

Sun Times photo

HAMS AT WORK — Vern Bohlender of Chesley and Don Richards of Sauble Beach, members of the Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club, receive Morse Code during weekend field day exercises. The annual competition is held to encourage readiness for emergencies.

Area radio operators ready for emergencies

By ANNE McNEILLY
Sun Times Staff

VE3BSF may be Greek to you or me but to a "ham" radio operator nothing could be clearer. The VE means Canada, the 3 Ontario and the last letters are his sending signal.

The Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club is the largest "ham" radio club in this area and during the weekend about 25 members set their equipment up on the Georgian Bay shore near Owen Sound to see how many contacts they could make around the world.

The field day is held annually. Clubs throughout North America participate and received points for contacts made and bonus points for the amount of power used and the number of messages relayed. The event is sponsored by the American Radio Relay League.

It's also "a practical illustration of what we can do in an emergency" club member Clare Plummer said.

One of the main purposes of the field day is to encourage readiness for an emergency by the amateur clubs.

The CBARC also participates in snowmobile and car rallies.

The reason they're called "hams" according to member Ted Scarrow is that they are amateurs and the word comes from the theatre.

Gas generators let the club provide a vital source of communication in an emergency.

Plummer said he remembered when Chesley was cut off from the rest of the area in a snow storm a few years ago and the hams were able to provide communication for the community.

Member Dick Shave said he remembered how ham radio operators provided essential communications out of Winnipeg in the 1950s when the Red River flooded.

By Sunday at noon the club had made about 300 phone (voice) contacts and 200 others by morse code or continuous wave. People from as far south as Texas had been contacted and signals from as far as Australia had been picked up.

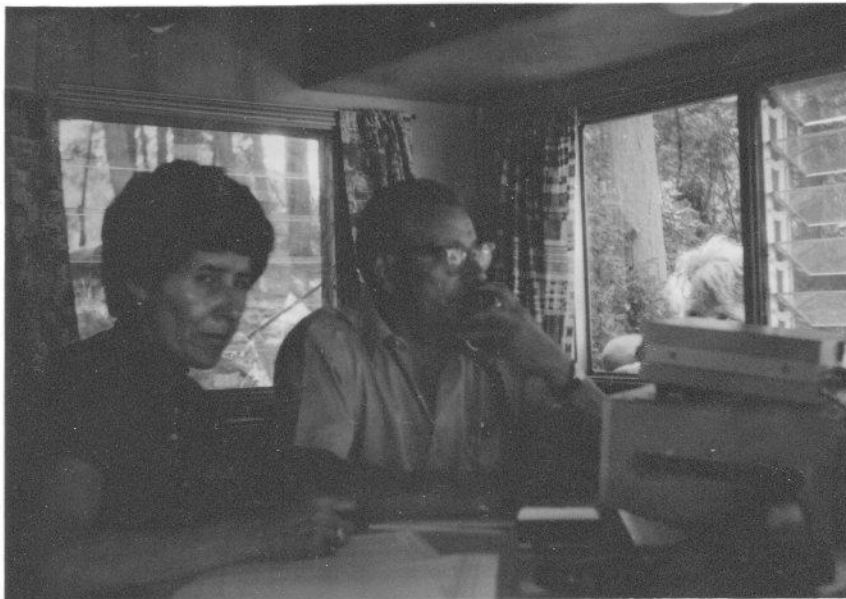
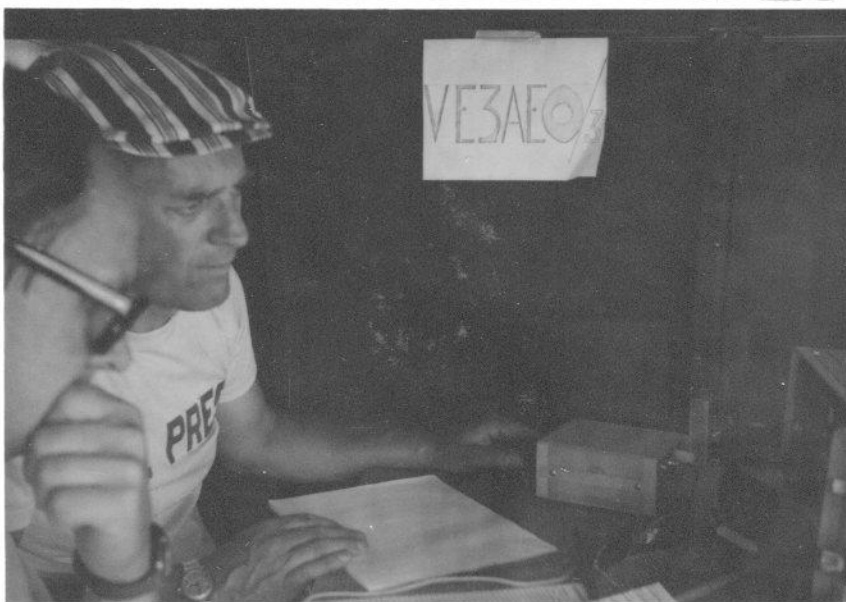
The idea, Plummer said, is to make as many contacts within the 27 hour period as possible.

He said language in phone contacts was not a barrier because English is generally spoken around the world and operators also know a special language made up of "Q" signals. QTH means, my home town.

Plummer said operators usually have a personal preference for either the phones or morse code (CW) but he prefers the code because it's faster "and a voice can sometimes fool you." Words and names sent over the phones are usually spelled phonetically so there is no doubt about what is being sent.

Becoming an operator involves passing government tests and acquiring a beginner's licence on morse before graduating after a year to the phones. "It's a real fun thing and a great hobby" president Ian Sutherland said.

FIELD DAY 1978
AT VE3AEO/P3



Ham radio contest planned

Tens of thousands of amateur "ham" radio operators across North America will be roughing it on the weekend of June 24 and 25 during annual field day activities.

The local Georgian Bay Amateur Radio Club with 63 members from Tobermory to Flesherton will be among those operators engaged in what is an exercise of emergency preparedness.

Ham radio equipment and antennas are set up in fields and run from portable gas generators in what has become one of the fiercest and most popular ham radio competitions.

Based on the number of operators, transmitters, power used and contacts established around the world, the hams compete with other operators for total points.

Last year, the Georgian Bay club placed tenth in Canada against competition from much larger clubs.

Club spokesman Ian Trenholm said this year the group has its sights set on first place.

They will be operating on a site west of the Rotary Youth Camp on property belonging to club member Ted Scarrow from 2 p.m. Saturday, June 24 to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 25.

Hams differ from citizens band operators in that they are examined on Morse code, electronic theory and radio regulations by the federal government before being licensed.

They are permitted to operate up to 1,000 watts on a variety of frequency bands that permit worldwide communication