

# M.C.W.A. NEWS

May 2014  
Vol. 14, No. 5

McHenry County Wireless Association

Since 1978  
35 Years

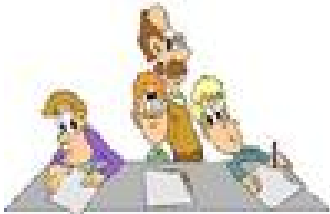
**AMATEUR RADIO**

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## VE TESTING



## Testing By Appointment Only !

7 PM on 3rd Tuesday of month  
(Sept. thru May)

Cost is \$15 one time charge  
for session no matter how  
many elements are taken.  
Must show original license  
and/or CSCE if upgrading .  
Valid photo ID needed.  
SS# or FRN#

Steve, KB9OLD

847/477-3518

## MAY MEETING

**May 6, 2014**

Crystal Lake Bank

5100 Rt. 14, Crystal Lake, IL

6:30 PM - Socializing

7:00 PM - Meeting

## PROGRAM :

## Learning to Love Field Day

Cornel, KK9DX, talks about Field Day Operation with  
some possible insights into past W9CA operations.

## MCWA Treasurer's Report – May 2014

Thanks to those that paid their 2014 dues at the April meeting.

Feel free to contact me about any Treasurer related issues.

73                      Bob Lubecker NZ1B  
3812 Monica Trail  
Crystal Lake, IL 60014

BankBalance:            Per. 3-31-14 Statement

Beginning Balance	\$5,129.25
Checks written	147.85
Deposits	308.50
Interest	.45
Ending Balance	\$5,290.35



## Propagation

## Decline Not Too

## Devastating

In last month's article it was noted that we were experiencing excellent conditions on all HF bands. The good news is that there are still favorable DX catches on the bands; the unfortunate news is that we have experienced a decline in conditions. We have had some solar flare activity that reduced the propagation and increased the A and K indices to high levels. However, at the writing of this article, the indices are lowering. So are the sunspot numbers. Put it all together with the increased daylight of mid-spring and the propagation is reasonable, but 12m and 10m are behaving like the days before the greatest Cycle 24 peak which we experienced a month or so ago.

Since the last article, I do have a few good DX catches in my log. I worked 5W1SA with little trouble on 10m and A73A on 15m. These were worked during the CQ SSB Contest with significant pile-ups. I targeted VK9MT following the contest and was expecting to work the DXpedition on numerous bands, but only logged them on 10m. This DXpedition started out with a bang (excellent operation) but was shut down quite early due to an approaching serious storm. We certainly appreciate all that went into the Mellish Reef operation, but human life comes first. One injury or death due to a storm is not worth a DXpedition. Another DX operation I targeted was A35X and I worked this station mid-April on 10m.

Last evening I went into the shack and called CQ on 17m and had Norm NH6I come back with 5w. Due to storms and flare QRN, he had to increase his power to 100w. We had a great QSO. Later in the evening I went into the shack to disconnect antennas as a lightning storm was in the overnight forecast. Before pulling the coaxes, I turned on the rig and noticed that 20m was hot a bit after midnight. I worked 4Y1A and EA3BDE and then shut down. 17m, 20m, 30m, 40m and 60m have been very good in the evening. These bands are holding up well in spite of the flares. However, thunderstorm QRN has been very noticeable. If you can get on your rig between storms (which has been hard lately) you will be able to work DX in the European region very easily. 80m and 160m have really suffered from the storms of spring, which is typical this time of year.

As we head into May, look for 3B8 call signs, SX5LA, HB0DRK, V650XG, V63PSK, A25GF, 7QNL, Z21GF and an assortment of E51 call signs. DX across the summer looks promising. I expect Cycle 24 to still give us some good action through 2014 and maybe for a couple more years beyond that.

Get on the air! The DX is waiting for you and the world is filled with great amateur radio DXers. 73 --- Dave KA9OZP



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** When replying to newsletter, please do not use the *MCWANNEWS@Gmail* - *THAT IS FOR OUTGOING MAIL ONLY!* Please send all comments to Editor's address on front page.



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

### M.C.W.A. Upcoming Ham Class:

At this writing Jack, W9MU and others are planning a ham radio class at McHenry County College in February 2015. This will NOT be a “ham cram” type of licensing class, but will cover a basic understanding of ham radio and an explanation the things memorized to pass the tests. aim of this class will be to make better Amateur Operators. More information in later issues of MCWA News.

