

NARS NEWS

The Northwest Amateur Radio Society

Houston, Texas

April 1998

An Interesting QSO!

I stumbled on Ray KQ6RH/M at 5:10 PM, March 4th, calling CQ on 15 meters with a dandy mobile signal. He was near Barstow, California, on his way to work at Goldstone Tracking Station. In quite a pleasant conversation he said his work involved the tracking and, using CCD, imaging of an asteroid with a diameter of about 200 meters. It was out there about fifteen "moon distances" which meant a signal round trip of about 45 seconds. Tracking was done with a 70 foot dish sending a 3 1/2 CM wavelength maser signal at 500 KW ERP continuous. He said they were using the only useable one of three amplifier tubes and it was not at full efficiency. Although he didn't say, it sounded like money was tight and that the acquisition of new tubes at \$250,000 each was problematical. Among other interesting facts, he said elements of the signal generator were cooled to 14.5 degrees Kelvin (about 26 degrees F above absolute zero). Ray said he would be in Houston at NASA in two weeks (from the 4th) to give a paper at a lunar conference. I thought about sneaking into that.

Jim Kirk KJ5X

Public Service Events

Your radio skills are needed.

MDA March of Dimes WalkAmerica, Sunday, April 26

Contact: Paul Owen N5NXS, home: 281-894-7758, work: 713-644-8872, email: n5nxs@flash.net

Location: George Bush Park (Cullen Barker Park), just west of Hwy 6 and Westheimer.

We will need to show up at 7:30 am and the walk will start at 9:00 am. I will need about 10 hams for this event. We should be done about 2pm. If you would like to volunteer, please call or send email (see above).

Paul N5NXS

Buffalo Bayou Regatta (canoe race), Saturday, May 9 (rain date May 10)

Contact: Scott Byrd N5KEU, home: 281-537-6033

Location: San Felipe just west of Voss.

Be there at 7:00 am - race starts at 8:00 am. At least 15 hams are needed, each with a two-meter HT. Lunch will be served at the end of the race. Bring sunglasses, hat, suntan lotion, lawn chair, paper and pen.

Important Dates

Friday, April 17, 7:30 PM - NARS monthly General Membership meeting, Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church - Eyeball QSOs, 7:00 PM

Saturday, April 25, 8:30 AM - VE License Exam Session, Tomball Community Center, S. Cherry & Market streets (just South of Main).

Sunday, April 26, 7:30 AM - MDA March of Dimes WalkAmerica, George Bush Park (Cullen Barker Park), just west of Hwy 6 and Westheimer.

Tuesday, April 28, 7:30 PM - NARS Board of Directors meeting, Terra Nova Clubhouse, 5200 Woodville

Saturday, May 9, 7:00 AM - Buffalo Bayou Regatta (canoe race), San Felipe just west of Voss.

Contests:

April 21, ARRL VHF/UHF Spring Sprint, 222 MHz

April 25-26, Texas QSO Party

April 29, ARRL VHF/UHF Spring Sprint, 432 MHz

May 2-3, MARAC County Hunters CW

May 9, ARRL Spring Sprints - 902, 1296, 2304 MHz

May 16, ARRL Spring Sprints - 50 MHz

May 30-31 CQ WW WPX CW

Notice:

NARS membership dues is \$20 per year, renewable on anniversary of last year's full payment.

Deadline for articles to appear in May issue - Thursday, April 30.

BREAKFAST

at Victors

4710 W FM 1960

Saturdays

8:00 AM

President's Corner

April 1998

April already and nothing stays the same. Just when you think you have it all figured out, you can't figure it out! I can remember when anybody called "Grandma" was a little old lady with gray hair and gold rimmed glasses who wore a shawl and sat on a rocking chair and rocked, and rocked, and rocked some more. The contemporary grandma is just a little bit different. She goes shopping in Reeboks and blue jeans, plays tennis in shorts, captains the bowling team and goes belly dancing on Wednesdays. To put it bluntly - Grandma is off her rocker. Gents who used to help little old ladies cross the street now follow them. Nothing stays the same... Or does it just seem that way?

On April 2, we started our twelfth annual novice/tech class. About twenty-seven applicants showed up eager to get their first ticket. I've been involved in most all of these sessions, more or less, and in each one I have seen the same enthusiasm and desire to learn something new and exciting. The young kids are there, the fathers, mothers and yes, even the grandmas. The kids are wearing their caps backwards (never could figure that one out...) and the grandmas are out of their rockers, but they're out there ready to move to new horizons. That excitement is there in every enrollment, and that part has never changed.

