



## It Seems to Us

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# Great Centennial. What's Next?

*“In 2014 we had a terrific time celebrating the ARRL's first 100 years. Now we have work to do, to make sure there will be more celebrations in the future.”*

ARRL members will long remember 2014. The year got off to a roaring start on the air with operations using the W1AW call sign from West Virginia and North Carolina for the first 7 days of the year. Similar activations of every state followed, with two week-long opportunities to work each state and earn a special Worked All States award by only working “W1AW/x.” Operations from the District of Columbia and overseas territories added a bit of spice, and chances to earn endorsement stickers.

We had no idea how popular the chase would become; no one thought at the outset that the total number of QSOs made by the W1AW “portables” would top three million! At least 1500 members were able to experience being at the other end of a pileup without leaving home. More importantly, their participation underscored the fact that the ARRL is not simply a place in Newington, Connecticut. The ARRL is its members, wherever they may be. The year-long Centennial QSO Party maintained the theme, with every contact with an ARRL member counting for at least one point.

Emphasizing that it established no precedent, the FCC granted permission for W100AW to be used as an additional call sign throughout the year. We limited its use to two-way contacts made from the Maxim Memorial Station and from the sites of the six Regional Centennial Conventions. Visitors to the station made tens of thousands of contacts, with visits peaking in mid-July during the National Centennial Convention held in Hartford.

And speaking of the conventions, if you were able to attend one or more of them, you know how special they were! Hartford is not a regular ARRL convention site, but the combined efforts of the ARRL volunteers and staff caused many attendees to say they wished it could be. The regional designations added a dimension to perennially successful events in Florida, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Alabama, and California.

We have received countless positive comments about the activity stimulated by the operating events. Many said it gave them a reason to turn on their equipment more often or to put up a new antenna; some even said they had been off the air for years but saw the Centennial as a reason to get back on! A lot of the comments concluded with a question: “What are we doing next year?”

That's not an easy question to answer. Special events are fun, but do them all the time and they're no longer special. In 1994, we celebrated Hiram Percy Maxim's 125th birthday by inviting ARRL volunteers and staff to append “/125” to their call signs for a week. It was such a success that we did it for the next 2 years, but each time there was less activity than the previous year. The lesson learned was that making it an annual event was too much; every 5 years is about right. The most recent HPM birth-

day celebration, another success, was the 140th in 2009. Last year's was preempted by the Centennial, but we can plan a big HPM 150th birthday bash for 2019!

In the meantime we have work to do, to make sure that Amateur Radio and the ARRL have many more celebrations to come.

Over the years, the ARRL Board of Directors has engaged in several cycles of strategic planning. The most recent Strategic Plan, which is available on the ARRL's website ([arri.org](http://arri.org)), was completed in 2009. As planning for the Centennial got under way we recognized that strategic planning was due for a fresh look, but it was unrealistic to try to give the subject the attention it deserved at the same time. It was better to develop our plans for the future on the heels of a successful celebration — one that would remind us that today's healthy Amateur Radio Service didn't just happen, but that it resulted from hard work, good decisions, and sacrifice by our predecessors. We also realized there was no time to waste, so we budgeted for a survey of representative samples of ARRL members, former members, and other licensed amateurs to be conducted as soon as possible after the festivities were concluded. The survey, which will provide a factual base for future planning, is being conducted by Readex Research and was launched right after the first of the year. If you happen to receive the survey, please help by completing and returning the questionnaire.

At its meeting on January 16 – 17, around the time members receive this issue of *QST*, the Board will consider a report recommending a new approach to strategic planning to be pursued in an iterative process during 2015. If the Board decides to proceed, when it convenes a year from now there will be a draft strategic plan ready for its consideration that will reflect input received throughout the year.

As always, your elected Division Director will be interested in your thoughts and ideas. What should the ARRL be doing that we're not doing now, or not doing enough? Are there areas of Amateur Radio that deserve more emphasis (or less)? What trends do you see that we might be overlooking?

Today's healthy Amateur Radio Service didn't just happen by accident. Neither will tomorrow's. But with your help and support of the ARRL, it will happen.