**M.C.W.A. 2014 Field Day !** We are currently looking into a Field Day for M.C.W.A. at the end of June. First off will be a site and then we'll need operators, rigs, antennas, generator(s), power cords, tents/campers, and all the other stuff that makes a Field Day (except mosquitoes !). More info at May & June meetings.

**73** “73” is an old shorthand signal, not a normal word. It has no plural. You wish “73” to one person or a group.  
W1KRT (*de eham.net*)

**Stray** For those NOT WANTING to learn CODE :: Stay right where you are !  
K0TCH (*de eham*)

**Stray** Couldn't they have come up with something easier to pronounce than “Lissajous?”  
KB3BTO (*eham.net*)

### U.S. Ham Population

NEW and UPGRADED FCC LICENSES ISSUED  
BY YEAR

	FIRST QUARTER RESULTS			
	2011	2012	2013	2014
FCC License Action				
New Licenses	5,809	7,532	7,732	8,943
Upgraded Licenses	2,656	2,824	2,414	2,719
Total Issued	8,465	10,365	10,146	11,662

Is ham radio growing ? Looking at the number of Silent Keys in the pages of QST and other publications over the past year, one might wonder just exactly how many of the licensed hams are really there. Add to those SK's , what about the number of hams who hold licenses, but haven't been on the air in years, if ever. How many times have we seen ham plates driving around but the call doesn't ring any bells... pseudo vanity calls ?

### Uping Hamfests

- \* **Sandwich, IL** May 4, 2014 Sandwich Fairgrounds
- \* **Wheaton, IL** June 15, 2014 DuPage Fairgrounds
- \* **Oak Creek, WI** July 12, 2014 American Legion Post 434
- \* **Aurora, IL** July 13, 2014 Aurora Central Catholic HS
- \* **Peoria, IL** Sept. 20-21, 2014 Exposition Gardens

## X-class solar flare hits Earth, causes major disruption of communications

A strong X-class solar flare early Friday triggered some radio blackouts on the side of the Earth facing the sun, astronomers say.

The X1.4-class event, which lasted nearly two hours, arrived at Earth after erupting from active region of the sun dubbed Region 2035, where a sunspot reached its peak intensity late Thursday EDT, they say.

Region 2035 is rotating out of view and won't pose any danger for much longer, but could in the immediate future," the U.S. Space Weather Prediction Center said in a post.

X-class flares are considered the most intense of such events, and the accompanying numbers provides a relative strength measurement, with an X2 being twice as strong as an X1, an X3 three times as strong and so on.

Solar flares are created when highly-stressed magnetic field lines rising above the sun's photosphere layer are pushed together and accelerate hot ionized gas, ejecting it into space.

The strongest flare of this year so far was an X4.9 in February, while the most intense flare of the current 11-year solar cycle was an X6.9 in August 2011.

The cycle was thought to have peaked during 2013, but as Friday's flare showed, the sun is not finished with its rumblings just yet.

Some solar flares can result in coronal mass ejections, or CMEs, intense bursts of solar wind and magnetic fields.

A CME did result from Friday's flare but was not aimed directly at Earth, so it did not result

in a geomagnetic storm or its often-accompanying aurora borealis, the Northern Lights.

Earth's atmosphere protects humans from a flare's powerful pulses or radiation, but when strong enough flares can disrupt communication and GPS satellites in low Earth orbit.

Friday's X1.3 flare resulted in a temporary blackout of high-frequency radio waves on the side of the Earth facing the sun, mostly over the Pacific Ocean and Eastern Pacific Rim, the SWPC reported.

Flares classified as X-class are not the only types of solar outbursts that can affect the Earth. Our star will erupt with slightly less energetic M-class flares, also capable of generating aurora displays, plus relatively weak storms dubbed C-class.

NASA keeps tabs on solar activity in a number of ways, including orbiting spacecraft like the twin STEREO satellites and the Solar Dynamics Observatory, which captures a video of the X1.3 flare.



# Understanding the Posts on Amateur Radio Discussion Groups and Reflectors

By Don Keith

www.n4kc.com  
www.donkeith.com

In my continuing effort to be a good steward of our wonderful hobby of amateur radio, and to make entry into the pastime even easier for newcomers, I would like to provide some guidance on an important topic: how to interpret comments you might encounter on some of the more popular hobby discussion groups. What follows are some of the typical responses these new licensees might encounter if they post a question or comment on the forums here on eHam.net, on QRZ.com, or one of the myriad special-interest reflectors such as those on Yahoo.

