

NARS



NEWS

The Northwest Amateur Radio Society

Houston, Texas

October 1999

Speaker to Discuss Space Communications

Greetings, fellow Narsians! We have another humdinger of a program for your dining and dancing pleasure at this month's Club meeting. Mr. Craig Davidson, alias WB5BDX, will be our guest.

Aside from his status as a fine amateur, Craig lists as his vocation Deputy Director of Communications for NASA's portion of the International Space Station Project. Craig is also the trustee of the (WB5BDX) 147. repeater. As I understand it the I.S.S. will incorporate a ham station along with all of the other whizbang communications gadgetry, the majority of which Craig will likely explain in detail.

Craig is a native of this area and cut his teeth in the hobby through guidance of hams affiliated with Explorer Scouts here in Spring Branch. As in many cases ham radio generated an interest in Craig years ago to pursue electronics as a career.

I was hoping to have a bit more information to share with you regarding the content of his presentation but, as it happens, Craig is and has been out of town for a time. So, come out and enjoy what should truly be a rich and informative program. It is not often that we get a speaker willing to take the time to share with us information on a communications stopic that has such global attention and interest.

See you at the meeting!

-- George, KD5AYF

SIRE 6th Annual Ride-A-Thon, Saturday, October 16

Here's a chance to take part in an event that NARS members have supported with radio communications since Saddle Up For SIRE started seven years ago. With reasonable weather, it is always fun and requires only a 2-meter HT, fresh batteries and a few hours time. Volunteers are stationed along a ten mile trail near Montgomery where participants ride horses to raise money for SIRE, Self-Improvement Through Riding Education, the charity dedicated to the rehabilitation of children and adults with disabilities. For more information, call Keith Dutson, 281-351-7683.

Important Dates

Friday, October 15, 7:30-9:30 PM
NARS General Membership Meeting at
Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church, 6000
Spring Cypress Road

Saturday, October 23, 8:30 AM
License Exam Session. Tomball Commu-
nity Center, S. Cherry & Market streets (just
South of Main Street)

Tuesday, October 26, 7:30 PM
NARS Board of Directors meeting, H.O.
Townsend's home, 16880 E. Maglitto Circle

Contests:

October 16-17

JARTS WW RTTY Contest
RSGB 21/28 MHz Contest
Illinois QSO Party
Asia-Pacific CW Sprint
Worked All Germany Contest

October 21-23

YLRL Anniversary SSB Party

October 23-24

Rhode Island QSO Party
QRP ARCI Fall QSO Party, CW

October 30-31

CQWWDX (SSB) Contest
Ten-Ten Int'l Fall CW QSO Party

November 6-8

ARRL CW Sweepstakes Contest

November 13-14

WAE RTTY Contest
OK/OM DX Contest

Deadline for articles to appear in November
issue -Monday, November 1.

BREAKFAST at Victors

4710 W. FM 1960

**Saturdays
8:00 AM**

President's Corner

October, 1999

Howdy all...

Thanks, Howard, KD5DJJ, for a FB September meeting. Your presentation on switching power supplies was greatly appreciated.

Our October meeting will be a presentation by Craig Davidson of NASA. Craig's presentation will center around NASA's space station efforts. Come on out to the meeting to get some ideas about your next space station DX antenna system.

Time is short, but be sure to contact Keith, WD5DXL, and sign up for the S.I.R.E. event scheduled for October 16. Ready your HT and extra batteries.

Don't forget to sign up for the Sunmart Texas Trails Endurance Run on December 11 in Huntsville State Park. Mark your calendar and get ready for a good time. Contact Walter, KK5LO, or Paul, N5NXS,

Nominations are being taken for next year's officers. The nominating group needs to find folks to fill the President and Vice-President slots, and Director positions. If you are interested, contact one of the current Board members and make your ideas known. The election is set for the November meeting.

