



THE BULLSHEET

Official News Bulletin of the

Texas DX Society

An ARRL Affiliated Club

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The Texas DX Society, P.O. Box 540291 Houston, TX 77254-0291

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Announcements

Meeting – The Texas DX Society meets the second Friday of each month, except when the date is changed by the Board of Directors. The next meeting will be on **Tuesday May 14 at 7:00 p.m. at Antonio's Flying Pizza at 2920 Hillcroft**, south of Westheimer on the west side of Hillcroft. It has a really big sign out front.

How to Reach Us

On the World Wide Web:

<http://wb5fnd.tech.uh.edu:80/~tdxs/>

On 2 Meters:

147.96/36 MHz

On Packet:

K5WA on 144.950MHz

or

Connect to TDXS95 (144.950MHz) and then connect to K5WA

The Prez Sez – de Chuck, KE5FI

Our Houston, Texas "One day of Spring" is over and Summer weather has arrived. Its now time (if not past time) to plan and execute some sort of antenna project. My plan is to FINALLY get an all-band capability with some sort of tri-bander in the empty space on the mast. Yes, I'm finally getting tired of listening to the hiss-with-no-signals on ten meters.

Reminder-you who are full members should have your ballots for new members in hand. Sorry they are a little late. I was not able to pick up the slack when our Secretary resigned. Thank goodness Madison, AB5TV volunteered. I know he is as busy as I am, but he is probably more organized than I. There are two great guys up and I STRONGLY urge everyone to vote for them. We desperately need new blood and these guys are veteran contesters/DX types who will help replace some of our "good guys" who have mover afar from Houston.

Meeting will be at Antonio's "Thrown Around" Pizza Place on Hillcroft again on Tuesday night, May 14. Try to contact someone and bring them with you.....73 es see u there

73, Chuck (ke5fi@wt.net)

CQ Field Day, CQ Field Day.....

Yep, I'm afraid its that time again. Field day is right around the corner. Bob Perring, N5RP, has a plan together and station captains are in place, but we still need your help. Several of us have a very good feeling about this year's effort (even with Bob at the helm :-).

When lots of members and our friends come out Field Day is one of the best ham radio events there is. In the past TDXS was THE Field Day Club. I think we still are when everyone comes out we can prove it. Come to the Meeting Tuesday May 14 and see what we have up our sleeve.

de, Dave, WB5N

TEXAS QSO Party May 4-5 1996
"It doesn't get better than this"
OR - showdown at Ham Creek
de Madison AB5TV

It was obvious to the most jaundiced observer that things were afoot for the Texas QSO Party on May 5-6, 1996, notably the Armadillos. A number of 'Dillo cruisers hit the highways and byways to give Qs on SSB and CW to contesters everywhere. Don K13L dusted off the old Ford Club Wagon for the occasion, stuffed WB5N and AB5TV in the back, and hit the road for the Texas Piney Woods.

The whole thing had been carefully planned for weeks: routes were laid out, equipment peaked and antennas tuned to get maximum effort for the contest period. Don had his Spider cut for 40, 20 and 15, though only 20 seemed to capture a signal on the move which was strong enough to work consistently while we were actually moving. Otherwise, the ignition noise (ours and theirs) ran a consistent S7, making weak signal reception difficult. We got plenty of practice with AGN and NR, trying to drag folks out of the mud. Dave's voice started to give out after the third or fourth hour of shouting into the microphone.

Our odyssey began in Brazoria County at K13L's house. From there we went to Galveston County, and took the Bolivar ferry across to High Island. We had a good view of the concrete tanker which was scuttled in Galveston Bay in 1920. It was celebrating the 76th anniversary of its sinking into the bottom of the bay on the day we passed it. We determined it would probably qualify as an IOTA, so that will be our next outing when we can get the designation. As we proceeded on into Chambers and Liberty counties, we resisted the urge to travel up Texas 87 to the nude beach, so that anyone who might be working the contest up there wouldn't be embarrassed by our arrival.

We managed to get a small but faithful following as we went through Chambers, Liberty, Jefferson and Orange counties, and found that even though the rate slacked off after 15 minutes or so (going from a rate of 30 to 20 is a 33% reduction for those readers who like everything quantified, and definitely comes within the definition of "slacking off" in the Official Rules), K5MA, K5ZD, KF9FU, K8CW, W6MU and several others were always present within 60 seconds of the announcement of NEW COUNTY throughout the trip.

