



## It Seems to Us

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# The Year Ahead

*“The year 2012 promises to be a busy, varied, and interesting one for Amateur Radio. Here are a few of the highlights we are looking forward to.”*

The waning months of 2011 have blessed us with the best HF radio propagation conditions in at least eight years, but the best is yet to come. With the sunspot peak is expected to occur sometime in 2013, 2012 should be a great year to surf the radio waves.

Even before New Year's Day dawns there will be a new ARRL video in circulation. *The DIY Magic of Amateur Radio* compresses into eight minutes a wide array of activities likely to appeal to a new generation of Do It Yourself hobbyists. Page 75 has the details about this new tool we will be using to explain the hands-on, creative dimension of Amateur Radio to this target audience. In every generation there are people who are curious about how things work, both natural and manmade. We want them to know that in Amateur Radio they will find kindred spirits and constructive outlets for their inquisitiveness.

On January 23 the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) kicks off in Geneva, the climax to four years of discussions and negotiations about dozens of possible amendments to the international Radio Regulations. Among the more than 2,000 participants will be an experienced group of radio amateurs credentialed as members of their national delegations, including that of the United States, or as observers for the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU). Four weeks later we will know whether our arguments for a new amateur allocation just below the AM broadcast band have carried the day. We will also know more about how global developments in telecommunications, particularly the sky-rocketing demand for mobile broadband services, may affect our future access to the radio spectrum. Our work to ensure that Amateur Radio is represented effectively at the International Telecommunication Union never stops; preparations for the next WRC in 2015 will begin as soon as the final gavel brings WRC-12 to a close on February 17.

In April we can expect to hear a lot about the most famous radio distress call in history as the world marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sinking of the RMS *Titanic*. The *Titanic* tragedy led to major improvements in maritime safety, including but not limited to maritime radio procedures, and cemented in the public mind the role of radio communications in preventing or responding to such disasters.

On a happier note, World Amateur Radio Day, April 18, will be an occasion to celebrate the theme “Amateur Radio Satellites: Celebrating 50 Years in Space.” The launch of the first Oscar satellite on December 12, 1961 was followed by the second just six months later. An even greater thrill would come in 1983 when radio amateurs the world over spoke with Owen Garriott, W5LFL, as he

orbited the Earth aboard STS-9! Dozens of amateur-constructed satellites and licensed astronauts and cosmonauts have followed these pioneers into orbit, with no end in sight.

The annual flocking of the faithful to the Dayton Hamvention® will occur once again in May, followed a few weeks later by the largest on-the-air operating event in North America: ARRL Field Day, June 23-24. Around this time we anticipate launching the online, digital edition of QST. You will be hearing more about this new membership benefit, to be offered at no additional cost, in the coming months. Unless you don't want it to, the printed copy will continue to arrive in your mailbox as it does now — but even if you prefer your reading material to be on paper, we think you will also like being able to access the enhancements we're planning for the digital version.

August 13 will mark another centenary: the approval of the Radio Act of 1912 that required for the first time that radio stations must be licensed. Today we take great pride in being a federally licensed radio service that can only be entered by examination, but at the time it was widely regarded as the end of Amateur Radio. Enacted two years before the founding of the ARRL, the legislation was intended to curb amateur activity not only by requiring licenses but also by placing severe restrictions on private, non-commercial stations. In the four months following its passage just 1,185 amateur station licenses were issued in the United States, representing but a fraction of the stations known to be active at that time.

As we now know, the amateurs of that era overcame the supposed handicap of being relegated to wavelengths shorter than 200 meters (that is, frequencies above 1.5 MHz) and in the following decade would demonstrate that shorter is in fact better. One wonders what the architects of the more draconian provisions of the Radio Act of 1912 must have thought in the ensuing years as they watched the spectacular record of Amateur Radio unfold.

Finally, as is the case every year there will be many opportunities for ARRL members to meet in person during 2012. A very special occasion will occur in October when the ARRL National Convention will be held on the West Coast for the first time since 1992. Put Santa Clara, California on your calendar for October 12-14!

*David Sumner, K1ZZ*