On a personal note, DX activities around my shack have been good. I've spent hours logging old/confirmed DXCC contacts into the computer. I'm happy to say that effort is complete. I have also sent out a number of new QSLs. For a brief moment I thought I was ten years old again, trading baseball cards!

About this time each Fall, the broad-wing hawks fly through Smith Point. So, take your cue and get that last minute antenna work completed before the dead of winter sets in. *Brrrrrrrrrr!!*

73 es Gud DX, H. O., WA5MLT

Hamfests in Houston

Why can't Houston have a decent hamfest -- every year?

We have something in the neighborhood of 5000 ham operators in the Houston area, with many, many others well withing easy driving distance. What does Dayton, Ohio have that Houston lacks? I realize that there have been some pretty decent hamfests here in the years I have lived here (since 1976). Unfortunately, for whatever reason(s), they have fallen on hard times and have gone away.

Why is this so? Everybody seems to have an answer. "Lack of leadership" is a common one. Frankly, I don't buy that. There is plenty of good, capable leadership within the Houston ham community. "Nobody buys anything at the hamfests" is another frequent response. I don't buy that either, based upon my own personal knowledge of hamshacks in our area. "Lack of continuity in leadership", some say. That is one I can probably accept as a valid reason, but it is not a valid excuse for our poor showing hamfest-wise.

In West Virginia we had a State Radio Council made up of representatives from most of the active radio clubs in the state. This was created under the leadership of the then Section Communications Manager for the state, the SCM, a job that is now known as the Section Manager, or SM. The State Radio Council provided the vehicle for the statewide hamfest held each year, and it has worked pretty well for nearly forty years now. I know; Texas is much larger than West Virginia. But I think the concept could be made to work here on a regional basis.

Harry's Hints

There are a goodly number of Technician and Technician Plus licensees in the NARS membership, and hopefully all of you are looking forward to upgrading to General Class or higher. In addition to centralizing all of your grounds (see page 3), there are some other things you can do involving your antenna that can help to control stray RF, thereby reducing neighbor complaints.

I use a commercially made vertical antenna mounted on a galvanized mast. For a feedline I bought a 100-foot length of RG/8U coaxial cable. Enough length was left over to enable me to coil five or six turns about eight inches in diameter. Taped together this "choke" was then taped to the mast near where the coax connects to the antenna. In addition to the "choke", just behind the connection to the antenna I installed two sets of one-half inch split ferrite beads. These were also taped to the coax at that point. The "choke" and the ferrite beads help to minimize stray RF on the outside of the transmission line.

So, when you upgrade or get onto ten meters, have fun operating with peace of mind with a minimum of, or no, complaints from your neighbors.

One source of split ferrite beads is Palomar Engineers, P. O. Box 462222, Escondido, CA 92046. Telephone: 519/747-3343.

73, Harry, N5WIZ

VE Session Results

The regular September VE session was somewhat sparsely attended. However, all four candidates came well prepared. Of the five elements on which they were examined, all were passed for a 100% pass-rate. The results were one new Technician, one Technician Plus and one Advanced Class. Participating VEs included K8CSG, K5ZTY, K5GQ, N1LN from NARS, K5WH from Compaq, and Steve Smothers, W9DX, from the TDXS.

Contest Results

The ARRL DX CW Contest results were announced in the October issue of QST. I was very pleased to find that our friends that operated at XA5T finished fourth for DX in the multioperator two transmitter category. Their total score was 5,933,000 points with 5875 Q's. The crew consisted of W5MJ, K1OJ, AD5Q, K3NZ, N5RP, N5TU, KG5U and XE2KB. Nice job!

With CQWW SSB coming up at the end of October, a challenge has been thrown down. It's N1LN vs W5SB in a multi-op single transmitter shootout. If we win, Bruce has to wear my Force 12 tee shirt to the next club meeting. He still thinks he is part of the aluminum curtain on the East coast. Sorry, Bruce. The Force will be with us.

The 1999 Texas QSO Party final results have been posted to the NARS reflector. It lost its formatting when Henry sent it to me and fixing it for publication was too much work. I'll try to do that for next month.

