

Fifty Years: "You have come a long way, Baby"

A lot of bloviating and a few facts...by Chuck Theisen, K9IA

Fifty Years? WOW! *They say that when you get to be an old guy, all you have left is your memories. So let us see if they (who ever they may be) are on the right track...*

I had been interested in Amateur Radio for sometime before I was introduced to the Fond du Lac Amateur Radio Club. It was in the spring of 1958, just two years after the club was formed. I was introduced to the group by Bill, a friend and fellow classmate at St. Mary Springs Academy. Bill was big on what he called "foolishness". His favorite saying was, "ARUGA and FOO" and was drawn to the club by the antics of the then president, Earl Jenkins - W9LUQ, whose favorite saying was the same. Having discovered 75 meters on his AR3 Heathkit receiver, which he constructed by himself, Bill became mesmerized by the "Foolishness Hour", as they called it. A gathering of guys, including W9LUQ and others not to be mentioned, the foolishness hour was a rather calm predecessor of what you hear on 75 meters today. As I remember, it was on the edge of what we thought of in those days as "civilized behavior". It's not surprising then that Bill and I would be attracted to this bunch. Bill never did get his ticket. I suspect that the radio part of the Fond du Lac Amateur Radio Club was never really the attraction.

I did not have my ticket when I joined, and did not get it until December of that year. What an exciting time that was. In those days, being an amateur radio operator meant that you were a member of an elite group of people. ---- I think we thought we were up there with doctors and lawyers and such. To be sure, things have changed. Those were the days before CB!

The Club had a way of bringing young beginners like us down out of the clouds and back to reality. As non-ticket holders or mere Novice license holders, we were not allowed to vote. Basically ignored, we mostly just watched the antics and practiced trying to be like those goofy guys. W9LUQ had quite a following. Think of W9LUQ and then consider the Robert Browning poem "The Pied Piper of Hamelin".

Membership dues in those days were just 10 cents. Steve Smith was the Secretary (or was it Treasurer?). Steve also put out a newsletter for the club. I remember, in later years, coming across one of Steve's newsletters tucked in an old radio handbook, stashed away and long forgotten.

I recall participating in a communications exercise associated with the "Winnebagoland Outboard Marathon", a big race sponsored by the Kiekhaefer Corporation. This was big stuff and great fun, but I remember thinking to myself, "what's the point?" Is this for real or is this just



an excuse for ham radio to exist? Thinking about that event many years later while participating in a "tornado event", I remember having the same question pass through my mind ---- "Who am I? Why am I here?!"

But then, seriously, keeping all things in their proper perspective, I have come to realize the uncontestable fact that man was put here on earth for one reason and one reason only. And that is to play radio! So, if sitting out in the middle of nowhere with the lightning crashes and the wind blowing and the hail and all that stuff means that I get to play radio then I am all for the program. Even though I am not exactly sure just what the program is, I want all here present to know that I am all for it!

When Fran (W9XYL) and I moved back to Fond du Lac in the late 80s, I was delighted to discover that the old club was still in existence. Today, looking back, it's clear that a lot of things have changed since those days -- way back when --. And, a lot has changed since 1989 when Fran and I were so lucky to have the opportunity to be associated with the good folks who became the Fond du Lac Amateur Radio Club of the new era.

It made us so very proud when the December issue of QST arrived at our door and we saw your standings in the 2005 Field Day. You have come a long way since those days when you did Field Day in the back yard of some old guys' farmstead... Keep up the good work!!

Fifty Years ----- WOW!!! "You have come a long way baby"! Happy New Year!!

Your Friend,
Chuck K9IA

Member Profile

Mike Miller KC9DOA

Mike Miller was born in Tomah, Wisconsin in 1947. He admits to beginning to get involved with radios in 1960, when he started listening to short wave on his father's army surplus receiver. He started listening to amateurs on 75 meters about 1963 and began working on the code. Mike says he got involved with the Civil Air Patrol as a cadet while in high school. Still in Tomah, he was part of the Tomah Composite Squadron.

