

PEOPLE AND EVEN

Ham radio exhibit opens at museum

Terry Lewis was skeptical about a used ham radio he bought, until he and Lee Bennett met one day to try it out. The two UT Martin employees had a little coaxial cable, some 14-gauge wire and a hammer.

Using their limited resources and swinging the hammer laden wire up into a tree, the two men were able to fashion a workable antenna for the bargain radio. The first contact they made was with a ham radio operator in Holland.

Bennett, an electronic technician in the School of Engineering, has always had good luck making contact with minimal short wave radio equipment. Bennett has been able to talk with some one in the South Pacific by dangling telephone wire from a second floor window at Clement Hall.

"You don't have to have anything elaborate. I've talked to passenger aircraft where pilots were flying from California to Hawaii. The pilots told me the planes had ham radio capabilities. And all our conversations were crystal clear. One pilot said all he could see was the sky and blue water."

Bennett and Dr. Ottis Barron will share the wonders and their experience with ham radios through an exhibit currently on display through March 7 at the University Museum located on the campus of UT Martin. The exhibit includes ham radio transmitters, receivers, digital photographs of the repeater on campus, antennas, a radio-controlled airplane, telegraph keys, videos, audio tapes of Morse code and a satellite tracking computer.

"We want this to be a hands-on exhibit, and we encourage the people to tune the receivers on display," Bennett said. Because of FCC regulations, transmitting from the exhibit will not be possible, but QSL cards acknowledging recent transmissions with people around the world will be on display.



MAKING CONTACT WITH SHORT WAVE RADIO EXHIBIT - Lee Bennett and Dr. Ottis Barron (right) try to make contact with the outside world on this 1962 Valiant Transmitter. Bennett and Barron will share the wonders and their experience with ham radios through an exhibit currently on display through March 7 at the University Museum, located on the campus of UT Martin. The exhibit includes the Valiant transmitter, other transmitters, receivers, digital photographs of the repeater on campus, antennas, a radio-controlled airplane, telegraph keys, videos, audio tapes of Morse code and a satellite tracking computer. The museum, under the direction of Dr. S. K. Airee, is open from 1-4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The museum will also open any time for group tours. To set up tours or for more information, call Airee at 901-587-7454.

Barron plans to include in the exhibit a Valiant transmitter, which was built in the 1950s by the EF Johnson Company. Together Barron and Bennett have more than 50 years of experience in ham radios, and they represent a small local population of ham radio operators. Barron said the total ham radio population in the United States is between 600,000-700,000.

The exhibit, in part, has been designed to create more interest in ham radios. "There's enough variety in the kinds of things you can do in ham radios that almost everyone can find something they like," Barron said.

The ham radio exhibit coincides with National Engineers Week (Feb. 22-28) and replaces the "Lincoln's Legacy in Tennessee" exhibit, which has been rescheduled from the end of August to the end of September.

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Information about the museum can also be accessed by computer through <http://fmc.utm.edu:80/~sair-ec/MUSEUM.HTM>.