



It Seems to Us

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A Week to Remember

“If you were in Hartford for the ARRL National Centennial Convention, July 17 – 19, you were part of a once-in-a-lifetime event.”

The week of July 14, 2014 is now a permanent part of ARRL history. It began right on the heels of a successful World Radiosport Team Championship held in Massachusetts that brought several hundred participants from 40 countries to New England, many of whom made the 90-minute trek to the Hartford area for the ARRL Centennial festivities at the Connecticut Convention Center and at ARRL Headquarters, about 10 minutes away. The International Amateur Radio Union Region 2 Executive Committee held its annual meeting in Hartford on July 15 – 16, adding even more of an international flavor.

At Headquarters, visitors began to arrive early in the week. By Sunday at least 1000 had toured the office and many had had the very special opportunity to operate with the call sign W1ØØAW from the iconic W1AW building.

At the Convention Center, once the initial crush of preregistered attendees was taken care of on Thursday morning, it was smooth sailing from that point on; 728 took advantage of the multiple Training Tracks that occupied the day. They were joined by others at lunch, bringing the audience for an inspiring talk by First Vice President Rick Roderick, K5UR, to a total of 900. Rick challenged us to think about the memorable moments we could have experienced only through Amateur Radio, all that we owe to those who came before us, and why we must leave a legacy so future generations can enjoy the same opportunities. Toward the end of the day, about 500 stayed for a reception to welcome our international guests from all continents.

The convention got underway officially on Friday morning with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting. In the exhibition hall more than 100 vendors and exhibitors were kept busy all day on both Friday and Saturday. On another level of the clean, modern facility, dozens of forums and presentations on a wide range of subjects drew large crowds on both days.

For each of the 3300 attendees, there were so many highlights of the event that it would be an injustice to single one out. Here are a few more:

On Friday afternoon a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Craig Fugate, KK4INZ, and ARRL President Kay Craigie, N3KN, with Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra looking on. The MOA strengthens the cooperative relationship between the two organizations so that Amateur Radio's emergency communications capabilities can be utilized even more effectively by the nation's emergency management system.

Addressing more than 900 banquet attendees Friday evening, FEMA Administrator Fugate earned a heartfelt standing ovation with a description of his own journey of discovery of the magic of short-wave radio communication and his experience with radio amateurs as an emergency manager in Florida. None of his listeners could have questioned Craig's sincerity, but any possible doubts would

have been dispelled by observing him in the role of enthusiastic shopper in the exhibition hall!

After the banquet, a mass initiation into the Royal Order of the Wouff Hong, the whimsical "secret society" that seeks to uphold the finest traditions of "The Old Man" himself, Hiram Percy Maxim, was attended by nearly 600 members both new and old.

Saturday began with a well-attended Presidents Breakfast to honor the ARRL's volunteer leaders, past and present. The surviving Past Presidents who were able to come to Hartford were Harry Dannals, W2HD (1972 – 1982); Larry Price, W4RA (1984 – 1992); Rod Stafford, W6ROD (1995 – 2000); and Joel Harrison, W5ZN (2006 – 2010). Jim Haynie, W5JBP (2000 – 2006) was unable to attend. The awards they received symbolize the debt we all owe to the countless ARRL volunteers and officers of affiliated clubs who have contributed their time and talent over the past century.

Congressman Joe Courtney from Connecticut's 2nd District, the original cosponsor of H.R. 4969, addressed the breakfast gathering and spent an hour touring the exhibits to see how Amateur Radio is contributing to the development of American technology and emergency preparedness.

At midday on Saturday Joe Taylor, K1JT, related to a rapt audience of 800 how his early interest in Amateur Radio led to an academic career that earned him, among other honors, a Nobel Prize in Physics. Joe has come full circle, giving back to Amateur Radio by applying knowledge gained in the field of radio astronomy to the challenge of communicating with weak digital radio signals.

Joe Taylor observed that in Amateur Radio's infancy, scientists of the day did not believe the short waves could support useful communication and "truly were astonished" when amateurs proved them wrong. "It's a great story and it couldn't have happened the same way without the ARRL," he said.

Looking to the future — one in which good radio engineering will involve both hardware and software — Joe encouraged us all to not overlook any opportunity to contribute to the art and science of radio and to the public good. "Let us also work to keep our League a strong and effective voice on our behalf," he said. "I'd like to think that someone will be here 100 years from now looking back fondly on all the good things accomplished by Amateur Radio during ARRL's second century."

And that century has just begun. Let's make the most of it.