Following high school, Mike enrolled in the DeVry Institute of Technology in Chicago and earned an Associate degree. He began working for Western Electric at the Hawthorne Works. He was only on the job for six months when he was drafted by the Army. Discharged two years later, he went back to school, but had to drop out before earning his bachelor's degree.

He went back to work for Western Electric at the Hawthorne Works, but was laid off when they began downsizing before closing that facility. He secured a job as an electronics technician at Bally Pinball and worked with them for seven years before moving to Fond du Lac. Mercury Marine, recognizing talent when they see it, hired Mike as an assembler. Unfortunately, he was laid off during one of Mercury's downturns.

Given a "retraining grant" by the government because the Mercury layoff was deemed to be the consequence of foreign competition, Mike started taking classes at MPTI and earned another Associate degree in electromechanical systems.

After a stint at Arthur Technologies, Mike got involved in an assembler training program coordinated by Manpower, in August of 1991. He says that he worked at G&L in the mornings and went to classes at MPTC in the afternoon, finishing the program in May of 1992. G&L hired all the graduates from the previous class, but only hired a couple from Mike's group—unfortunately he was not one of the chosen few.

But he was able to secure a job with Alto Dairy, and Mike has been working with them for the last thirteen years as a Maintenance Technician. He enjoys the work and says that it helps "keep him out of trouble."

Mike has always been interested in radio and says he spent a lot of time at Radio Shack over the years. He admits to building some CB radio kits, among other things, while in high school. Several years ago he again became interested in amateur radio and started working on the Technician test on the QRZ website. He kept taking the test over and over until he could consistently pass...then he went up to a Fox Valley Club test session, took the Technician test and passed in April, 2003, becoming KC9DOA. After getting on the air on 2 meters, he found the Fond du Lac Amateur Radio Club and joined the group.

He enjoys building his own antennas and the collection on his roof includes a 2 meter antenna pointed straight up, which he uses in QSOs via the International Space Station's packet digipeater to talk with other ground stations from Maine to California.



Mike Miller with his dog, Buster

He has developed an interest in GPS and the APRS (Automatic Position Reporting System), which he has installed in his car. Interestingly enough, Mike (like many of us) thinks about "big brother" being able to use our cell phones to know where we all the time...yet he has APRS in his car that reports his position to a web site that displays exactly where he is 24/7 for all to see!

Although he has passed both the General and Extra Class test elements, Mike says that his "ear" is still not up to Morse code...he works at it from time to time, but his job interferes and he gets distracted from his goal. But "one of these days"... or the FCC will drop the code requirement...Mike's all set if that should happen.

Mike says he likes the 'technical aspects' of amateur radio...especially experimenting with antenna designs. One of his concerns is the lack of activity on the VHF and UHF bands...although he does find somewhat more activity on 440 than two meters.

He would like to hear more people 'on the air'. He says that the SKYWARN weather-spotting activity was fun, but notes that participation in that activity has dropped off.

Mike thinks that the Club can do more to help its members by providing, for example, a library of publications (QST, CQ, ARRL handbooks) and a few pieces of equipment (example would be an antenna tuner) that would be useful to everyone, and available for loan, especially to new and/or younger members. He also thinks that more ARES drills or activities like 'fox hunts' as skill-building exercises would be beneficial to our overall readiness to react to a communications emergency.

Mike believes that maintaining amateur radio and its capability is important, pointing out that 'cell phone overload' and even 'wire phone overload' in an emergency can cripple those communications services. He says that participation in the ARES/RACES groups is important and encourages the 'Red Cross connection'.

FOND DU LAC AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Minutes of January 9, 2006, Meeting

The January 9, 2006 meeting was held at Moraine Park Technical College. President Gene Olig called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Gene asked for any additions or corrections to the December minutes as published in the club newsletter. There were no corrections or additions voiced. Ed Beltz made a motion to approve; second was made by Jack Heil and motion passed on voice vote.