By evening, we had arrived in Marshall, so we exchanged a few P5 QSO cards for lodging at the Comfort Inn and hit the sack. (It's not so extraordinary, keeping in mind how the Dutch bought Manhattan Island for \$24 back in the Good Old Days. The clerk did get a little surly when we

had to remind him 3 times for towels, however, so we promised him a couple of Scarborough Reefs as soon as we get them printed.) Although we hungered for a dinner where they actually bring the food to you, as opposed to using the drive through window, we found none in Marshall, and settled for a \$6.95 steak at Barnstomer's Restaurant in the buffet line as we closed the first day's activity. Our assessment was that the participants out there were not plentiful once the sun went down, since our plaintive CQs after about 9 p.m. were met with silence. Perhaps they had already worked Harrison County.

Sunday morning we were on the air again at 0700, long before any of the faithful were looking for us. We managed a couple of Qs on 40 CW, but no voice, and went back to 20 in order to get the first group of hardy souls. Our rates were much better on Sunday, up to 60 or so for short periods. Once again, we could hear them calling, but not well enough to read over the ignition noise. We stopped in nearly every county for long enough to work both SSB and CW, and were able to take care of the QRPers if they stuck around. It's amazing how a full gallon will cut across the hash, but 100 watts is merely a buzz in the background if you are moving. We had thought that Angelina, Morris, Smith and Polk counties would be a big draw, but apparently not due to a questionable interpretation of the rules that led some to believe that we could not be worked except for multiplier credit.

To our surprise, the further south we went, the higher the rate we worked. Although we were not able to find many Texas stations along the route, our highest rates came in Montgomery and Harris Counties, presumably where the largest number of stations in the contest resided. We encountered several mobile stations along the way, including a VE2 in New York and a W4 traveling across Louisiana and Texas, and a couple of others. We received reports that ours was the best mobile signal, though we suffered chirp in the extreme at idle RPM. When we stopped the engine, we switched to a deep cycle marine battery rather than the van's system, which helped a lot.

We hit most of the Dairy Queens in east Texas along the way, including one which proclaimed itself as the first DQ in Texas. The old expression, "CQ from the DQ" now has more meaning than it did, though it's pretty hard to say just how much more it has. Likewise, we discovered Ham Creek in Polk County, and shot some film up there at the sign to commemorate the wisdom of the ancients in choosing that name for an otherwise undistinguished body of water. We plan to offer autographed prints to help defray the cost of the expedition. At 9 mpg for the trip, every bit helps.

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We ended up with about 500 QSOs and 50 mults, most of which were other states rather than Texas counties. We have not heard the claimed scores yet, but did have several in the log with almost 200 QSOs, so there was good competition out there. To our amazement, the mobile CW was more productive than SSB, although at one point we were told that ours was one of 2 SSB signals on 20 meters in the contest. Our totals had about twice as many CW Qs as SSB, though it was not for lack of trying with voice: the SSB contacts were just not as available to us. We ran 100 watts out, and received consistently good signal reports when queried. We even worked a little DX along the way with operators in Mexico and Honduras.

Our evaluation was that it was a good effort, and lots of fun. We would have done a little better with a functioning air conditioner and a DSP, but we will incorporate those items in our next outing. In the meantime, we will practice up by memorizing those maddening county abbreviations so we can have some consistency in our responses, and go back there in a more leisurely fashion so we won't be tempted to stop at all the historical markers during the actual contest.

PROPAGATION - by AD5Q

With most of the Arctic Ocean now exposed to 24 hour daylight, we have excellent polar windows both in the morning and evening on 20 Meters. These extend to the southern reaches of Asia which are among the most difficult parts of the world to reach from North America. Europeans will find these same windows open to their favorite part of the world to work: the Pacific. It is now early May, so these evening windows are still not open to the northeast as they will be a month from now. The MUF along this path still needs to go a little lower. From Texas, this will open the band to the heavily populated areas of Russia (there are lots of hams in the Ukraine) plus the Middle East. The West Coast already has this opening because it is a true polar path to them. As 20 Meter band closings move later into the night, larger areas of the earth will be workable for longer durations. At the peak of the solar cycle, these night paths open up during February!

This is also the season where the molecular density of the ionosphere starts to thin due to heating. Daytime MUFs start to trend lower, and this keeps 20 open in the morning for several hours after sunrise. Polar Asians are starting to come through nicely in the morning from Zone 26. A morning path to the east coast of Asia will open up later this month, and will remain open through the summer. These openings make the WPX CW contest an interesting event at the low end of the cycle. Nobody expects much activity on 15 or 10.