-- 73, Bill W5SB

Simple, Inexpensive Grounding of HF Equipment

Are you a new radio amateur upgrading to HF equipment? I've only been an amateur operator for about eight years on HF, but I can offer some simple, inexpensive tips on grounding.

I use #10 solid copper wire from the grounding post of the transceiver to the amplifier, then from the amplifier through a hole drilled through the window frame. Be sure to leave enough slack in your wiring to be able to pull out your equipment for adjustment or to connect/disconnect.

Outside the radio shack window I have an eight foot copperclad grounding rod driven into the earth, with about four inches protruding. The equipment grounding wire is clamped to the ground rod with an electrician's "bug", or clamp. Rods and "bugs" or clamps can be purchased from many hardware stores or Radio Shack stores.

If you're like most amateur radio operators, your antenna will be in the back yard. From your equipment grounding rod you will want to run a #10 (or larger) wire to your utility ground rod which is close to the

house near the breaker panel. For this connection you may find it easier to use a screw-driven stainless-steel hose clamp.

If your antenna is mast-mounted, use an appropriate stainless-steel hose clamp to attach a short length of #10 (or larger) wire. The other end of this wire is connected to another ground rod using an electrician's "bug" or clamp. From that ground rod run a length of heavy wire to your utility ground and attach it with another hose clamp. This wire should be buried below the surface of the ground.

Of course, no matter how good your grounding system may be, nothing will protect your antenna and equipment from a direct lightning strike or from a lightning surge on your power line.

Remember! It is important that all of your grounds be centrally connected as outlined, maintaining the principle of single-point grounding. A safe rule to follow is to pull the power plug on your radio equipment, and disconnect your antenna(s) no matter how good your grounds may be.

Threaded Fasteners as Coil Forms

Here's a clever idea, by Robert C. Arge, NY6W, for the use of small plastic and metal screws as coil forms. These could be useful for those hams who like to build miniature projects, i.e., QRP equipment. The basic idea is to select a screw of some appropriate diameter and thread pitch, wind the coil onto the screw using the threads as a guide, secure the coil to a mechanical support and connect it into the circuit.

He suggests that a disadvantage to the technique is that one cannot tune such a coil by adjusting the spacing

between the turns. It seems to me, however, that once the coil has been mechanically secured in place, the plastic screw can be removed simply by unscrewing it from the coil. The coil can then be adjusted easily.

If the screw is removed once the coil is formed, there is no need to limit oneself to using plastic screws. Metal screws come in a wide variety of diameters and thread pitches that are useful to coil winders.

-- Harry, Gage, N5WIZ

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DX News

*Soon the leaves will fall
And the weather turn chilly and cold.
The DXers will call and call,
Til their needed new countries fold.*

..

Having wrapped up his quarterly QSLing chores a bit earlier, The Old Timer was casting about for things which needed attention. Suddenly his peaceful thoughts were severely interrupted by the charging approach of one of the Local QRPers. "Where do all of these creeps come from?" he cried. Looking at the wild-eyed QRP, The Old Timer was tempted to answer directly. He thought better, and asked who the QRP was referring to. "Those clowns on top of the Annobon DXpedition," he replied at only a slightly lower intensity. "Have you heard what they are doing? There are all kinds of people calling right on top of the DXpedition station. It's a really good thing there are some of us around to correct them and help them get onto the right frequency!"

"Do you really think that sort of thing is helpful?" asked The Old Timer. "What do you mean by that?" bel-lowed the QRP. "If it weren't for people like us, who would keep things in order?" The Old Timer considered that statement briefly before observing "But you so-called frequency policemen make more QRM than anyone. Have you ever thought about that?" The QRP looked at The Old Timer and shook his head. "Boy, some of you old, big gun DXers must be getting soft in the head. If it weren't for some of us there would be nothing but chaos on the DX bands! Who would maintain order?"