Treasurer's Report

Steve Smith reported the truck fund balance of \$523.18, repeater fund of \$1230.18, emergency service fund of \$218.68 and general use fund of \$647.37, \$25 petty cash, and \$25 savings. Total balance reported is \$2617.41. Motion was made to approve treasurer's report by Ed Beltz; second was made by Jack Heil. Motion passed on voice vote. Motion to pay expenses was made by Dave Witt, seconded by Jack Heil and passed on a voice vote.

County Hunting

Gene Olig reported that K5OT (a former club member) ran all counties in Texas, CW, and his last contact was W9MSE, Jeff Bechner, for which Jeff will receive a last county award. Gene also updated the club on the National County Hunter's Convention to be held July 12 - 15. Registration fee is \$35 and extra name tag \$5. Friday, July 13, will be the game farm brat fry picnic from 5 p.m. to approximately 9 p.m. There will be brats, hamburgers and chicken patties. The remainder of the menu will be addressed at a later meeting. The Saturday night dinner will run approximately \$13 - \$16. (More Info will be in future Newsletters!)

Fund Raisers

Louie Simon has scheduled a brat fry for September 8, 9, 10 at Lomira. Another brat fry will be considered for the weekend of July 3 & 4.

Contesting

Randy Grunewald reported that the Christmas Lights QSO Party, which ran for two weeks starting on 12/17/2005, was successful. There were 979 contacts, 148 light house members contacted and 26 light houses. Randy reports that he has a "huge" number of QSL card requests to reply to!

Repeater

Ed Beltz will follow up on the cement expense for the repeater and report to the treasurer at the February meeting. An e-mail was received from the Assistant Frequency Coordinator from WAR, indicating that the repeater is no

longer a coordinated repeater because it was moved and also that the repeater is not ARES/RACES designated. Gene will follow up with the coordinator and Dave Witt will follow up with Bill Niemuth, ARRL/ARES Section Emergency Coordinator, Wisconsin, and request a letter confirming designation.

ARES/RACES

Dave Witt reported that a new county emergency manager has been hired. He also reported that he met with the emergency director at St. Agnes Hospital, who asked if the FDL Amateur Radio Club members would operate their amateur radio station at the hospital for their emergency simulations. Dave will also be meeting with the emergency directors at Waupun and Ripon hospitals.

Sunday Night Nets

Doug Schultz reported on the Sunday night nets. There were 12 check-in calls for the Sunday net and 8 calls for the ARES net. There are more members needed to run the Sunday night nets, please volunteer if you can.

Red Cross

Ed Beltz reported that the Red Cross Director position is open and that a board member is in charge at this time. Everything is ready for the move. Coax is needed for the move. Members will schedule times to work on this project before the next meeting.

Old Business

Steve Smith and Jeff Bechner have completed the paperwork for the bank deposit box and credit union account transfers to the new officers.

Randy Grunewald and Dennis Paulin reported that the Waukesha swap fest was a success. A table was set up at the fest and many members attended. Dennis had created a "club information sheet" to pass on to interested parties at the swap fest. Good job to all who attended!

Treasurer Steve Smith received a bill for \$15.54 from Print Right for QSL cards. Motion to pay Print Right was made by Louie Simon, seconded by Jack Heil. Motion passed on voice vote.

New Business

A Board of Directors meeting was held January 2, at Jack's Lab. This meeting was primarily for establishing a budget for 2006. Gene Olig presented the proposed 2006 budget for the FDL Amateur Radio Club. Questions and comments were offered, discussion ensued. Motion to accept the 2006 proposed budget was made by Dave Witt

and seconded by Jack Heil. Motion passed on a voice vote.

Two bills were presented for payment, one being the Web renewal for the club and the second to pay Lloyd Vandervort \$65 from the repeater fund for the lightning arrester. Motion to pay these bills was made by Jack Heil, seconded by Ed Beltz. Motion approved by voice vote.

Randy and Dennis have agreed to be club Historians and will sort out the information contained within the two briefcases that Dottie has. Thanks guys!

