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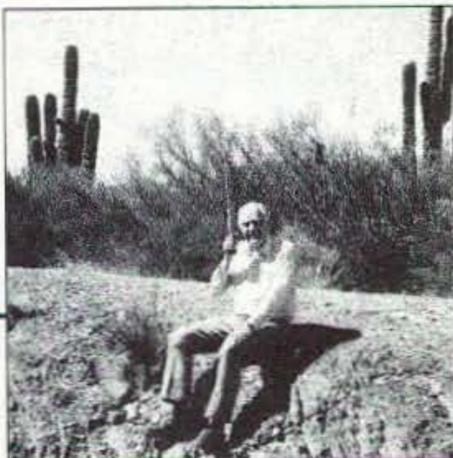
Art Bell W6OBB Gets Ready for Y2K

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NEVER SAY DIE

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Art Bell W6OBB

You probably don't spend much time listening to AM radio. But if you do, and you've ever tuned in at night, you've heard Art's coast-to-coast talk show "from the Kingdom of Nye" all up and down your dial. That's Nye County, Nevada, by the way.

In the East, his show is on the air five nights a week from 1 until 6 AM, which means that if you're a 9-to-5er, unless you turn on your radio during a sandbox visit, you'll probably never hear him. I keep a little Sony ICF-SW1, a 3" x 4" x 1" allband digital radio, by my bed, so all it takes is a push of the on-off button and I'm listening to WPTH out of Philadelphia on 1210, New York's WABC on 770, or WTAM Detroit on 1100.

On weekends, the show is a little shorter and consists mostly of repeats of his best shows.

The usual format has a news broadcast for about 8 minutes on the hour and half hour. The first hour of Art's show has him bringing you up to date on some of the latest happenings he thinks you'll want to know about. That's usually followed by listener call-ins, where they can discuss whatever they want. The next four hours normally feature an interview with a guest, and Art's been able to get some fascinating guests. I know I've learned a lot from them — and so have you, via my resulting editorials.

The topics covered are all over the lot — those strange contrails that are making us

sick, time travel, UFOs, contactees, alien technology, a space hotel in the works, those incredible crop patterns, ghosts, reverse speech, remote viewing, Area 51 visits, and so on.

No, of course I don't sit up five hours a night so I won't miss anything. I record the program every night. And you should be doing this, too. All you need is a cable between your AM radio and a VCR and you're in business. For the technically challenged, I have my \$5 Wayne Green's Bell Saver Kit (see p. 63) that includes the needed cable and complete instructions on connecting it and programming your VCR. In this way, you can listen to the show when it's convenient for you. You can fast forward through anything that doesn't interest you (like the newscasts). When there's a phone number or Web site address you want to note, you can rewind and get it. And if there's a guest you want to listen to again, or want to play for someone else to hear, you can save the tape, keeping a note of the time on the tape that you want to find. I have several boxes of tapes I've saved for reference. They're not quite as handy as books, but if you keep an index in your computer, they're easy to find. The T-120 tapes will record 6 hours, and you can find 'em for a buck, if you watch the ads.

Art is seriously geared up for the Y2K crisis, with an emergency generator, solar power, and wind power backup. You'll be hearing W6OBB on the bands even if

the power grid goes down for months.

Art does his program from his home in Pahrump, Nevada. You can watch him do the show, if you're up, via video on www.artbell.com. You can also listen to it via his Web site and see a list of his coming and past guests. If you look me up you'll see that I've been a guest five times and we've talked about all sorts of things. You can even listen to these past shows.

I'm anxious to be on more so that we can talk up amateur radio and encourage more people to come into the hobby. Well, the ARRL doesn't seem to be doing a damned thing, so *someone* has to do it.

Plummeting

The number of new licenses issued in January has dropped by almost 50% in the last two years. Hey, get out some graph paper and plot it for yourself. Plot 1553-1053-871 for the last three years and see where things are heading! The line hits zero around 2010.

The situation isn't any better when it comes to upgrades, either. They, too, are down 50% in the last two years.

Unless you can somehow force your ARRL director to make the League honor its responsibility to preserve the hobby, it looks like we're crashing and burning.

Why am I leaning so hard on the ARRL about this? Well, there are only two other interested parties, the FCC and the ham manufacturers. As far as the FCC is concerned,

amateur radio is an expensive nuisance, and the ham manufacturers are unorganized and apparently uninterested in whether the hobby continues or not.

Thus, whether amateur radio survives this crisis or not seems totally dependent on the ARRL taking some serious action. If they can't be forced to start promoting the hobby, we be gone.

There isn't any big secret about what needs to be done. I've written about it enough times, so I won't rehash my advice. Mostly, the League needs to figure out how to rebuild the high school radio club infrastructure they wiped out in 1964. That was our largest source of new hams.

It's going to be tough, for in addition to sports and TV, now we've got the Internet as a competitor for the teenagers. The League has to get kids to think of ham radio as cool. Now, there's a challenge!

A Slight Tinkering

With the ARRL membership dropping almost 10% (plummeting) in the last year; with *QST* shrinking; with manufacturers and dealers going out of business all around the country; with the number of new Techs dropping about 30% in the last two years; with the number of Techs upgrading to General dropping even faster; I then look over the ARRL's comments to the FCC on restructuring the hobby and all I see them recommending is a slight tinkering. What does it take to get alarm bells to go off in the atrophied brains of the directors you keep on blindly reelecting?

For that matter, what is it going to take to get our old-timers to recognize that the world has changed and that if amateur radio is going to survive, it has to change, too? I'm talking major changes, not tinkering.

Fifty years ago, amateur radio made a lot of sense as a service. In addition to providing engineers and technicians

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