

They 'ham' it up at fairgrounds

By JANICE McDERMOTT

A good crowd of 'hams' and their families turned out for the Burlington Amateur Radio Club's annual Hamfest at Milton Fairgrounds last Saturday.

It's a day of family fun run by the BARC since 1972, with picnic lunches, demonstrations and sales by amateur and professional dealers. The meet has been moved about in recent years in attempts to find a perfect balance of protection from heat and rain.

Demonstrations by Jacques Boucher on a packet radio drew messages to an electronic bulletin board, in the manner computer hackers do. He used a laptop computer to call up a message which had been relayed by 11 repeating stations from its originating station in Pennsylvania.

While methods of communication proliferate, most communication developments have their roots in amateur radio operations, he said.

"The first satellite communication (system) was built by amateur radio operators in 1962," he said. "I tracked it (the satellite) for three days."

Using simple equipment at the time, 'hams' were able to measure the satellite's orbit, Mr. Boucher said. The collective results were within three per cent of the official ones, he pointed out.

One of several families to boast multiple licences, the Lockies of Burlington had three members attending Hamfest. Wayne Lockie teaches the 20-week course for aspiring hams in both Burlington and Oakville.

"The reason I got into ham radio is that when I was a kid I heard Australia in high school. I thought that was fascinating," he said.

He got his licence in 1961.

Wayne's wife Ann admitted she had no interest in obtaining her licence until a couple of years ago, when she went to work and wanted to reach Wayne at odd times. She