The Old Timer rolled his eyes and said what he had been thinking. "If you have to ask the question, you probably will not understand the answer," he said to the QRP, as he gently nudged him out the door.

September saw relatively poor propagation for most of the first half of the month due to a series of corona holes on the sun which continuously disturbed the ionosphere. Things were made worse by a coronal mass ejection. High A indices caused considerable frustration among the DXers.

On September 20 the A index fell into single digits for the first time during the month, finally offering some help. Although that respite did not last long, as the end of the month approached, the A and K indices both fell into low single digits in time for the weekend contests. Immediately after the weekend activity, the numbers went sour again, i.e., A index into the 20s and the K into the 3-4 region. All this with the solar flux level hovering in the 120-130 range.

LOCALEVENTS: Congratulations, and a tip of our collective hats to Dick Rooney, W5VHN, who has become a member of the DXCC Honor Roll! This means he is within nine countries of the top of the DXCC list, and that is no small accomplishment. Loyd, KM5OE, enjoyed some DX success during his recent visit to West Texas, including these new countries: YU2KC, T24DX, FT5GS, FK8GM, FO0SAL, 5N3BHF, TG9NX, XX9TUP. He has also received his card from 5A1A completing his Worked All Zones. Not bad, Loyd! The Annobon DXpedition came up after a difficult trip. A number of NARS DXers were successful in their pursuit, i.e., WA5MLT, KD5AIJ, K8CSG, KJ5X, KM5LA, N1LN, N5ET, K5VUU, and K7LEX. T31T (etc.) came up on Sept. 23. Various NARS DXers worked them the first night: KD5AIJ, N1LN, WA5SAJ. T31K was also readily available and was worked on several bands by K8CSG and others. CQ Magazine for October listed K5VUU and KD4AIJ sequentially for their WAZ awards. Looks like the roadblock has been removed, fellows.

DX WORKED: 5Z4RL (Kenya) 20m 0254Z; VK8TM (Australia) 20m 1207Z; T24DX (Tuvalu) 20m 1247Z; VU2XX (India) 20m 1321Z; 3B8AD (Mauritius) 20m 1157Z; FK8GM (New Caledonia) 20m 1303Z; 5H8TL (Tanzania) 15m 1843Z; 6W1RB (Senegal) 15m 1851Z; R1ANZ (Antarctica) 20m 1157Z; 3D2DX (Fiji) 10m 2057Z; 3C0R (Annobon Isl.) 15m 2248Z; ZD7RS (St. Helena) 15m 2114Z; 4S7DA (Sri Lanka) 20m 1515Z; YJ0AIR (Vanuatu) 20m 1215Z; T31K (Canton Is.) (20 and 10m)

1310Z and 2146Z; S79KMB (Seychelle Is.) 20m 1351Z; FO0DEH (Austral Is.) 10m 2156Z;; OH0B (Aland Is) 15m 1549Z; TF1IRA (Ice-land) 15m 1603Z; OD5NH (Lebanon) 10m 1602Z; T31YL (Canton Isl.) 10m 2133Z; 5W1CW (W. Samoa) 10m 2256Z.

QSL ROUTES: R1ANZ via RU1ZC; 3C0R via EA5FVY; 4S6DA via W3HNC; YJ0AIR via W8WC; T31T and T31K via SM6CAS; T31YL via SM6WYN.

DX HEARD/NOT WORKED: VQ9SB (Diego Garcia) 20m 1244Z; T31T (Canton Isl.) 15m 0110Z; 7Q7RM (Malawi) 20m 1320Z; JT1FBB (Mongolia) 20m 1308Z; VU2WAQ (India) 10m 1605Z.

Dee Logan, W1HEO, is an Honorary Life Member of NARS and is one of the original founding fathers. Dee has advised of his planned operation from Lord Howe Island during October 25 through 30 using the call VK9LM. While primarily a family vacation visit to Lord Howe Island as the guests of Dick (VK9LH) and Noelle Hoffman, he will try to make as many QSOs as time allows using Dick's station.

