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Ham Fest draws amateur radio fans

BY BETSY WILLIAMS CORRESPONDENT

Area amateur radio operators gathered Saturday at the Charlotte County Fairgrounds for their annual Ham Fest and Flea Market.

The radio buffs, more commonly known as hams, sold, swapped and bought all kinds of electronic gear, not just ham radios.

Demonstrations of the newest technology in ham radios and satellite antennas were available.

Martin E. Lee explained and demonstrated the Internet Radio Linking Project, in which a person can communicate from one radio through a computer to another radio in far away places.

"The Internet is a great tool, but replacing the ham? probably not," said Lee. Most want to use the actual radio, but if a person cannot afford a radio and already has a computer, it is the way to go."

"Ham radios are especially important during an emergency" when power is lost, said Don Hartlein. "They are better than satellite phones. We were the eyes and ears of the county when

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CORRESPONDENT PHOTOS / BETSY WILLIAMS

Jack Hendrick discusses "old time" ham radios with Bob Sternbergh while his wife Nancy watches the crowd. The Hendricks were working out of the back of their car selling antique ham radio equipment.

More photos

Bob Mott, president of the North Port Amateur Radio Club, talks with visitors listening to Martin E. Lee call during the Internet Radio Linking Project.

Ken



Anderson looks over a dual band antenna, one of the many items for sale at the Ham Fest and Flea Market.

INTERESTED?

For more information on ham radio, contact:

Peace River Radio Association, 625-5861

North Port Amateur Radio Society, 876-0218

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Charley hit."

Englewood Amateur Radio Society, 475-3172.

Antique radio equipment was being sold by John Fyke from the rear of his car. Fyke used to build radios.

"They have changed considerably," he said. "Everything is all set up for you -- either push a button or click a mouse."

According to his wife, Nancy, "He was so proud of building the radios. That time is gone. It kind of takes the pride away. It kept him occupied and using his brains."

Ham radios draw devotees from across the generational spectrum.

"It's a very wide hobby with a whole different language," said Matthew Henry, president of the Englewood Amateur Radio Society.

Russ Bryan, 26, and his sister, Nicole Bird, 12, browsed the tables looking for good deals. Bryan, who just received his basic technician license, has yet to be able to go on the radio, but "hopes to make contact with my grandfather in St. Petersburg on my first call."

The two found a CB radio and a Kenwood radio for a car. Nicole plans to take her test in a couple of weeks.

Off to the side, under a canopy of trees, testing was taking place for \$14 a person. Examiners Bob Stubbins and Aldo DiSalvo graded the test on the spot, "but the person has to wait 'til their names are posted on the FCC Web site, which will give them their call sign numbers," explained Stubbins.

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