The results are in from the survey many of you participated in regarding the movement of our digital repeater. About 60 of the members responded to the survey and indicated a desire to support movement of the repeater to a more suitable site by a margin of about two to one. The board, therefore, voted in favor of this relocation. The cost to move and maintain the new site for the first year will be funded by donations accumulated for this purpose. At the end of that period, we'll evaluate the usage and interest level in this mode of communications and decide whether to continue or discontinue its activity. We hope to get the new site up and running as soon as possible and will keep you all advised as to its progress.

Joe Sokolowski KD5KR

QRZed de W5NC - On the Web

New Stuff - There are a couple of new items on the web this month.

First, the list of past club officers is complete thanks to Ken KA5AKG and Joe KD5KR. When you click on Officers in the Menu pane, a table of the current club officers appears. In the right-most column, you see a list of years. Click on any year and you will see the officers for that year.

Secondly, when you click on Slides, there is a new slide viewer. Unlike the original slide viewer, the new one loads only the first slide. Once the first slide is loaded, it looks forward and anticipates the next slide and pre-loads it. Occasionally, when you click next, you will notice the load indicator start. This will typically occur when the next slide is kinda large. In short, this all means that the slide viewer is cleaner and meaner and requires less of your computer system resources too. OK, it should work better. The captions are another story. Be patient; I'm working on them.

Even Newer Stuff - Some time ago, several members asked about setting up a place on the NARS web site for links to personal web sites (ham-related). So send me the URL of your personal ham-related web site and we'll add a link to your page.

Next is the audio experiment we are conducting at the NARS web site. Thanks to new member Tony Muckleroy N5FNH for recording and sending me the audio clip.

To access the audio page, scroll to the bottom of the Menu pane on the left, then click the NARS Audio button. The "NARS on the Air" page will appear. Again click on the NARS Audio button. If you have a recent copy of Real Player 5.0, Real PlayerPlus, or equivalent, you should hear a short QSO from the repeater.

Hopefully, we can set up a process by which we periodically add and change audio clips. Thanks Tony for nudging me off dead center.

If you'd like to see what other clubs are doing audio-wise try "The Amateur Radio Listening Post" at URL: <http://nihac.info.nih.gov/listener/listener.html>.

Finally, if you are using Netscape Navigator 4.x, did you know you have a Personal Toolbar? Did you know you can customize this toolbar? Did you know that the toolbar can contain both pages and folders? Try it out, if you haven't already done so. It may provide for quicker access to one of your favorite URLs.

E-mail me, wa5mlt@flash.net, with your questions, ideas for future web site improvements, suggested links, notification of broken links, or Flash information.

73 de H. O. WA5MLT

NARS Board of Directors Meeting 3/31/98

Treasurer's Report - The checkbook balance on January 31, 1997 was \$5486.81.

Programs - May - Field Day preparation.

Rose Hill Node - Approved move from current location; signed one-year contract with tower owner Jim Davis.

Administrative - Computer donated by member to be used instead of upgrading current computer.

Annual Picnic - Date changed from May 9 to May 16, 1998; location to be announced.

Field Day - Doug and Dianna Hudspeth named Novice station coordinators.

Bob Argo KC5JZO, Secretary

DX News

This is my sure, my very firm belief; That DX, to the Deserving, is worth the living, Well worth the taking, having and the giving . . .

Propagation was fair to good through the early part of March. The solar flux index reached a high of 101 in the first week, falling back a bit as the contest weekend approached. Conditions were not bad for the contest weekend. It is always amazing to see the bands come alive with contests when the bands have not been perceptibly alive just prior. Later in the month the SFI reached 133 before settling back into the 120's and below.

As expected, the DXpeditions have come alive during March. Palmyra and Kingman were both on as the month began, followed by Wake shortly afterward. Just before the ARRL DX contest Howland Island appeared with respectable signals. The Belgian group, with YL ON4CAT, was also on the air from Libya. Martti and his Finnish buddies placed the Aland Islands on during the contest, with others expected during the CQ WPX contest late in March. FR5HR is scheduled for trips to Crozet, Kerguelan and Amsterdam Islands. The German chaps were active as expected from Chatham before and during the ARRL contest. Not a bad start for the year! Shortly before the WPX contest began near month-end, the fellows showed up for the DXpedition from the Temotu Islands. Several of us worked them as H44?? on various bands, indicating that working H40AA for the new country should not be all that difficult come April 1 and after.

LOCAL EVENTS: Various NARS DXers were having good success with the DXpeditions. KJ5X, KK5LO, K8CSG and others worked Wake Island in quick order. Steve (KD5AIJ), Gerald (W5BA) and K8CSG worked Chatham during the ARRL DX contest and beforehand. KJ5X, K5VUU and K8CSG worked Howland Island on Friday before the contest. Frank, KC5WDP, enjoyed working Wake Island from his mobile station. Steve, KD5AIJ, was heard telling people he enjoyed the Saturday of the contest more than any previous activity in ham radio. Rok, K5UEQ (now WA5UA), worked ZL1BD (New Zealand). OJ, K1OJ, worked 5W0V? (Western Samoa). K1OJ worked JT1M on PHONE

(surprise) in Mongolia. Loyd e-mailed a report of some of his DX QSOs from his place near the Davis Monitions in West Texas: 9K2JH (Kuwait), V63KU (Micronesia), A61JA United Arab Emirates), FH5CB (Mayotte), D2AI (Angola), ZK1DI (So. Cook Is.), 5Z4NU (Kenya), and a long string of lesser contacts.

