



Second Century

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Well, sort of. June and July must be two of the greatest months for amateur radio, with favorable weather for outdoor activities, lots of operating events planned, and of course the granddaddy of them all: ARRL Field Day! Summertime propagation coupled with the continued rise of Cycle 25 should also carry our signals farther, even on the VHF bands. I hope to inspire you to take advantage of these opportunities over the next 2 months, to make the time to get your station up and running, and to get on the air.

Let's start with 6 meters — the “Magic Band” — which is now coming into its own. The rare opportunity for stations on the east coast to work into Japan should appear this month, right around the summer solstice. It is not uncommon for the band to be completely dormant and then Mother Nature jumps in and creates something exciting, from E skip to aurora, and then it disappears. I spent some great times on 6 meters hill-topping with my club during VHF contests, hitting the CQ button for hours in the middle of the night, then suddenly running dozens of grids from the midwest to the southwest, only to see the band go back to total silence. Exciting! Much of 6-meter activity today is on FT8, so even as a phone operator, check 50.313 MHz for signals to get a sense of whether the band is open.

The ARRL Digital Contest is the first weekend of June, and a fantastic opportunity to use everything digital from RTTY to FT8. Get those software packages installed and get on the air. This is also an excellent opportunity for Technicians. Propagation couldn't be better on 10 meters, and 6 meters should also provide some great windows to work stations. This is one of those events where your grid square is used to designate your location, and it's great after the contest, especially on 6 meters, to see where you were able to make contacts toward a VUCC award! Remember to use LoTW® after the contest!

The ARRL June VHF Contest, the second weekend in June, has always been a favorite of mine. Antennas are generally smaller and easier to deal with, and the opportunity to get in your car and go rover operating from multiple grid squares is a great challenge in both planning and execution. You may find places to operate where two or four grid squares meet, to really drive excitement from those working you. Again, a big nod to 6 meters for this contest, especially in June. Be sure, even as an FT8 operator, to get on other modes. Get on phone! There will be plenty of stations to work. If you're a newcomer to the band, longtime contesters will want to say hi and welcome you!

ARRL Field Day! It's not just an operating event; for many it is a way of life! There are radio clubs and groups that take the Field Day experience very seriously. Even if you are home and can't get out to a Field Day site, there's a place for you on the air. This is a great opportunity to make the on-the-air experience personal by meeting people face to face and sharing camaraderie. From BBQs to overnight stints on 40-meter CW, Field Day can be a great time. I will never forget seeing Phil, K3UA,

walk out of the tent after doing a nearly all-night 40-meter CW run. This is an event where, for sure, you'll be taking pictures and making memories. Field Day is always the fourth full weekend in June. This issue of QST includes a special 2024 ARRL Field Day section with advice to get you ready!

The IARU HF World Championship is the second weekend in July. Even if you do not like contesting, this is a relatively short contest and it gives you the opportunity to contact IARU headquarters stations around the world. I encourage you to get on and challenge yourself to make 25 or 50 or 100 contacts. Make collecting the HQ contacts a contest within a contest for yourself! Your participation adds to the excitement that the serious competitors are feeling by boosting their contact counts and run rates. This is one contest that you can easily jump into and have some fun with.

Finally, don't forget POTA — Parks on the Air®. This operating activity was inspired by the 2016 ARRL National Parks on the Air event, and participation has exploded! Use the great ideas from our *Parks on the Air® Book* and the army of YouTubers who we try to spotlight. Getting a POTA station together for yourself is relatively simple, and something you can evolve with if you like operating outdoors. It's a great way to experience your own mini Field Day any time you want. But you don't have to limit yourself to being an activator. Someone has to work these POTA stations — and it might as well be you. You will find many of the low-power POTA stations on CW and FT8, and there are plenty of POTA stations on phone as well. You'll hear real excitement on phone when two POTA stations call each other with “Park to Park. Park to Park!” The POTA organization has done an amazing job with their website, <https://parksontheair.com>, which adds to the enjoyment of this part of amateur radio.

With everything in full swing, and some help from Cycle 25, be radio active — there's no better time! Be prolific by trying a bit of everything from bands to modes. Be the connector that gets a new ham or young ham on the air during this great time! I'll be looking for you from FN31.

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