

Field Day Flyover

For 2012 Field Day, Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager Bob Famiglio, K3RF, went on the air, in the air.

Bob Wilson, W3BIG

On Field Day one of the big challenges is the rush to raise antennas. However, for 2012 Field Day, that wasn't the case for Eastern Pennsylvania Section Manager Bob Famiglio, K3RF, who was able to raise his to 3000 feet in minutes with the help of a Cessna 182 Skylane piloted by his friend Jim Goldman, W3JG.

Bob was intrigued by the idea of visiting Field Day sites from the air. His territory covers all of Eastern Pennsylvania so it would have been impossible for him to drive through the Section in 24 hours. A pilot himself, Bob is no stranger to operating from aircraft. Doing a series of Field Day flyovers seemed to be a natural solution.

Operating the High Bands

After a preflight check that included installing VHF and UHF transceivers in the cockpit along with an APRS station, K3RF and W3JG lifted off around 1600 UTC from Brandywine Airport in West Chester. An Amateur Radio operator for 40 years, Jim, W3JG, has been flying since 2003.

W3JG banked the Cessna northward and headed up the eastern side of the Keystone State. "I've been a Pennsylvania resident my entire life but could not have been prouder to be the new Section Manager than when flying over our wonderful state enjoying the panoramic view of our Eastern Pennsylvania mountains," Bob said.

One of the interesting operating features of the flight was the inclusion of a beaconing APRS station so hams on the ground could track the position of the aircraft en route to various Field Day sites. This proved a valuable tool to alert those on the ground when the Cessna was approaching their site.

As the small plane flew over many of the Field Day locations, operators on the ground

got creative in signaling their Section Manager. Some waved makeshift flags while others placed signs on pavilion rooftops that read, "Welcome SM."

Operating from a small plane with a modestly sized cockpit required the use of handheld transceivers. That decision worked well — the handhelds' 5 W output was adequate. Bob worked stations at a range of 40-60 miles simplex without difficulty.

Stopovers

While most of the visits were flyovers, Bob and Jim scheduled two landings at Field Day sites located at airfields. The first was a refueling stop at the Scranton Pocono Amateur Radio Klub (SPARK), at Seamans Airport in Factoryville, just north of Scranton. The owner of the airport, William Dobitsch, Jr, KB3NEP, is both a pilot and fellow ham, as are most of the SPARK members.

The second landing was to visit the Susquehanna Valley Amateur Radio Club at Penn Valley Airport in Selinsgrove. The club main-

tains a permanent station with a building along one of the airfield's runways complete with a tower mounted tribander. Bob and Jim enjoyed a visit with club president John Thompson, K3MD.

For a new Section Manager, the trip was a real treat. Bob found it a great way to combine two of his passions — Amateur Radio and flying. "Landing at some of the Field Day sites and meeting fellow hams in the Section reminded me of how we are all so alike and how much we really have in common that many of us as radio amateurs may never fully appreciate," he said.

The 2012 Field Day flyovers were a success. Bob visited 21 Field Day sites from the air, with Jim's, W3JG, help. During the 6 hour trip that covered 500 air miles, Bob worked dozens of stations on 2 meters and on 70 and 33 centimeters.

Bob and Jim are already making plans for another aerial sojourn for 2013 Field Day and will add amateur television to the airborne station so Field Day operators will be able to get a glimpse of their sites from the air. Bob will be posting updated information about his 2013 Field Day Flyover on the Eastern Pennsylvania Section web page at www.arrrl.org/Groups/view/eastern-pennsylvania.



Jim, W3JG (L) and Bob, K3RF, discussing operating frequencies before takeoff.

All photos courtesy of Bob Wilson, W3BIG.

Bob Wilson, W3BIG, an ARRL® member, has been licensed for over 30 years and serves as the ARES® Emergency Coordinator for Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Bob can be reached at 58 King Ave, Folcroft, PA 19032-1022, w3big@arrrl.net.