DX WORKED: N200/KH9 15m 2147Z (Wake Island); K4AU/KH1 15m 2219Z (Howland Island); XA5T 15m and 20m (contest); 7Q7DX 15m 2007Z (Malawi); ZD8Z 15m 2020Z (Ascension Island); 5X1Z 15m 2104Z (Uganda); V73UX 15m 2315Z (Marshall Islands); EM1HO 10m 2138Z (Antarctica); DU100SAN 20m 1310Z (Philippines); N4PAZ/KH3 15m 2356Z (Johnston Isl.); V73NN 15m 0002Z (Marshall Is.); A35RK 20m 0357Z (Tonga); FR5DX 20m 0325Z (Reunion Isl.); ZD8Z 10m 2018Z (Ascension Isl.); 5X1Z 15m 2104Z (Uganda); V73UX 15m 2315Z (Marshall Is.); TZ6JA 15m 2247Z (Mali); KH8/KF4MIW 15m 0139Z (Am. Samoa); DU3BBY 20m 1436Z (Philippines); DS4BB 15m 0010Z (So. Korea); 9J2BO 15m 1942Z (Zambia); UA4RZ 20m 0358Z (Russia); VK6WR 20m 2310Z (Australia); H44RY (Temotu Islands).

QSL ROUTES: ZL7DK via DK7YY; K4AU/WH1 via K4AU; N200/KH9 via WA4YBV; V73NN via N3OA; 5W0VV via OKDXF; ZS26BI via ZS1FJ; N4BAZ/KH3 via WA4FFW; KH8/KF4MIW via OK1FT; VP2VI via AB1U; H44RY via OH2RY.

The Kingman Reef operation came up on Feb. 26, with N4BQW operating solo on the reef with no sheltering tent, etc. Equipment-wise, he was working under a considerable handicap - a TS50 and a dipole antenna ten feet high. Not good conditions for an operation from a much-wanted DXCC Country. Shortly after 2000Z he had to shut down to work on his generator, leaving a group of hungry DXers yakking randomly on his transmit frequency.

Wake Island came up on schedule with good signals. Jim, KJ5X, reported early contacts on 15 meters, as did Dick (W5VHN), and John, W5PDW. Walter got home on Thursday and worked them on his first call. I got home from San Antonio late on March 4 and worked

them the next day on 15 meters with two calls. A covey of others worked him after drive time on Thursday.

Howland Islands came upon schedule, also. This one generated bigger pileups than Wake. Several NARS members worked that DXpedition, including KJ5X, K5VUU and K8CSG.

Iris Colvin, W6QL, died February 18. She was in her eighties after a lifelong love affair, with her husband Lloyd, of DXing all over the world. The two of them operated from approximately 100 different countries, some of them relatively rare.

K5NZ reports the following results for the TDXS effort in Mexico, XA5T. The operators were XE2KB, W5MJ, W5SB, N5RP and K5NZ (three from NARS). Operating in multi-single class, they accumulated 5083 QSOs and a total of 4.3-million+ points. Their best minute was 8QSOes; the best hour was 255. The overall average was 106 Q's per hour. Nice going, fellows!

W5BA had a mixed weekend with contesting, church, kids' baseball and the like. He captured 14 brand new countries. Some of his catches: 9J2FR, 5X1Z, UT7Z, 6V1C, EA9IE. Gerald found 160 to be a total wipeout for him. His RF problems in the shack created problems on 20 meters. Subsequently he worked C21IB (Nauru), A35RK (Tonga), 5W0FN (W. Samoa) and a bunch of others. Nice going, Gerald.

The ARRL DX Contest was a popular event early in the month. The bands were alive with stations, and propagation was not all that good. Bill Denton, Madison Jones and Mike Hance visited the TDXS contest station, XA5T, in Mexico to have a party. For whatever reason, Mike insisted on giving K8CSG as their QSL manager. No problem, as long as I get the logs and some cards to respond to the demand: The demand materialized very promptly, as two QSLs arrived for XA5T on Monday immediately after the end of the contest. This contest displayed some relatively new characteristics in the number of obviously new DXers who believe in pushing their radios too hard. Some very bad signals were heard during the weekend, accompanied by equally bad practices.

