Tyler County Ham Radio Club Reaches England

by Michael G. Maness, KJ5MTU

Tyler County Booster (1-29-26): 6A.

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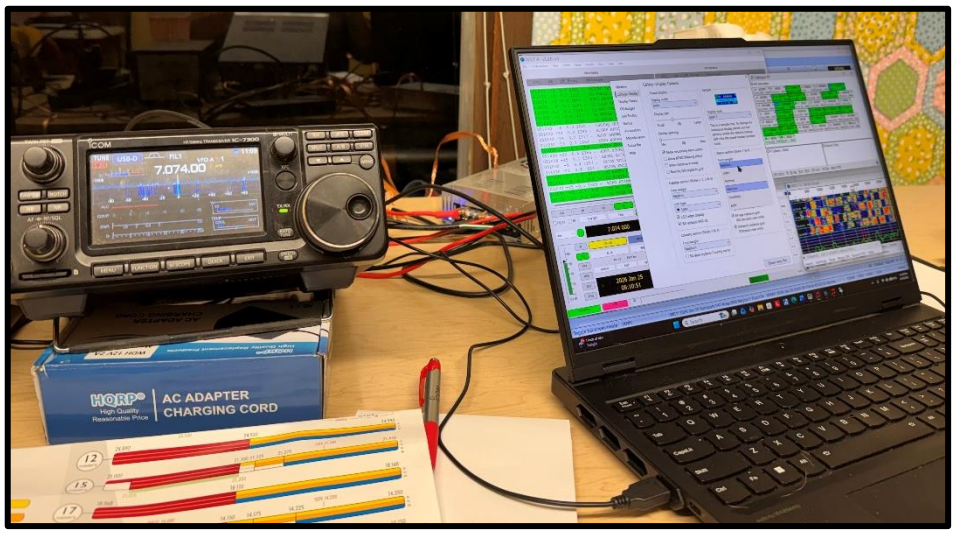

One of three "stations" operated by Tyler County Amateur Radio Association during their Winter Field Day, Jan. 24-25, a 27-hour marathon of worldwide connections sponsored by the American Radio Relay League, at Calvary Baptist Church, Woodville.
Photo by Michael G. Maness

Tyler County Amateur Radio Association reached England during their "Winter Field Day," an international marathon of radio connecting around the world.

Three TCARA licensed radio operators kicked off Saturday morning about 10 a.m. on Jan. 24, and they planned to run through 4 p.m.

TCARA once again thanks Pastor Tony Moye and the fine people of Calvary Baptist Church for allowing use of their excellent facilities and tall trees.

Charles Petri, Chuck Anderson, and Michael Maness set up three radio stations. One ran all night on battery power, earning extra points in the worldwide contest.

Extraordinarily, two dipole antennas over 75-foot long were roped up between two trees, one on the east-west axis and the other nearly on the north-south axis.

One antenna did not perform as planned, and so another was raised. In ham parlance, the "antenna needed tuning," which means it might have been too long or too short for transmitting on the desired band.

They did not make as many contacts as previous Field Days, partly because of the vicious ice storm. Still, they had two visitors drop by for a look at operations.

During the long night, as ice built up, Petri and Maness persevered in connecting, the latter still new and learning from Petri who has been working these for two decades.

They connected to England, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Washington state, central and middle California, Wyoming, and east to northern Virginia and central and south Florida, along with several in Texas and its surrounding states.

Mostly, they operated on the 40-meter band of frequencies just over 7 megahertz.

Still amazing, in about 10 minutes and with a 75-foot wire pulled up between trees, with relatively inexpensive equipment, one can talk around the world, literally, and completely off-

grid. No need for a subscription or dependence upon a billion-dollar network like Verizon or ATT.

Interestingly, your cell phone is also a type of ham radio operating under your cell phone provider's FCC license. While certainly robust and connecting the world through a vast network of cell towers, one difference is in the width of the radio wave lengths bouncing off cell towers.

TCARA relies upon the atmosphere to "bounce" its wider waves between the upper atmosphere and the earth itself.

You can say we are a very "grounded bunch."

Ham radio operators can provide communications to emergency services if there is a grid collapse from a power failure or other disaster. They can be seen aiding in parades and marathons and auto racing along the tracks and pathways.

If you want to see the vast array of U.S. frequencies, Google or see the TCARA site and click on "United States Frequency Allocations" for a vast perturbing color-coded chart (WD5TYL.org).

Petri is a certified teacher and examiner, holding classes and tests as new radio persons come on board. TCARA is part of the American Radio Relay League, est. in 1914, which hosts the ARRL 27-hour Field Days every winter and summer for international communication that crisscross the globe. ARRL's goal is to "work as many stations as possible on any and all amateur bands … and to learn to operate in abnormal situations" (ARRL.org).

After all is packed up and the stats calculated, Petri will upload our points from the various radio activities.

Field Days help hams test their skills, learn new skills, and prepare for emergencies.

And, though a nap for an hour or two is perfectly acceptable—it's a lonnng night—there is a comradery that develops.

The TCARA meets every first Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at Calvary Baptist's Fellowship Hall in Woodville, Texas, located at 911 N. Magnolia Street.

Visitors are welcome, and for more info see WD5TYL.org.

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