Daypaths are also open on 20, so you can still work Europeans in the morning and Asians in the late afternoon. During the WPX, the East Coast can expect to have a path to Europe for most of the day which the rest of us will envy.

40 is still in great shape, and opens in the evening to the European parts of Russia that are not yet accessible on 20. This is a sunrise opening where we work into the area of daylight and follow it across Europe. Morning brings an excellent opening to Asia lasting over an hour. 40 Meter contacts count double points in the WPX.

The lowband season is waning, and most DX activity will move to 20 Meters. Alternative bands are 17 and 30 Meters, and 40 will be usable through the summer (but noisy). 10, 15 and 80 will remain marginally useful. Southern hemisphere DX can be worked through the summer on 80 at our sunrise (especially VK/ZL). Sporadic E season is here for 10 & 6 Meter SSB short skip work.

<http://www.nol.net/~ids/prop.html>

E-Mail: ad5q@kb5tes.#setx.tx.usa.na or ids@nol.net

Sacrifice to RF Gods – de Richard, K5NA

About the only thing that will truly appease the GREAT ALMIGHTY MURPHY is to sacrifice a complete copy of the annotated GREAT ALMIGHTY MURPHY'S BOOK OF CONTESTING/DX LAWS. ...From the CQ-Contest INTERNET Reflector.

This is a serious subject that shouldn't be joked about! The proper sacrifice to the God of RF (G0RF) must be made with each new tower installation. To not do so will result in your having an ineffective tower system, personal ruin, and sexual impotence. If you are laughing now, then DON'T READ FURTHER! You just don't get the importance of this new tower ritual and you probably never will! The following is not a joke!

Around 1969, my first tower in Texas (a 35 ft crankup) was properly initiated by dropping a JT1 QSL card in the hole before pouring the concrete. The ritual was performed with all due solemnity and respect. K5ZJK (now NX7K) participated in the ceremony before helping me stir and pour the many bags of sackcrete. A TA-33 topped the tower off with inverted vees hanging from the 30 foot level. The tower performed well with a result of making 5BDXCC (#190), working 300 DXCC countries, and making the top 10 once (10th exactly) in SS CW.

My second tower, at the same Texas site, was 90 feet of Rohn 45G and the base was immediately alongside the previous tower base. In 1972, W5RMC (now W5NA) and I bowed our heads and offered a prayer to G0RF while I

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dropped a YA QSL card into the bottom of the hole. We then proceeded to wheelbarrow about a yard of already-hardening concrete from the concrete carrier to the backyard. This tower had stacked yagis for 10 through 40, sloping, phased verticals (guywires) for 80, and was shunted for 160 meters. The tower worked like a dream. The DXCC honor roll was achieved, dual top-ten finishes in the 1975 SS (5th CW and 10th phone as K5PFL), many division winning single-op efforts in the DX contests (was 11th once in ARRL DX CW), and several top-ten finishes in the ARRL 160 meter contest.

After moving to New York in 1980, I decided a new approach was in order. The decision was made to go more for QSOs rather than DX. So all the new towers there had not only a rare DX QSL sacrifice, but I also started adding a few cards from some of the louder JA stations along with some DL and IK QSLs. This seemed to work well as the more recent K5NA contesting record speaks for itself. G0RF smiled on us for the 15 years we lived in New York.

So you can see that this is no joke and it is serious business. If you want your new tower system to be successful, then you must make the proper sacrifice to G0RF. To do otherwise is to eternally condemn yourself to hearing the DX station say other people's callsigns in the pileup or to have someone with a dipole steal your run frequency. I hope this is useful for some of you new tower people. It has been a big-gun secret for many years and I am probably in trouble for sharing it.

73, Richard - K5NA
K5NA@BGA.COM

Measuring Coax Cable Loss – Dave, K6LL

Here's a quick method for checking cable loss from inside the shack, with the antennas connected. The basic concept was described somewhere in QST in the past few years.