The operation will be SSB/CW, primarily on 15 and 20 meters. Suggested frequencies:

SSB: 14.185 21.230
CW: 14.030 21.030

QSL directly to W1HEO's callbook address with SASE, please.

VK9LM
c/o "Dee" Logan, W1HEO
9901 Cypress Circle
Mentor, Ohio 44060

V8SEA will be on from Nov. 19 to Nov. 21. This will complement the SEAnet Convention held in Brunei this year.

There has been some trouble with Burundi QSOs in recent times. ARRL had discovered that several sources of contacts there had illegally obtained lifelike licenses which were actually not valid. Thus, ARRL

(Concluded on page 5)

DX News (Concluded)

has disallowed credits for those contacts. Now, the door appears to have opened a crack. 9U5D, has granted a valid (we hope) license to SM5DIC who has appeared on the bands. A copy of his license has been sent to ARRL. WFWL! His station is set up at his workplace, but he hopes to move it to his residence soon. He expects to be in Burundi until his contract expires on December 10, 1999.

Four Italian operators are going to Chad (TT8) for two weeks around the end of November. This will provide opportunities for relatively rare contacts with TT8.

F6AUS and F6AOI expect to be active from French Polynesia the middle two weeks of November -- CW, SSB and RTTY. They plan to operate from several different islands during their visit.

A group of Italian DXers has announced plans for a DXpedition to Giftun Island, a new IOTA counter, for May, 2000. They are seeking funding support from the DX world.

The "Double Trouble DXpedition Group" has put on a pretty good show during their visit to Canton Island in Central Kiribati. They have had a distinctive style -- CW operation uses T31T, SSB operation uses T31K and the YL member of the group uses T31YL. They have been very active from Canton, working most of the HF bands (if not all) and modes, and logging over 42000 QSOs from Canton. Quite a number of NARS DXers were successful in making contacts with the DXpedition.

Their next port of call was to be the Tokelaus Islands, a small group of specks in the ocean located west of the North Cook Islands and between Canton to the north and American Samoa to the south. They expected to put on a good operation from the Tokelaus also, extending at least to October 12 and, perhaps, beyond.

September 10-11 saw a short appearance on 20 and 40 meter CW by someone signing P99BH. No, it was not Martti Laine and it was NOT North Korea.

-- Bill, K8CSG

New Words For The 90's

Here's a new word list I ran across. I just got my P.T. certification. John Ellis, P.T., looks pretty impressive huh? Percussive Technican. Maybe I will get on the Resource List now.

Assmosis: The process by which some people seem to absorb success and advancement by kissing up to the boss rather than working hard.

Beepilepsy: The brief seizure people sometimes have when their beeper goes off (especially in vibrator mode). Characterized by physical spasms, goofy facial expressions and interruption of speech in mid-sentence.

Alpha Geek: The most knowledgeable, technically proficient person in an office or work group. "Ask Larry, he's the alpha geek around here."

Depotphobia: Fear associated with entering a Home Depot because of how much money one might spend. Electronics geeks experience Shackophobia.

Flight Risk: Used to describe employees who are suspected of planning to leave a company or department soon.

PEBCAK: Tech support shorthand for "Problem Exists Between Chair and Keyboard." Techies are a frustrated, often arrogant lot. They've submitted numerous acronyms and terms that poke fun at the clueless users who call them up with frighteningly stupid questions. Another variation on the above

I.S.ID10T: "This guy has an ID-Ten-T on his system."

Percussive Maintenance: The fine art of whacking the crap out of an electronic device to get it to work again.

Uninstalled: Euphemism for being fired. Heard on the voicemail of a vice-president at a downsizing computer firm: "You have reached the number of an uninstalled vice president. Please dial our main number and ask the operator for assistance." See also Decruitment.

