

LINE OF SIGHT

A Message from the Editor

A Not So Mild Embarrassment

It was in late December that *Time* magazine writer Lev Grossman wrote his piece “Blogs have their day,” in which he initially compares bloggers to the “mildly embarrassing hobbies of ham radio and stamp collecting.” Within the week the disastrous tsunami hit South Asia, killing more than 150,000 and injuring hundreds of thousands of others.

As with countless other natural and man-made disasters, ham radio operators immediately went to work to provide critical emergency communications. From a DXpedition that became the only source of health and welfare traffic between India and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, to hams throughout Thailand using 2 meters as their primary band of operations, came two examples of critical communications that were being handled by amateur radio operators. More information on how HSMM has been playing a role in the emergency communications can be found in the “HSMM” column (beginning on page 30) by John Champa, K8OCL.

As these examples indicate, hams continue to prove that we are made of the right stuff. However, as the Grossman piece indicates, we have a long way to go to improve our public image.

As the disaster continues to unfold, the needs of the area will continue to present themselves to the rest of the world for many months to come. If you have not already given to the needs, I urge you to generously respond to them by way of contributions to the charity of your choice.

Amateur Radio and Education

There have been more than 150 educational-related contacts with the International Space Station and the space shuttles. Even so, each time is unique and each time is special—particularly for the participants. Beginning on page 8 in this issue of *CQ VHF*, “Satellite” column edi-

tor Keith Pugh, W5IU, describes one of the recent QSOs with the ISS.

Getting back to Grossman’s article, as an observer of this particular ARISS QSO, I did not detect one hint of embarrassment among any of the participants as the hobby of ham radio was being used to further the education of the school children. Rather, what I saw was pride in accomplishment for all concerned, as, according to Keith, this was one of the more successful ARISS contacts.

DFing a Lifesaving Transmitter

In another fun aspect of the hobby that has a potentially far-reaching public-service spinoff, in this issue Pete Ostapchuk, N9SFX, describes how he and another ham, Ritch Williams, KA9DVL, went DFing for a lost lifesaving transmitter. This type of transmitter is one that is used as a tracking device for people who might become lost and not be able to assist themselves in their predicament, such as Alzheimer’s patients.

As Pete tells the story, when one of the devices that were being demonstrated went missing and conventional methods failed to locate it, amateur radio came to the rescue—and quickly found it. Commenting on the amateur radio involvement, Pete stated, “I keep hearing people talk about how cell phones and computers are taking the spotlight away from amateur radio. It’s pretty obvious that when the call for help went out in this instance, it didn’t go out to computer and cell-phone users.” The whole story begins on page 26.

The Unusual Propagation of November 2004

This past November 7–10 we had both aurora and unseasonable sporadic-E propagation on our lower VHF+ bands thanks to a large flare eruption on the sun

on November 7. In his “Propagation” column Tomas Hood, NW7US, goes into some detail, explaining what happened to bring about these propagation events. Also in this issue, Ken Neubeck, WB2AMU, reports on his experiences during those events (see page 42).

The Increased Variety of Use of the VHF+ Bands

The above-mentioned articles are just a sampling of what is in this issue. It is with this Winter 2005 issue that we conclude three years of the experiment of bringing back *CQ VHF* magazine. By all accounts, the experiment is working. You are accepting the new format and supporting it with your submission of articles and purchase of subscriptions, as well as telling others about it.

What has fascinated me the most over these past three years as editor of *CQ VHF* magazine is the increasing variety of the uses of the VHF+ ham bands. What I brought to the position of editor of this magazine was my interest in weak-signal communications. During these past three years I have learned that there are other creative uses of the VHF+ ham bands besides weak-signal, amateur television, space, and FM communications. Thanks to you, our readers and authors, we have included articles on ballooning, HSMM, and DFing, as well as other fascinating aspects of VHF+ communications. No doubt, in future years there will be more major interests that also will expand the usage of the VHF+ ham bands, and I look forward to presenting these new interests in future issues of *CQ VHF* magazine.

Thank you for supporting the second rollout of *CQ VHF*. I look forward to the publication of many more issues of this, your magazine, in which I can continue to provide you with the venue for you to tell your fascinating stories.

Until the next issue...

73, de Joe, N6CL