

# K9YA Field Day - 2009

## Mike Dinelli, N9BOR

Field Day is a lot of work. It's not so much the 24 hours of the event, but the preparation leading up to it. If you've ever done any painting, you know what I mean. The painting is the fun part, but the necessary prep work is the work part.

We had four participants on the day of the event: John, AAØBP; Steve, N9WAT; Art, WB9JKZ; and myself. We operated class 1A (one transmitter/club station) off the grid. Team K9YA, likes it simple and efficient, so we equipped ourselves with proven legacy gear. Our station consisted of a Kenwood TS-850SAT with cascaded mechanical filters and three inverted vees on a single feedline. We used a 24-foot aluminum tower with a 15-foot mast as center support. Logging was performed with a boatanchor laptop computer and TR software running DOS. We brought backup equipment for every part of our station—just in case.

## Location, Location, Location

Our idyllic Field Day site is located in northern Illinois at Camp Lakota—a Boy Scout owned facility. It's 90-minutes northwest of downtown Chicago. There is plenty of room for our operation and it becomes a wonderful stage for curious Scouts. It's fun fielding their questions and watching them listen to on-air Morse code through a spare set of headphones. "Is the computer decoding the signals?" asked one Scout. "No, we only use the computer to log the information; the code is copied by the operator." "That is so cool!" he said. We think so too.

*"That is so cool!"*



Art, WB9JKZ

It wouldn't be Field Day without rain and lightning. Our tower was located on high ground in the middle of an open field. At the first sign of lightning, we throw our coax back towards the tower and take shelter. We haven't lost a team member yet and don't want to take any unnecessary risks with Mother Nature.

## Eclectic Technologies

As we waited for the storm to pass, Steve is watching weather radar on his Blackberry. Over our two-hour break, we followed the storm heading east. Most of the storm was south of us moving very slowly. At some point it hits me that we are using technologies spanning well over 100 years. From Morse code to live weather radar on a handheld cellular computer. We mused that if we were hit with a tornado, our modern cellular technology would probably be useless. Our off the grid, legacy CW station would still be working though.

Even though we are somewhere around the bottom of the solar cycle, we're working station after station on 15-, 20-, 40- and 80-meters. You get a feel for the operator on the other end by the way they're sending.

Sometimes it's fast with perfect timing and sometimes it's slow and shaky. Still, we have a meeting of the minds as we convey information to each other. Occasionally we run into someone we know and send a quick "HI" or "dit dit." It feels good.

## Dawn Breaks

A string of Christmas lights adds ambiance to our portable station. Otherwise, it's pitch black overnight and you can't see five feet in front of you. We know our tower is straight ahead, but it's completely lost in the night. Around 4:00 a.m. outlines form as the sun begins to rise at the distant horizon. The last time I enjoyed a sunrise like this was last year's Field Day.

At the end of the day, we're 1,162 QSOs richer. Time well spent. I can't wait until next year. ■



Steve, N9WAT, (L) and John, AAØBP, (R)



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