

This year's games include 'radio sports'

By MARY SISSON

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VANCOUVER — International competition may be a byproduct of the contests at the Goodwill Games in Seattle in July.

In one related competition, international communication is the goal. The winner of the Radio Sports Games will be the one who makes the most contacts by ham radio to the most points around the globe.

Ham radio at an athletic event?

"The radio sports thing is fairly new," said Mark Gaunt of Vancouver, vice president of the Clark County Amateur Radio Club. "We don't do it like Russia does. (There) it's like an Olympic event."

Two amateur radio "athletes" traveled from Khabarovsk, U.S.S.R., to the Vancouver-Portland area this week to promote the Friendship Amateur Radio Sports Games, scheduled for July 1991 in Portland.

By coincidence, the pair recently won international competitions that earned them spots in the Goodwill Games. Next month, they will again make the 24-hour each-way trek to the Northwest.

Mikhail A. Zavarukhin, 25, and Eugeny V. Stavitsky, 49, will try to best radio buffs from 24 countries in sending and receiving international Morse code, making voice contacts with ham operators all over the world, and "fox hunting" — finding a hidden transmitter.

Similar events are on the docket for the radio games in Portland in 1991.

Those games will be the first event of its kind in the United States, drawing radio enthusiasts from Khabarovsk; Niigata, Japan; and all over the United States,

according to Rene Berblinger of Portland, vice president of the Friendship Amateur Radio Society.

"This will be a reciprocal event similar to one to which the Portland club was invited" last September in Khabarovsk, one of Portland's sister cities, Berblinger said.

He was on the Portland team vying for the most points against Japanese and Soviet hams. "They gave us their radio station at a pioneer camp in the woods," Berblinger said. "It's hard to imagine how tense it gets."

Zavarukhin started in radio at 17, when he studied at the Physical Technical Institute in Moscow. He works with electronics communications for the Soviet railroad.

Stavitsky, president of the Khabarovsk Territory Amateur Radio Federation, teaches piano. He runs a radio club station for girls in his school, unusual in this male-dominated hobby.

Stavitsky and Zavarukhin met Wednesday in La Center with Clark County Amateur Radio Club members and six radio hobbyists from Kazan, west of Khabarovsk. It was the first time they'd met their fellow Soviet hams face-to-face.

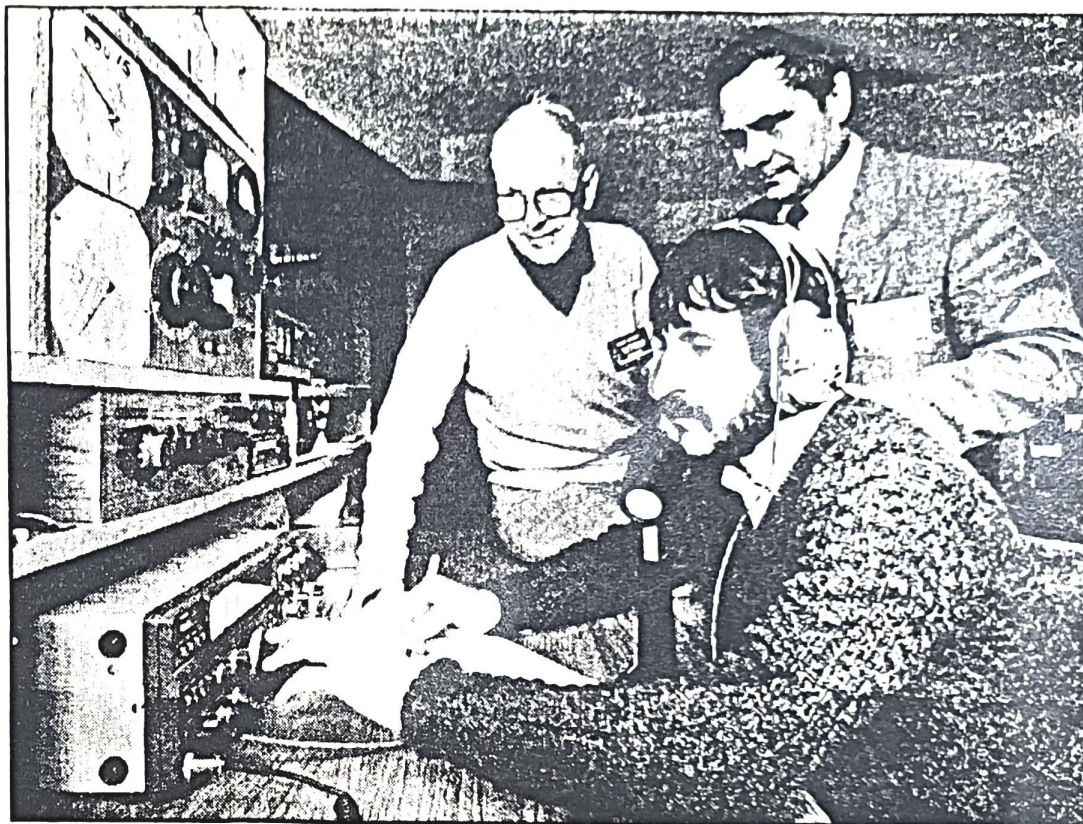
"Of course, we talk with them many, many times," Zavarukhin said.

The Kazan group, in Washington since May 12, was eager for news of conditions back home.

"It's going to be more and more difficult," Zavarukhin said. "To live in the Soviet Union becomes more and more expensive every day."

Expense is only part of the challenge for Soviet radio amateurs.

Gesturing toward six 120- to 170-foot high towers outside ham



FROY WAYHTEN

Mikhail Zavarukhin (seated), a ham radio operator from the Soviet Union, tries out the equipment of La Center ham operator Rush Drake (center), while fellow Soviet Eugeny Stavitsky waits his turn.

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— Mark Gaunt, radio club

operator Rush Drake's La Center home, Stavitsky said his club uses similar equipment. "Only it is homemade. Very many problems with equipment."

"Radio amateur equipment is not manufactured in the U.S.S.R.," Zavarukhin said. "The ruble is not a currency, so it's impossible to obtain (equipment overseas). Not

everybody can build equipment. It's very complex. Sometimes we are using parts from old professional equipment."

Most American hams, Berblinger said, "are appliance operators. The other side of the sport is building your own equipment. Eugeny built a state-of-the-art radio, complete with LED readout,

all home-built."

Berblinger plans to take Zavarukhin and Stavitsky to the American Radio Relay League's Northwest convention in Seaside this weekend, where they will promote the 1991 radio games in Portland.

Berblinger's radio interests go beyond its technical aspects. He is a board member of the Portland Sister City Committee, a classical guitarist and an anthropologist in training.

"Cross-cultural communications, that's what really interests me — how people connect with each other," he said.