Vulcan Nerve Pinch: The taxing hand position required to reach all of the appropriate keys for certain commands. For instance, the warm reboot for a Mac II computer involves simultaneously pressing the Control key, the Command key, the Return key and the Power On key. (Huh?)

-- John, W5PDW

New Orleans DX Convention Dissolved

After several weeks of review and soul-searching, the Board of Directors of the New Orleans International DX Convention voted to dissolve the convention. Faced with a financial deficit and flat attendance for the last several years, a majority of the Board were no longer willing or able to justify the extensive amount of work and effort that is required to maintain a quality program. It was with great sadness that this final step was taken. The Board extends its sincere thanks to all of our friends and supporters, as well as to all those who have attended over the last eight years.

-- 73, Don, W5FKX

Beacons

The Northern California DX Foundation has created, with the cooperation of others worldwide, an array of worldwide beacons on five HF bands. These are useful to those seeking band openings to various parts of the world. The beacons are automated, transmitting at regular intervals controlled by precise clocks. Each transmission is repeated every three minutes. A transmission consists of the callsign of the beacon (indicating location) sent at 22 wpm CW, followed by four one-second dashes. The callsign and the first dash are sent at 100-watts. The subsequent dashes are sent at 10-watts, 1-watt and 0.1-watt.

Beacons are currently located at these station sites: 4U1UN, VE8AT, W6WX, KH6WO, ZL6B, VK6RBP, JA2IGy, RR9O, VR2B, 4S7B, ZS6DN, 5Z4B, 4X6TU, OH2B, CS3B, LU4AA, OA4B and YV5B.

Frequencies used by the beacons are: 14.10MHz, 18.11MHz, 21.15MHz, and 28.20MHz.

-- K8CSG

Welcome, Congratulations and Condolences

Welcome to these new NARS members:
Gaylon Harwell, Technician, KD5HWU
Cliff Satterfield, Extra Class, KB5UPL
Mary Satterfield, Technician, KC5AIG
Jim Morin, Advanced Class, KE4YUK

Congratulations to: Ross Hardie, KD5FTW, on his upgrade to General Class; Scott Byrd, N5KEU, on his upgrade to Advanced Class.
Congratulations to Dick Rooney, W5VHN, on his reaching the DXCC Honor Roll

NARS Resource List

General Help:

Bill Stietenroth K5ZTY, 281/893-3901
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/UHF:

Brian Derx N5BA, 713/894-5942

Computer Operations:

Bob Argo KC5JZO, 281/288-7430

Computer Programming:

Keith Dutson WD5DXL, 281/351-7683

Interference (Basic Advice):

Harry Gage N5WIZ, 281/370-7488
Mark Tyler 281/587-0256

Card Checking for Awards:

DXCC - Bob Walworth N5ET, and Linda
Walworth KE5TF, 281/363-0209
WAS, VUCC - Brian Derx, N5BA
281/894-5942 N5BA@arrl.net
WAZ - Bill Gary K8CSG, 281/537-9240
CQDX - Bill Gary K8CSG

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10M Ragchew: Monday 8:00 PM. 28.444
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jrkirk@wt.net 281/537-0718

2M Information: Wed. 8:00 PM. 146.66
Coordinator: Bill Gary K8CSG
k8csg@arrl.net 281/537-9240

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URL: <http://www.flash.net/~nars/>
Webmaster: Ben Worell KM5OT
km5ot@bfweb.com 409/773-4484
Trustee: Walter Hock KK5LO
kk5lo@flash.net 281/350-6633

REPEATERS

2M -- 146.060/146.660 (KA5AKG)
70 cm -- 449.375/444.375 (KA5AKG)
Digipeater -- 145.710 (W5NC alias NARS)

MEETINGS

Monthly General Membership at
Spring-Cypress Presbyterian Church
6000 Spring Cypress Road
Third Friday each month -- 7:30PM
Saturday Breakfast at Victors Restaurant
7:30 AM
Wednesday Lunch Bunch at various
locations 11:30 AM (Info. on 146.660)

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