Continued on page 4

DX News Continued

One chap sat on 15 meters and called CQ DX for over ten minutes without getting a single QSO, while 20 KC up the band was 5X1Z who could be worked with one or two calls. The result of the hundreds of newer DXers calling CQ DX repeatedly was a lot of QRM, especially when many of them had their processors and mike gains turned up too high. Many of them have yet to learn that patience is a key factor in working DX. All in all it was a fun event, the malpractice notwithstanding. K8CSG made 229 QSOs during some casual contesting, winding up with 107 countries worked using three bands -- 10, 15 and 20 meters.

The Wake Island DXpedition wound up with approximately 22500 QSOs. The Spratly operation by the British chaps closed with over 65000 contacts -- 35000 on CW and 28000 on SSB. The operation from Howland Island shut down early due to worsening weather conditions in the area.

Coming soon -- Two US hams have been authorized to operate from Vietnam and should be active by the CQ WPX contest. The Czech boys will operate from Fiji from late March into April. Transportation problems have caused difficulty with their plans for other locations. In January 1999 there should be a substantial operation from Campbell Island, according to Ken Holdum (ZL2HU).

Fifty years ago in 1948 Bob Denniston, W0DX, visited the Bahaman Islands and

operated as VP7NG. This was, in effect, the beginning of fifty years of DXpeditions which have followed, bringing us DX from all over the world. Bob is nearly eighty years old now, and lives in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He and some friends operated VP2VI/50 on March 14-16 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of that first DXpedition. Using only CW and operating with the original DXpedition SX28A receiver, they were readily workable here in Houston on 40 meters. Cal, WF5W, put a spot on the DX cluster on Friday night which reminded me that I had read of the planned operation some time earlier, only to forget it until I saw the spot. It was fun to work VP2VI/50, and I look forward to receiving their QSL card.

As March ended we could begin to see the results of the DXCC 2000 group's handiwork. H40AA became the first new DXCC country as a result of the rules changes brought on by that committee's work. The Temotu Islands in the eastern end of the Solomons nation were activated by Martti Laine and a multinational group. Rumors on the bands also indicate that ST0 (Southern Sudan) may/will become deleted.

Leo, K8PYD, is giving up his responsibilities as QSL Manager for HZ1AB in Saudi Arabia after over twenty years. When he learned that I would be going to work for ARAMCO in 1976, Leo told me that if a QSL Manager was needed for HZ1AB, he was available. Upon going

to Arabia late that year I learned that the QSL situation was in considerable disarray and promptly designated Leo as the new manager. That relationship has persisted through all of these years during which he has processed over 300,000 cards, perhaps as many as 500,000. The reason for the change at this time is Leo's transfer to Hong Kong where he will enjoy being "real DX".

Congratulations to Steve, KD5AIJ, who went over the 100-countries mark with eleven new ones during the WPX contest. He is now at 106 worked, with over 60 coming during the past two months since he upgraded his license. Some WPX results: Canary Islands, ED8CMT; Tadjikistan, UJ9A; Solomon Islands, H44RY; Aland Islands, OH0W; Ivory Coast, TU2CI.

H40AA came up right on schedule at 0000Z On April 1 with Martti Laine, OH2BH, at the helm. With the pileup spread between 21300 and 21350, Bob (N5ET) was the only NARS member I heard work him in the first hour. When I got home from the Board Meeting he had faded out. At 0300-local he was coming in on 20m, working mainly JAs, Europeans and Left Coast Types. By 0400 he had again faded into the noise. Shortly after 0630 he came in again and I got him into my log at 1325Z for a new total of 350 countries.

Bill Gary K8CSG

1998 QRP To The Field

The third annual QRP To The Field contest, sponsored by the NorCal QRP Club, will be held on Saturday, April 25, from 11:00 am until 7:00 PM. The object of the contest is to operate from portable field locations with battery powered radios, temporary antennas and a maximum of 5 watts RF power, and make as many contacts as possible during the 8 hour period.

On Saturday morning the 25th, a few of us will be gathering at Fritsche Cemetery Park to do just that. This is the park where NARS holds its Field Day event each year in June. If you are interested in Field Day type contesting, low power operating, CW

contesting, trying out your portable rig, trying out your portable antenna, trying your hand at some reasonable speed CW, or just want to get out and do something different, come on out Saturday morning. Bring your portable equipment and set it up, or help someone set up, or just watch and supervise. For those of you that were at the Home-brew Night meeting in December and saw my Green Box portable radio station, I will be using it here. If you want to see if it really works come and try it out.

