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CALLING ALL STATIONS

Villages HAM radio enthusiasts compete for recognition

BY SUSAN WRIGHT
DAILY SUN

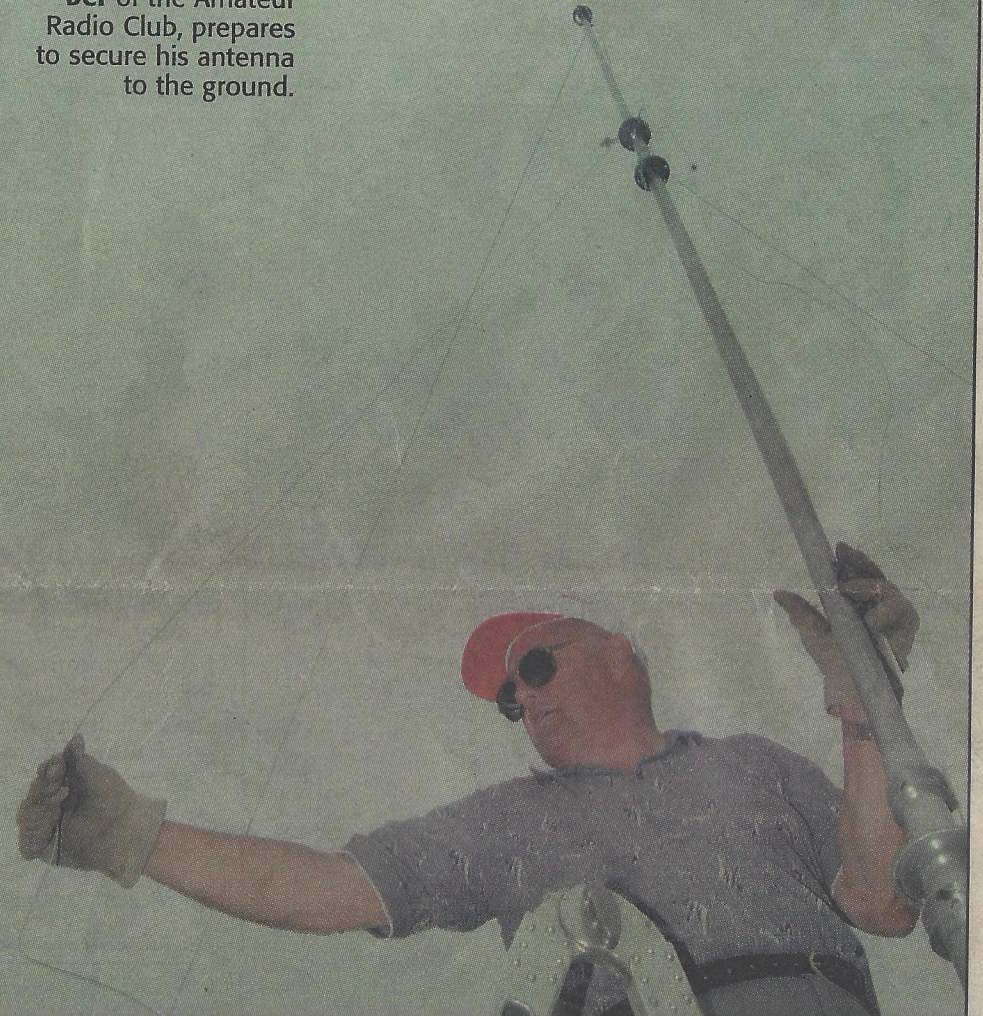
THE VILLAGES – In the '40s and '50s, small boys listened to radio transmissions from people around the globe, searching for a friendly voice and a fascinating conversation.



Decades later, these small boys have become men competing in the Amateur Radio Club Field Day event Saturday afternoon.

The contest began at 2 p.m. Saturday and ended 2 p.m. Sunday. Setup for the event takes between four and six hours, and a morning rainstorm Saturday put The Villages team several hours behind their competitors. Despite adverse

Michael Bean / Daily Sun
Byron Engen, a member of the Amateur Radio Club, prepares to secure his antenna to the ground.



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Michael Bean / Daily Sun
John Alexander uses the semiautomatic key to perform morse code during the Amateur Radio Club Field Day event Saturday afternoon in The Villages.

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The contest began at 2 p.m. Saturday and ended 2 p.m. Sunday. Setup for the event takes between four and six hours, and a morning rainstorm Saturday put The Villages team several hours behind their competitors. Despite adverse conditions, the team felt confident that they would do well.

"We'll pull it out," Richard Boehm, the club president, said. "We have a lot of people here today."

The team attempted to get as many transmissions as possible from the United States, its territories and Canada. Two years ago, the team took 15th in the country for the number of transmissions received. They have six transmitters and generate their own power. The team expected to have 15 to 20 participants over a two-day period.

HAM radio can be heard and transmitted from all over the globe. According to club member Jim Johanson, most HAM



speakers around the world speak English. Russians are the easiest to understand of all the international transmitters.

HAM radios can be used for entertainment, but they also serve a more necessary function. Often, when there is an emergency, HAM radio operators signal out for assistance. In The Villages, the radio club said they have many occasions to transmit emergency information in severe weather.

"When the power goes out and there's no way for most people communicate, guess who can communicate," Boehm said. "We generate our own power and spread the word."

The fascination with HAM radio

communication was springing up at a time when quick communication with people around the world was virtually impossible. Club member Glenn Cook said he was hooked when he went to a junkyard and talked to a man in South America in 1956.

"In our era, there really wasn't any television," David Melton, a club member, said. "It was a great entertainment for kids those days."

The team will broadcast through the night, using call signs, HAM jargon and popping the tops on cold 807s. They are hoping to bring HAM radio to The Villages again.