(By the way, I did a similar article a while back that tried to interpret the usual postings that are found in the equipment review sections of these same web sites. You can see it [HERE](#).)

First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! Yes, there is plenty to learn, though there

are a few curmudgeons out there who expect you to know it all the day you pass your test. Ignore them. You will encounter similar types on practically any forum for any type of discussion on the web. I'm sure the "Petunia Planters" reflector on Yahoo has its share of blowhards and gas bags. There is something about being relatively anonymous and having a keyboard right there at the ends of our fingers that seems to bring out the ogre in some of us.

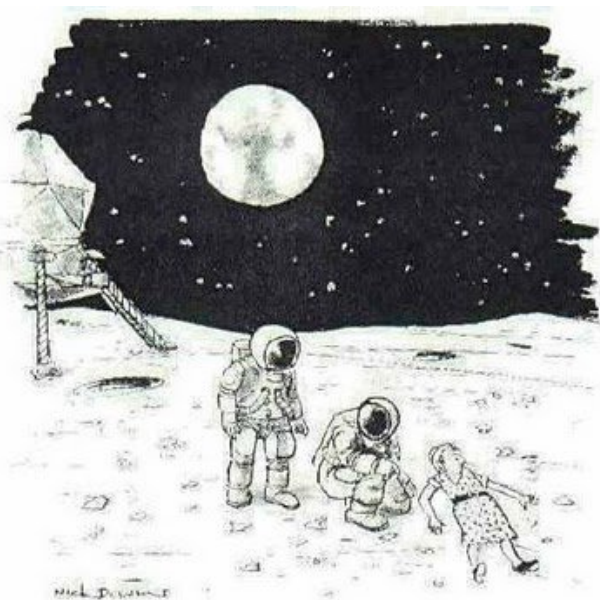
I can be a boor, a churl, a loudmouth ("loud keyboard?") so I think I shall!

One of the greatest aspects of our multi-faceted hobby is that it offers you the opportunity to continue to learn and experience new things. And you can do so as deeply and quickly as you want...or not at all. It is up to you. And these forums can be a wonderful way to learn. That is if you simply know how to interpret some of the responses and see what they are actually saying.

Now, here are some examples:

**POST #1:** "I am a newly licensed ham with very little space for an antenna. I am considering buying a G5RV or vertical. Which would you recommend?"

**TYPICAL RESPONSE:** "They let you have a license and you don't know any more about antennas than that? That's what happens when the ARRL and the communists dumbed down our hobby. If you can't put up a 70-foot tower with a 5-element Windtossor 5000 on top of it, you should send that cereal-box license back and take up crochet or competitive tiddly-winks. We used to build our own antennas out of shoestring and Scotch tape and the baby's wind-up toy. I solder with a blow torch and launch wire with a catapult. When I put fire to the wire, you can hear it humming to Harrisburg. When it comes to aerials, either put up one of each, make 'em multi-wavelength, or go back to the Charlie Brown band! Why should you expect us to do all the work, pulling your puny little signal out of the noise?"



*"It's Alice Kramden!"*

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**TRANSLATION:** “First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! Antennas quite often pose the biggest obstacle to newcomers who want to experience the magic of the HF bands, and especially if they are HOA- or space-challenged, but they can also offer an interesting way to learn more about the hobby. They can even be a lot of fun! A G5RV can be an effective antenna on the bands for which it is designed, and a vertical—with the proper radial setup—is also a possibility, especially for those with limited space. Google these and other antennas and start your learning experience. The League and other suppliers offer books from the basic on up. There is plenty of information on the web and many hams take great pleasure in helping newcomers choose a first antenna and to continue to learn about them. Good luck and I look forward to seeing you on the air!”