The contest starts at 11:00 am and the park will be open at 7:00 am or thereabout to start setting up. I would suggest that you

bring all that you might need in the way of food and drink (No Alcohol; this is a County park) and comfort stuff like a chair, because Fritsche Park is an unimproved park with NO conveniences. Weather permitting, it will be all the fun of Field Day crammed into an 8-hour day. If you want to set up some radios and operate let me know so we can do some planning for band space, antennas etc. If you have any questions call me. I am in the roster, or see me at breakfast or lunch or on the repeater.

73, Bill K5ZTY

Onward Through the QRN

Or How to Survive the CQ 160 SSB Contest

February 27 was a significant day. It was Marian's KB5SGV birthday. It was also the start of the CQ 160-meter SSB contest. After listening on the band during the week and with all the thunderstorm activity in the area, I had a hint it was going to be a noisy weekend on 160m. I was right on. On Wednesday I put out the Beverage receiving antenna. The forecast called for rain on Thursday and for once they were right.

When Bill N8ET was in town we talked about 160 receiving antennas and he related to me the type of antennas he used to place high in the world a few years ago in a 160-meter contest. His Beverage was 256' long terminated with a 500-ohm resistor. He used quarter wave radials on both ends and a balun on the feed end. With the wire donated by Joe KD5KR, I measured the main antenna and radials and stretched them out through the woods. I used surplus RG-6 and connected it to my FT-990 receiver antenna input jack. I listened to the noise on 160M; yep, it worked...except for one small problem. When I transmitted at a full KW on the inverted L, RF got back into the receiver and shut down the transmitter. Yaesu, in their infinite wisdom, doesn't switch off the receive antenna on transmit. Since the Beverage was just below the elevated radials on the L, RF coupled back into the rig. The dipole at 70' did not affect the receive antenna at all. After conferring with my contest partner K1OJ, we decided that we need to install a relay to cut off the receive antenna during transmit. After inspecting the remote din plug on the back of the FT-990 I discovered that there was a set of unused normally closed contacts - just what I needed. I found a 4' piece of miniature coax with connectors on each end that I had been saving for just the right occasion. I cut the coax in half and the bare ends were soldered into the DIN connector. It just fit nicely along the amp keying circuit and the external foot switch. It worked. Now with keydown on the "L" with a lot of smoke, there was no RF in the rig. Problem number one solved.

What next? How to take Marian out to her birthday dinner with a contest in full bore. My momma didn't raise no fool. The birthday had to be a priority. Mark

KM5AO and OJ saved the day. They came over early and got the contest started and Marian and I went happily off to dinner with our extended family in tow including our newest grand daughter, Cara Mckinsey Foster.

After a nice meal of sweet and sour pork, I made it back and tried to get into the contest mode. OJ and Mark had it off to a nice start in spite of the noise - QRN. In the hours to come it would get worse, a lot worse. The Beverage that I had put up seemed to do little in reducing the noise. I took my turn around 10:00pm. The Q's were far between and the static crashes were deafening. Larry WA5SAJ came in at 2:00AM, and Keith WD5DXL finished up about 7:00. At 6:00 Larry and I made off for a quick breakfast at The IHOP and then to bed. It's been years since I had stayed up all night.

I had trouble sleeping. Daytime on weekends is for getting out and doing things, not trying to sleep. Around 2:00 PM I got up and had a little lunch and retreated to the trusty Lazy Boy. A couple hours later I heard strange noises coming from the direction of the shack. I got up and looked out the window and saw Rob KD5BXZ outside working on an antenna. Walking into the shack I found OJ bright eyed and bushy tailed ready to do some more contesting.

Generally, Saturday didn't net a lot of Q's. The band was full of stations that we had already worked and the weak ones were hard to hear due to the noise. At 10:00 KJ5X came. I told him I would like 400 Q's by midnight. That was easier said than done. I think Jim only found 3 or 4 stations that we hadn't worked, so around 11:30 we shut it down.

We had a total of 389 Q's and 49 multipliers including 10 DX countries for a total of 51,448 points. I posted the score on the 3830 reflector the next day and so far a number of stations across the country had better scores but many more had less. All complained of the same QRN. The guys in Canada and out west seemed to do better. It was a valiant effort by the 12 operators that sat in front of the mics.

The highlight of the contest is when Dan

KK5LD brought in the BBQ ribs. It made us forget the nasty QRN. Of coarse the real noise came when the kibitzers came in, not to operate but to generate a bull session. At one point I counted 9 extra folks in the shack. A total of 17 or so came either to operate or just to join in on the fun.

This is the list of operators: W5SB, K1OJ, KM5AO, KD5AIJ, KK5LD, K5KEU, WD5DXL, WA5SAJ, K5LBL, AG5T, KJ5X, and KD5BXZ. Two made their contesting debut: Rob KD5BXZ and Steve KD5AIJ. It was a learning experience. Hopefully we can carry some of this over to field day coming up in June.

See you next time.

