

# Field Day 2008

Wes Hayward, w7zoi.

I vowed to myself that Field Day this year would be a backpacking effort. Sometimes I get away from this and either do a drive in effort with friends, or sometimes a walk-in effort to a local park. They all work; it is always fun to get on the air and make a few contacts. But it is always much more fun when it is done out of a pack in the back country.

I selected Ghost Ridge for this year's location. It is a favorite place that I've enjoyed in both summer and winter. It is a relatively easy walk to get there. But it is just enough work to keep the crowds out. It requires a walk of about a mile on the Pacific Crest Trail. Then we leave the trail and navigate with map and compass for the better part of another mile. There is just enough climbing to make it interesting and scenic. This year there was a lot of snow on both the trail and on the cross country segment. Roger and I saw similar conditions during the June VHF contest (mid June) a few years ago when we used the same location. We have also been in there for the January VHF SS contest on numerous junkets. I even used the location for a QRP contest, FYBO, which is a something like a winter Field Day.

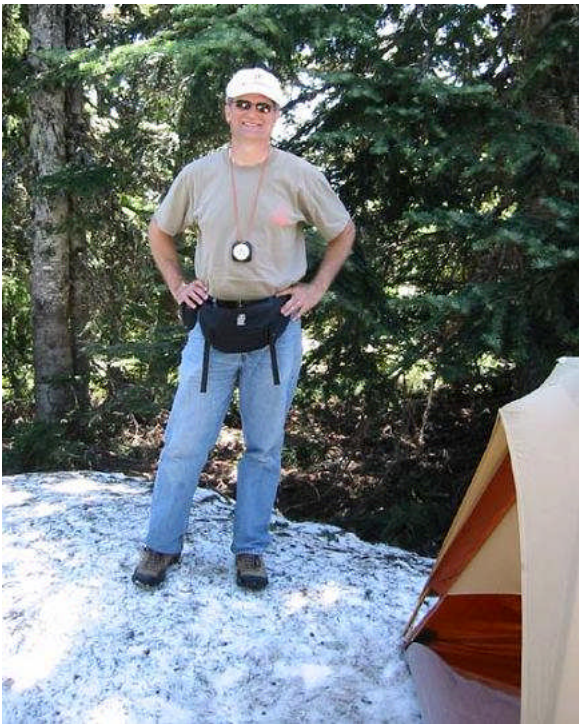
I was joined on this trek by Rick Campbell, KK7B. Rick went with us to this place several years ago, shortly after he moved to Oregon. A couple of hours after we arrived at our camp, we were delighted to see my son Roger, KA7EXM, and his son Peter arrive at our camp. They came in to kibitz and join in on the fun. Although Peter had been backpacking, he had never done any cross country travel.

My ham rig for this trek is a little transceiver that was purposefully constrained to an output of 1 Watt on the 40 meter CW band. I got a dipole antenna up about 25 feet, limited by the amount of feedline carried to the camp. The feedline was small coaxial cable (RG-174 size). I used Alkaline batteries, although the ones I grabbed were not as fresh as I had hoped. I should have been more careful. The rig functioned flawlessly except for that planning error.

The first chore upon reaching camp was to get Rick's tent up. This was a great tent for this kind of event for it was slightly larger than the usual two person design.



We elected to pitch the tent on the snow, for it was more comfortable and cooler than the bare ground. Either option was available to us, but we had the pads needed to camp on snow. Note the feedline dropping into the tent.



This shot shows Rick after we got the tent set up.



Roger is cooking dinner for himself and Peter. Both his meal and the one that Rick and prepared was Mountain House freeze dried. Rick and I also had some premium coffee that he brought along. Here Rog is melting snow to get the water needed for dinner.



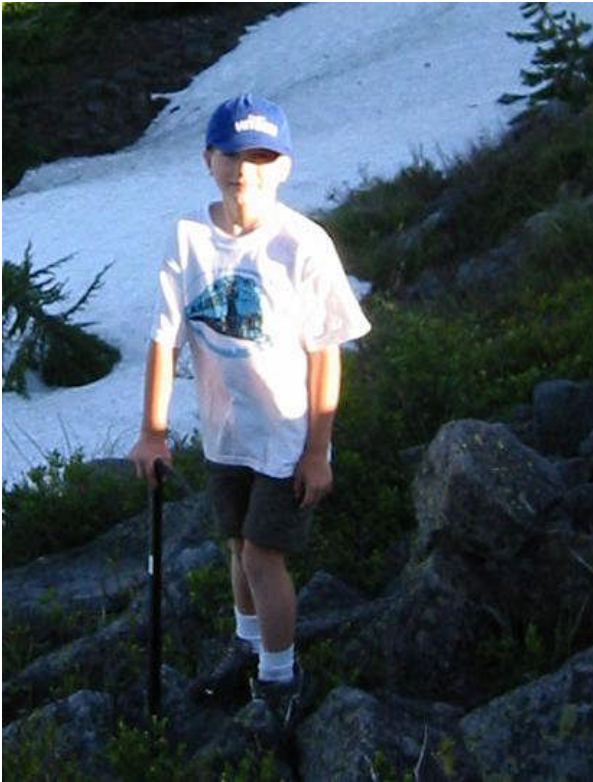
Roger and Peter also elected to camp on the snow. About 50% of the ground was bare.



The mountain weather was nearly perfect, although it was much warmer in the greater Portland area. Indeed, they broke records there on Saturday. This view of Mt. Hood is from a ridge just above our camp site.



The same ridge provided views of Mt. Jefferson, about 40 miles to the south.



Peter explores the ridge.



Peter gets a demonstration from Roger on the way to do a self arrest with an ice ax.



The ridge was so close to our camp that we ran up there often. This view shows Mt. Hood as the last light illuminates the area.



The sun slips below the horizon to the northwest.



Here's a shot of me making a few contacts on 40 CW. A foam pad provided the insulation needed to allow the snow to function as a bench of sorts. The blue bag contains batteries while the rig sits on another stuff sack. The clipboard holds a log sheet and a cross check sheet. The small box attached to the antenna lead is a transmatch. Our best "DX" for the weekend was Hawaii, garnered at about breakfast time on Sunday morning. While the east coast was easily heard, even during daylight hours for most of the contest, I never managed to poke through the interference.