
If the ED8X operation in last year's CQ World Wide CW DX Contest was "Field Day on Steroids" (see previous article), this one — well, two — may have been the polar opposite. Here's W4FSV's story of two QRP Field Day operations separated by four decades!

A Field Day Story ... Forty Years in The Making!

BY WILLIAM F. MINIKIEWICZ,* W4FSV

I had only been a ham for three years when, in my senior year at Linton High School in Schenectady, New York, I met Doug Allen. Mr. Allen was an English teacher who shared a common interest with me ... amateur radio. Doug — then W2CRS (now K4LY) — was not just another ham, he was one of those really active hams who did it all, on all bands and all modes. One of his special interests was low-power operation, or QRP. Doug and I developed a friendship, which has endured decades. Although our lives have taken us on different paths and multiple cross-country moves, we have always kept in touch via this wonderful hobby we share.

Bicentennial Field Day

In 1976, Doug and I decided to operate the ARRL Field Day as a two-man team. Sharing our mutual fondness for CW and QRP, we operated in the 2B/Battery category with our Ten-Tec Argonauts (Photos A & B). In the mid-70s, the Argonaut was the rig every QRPer wanted, providing a good receiver and solid 5-watt transmitter. After setting up in a city park using all-band dipoles for antennas and car batteries for power, we operated the entire 24-hour Field Day period without sleep (Photo C) ... oh, to be young again!

In 1980, I left Schenectady for greener pastures. After college, a career, a wife, kids and grandkids, I am still an avid QRPer. Happily, so is Doug, and as fate would have it, a few years ago he and his wife ended up just 70 miles north of me near Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Fast-Forward Forty Years

Pondering what to do for the 2016 Field Day, it occurred to me that my favorite one to date had occurred 40 years earlier, in 1976, at that park back in New York. Without a second thought, I called Doug. It did not take much effort to convince my old friend to once again take on the challenge of QRM, long hours, ringing ears, and cold food that is Field Day!

We operated 2B/Battery again, this time from a small park in rural Calhoun County, South Carolina. The county emergency management agency let us borrow their communications trailer. We used two Breadboard Radio off-center-fed dipoles hung in trees at 30 feet and our rigs were both Elecrafts, a K2 and a KX3 (Photos D & E).



Photo A. The author (then WA2FSV) operating Field Day in 1976 in Schenectady, New York. He and W2CRS operated 2B/Battery with Ten-Tec Argonauts on a cool, damp, weekend. (Photos courtesy of the author)



Photo B. Bill's 1976 Field Day partner, Doug Allen, W2CRS (now K4LY), taking a break from operating on Saturday afternoon.

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Photo C. Doug and Bill toast to getting through 24 hours of non-stop operating as a park policeman looks on.

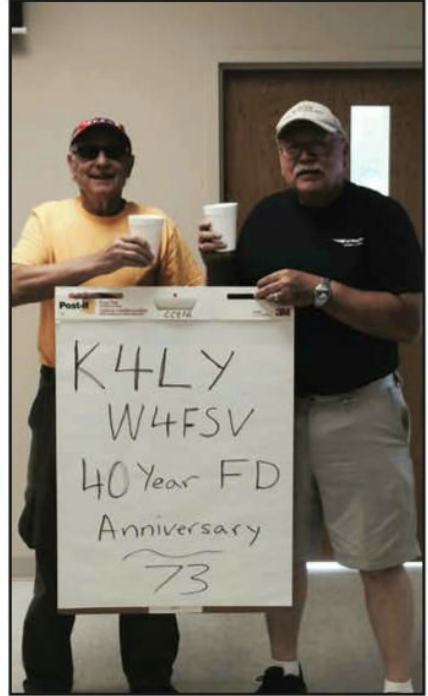


Photo F. Doug and Bill in 2016, toasting another Field Day in the books!

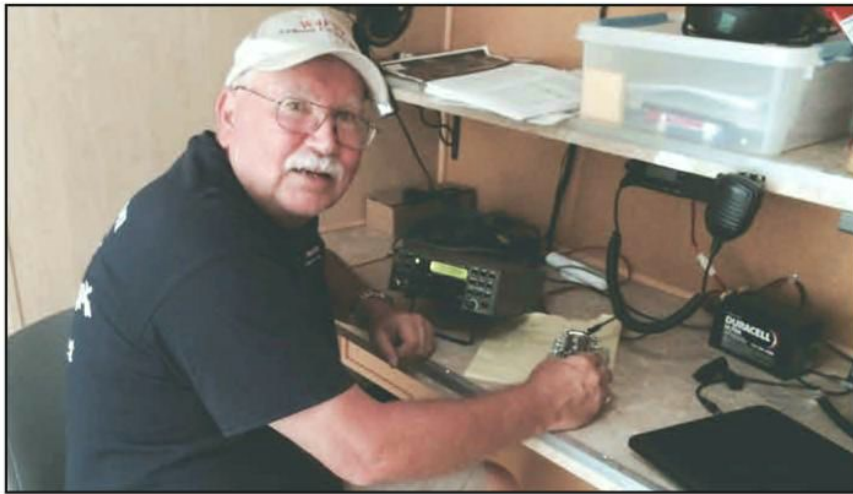


Photo D. The author at station #1 as the two friends reunited for one more 2B/Battery Field Day operation 40 years after the first, this time from South Carolina.



Photo E. Doug, now K4LY, operating station #2 on Field Day 2016.

Doug and I are no longer spring chickens ... or should I say spring hams? So we agreed to a few of our own rules. Foremost, we would have fun, which meant we would operate as long as we enjoyed it, sleep when we needed to, eat well as often as we wanted to and, of course, play by the rules. That is exactly what we did. We took time out to visit the Columbia Amateur Radio Club operating about 15 miles away and were invited to join them for dinner. After the visit, Doug and I operated until we were tired and got about six hours of shuteye. Sunday morning found us once again pounding the brass until about 10 a.m., when we left for a good southern-style breakfast at the state farmers' market just a few miles away. Our intention was to make one last thrust towards the 2 p.m. finish line, but, alas, with full bellies and more dupes than contacts, we opted to QRT. Doug still had a 90-minute drive home and I would need to do the teardown and clean-up duties.

In all, we operated just 10 hours and that was enough time to make 287 contacts in 51 sections in 43 states and provinces for a claimed score of 3,375, including a few bonus points. Not bad for a couple of senior citizens! Before we left our reunion Field Day, we toasted to our modest success and friendship just as we had 40 years earlier (Photo F). This was our best Field Day ever.