Bill Denton W5SB



by Keith Dutson

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Check out all the contesting articles in this month's issue. Our membership is well represented in many prominent events. Take the time to congratulate these fine gentlemen the next time you see them.

The Novice class is off and running well; special thanks to Bill Rister for keeping up with the paperwork.

Looks as if the Rose Hill Node will finally become a reality. After receiving a two-to-one favorable response from the membership survey, the Board decided to go forward with this project. This job is going to require a lot of effort; please offer your help if you can.

Sign up today as a NARS News reporter; see me for details. You do not have to be a writer or photographer, but it will help if you can do either. Call me at 281-351-7683 or send email to kdutson@swbell.net.

Contest Connection

Contesting South of the Border

Since I have dabbled in contesting a bit in the past few years, I jumped at the chance to go down to Mexico to work the ARRL DX Contest. It was Madison W5MJ who issued the invitation. Since I had some time off coming it was not going to be a problem to head down across the border for a few days.

Madison picked me up around 3:30 on Thursday and we were off with his blue Buick sitting close to the ground loaded with equipment and supplies. We headed out highway 59 south. After several hours of chitchat we arrived at our last stop before crossing over the river into Mexico. In Laredo we picked up a five-gallon jug of drinking water and a few other goodies. This would be our last chance as all the food and water had to be brought in. There is no convenience store on the nearest corner to the ranch. Crossing the border into Nuevo Laredo went off without a hitch. Madison said that the custom folks get a little picky at times. We were loaded to the gills with a lot of strange looking electronic devices, but they weren't interested.

The first thing I noticed once in Mexico was all the trucks. This was due to the NAFTA activities. A big SONY electronics plant was just across the border with big semi-tractor trailer rigs moving in and out of the plant. As we made our way through the narrow streets we could see the shanties and shacks the locals live in. Most of the buildings looked like they were ready to fall down. On the main street, peddlers were selling their wares from pushcarts. Some were selling hot dogs, others trinkets and gadgets. It wasn't long until we reached our turn off to the ranch where we would do our operating for the weekend. The road to the ranch was more like a dried up creek bed. It was laden with rocks, deep ruts and gullies. Our loaded car dug high center most of the way. Madison was able to dodge the pitfalls and at times the so-called road looked impassable. He had been there before. After about 45 minutes and 3 miles we made it to the gate of the ranch – the site of our 48-hour marathon. XA5T was just around the corner.

A member of the local radio club owns this 500-hectare spread. It's very desolate and arid, lots of cactus, prickly pears and

little vegetation no more than 10 feet high. They say it's a cattle ranch but I didn't see any cattle during our stay, nor could I see how they could survive on such a sparse amount of grass.

The house where we were to live and operate was some better than I had imagined. It had a large living room where we set up the radios. The furniture looked like it was hand made of native trees. It was very heavy and crude. The room had high beamed ceilings and a cement floor. The rest of the house consisted of two small bedrooms, a kitchen with no running water and an outdoor toilet. As far as I could tell there was no provision for cooling or heating the place.

We arrived around 11:00 PM. Mike K5NZ and Bob N5RP had gotten there earlier, set up the TS-440, a temporary antenna and were already making some contacts. We talked to Mike and Bob for a while and decided to make up our bunks and get a good night's sleep before the contest started. One thing I wanted to do was check into the lid net from our DX location on Friday morning. I set the alarm for 6:30 AM and fell asleep.

When the alarm went off I thought, was the lid net worth getting up this early for? I knew from here on out sleep might be hard to come by. I found the power switch on the TS-440 and it came to life. Sure enough there they were, the whole crew on 3861, just like a bunch of flies buzzing around fresh road kill. Zed, Mark, Conrad, Bill, Gary, Steve, Lockhart, Gerald, OJ – who did I miss? They were all there, and I might add all had good signals. Could even copy Gary better across the border than I do in Houston. Even heard Ben in his mobile with a good signal. Mark as usual did a remarkable job with his less-than-perfect attic antennas. By the reports we were getting, it was evident that we were going to do well on 75 meters. Later I found that our temporary 75-meter antenna was only 8 or 10 feet off the ground at the center.

It wasn't long until the whole crew was up anxious to start getting the station set up and the antennas up and ready to go. We attached the 40m, 80m and 160m sloper antennas to a rope that Mike hung at the 90-foot level on the big tower. We sloped

them out toward the North and Northeast and tied them off to a barbed wire fence. With the slopers up Madison and I strung out the Beverages to the Northeast and Northwest. This was no small task since the 500-foot wires had to be stretched out over the brush and cactus.

With all the wires out the station set up were ready to go. We would be using a TH-6 on the 58-foot tower locked off toward the Northeast. It did not have a rotor. The operating equipment included Bob's TS-440, my Heathkit SB-1000 and a laptop computer running TR logging software – a modest station by most contesting standards.