**POST #2:** “I admit I know little about electronics. I’m only 14 and a freshman in high school and recently passed my Technician and General tests in the same session. Will the hobby of amateur radio help me learn more, and maybe even prepare me for a technical career someday?”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE:** “Awwwww, geeesh! See, this is why the hobby is going to heck in a hand basket. This kid is already fourteen, got his license, and probably don’t know high-voltage from ‘Hi, how ya doin’.’ He’s supposed to be listenin’ to that Johnson Bleeper’s records and playing ‘Donkey Kong’ or whatever it is they play on them game things nowadays. When I passed my test, you had to draw the schematic of a super-het receiver blindfolded and copy the code at 50 WPM...underwater...while eating a ham sandwich. They made you build a transmitter from scratch from old TV parts while the examiner watched and called your momma dirty names. Now, h with all them cellular telephones and the Twitter and the intranets—whatever all that crap is—the kids don’t know squat about technical stuff. If you don’t know everything there is to know about electricity before you take your test, you ought not to even bother!”

**TRANSLATION:** “First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! Yes, ours is a technical hobby and can be a wonderful gateway to a career in electronics, communications, and more. But

the beauty is, you don’t need to be “technical” to participate and enjoy the hobby. You can take it as far as you want to go, as far as your interests lead you. Sure, there is plenty to learn...if you want to. Or just enjoy the non-technical aspects of ham radio if that is your thing. Good luck and I look forward to seeing you on the air!”

**POST #3:** “Since becoming a ham last year, I have developed a real interest in (antennas, moonbounce, QRP, kit-building, homebrewing, some other technical side of ham radio) and wonder if someone could recommend some publications that would help me learn more.”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE:** “Well, look at you! Passed that kindergarten exam and now you want to learn the difference between AC and DC? Look, this stuff is complicated. If you weren’t born knowing it all, you don’t have a chance. Never mind that when I passed my license exam AC had not been invented yet so that part was easy. Or that the transistor was still on the drawing board. Or that I have to have a guy from the club come tune up my transceiver and program the repeaters into my HT. Just do us all a favor and stay away from all the high-level technical discussions we have every night on 75 meters.”

**ALTERNATE TYPICAL RESPONSE:** “Quite refreshing, I must say. I delight in your eagerness to expound on things technical. As Herodotus elocuted in Scribus Interus de Fliedermaus, ‘Into the cerebrum elongated must we sate the ravenous desire for elucidation.’ Obtain Professor Gronkus Philatella’s tome on The Third Theorem of Quantum Field Behavior in Electron Substrata and you will have in your possession the ultimate primer...a veritable beginner’s guide...to all things electrical. Then you may later delve into the more advanced material by joining our weekly on-air symposium via EME on 1296, where we alternate speaking Latin and scientific German...just because we can.”

**TRANSLATION (for both):** “First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! As I have stated in response to other posts, you can learn as much as fast as you want or are able. Or not at all, if that is your desire. Ours is not a hobby just for electrical engineers. I recommend a copy of The ARRL

Handbook for starters. There are many good books available for all technical areas of our hobby as well, from beginning to advanced. If you look, you can even find military electronics courses available for free (Here is one: <http://hnsa.org/doc/index.htm#neets>). And plenty of nice, smart people frequent these forums and are happy to help you. There are some curmudgeons and stuffed shirts, too, but I bet you will be able to spot those right away. Good luck and I look forward to seeing you on the air!”

**POST #4:** “As a newcomer, I’m interested in getting on HF. I’m considering buying a transceiver, either a Hotscratch TW-4500 or a Slapdoodle 5100X. Does anyone have experience with these rigs? My budget is \$1800.”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE #1:** “I played with both them pieces of cow dung at the local ham store the other day. They’re both junk, and they probably would have been even worse if they had had power and an antenna hooked up to them. You need to get you one of them 1962-model Scatterbox 75s, the one with the TV sweep tube for a final. Ain’t none of these modern computer-headed radios gonna give you the kind of experience one of them will do. Or build your own. There’s a nice one in the 1954 ARRL handbook. You can order the parts from Joe’s Neighborhood Radio Parts Store. I’m sure they’re still around.”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE #2:** “Well, if you read the reflectors, both those radios have a serious ALC power overshoot problem on key-down, won’t make power except for that overshoot (so you better get a signal report in less than a milli-second!), have audio that most closely resembles a cement truck full of ball bearings, have receiver front-ends that offer up the most headache-inducing noise since my mother-in-law got the menopause, routinely burn up the output transistors with a glorious fireworks demonstration, have bad filters that create more static than an Alabama thunderstorm, and have LCD displays that soon look like a herd of spiders has set up homestead inside them. No matter that the reviews on eHam are 4.9-out-of-5 with hundreds of users chiming in. They clearly don’t know junk when they see it.”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE #3:** “Well, I reckon they are pretty good rigs, but what you really want is the Glockenspiel Six-million. I bought mine when they first came out and it does everything,

