from the jargon of photography, in which a flashbulb is used to illuminate everything in front of the camera, thereby giving us a picture of what was happening at the moment in time when the picture was taken.

Many of us had a flashbulb moment on February 1, 2003. It was the moment when we found out about the fate of the shuttle *Columbia*. It became a moment that none of us will ever forget.

For my friends in Ft. Worth, Texas who were at the Saturday swap meet, they had more than their share of a flashbulb moment as they looked up and saw what was happening. Among them was "Antennas" columnist Kent Britain, WA5VJB, who describes his experiences in his column in this issue.

Elsewhere in the country, my friend Chip Margelli, K7JA, who was at the Orlando Hamfest, told me that a pall came over the entire hamfest as word spread of the tragedy. For me, I was in a church leaders' training program, and when I learned about the tragedy suddenly I was no longer interested in the program. For my flashbulb moment I will always remember where I was and what I was doing. "Satellites" columnist Tom Webb, WA9AFM, gives insight into his flashbulb moment and a perspective of the intertwined relationship between ham radio and the space program.

That tragedy was the unthinkable. *Columbia* was destroyed as it was returning to Earth after probably the most successful scientific voyage ever for the manned space program.

The success of the shuttle programs had become so routine that they no longer were of riveting interest to most of us.

Indeed, few of us had any idea who was on board the shuttle. Since the International Space Station became the venue for ham radio operations from space, such operations from shuttles had been discontinued. Even so, we suspected that there might be ham radio operators among the crew of *Columbia*. We soon learned that indeed, among the crew were three members of our fraternity: Mission Specialists Kalpana "KC" Chawla, KD5ESI, Dave Brown, KC5ZTC, and Laurel Clark, KC5ZSU. Finding out this information personalized the loss for many of us. By way of our fraternal connection, we hams became inextricably drawn into the tragedy.

Almost immediately after the tragedy occurred we also were drawn into it because of what we do best—*communicate*. As word of debris falling over a wide area of the southwest began surfacing, the call went out for amateurs to assist in the recovery. This would include the remains of the astronauts, thereby making it all the more personal. Although few of us personally knew the astronauts, we felt that we needed to participate in some way, because it was almost as though we were looking for best friends whom we never actually knew. In this issue "FM" columnist Gary Pearce, KN4AQ, provides excellent coverage of the search for and recovery of the debris.

Thinking about the amateur radio connection to *Columbia* caused those of us who have had the experience of space communications to remember those moments. Many of us who first heard astronaut Owen Garriott, W5LFL, operate from *Columbia* in December 1983 remember that event in detail. On page 76 in this issue two of those who participated in that inaugural event—Lance Collister, W7GJ, and Features Editor Gordon West, WB6NOA—recall their experiences on that December night.

Where do we go from here? From tragedy such as this one there always is a way to find hope. From Israeli Astronaut Ilan Ramon's heritage and tradition there are two thoughts, called *mishnas*, to think of as we attempt to grapple with this tragedy. First, eternity, in his tradition, is the remembrance of those who have gone on before us. Second, one does not arrive at greatness until one is unconscious of the greatness one has accomplished.

Eternity for our fallen heroes is accomplished by our remembering them. For them, sadly, in this life they will never know about the greatness they achieved. However, as the *mishna* indicates, their not knowing of their greatness is precisely what makes them great.

Until the next issue... 73 de Joe, N6CL