By popular vote Mike K5NZ was elected to be the lead off hitter. Hopefully he would get us off to a good start. Boy, did he ever! He started out on 20 meters and never looked back. He got a good idea of what it was like to be on the other end of the pile up. Before he got up for a rest he had logged 503 Q's in 2 hours and 20 minutes. This was going to be a fun contest. So far everything was going our way. I took my first shot at 11:00 and was able to get some good numbers on 75 meters. Madison followed up with the early morning shift and worked 40 meters until 20 began to get active again. During the day Saturday, 15 and 20 gave us some really nice rates. I saw peak rates on TR of 250-300 or more. While on 15 meters Saturday afternoon I reached the 2,000,000-point mark and by 10:30 that evening when a storm shut us down we were at 2,800,000.

We were disappointed in our inability to make Q's on 10, and even more so on 160. The top band was just about useless. The static crashes were 20-30 over S-9. We called CQ and heard many stations responding, but in spite of the two beverages, the noise was too overbearing; few signals could be copied. Many missed multipliers were left begging. Ten meters just never opened at all for us either. We could hear the stations down south in the Caribbean having a good time on ten. Some of them had over 2000 Q's. We had 73. The band was too long for us.

About 11:00 on Saturday night I was operating on 20 when I heard all heck

Continued on page 7

Contest Connection – Continued

break loose. Mike and Bob were caught outside in what they later described as a dust devil. Our cooking utensils on the porch were blowing all over the place and sparks from the fire in the pit were showering all over. The wind was blowing so hard and making so much noise it was difficult to concentrate on my operating. After things settled down a bit we decided to take a look at 160. Nothing could be heard. In checking the other bands we found that all had shut down because of the noise. The storm had completely blanketed all the bands with a kind of white noise – like opening the squelch on a two-meter rig. It was actually a cold front passing through. We decided at that point to shut down and get some sleep. After three hours of sack time I heard Bob back calling CQ contest. After the front came through the temperature dropped several degrees and the bands were hopping again.

Sand and dust was all over everything and the wind was still blowing around 40 mph.

Even though the wind had blown the TH-6 around to the West we kept piling up the points, mostly on 15m. One station told me that we were blasting a big signal into southern California. Mike decided that was too far west and put on his climbing gear, made it up the tower and managed to muscle the beam around toward the NE in the high winds. We were still hoping for those 10-meter multipliers. With 4,000 Q's we were looking to pad our score.

With about three hours left in contest Ricardo Espinosa XE2KB and a couple of his friends from the local radio club came by for a visit. We invited Ricardo to sit down and try his hand at contesting. He put on quite a show. As it turned out he was an experienced tester. Just before the

bell rang to end the contest he logged our 5,000th Q. He had really given us a nice boost at the end.

It was a great weekend, one that I will never forget. I learned a lot and have gotten a lot of confidence to carry me into future contests. I was the rookie of the group but I felt I was able to hold my own considering that most of the contacts came through pileups. At times I had some pretty good rates. I really want to thank Madison for including me in this event. It was great. Mike and Bob were a lot of help as well.

As of this writing we are standing in 5th place for DX Multi OP Single Transmitter with 5093 Q's for 4,381,344 points. It was a great ride.

Bill Denton W5SB

Another Theory up In Smoke

For many years young electronics technicians have been taught the hole theory of electronics. This theory explains how electrons move in conductors and semiconductors. The explanation has been good enough to satisfy or keep at bay anyone who might otherwise question the theory. However, after many years of working in the communications business, one of our colleagues has come to realize that the hole explanation may not be

correct. His theory, which has been proven again and again by personal observation, is that electronics works on smoke. Yes, that's right -- smoke. He recently learned that every manufacturer encapsulates a certain amount of smoke in every component or piece of equipment that is made. The smoke is what does the work. Readers have probably noticed that a component or device will quit working when the smoke leaks out. This has been

documented many times, and it conclusively proves the new theory. It surely beats the hole theory. How many readers have ever seen holes in a wire? And, why don't electrons pour out of the end of a broken wire? Our illustrious colleague predicts that this pioneering discovery of electronic smoke will be celebrated each April for the rest of time!

Submitted by Bill Gary K8CSG

Foxhunt Scores

Well, it's officially over. The Fourth Annual QRP-L HF FOXHUNT (tm) is now history. For those that participate it's over before you know it. For those that don't, it's finally over.

All the scores are very good and a bunch of awesome operators in the group, both foxes and hunters. Those that have been here since the first round four years ago remember how slow things were to begin with. Ahh, the good ole days.