including making coffee and mailing out QSL cards. I know it costs about the same as a Mercedes Benz M-Class, and you still have to buy a power supply that can deliver precisely 13.7 volts and 100 amps continuously, an antenna tuner that instantly tunes to 1:1 or the rig faults and yells at you in profane Italian, and a knob kit...unless you want to just not use some of those 150 knobs on the front panel. Don’t cheap out. You only live once. And you may live long enough to pay off the mortgage on this fine piece of engineering.”

**TRANSLATION:** “First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! You asked for input from people familiar with those rigs. I have used both radios extensively and have a spreadsheet with my personal pros and cons that I’ll be happy to send you. The user interface and how you plan to use the radio are usually the most important factors in selecting a rig. A contester needs different things than a rag-chewer does. Download the manuals, read through them, talk with people who have one or the other, and, if you can, visit a store and turn the knobs. Actually, though, both are excellent starter radios. Though you may want to move up to something more sophisticated as the hobby takes you in different directions, either will be a good backup if you do. But it will also be a good station for you even if you stick with it as your primary rig from now on. Today’s affordable technology is amazing! I look forward to seeing you on the radio!”

**POST #5:** “I’m a new ham and have decided I want to learn Morse code. Any tips?”

**TYPICAL RESPONSE:** “Forget it! If the FCC ain’t got the stomach to require the code no more, then none of you no-coders should be ALLOWED to use it. If you ain’t willing to go back in time and take the exam they were giving in the 1960s, then don’t bother getting a license. Naw, the code used to weed out the wanna-bes, the ‘pretend’ hams. If you couldn’t muster up five minutes of solid copy at 13 WPM, you didn’t deserve to be on the air. It only took me four tries to get mine, and all the sobbing and begging I did absolutely did not influence the examiner. It was just my bad handwriting, see. Last time I worked the Morse—back in about ’54—I could still whip along copying at a good 10 WPM. Well, maybe 7. Course, I could send about 35 with my straight key, and did,

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though most everybody came back with ‘di di dah dah di dit’, whatever that means. I could still copy 10 today, too, I betcha, were it not for this hearing loss problem from when my radio messes up the XYL’s stories on the TV.”

**TRANSLATION:** “First, let me say a hearty welcome to the hobby of amateur radio! There are many good reasons to learn Morse code. N4KC wrote an article in which he offers several of them, along with some tips on learning it the correct way. You can find it on eHam [HERE](#) or a printable version at Don’s web site, <http://www.n4kc.com>. No, you don’t need to learn the code any more to get a license. Nor do you necessarily need to know it to enjoy the hobby. But if you are interested, and if you want to, it can offer plenty of fun for you. But you certainly don’t have to! I look forward to seeing you on the radio...and on CW!”

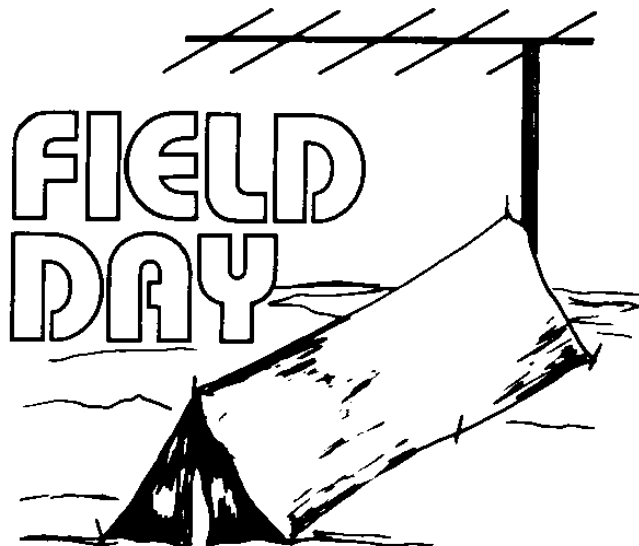
I hope these translations will help you as you navigate the various forums and reflectors. Remember, there are many helpful amateurs who will be happy to try to answer your questions, and eHam.net and the other sites are a great way to seek them out and benefit from their knowledge and willingness to help newcomers...and old-timers, too.

