

## 2022 Fall NEAR-Fest

By Tony Baker AA3HD



The New England Amateur Radio Festival (NEAR-Fest) is an amateur radio event run by and for all radio hobbyists and enthusiasts, including “hams”, short-wave listeners, scanner buffs, vintage/antique radio fans, etc. It is held twice a year -- spring and fall -- rain or shine at the Deerfield Fairgrounds, Deerfield, New Hampshire. The two-day event begins on a Friday at 9:00AM and ends the next day at 2:00PM. NEAR-Fest is the largest event of its kind in the Northeast and typically attracts attendees from the six New England states, NY, NJ, PA, MD and other states, as well as from Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in Canada.

For those who have never attended a NEAR-Fest, the program of activities and events are extensive. Many attend just to go to the vast outdoor flea market of mostly used equipment, much of which is amateur radio-related, but also includes such things as computers and computer components, audio equipment, tools, books, musical instruments, and arts and crafts. Some go just to sell, others to buy, and some attend just to look. In addition there are three buildings full of commercial vendors, forums, technical seminars and symposia, demonstrations, exhibits, displays, licensing examinations, and special event radio stations. Overnight camping, trailer and RV hookups are available, and three food vendors provide meals and snacks. Those staying overnight can often be found at the Friday evening “jam session.”

This year’s fall NEAR-Fest took place on 14/15 October, and although Friday morning started out with a cold heavy rain, those who came prepared were able to shed their raingear by the afternoon when it warmed up and became bright and sunny. Virtually no outdoor vendors were set up Friday morning, so I spent nearly the entire morning inside the commercial buildings. One disappointment for me was that Ham Radio Outlet (HRO) was not present. Others I spoke with also expressed their regret that HRO was missing from the scene.



***Like me, many of the Friday morning attendees stayed out of the cold rain by 'shopping' the indoor vendors.***



***Despite the rain Friday morning, people still have to eat...Angelino's was one of three food vendors ready to meet their breakfast appetites.***

With the weather still not turning for the better by noon on Friday, I chose to attend the ARRL Forum presented by ARRL New England Division Director Fred Kemmerer AB1OC. Fred passed on a lot of information on the state of the ARRL, including topics such as the Club Grant Program, building public support and awareness,

ARRL projects and priorities, and club development. A couple of points that really struck me in Fred's presentation were that only about half of the licensed HAMs in the US are on the radio, and that the main reason people get amateur licenses today is so that they can do Parks on the Air. A few years ago, the main reason people got into HAM radio was so they could do emergency communications.



***Fred Kemmerer AB1OC answers questions during the ARRL Forum.***

Following Fred's presentation the skies were clear and bright, and it was warming up. (That said, there were three more forums on Friday covering the following topics: the 10GHz band; dealing with power line RFI, and; Enigma machines.) Some outdoor flea market vendors set up Friday afternoon, and those that had toughed out the morning got the pick of the lot. Friday closed with prize drawings for which you had to be present to win. The name picked to win the grand prize of a Yaesu FT-891 was not present, and so that radio was held over to be given away the next afternoon.

The activities Saturday started out bright and early (7:00AM)...and a bit cool, but things warmed up quickly with many more outdoor flea market vendors than the previous day. I was able to meet up with some old friends - Mark W1MTW, Brian W1BKW, & Rick KB1ASM -- and also was able to put some faces to voices I had had QSO's with on numerous occasions but had never met in-person before - Tim KB1PRG & Peter KC1HBM. Scouring through the many, many flea market vendors is always fun, and if you are persistent, you are bound to eventually find what you're looking for and you will definitely see something that you never saw or heard of

before either....always so much fun. For those not yet licensed there was a VE session on Saturday as well.



***Flea market outdoor vendors were out in force on Saturday, as were lookers and buyers.***

Fall NEAR-Fest closed Saturday afternoon with another round of prize drawings. This time you didn't have to be present to win. Lucky winners received \$50.00 ARRL gift certificates, an ARRL Antenna Handbook, and a Vector Network Analyzer. Two lucky winners each won a Yaesu FT-891 transceiver. Unfortunately, yours truly didn't win a thing!!



***2022 Fall NEAR-Fest ends with prize drawings Saturday afternoon on the stage in Relaxation Grove.***

2023 Spring NEAR-Fest takes place on May 5/6. Hope to see you there. For more information, go to:  
[www.near-fest.com](http://www.near-fest.com)

73 - Tony - AA3HD