Plug your Autec or AEA analyzer into the feedline in the shack and tune it to a frequency where it shows a peak SWR. At this frequency, the antenna, whatever it is, will be a damn good approximation (DGA) of an open or short circuit. The frequency doesn't have to be in the ham bands. Start at 30 MHz and work down. Plug the SWR into the following equation which is for calculating loss in a shorted or open line:

$$\text{Loss in dB} = 10 \log \frac{\text{SWR} + 1}{\text{SWR} - 1}$$

For example, suppose you find a big peak in the SWR (7 to 1) at 25 MHz.

$$\text{loss} = 10 \log \frac{8}{6}$$
$$\text{loss} = 1.25 \text{ dB}$$

All you have to do now is to figure out what the loss would be in a brand new piece of coax of the same length at 25 MHz. Just look it up in the coax charts, then decide if it's worth while to replace the old cable with a new one.

Knowing your feedline loss is like knowing your cholesterol number. If it's bad, you should do something about it. If it's good, it provides peace of mind, especially when there's a lull in responses to your CONTEST cq's, and you're wondering what's going on.

TNC Operating Hint

I'm sure that we all can remember how we struggled with our new TNC's in order to make them communicate effectively with the packet clusters back when we first purchased them and implemented them into our radio stations. Well, a littler trick that has saved me having to repeat that mental aggravation at later dates has to been to simply take all of those operating parameters and save them off on my hard disk as a separate file for later reference purposes.

As an example: If you operate a KAM just enter the command "display" (other TNC's might use a differently worded command), and all of your operating parameters scroll up your monitor's screen. Now, save that screen scrolled buffer as a file, and call it param.xxx, with the extension being something like .496 for having done this on April of 1996.

If you should lose all of your TNC operating parameters due to battery failure, lightning hit, etc., you can later recall those successfully operating parameters. Simply go to that "param.496" file, print a copy for reference purposes, and start the easy process of re-entering those same successful operating parameters back into your TNC, thus saving yourself the aggravation of "having to re-invent the wheel" in order to get back on line with the local packet system.

Contest Calendar May, 1996

May, 1996

ARRL 432 MHz Spring Sprint
Danish SSTV Contest
MARAC County Hunters CW Cntst
Ten-Ten Intl Net CW Contest

1900-2300 local time, May 1
0000Z, May 4 to 2400Z, May 5
0000Z, May 4 to 2400Z, May 5
0000Z, May 4 to 2400Z, May 5

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Texas QSO Party	1400Z, May 4 to 2200Z, May 5
MTARA VHF/UHF Contest	1400 local time, May 4 to 1800 local time, May 5
Massachusetts QSO Party	1800Z, May 4 to 0400Z, May 5 & 1100Z-2100Z, May 5
ARI International DX Contest	2000Z, May 4 to 2000Z, May 5
Connecticut QSO Party	2000Z, May 4 to 2000Z, May 5
ARRL 902 MHz Spring Sprint	0600-1300 local time, May 11
ARRL 1296 MHz Spring Sprint	0600-1300 local time, May 11
ARRL 2304 MHz Spring Sprint	0600-1300 local time, May 11
Nevada QSO Party	0000Z, May 11 to 0600Z, May 12
Volta WW RTTY Contest	1200Z, May 11 to 1200Z, May 12
FISTS CW Club Spring Sprint	1700-2100Z, May 11
CQM International DX Contest	2100Z, May 11 to 2100Z, May 12
EU Spring Sprint, CW	1500Z-1859Z, May 18
Baltic Contest	2100Z, May 18 to 0200Z, May 19
ARRL 50 MHz Spring Sprint	2300Z May 18 to 0300Z, May 19
CQ Vikings Contest	2300Z, May 24 to 2300Z, May 25
CQWW WPX Contest, CW	0000Z, May 25 to 2400Z, May 26
World Telecom Day, CW	0000-2400Z, May 25
World Telecom Day, SSB	0000-2400Z, May 26

June, 1996

European Field Day, CW	1500Z, Jun 1 to 1500Z, Jun 2
ANARTS WW RTTY Test	0000Z, Jun 8 to 2400Z, Jun 9
TOEC WW Grid Contest, Phone	1200Z, Jun 8 to 1200Z, Jun 9
Asia-Pacific Sprint	1230-1430Z, Jun 8
ARRL June VHF QSO Party	1800Z, Jun 8 to 0300Z, Jun 10
All Asian DX Contest, CW	0000Z, Jun 15 to 2400Z, Jun 16
SMIRK QSO Party	0000Z, Jun 15 to 2400Z, Jun 16
ARRL Field Day	1800Z, Jun 22 to 2100Z, Jun 23
RGSB 1.8 MHz Contest, CW	2100Z, Jun 22 to 0100Z, Jun 23