Feedback was received for the club's 50-year celebration. Ideas presented were as follows: submit article to QST, arrange for an article in the Reporter on February 24, 2006, bumper stickers, QSL cards, celebrate the whole year, name tags/badges for "50" years, new "50" year banner, create a crest or seal to put on the bumper stickers, caps, jackets and brat fry. A meeting will be arranged to address the coordination of the 50-year celebration.

Steve Smith offered a suggestion that perhaps the club should have its own telephone line so interested or poten-

tial members could contact us easily and to let the community know that we do, indeed, exist. Comments and suggestions were forthcoming and Steve will get some cost information. He also will inquire about the FDL Convention book which is circulated twice a year to possibly get our club registered for inclusion in the book.

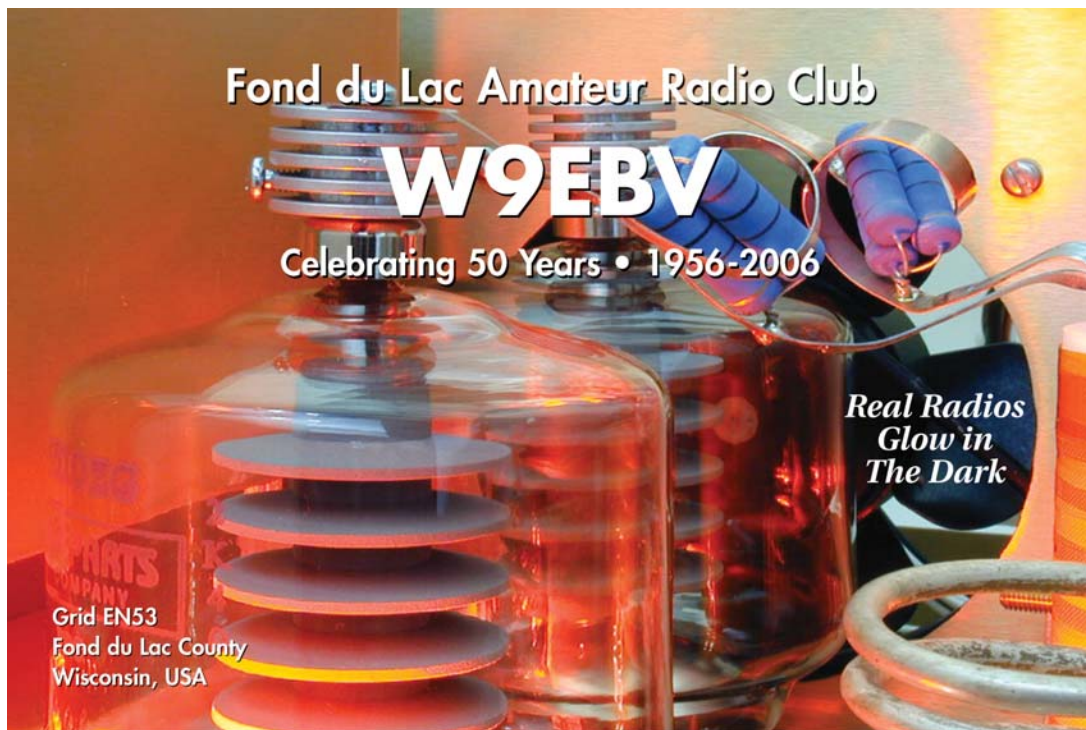
Thanks

President Gene Olig presented Ed Beltz the "President 2005 Award". Thanks, Ed, from all of the club members for being our president for 2005!

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, motion to adjourn was made by Louie Simon, seconded by Doug Schultz. Meeting was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectively submitted by Dottie Olig
Secretary - K9FDL, FDL Amateur Radio Club



This is our Club
'50 Year Celebration'
QSL Card.

This card will be used to
confirm all contacts made
by W9EBV during 2005,
except the Lighthouse
QSO Party and Walleye
Weekend events.

The cards were donated
by Steve Smith.

We have been pondering a "Club Logo" and this "look" was proposed by a few members at our last meeting. Let us know what you think...