Yes, you will likely get some similar responses to the ones you see above. But now, you can translate and know what they are really saying in their posts. And if it appears they actually are being equestrian hind ends, you probably can simply use it as an opportunity to practice tuning out obnoxious QRM.

Now, I look forward to seeing you on the radio!

*(Don Keith N4KC has a number of similar articles in the archives here on eHam.net. Just go to the “Articles” page, enter “N4KC” in the “Author Search” box, and click “Go.” There are also easily printable versions of those and more on his amateur radio web site, <http://www.n4kc.com>. Don is a prolific author with more than two-dozen books in print, including “Riding the Shortwaves: Exploring the Magic of Amateur Radio.”. His professional site is <http://www.donkeith.com>. Oh, and you can see him on the radio, most bands and modes.)*

[ de eham.net]

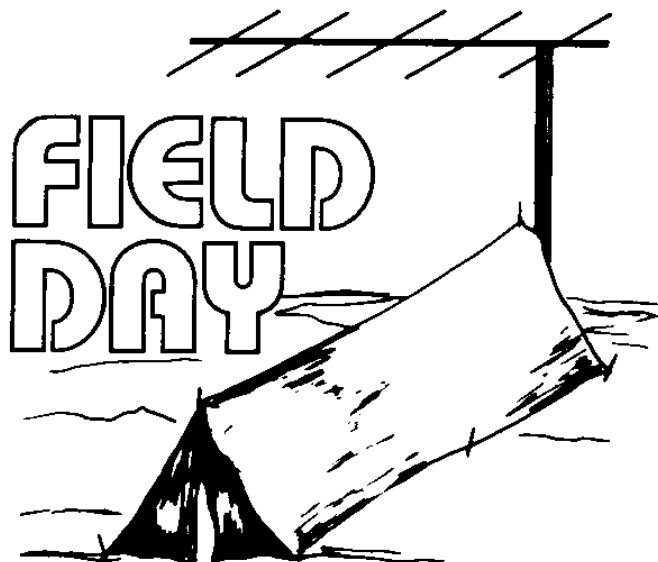


## June 28-29, 2014

Will MCWA be there for the first time in many years ??? Come to this month's meeting to find out.

MCWA came out of a group who started field day in 1978. Those who come to mind were W9KTB, K9HOQ, K9XI, WB9TBG, N9AVY and many others. It was held in Woodstock's Emricson Park in the area of the gun club which is no longer there. Several local merchants supplied food & beverages ... El Niagra Restaurant and McDonald's come to mind). Operations were conducted from tents using wire antennas. The big excitement happened when a T-storm moved through while we were on the air. Most of us went QRT except for K9HOQ who hung on until last minute ! We almost had fried ham for breakfast ! Hi ! Hi ! Al in all everyone had a lot of fun and this set the tone for future field days .

Let's hope we can bring back some of that tradition !



## Field Day Meeting

On 29 April there was a meeting of 12 people interested in having an MCWA Field Day operation. The meeting was held at the Crystal Lake Bank in our usual meeting room

Present at the Meeting were W9MU, N9SOX, K9KMD, N7US, WB9BZK, KE9NDY, KB9VRW, NZ1B, KF9D, WB8BHN, K9DMV, and N9AVY. Wished more had been able to make the meeting.

The main subject discussed was selection of a site to have Field Day. Several sites were mentioned and it was decided to do the next week scouting out other possible sites.

Subject to change, the 2A category was chosen with a VHF station headed by WB8BHK and the possibility of a GOTA station. Roger, KF9D, volunteered to be captain of one of the stations; assisting him will be N9SOX. N9AVY was volunteered by W9MU to be the overall coordinator to make sure things run well.



*“Gung Ho, Field Day Participant ?”*

Also discussed was the need for lots of help in pulling this whole thing off. Even if you've never done a Field Day and know nothing about it, just a willingness to help is all that is required. There is an old Chinese proverb that holds true of Field Day.. “Many hands make light work.”. The more help there is the better it is for everyone.

Others subjects covered were power, equipment, cables, software, the possible need for networking (?), antennas, tents, food and how much MCWA treasury can spend on Field Day.

This will not be one of those operations where we're out for a big win, but just a little splash. It's a serious FD, but we should all have fun.

There is also a need for operators and bodies to help with set up and especially take down on Sunday. We need to leave whatever site we use in the same condition we found it in.