

## President's Corner

### May 2009

Yesterday BARA held it's 50<sup>th</sup> hamfest, and initial indications are that it was another successful year, with 258 tickets purchased and all indoor tables sold out. There was a downside, though, in that we had far fewer people tailgating than in previous years. This is a pattern I've noticed occurring with most small hamfests, and I believe there are two primary reasons:

Just as the Internet (and cell phones) has usurped many of the functions previously available exclusively to amateur radio, so has it cut deeply into private sales functions (such as flea markets and hamfests). The advent of eBay (and other classifieds sites) has forever changed the face of the collectibles and antiques markets, as well as revolutionizing the sale of second-hand goods. Why bother dragging all that heavy equipment 30 miles away at 5:30 in the morning (perhaps in questionable weather) so that a handful of people can view it, when one can spend a few minutes at their desk offering it up for sale on the Internet to millions of potential buyers, who can purchase the item as soon as their need arises, and have it delivered to their doorstep?

Also, the "DIY" (do-it-yourself) mentality, far more prevalent among electronics experimenters decades ago, has shrunk tremendously. This is in part because modern consumer items, with their miniaturized circuitry and ubiquitous surface-mount components, are far less prone to tinkering and repair. Also, it is no longer cost-effective to build such things from scratch, contrary to the case years back (for example, it used to cost a lot less to build a PC from individual components than to purchase a complete system, but the cost of computers from Dell, HP, Acer and other large manufacturers has dropped so precipitously that one cannot build a PC from scratch for less than the price of a warranted system).

But there is still a small coterie of DIY'ers out there (I subscribe to *Make* magazine, which caters to this crowd). A significant majority of those who are engaged in electronics projects are interested in microcomputer control of devices and robotics. (Traditional electronic kits are still widely available; check my web page at [www.lutins.org/lists/electronics.html](http://www.lutins.org/lists/electronics.html) for a list of suppliers.) These people share with amateur radio enthusiasts the spirit of exploring the vast capabilities of electronic devices beyond the consumer realm. In looking to keep our hobby (and our club) alive, we should probably be striving to reach out to this group of folks.

I'd love to hear more ideas from folks about how we can maintain an interest in the activities of our club!

73 de allen lutins KC2KLC