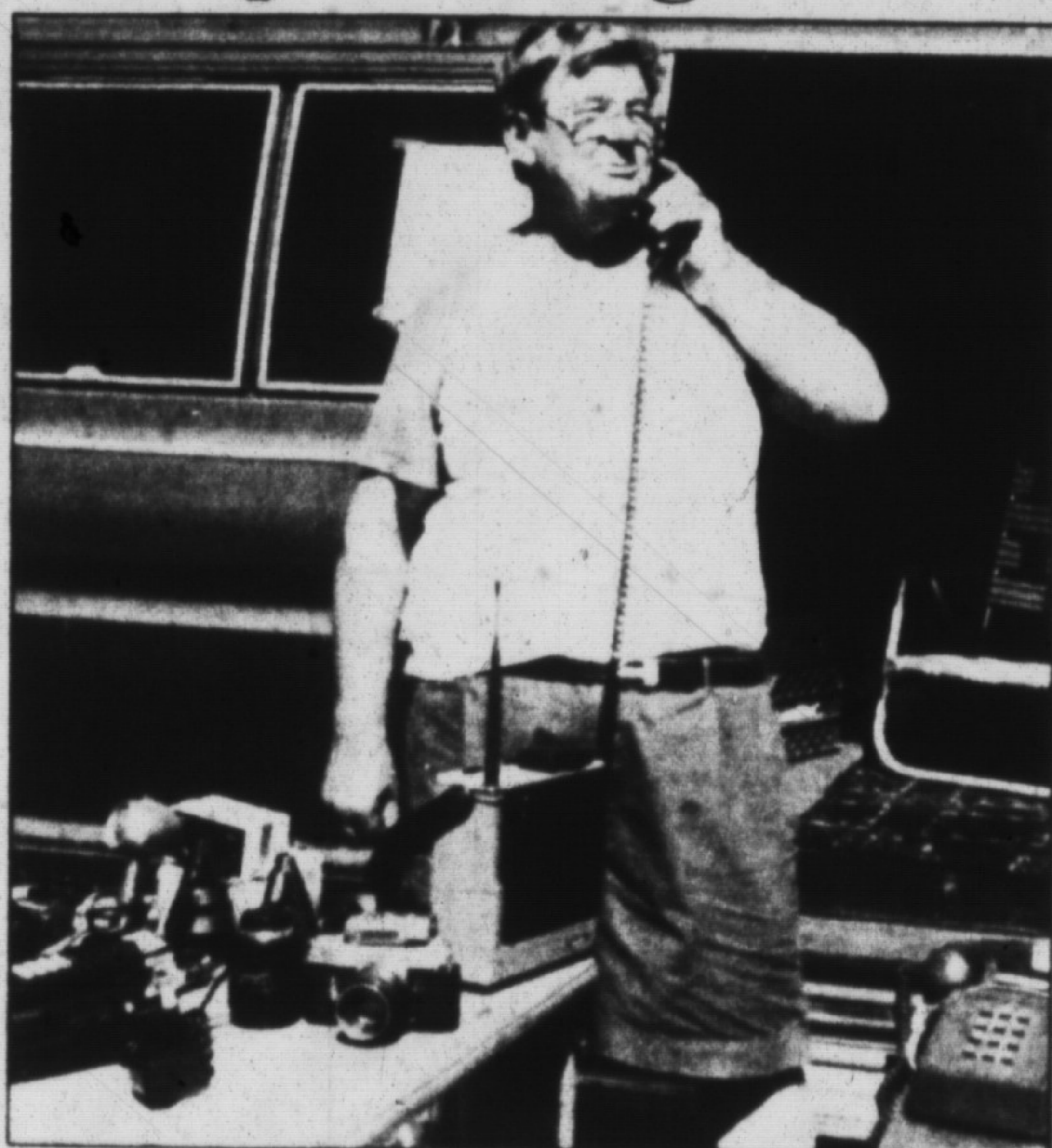


Photo by JOHN WARREN
Frank Sabbo of Mississauga chats on his radio at the 'Hamfest' Saturday at Milton Fair Grounds. The fair weather helped bring out good crowds for the event, sponsored by a Burlington radio club.

can contact him from Burlington when he is as far away as Mississauga, Simcoe or Fort Erie, much farther than citizen band (CB) radio can normally reach.

Ann and daughter Kathy, 16, studied and got their licences at the same time, just over a year ago.

There is a wide variety of ways for people of different dispositions and aptitudes to enjoy amateur radio operations, said Mr. Lockie.

They range from short wave - talking to other hams worldwide using voice or Morse Code, to operating contests which offer practice in simulated emergency situations, such as natural disasters.

The clubs do a lot of volunteer communication at community events, such as fundraising runs or charity tournaments.

"It might be to send scores back to central communications or in a tournament to tell a team where to go for their next game to eliminate extra travel and time," Mr. Lockie explained.

For \$20 interested individuals can become members of BARC, which meets the first Thursday of the month at the Burlington Central arena auditorium, at 7:30 p.m.

For an initial outlay of approximately \$300 a person can set up a basic 'ham' radio station.

Batman isn't brilliant but it is entertaining

Cross present day New York with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and what emerges is the Gotham city of the recently released film version of *Batman*. Gothic and grimy, it rises in cancerous art-deco style, a mirror of the corruption in the hearts of its politicians.

The look of Gotham city works in tandem with the unveiling of the dark side of Batman to a generation of fans more familiar with the high camp of the 1960s television show.

The conflicting influences are a prescription for box office burnout. Comic book fans demanded somebody other than Michael Keaton, of Mr. Mom fame, in the title role. Television fans wanted Adam West, who played Batman on the small screen.

They also wanted Robin, who is excluded from the film's story line. And they wanted comedy. Everybody is alienated by the film. Harlon Ellison, an eminent commentator on fantasy and science fiction in the United States, deplored the casting of Keaton and said so in numerous articles and interviews. He now claims he was misquoted.

All the hype for *Batman* is enough to scare off even the least discerning moviegoer. Initial hype was a product of the film studio, which wants to recover the costs of the piece. Secondary hype is that generated by the press, who liked the film, or said they did.

As with any subject that exists in the collective consciousness, there are certain conventions and elements necessary when committing *Batman* to the big screen. Translating that proves a difficult task, considering the varying influences. It is necessary, however, to have a batcave, a batmobile, Bruce Wayne, Alfred and the traditional cape and cowl.

Director Tim Burton brings it off wonderfully. His other film projects

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include *Beetlejuice* and *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. While they don't immediately strike one as the sort of works that should form a resume for the person who attempts *Batman*, they were inventive, off-centre films which succeeded when convention said they would not. Mr. Burton seems to have an eye for what will work on screen.

The film is not brilliant, not a masterpiece. It is, however, entertaining. But there are two major problems which hold it back.

Batman is not fully explored as a character. He is introduced and utilized, but his motives are never adequately explained. Sure, his parents were killed by gangsters, but why the bat bit? Also, letting Kim Basinger, who plays a newspaper photographer, find out his real identity is a bit demystifying. The dark knight is just this guy, eh?

There are segments of the film where the reel, so carefully built up, slows down or collapses. A sweep of the batmobile through a forest builds up some suspense which is ignored, perhaps cut from the film, and a scene where Keaton is about to reveal his identity sputters to an end with no real denouement.

The movie is a prime candidate for a sequel. Not only is the subject episodic, like the Bond films, but there is a wealth of material to draw from. The huge box office that *Batman* has done and the legion of devout fans assures a second film. There have been rumours that Danny Devito has signed to play the arch-criminal Penguin.

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