Some of the reasons for this exercise are:
a. get QRPers off the couch and on the air;
b. hone operating skills in pileups, code speed, RIT;
c. test propagation and weather on 40M in the winter;
d. check out gear under sometimes adverse conditions;
e. learn to use UTC;
f. generate traffic on QRP-L;
g. generate more than 2,900 2xQRP exchanges that otherwise would not be accomplished;
h. learn to fight QRM/QRN/....

There are no losers in this exercise. Variation in scores can be attributed to propagation factors such as band going long/short/dead, time zone differentials, workloads, travel, and many many other factors too numerous to list. The scores are as accurate as I could get them considering the amount of email, updates, and errors that could be corrected and some eliminated and duplicated contacts. Since there were no prizes all you get are bragging rights.

My personal thanks to the participation levels on the part of both the foxes and the hunters. Who would or could have ever thought that such an activity would become so large and take up so much time?

FINAL 1997-1998 FOXHUNT
SUMMARY SHEET, March 30, 1998
Fourth Annual QRP-L HF Foxhunt
Total Number of Q's = 2,910

HUNTERS SCORES

NQ7X(47), K1MG(46), AB5UA(44),
AB7TT(44), KU7Y(43), K1OJ(42),
W5FN(42), K1MG(46), K1OJ(42),
W1GM(3), AA1MY(6), N1OCJ(3),
N1QQV(17), KA1AXY WA1QVM(14),
KC1FB(14), W1LP/MM(5), AK1P(9),
N1FN K1CL(3), K1RA K1XS(3),
W1HUE(3), N1TP(20), K1NY(3),
KD1JV AA1OF NT1R N1ODL KC1GB

Chuck Adams K5FO Dallas, TX CP-60
<http://reality.sgi.com/adams>
adams@sgi.com

submitted by O J Quarles K1OJ

Buy – Sell – Trade

Wanted: Need copy of manual for Kenwood AT-130 antenna tuner. Can anyone help? Joe Sokolowski · KD5KR.
281-353-2196 · kd5kr@juno.com

Welcome

Join us in welcoming the following new NARS members: March
Jim Bawcom KD5DNB, Al Fritsche KD5CML, Mike Lodge K7LEX,
Thomas Manney, Todd Walter KC4WSY, and Bob Loeb KM5OO
Also, welcome back to former members Sylvia KC5BXR and Jerry KK5CA Reimer.

NARS Resource List

General Help:

Bill Stietenroth K5ZTY, 713-893-3901
Allen Majeski WA5REJ, 281-353-8652
Bill Denton W5SB, 281-469-8331,
Antennas
O J Quarles K1OJ, 281-955-1555, HF
Larry McCain WA5SAJ, 281-469-6709
Madison Jones W5MJ, 281-350-4330,
CW
Bill Gary K8CSG, 281-537-9240, DX
Bill Rister KC5EZQ, 281-537-8596, ATV

Satellite:

Deral Kent K5WNO, 281-548-7476,
RS12/13
Dick Rooney W5VHN, 281-288-8424

Electrical Design, Troubleshooting:

George Carlson KC5RCC, 281-376-8307

Packet:

Don Bedell KA3BKU, 281-370-6576

VHF:

Brian Derx N5BA, 713-894-5942

Computer Operating, Win'95:

Bob Argo KC5JZO, 281-288-7430

Computer Programming:

Keith Dutson WD5DXL, 281-351-7683

Interference:

Harry Gage N5WIZ, 281-370-7488, Basic
Advice

Mark Tyler K5GQ, 281-587-0256

Card Checking Awards Managers:

DXCC - Bob Walworth N5ET,
Linda Walworth KE5TF, 281-363-0209
WAS, VUCC - Brian Derx N5BA;
713-894-5942
WAZ - Bill Gary K8CSG; 281-537-9240

NARS Public Information Officer:

Open (apply to Board if interested)

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*Call Marian for general information about
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changes to:*

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Houston, TX 77269-0342

NETS

10 M Ragchew: Monday 8:00 PM, 28.444
Coordinator: Jim Kirk KJ5X
jrkirk@wt.net 281-376-0718

2 M Information: Wed. 8:00 PM, 146.660
Coordinator: Bill Gary K8CSG
bsnn87a@prodigy.com 281-537-9240

WEB SITE

URL: <http://www.flash.net/~nars/>
Webmaster: H O Townsend WA5MLT
wa5mlt@flash.net 281-955-8216
Trustee: Walter Hock KK5LO
kk5lo@flash.net 281-350-6633

REPEATERS

2 M - 146.060 / 146.660 (KA5AKG)
70 cm - 449.375 / 444.375 (KA5AKG)
Digipeater - 145.71 (W5NC alias NARS)

MEETINGS

Monthly General Membership at Spring-
Cypress Presbyterian: third Friday, 7:30 PM
Saturday Breakfast at Victors Restaurant:
8:00 AM
Wednesday Lunch at Various Locations:
11:30 AM (Info on 146.660)

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