



THE BULLSHEET

Official News Bulletin of the

Texas DX Society

An ARRL Affiliated Club

April 1996
Volume XX
Number 3

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

President	Chuck Dietz, KE5FI (713) 723-5253, ke5fi@wt.net
Vice President	Jim Carmody, NN5O (713) 466-1856, nn5o@aol.com
Secretary	
Treasurer	Madison Jones, AB5TV (713) 350-4330, 102236.362@compuserve.com
Contest Chairman	Rich Keller, K5WA (713) 434-0409, k5wa@hal-pc.org
Field Day Chairman	Bob Perring, N5RP (713) 493-5780, perring@infocom.net
Repeater Chairman	
Bullsheet Editor	Dave Sarkozi, WB5N (713) 520-5906, dsarkozi@infocom.net
DX Chairman	Clarence Sharp, K5DX (713) 843-2495, sharpk5dx@aol.com
Legal Chairman	Sid Leach, K5XI k5xi@aol.com

Maybe I need a new hobby. After doing several single band ten efforts in contests lately, I am considering taking up snake training. I hope conditions can't get much worse. This is the time of the sunspot cycle that we need to try to generate interest in young and upcoming DXers and contesters. They don't know any better and they only have one way to go: up to higher and better conditions. For one thing, we can visit other area clubs and help give programs on DX and Contests. BVARC has expressed interest in having a contest program at their June meeting and a DX program on another meeting date. Anyone interested in helping put on these programs, please let me know.

We will try out a Tuesday meeting on April 9th again at Antonio's Flying Pizza in the back room. This meeting place seemed to work out well last time, but several "regulars" were unable to make a Wednesday meeting due to a regular conflict. While I know that someone will have a conflict on any given night, I hope Tuesday will work out to have the fewest conflicts.

Full members should be getting a ballot soon. We have two proposed members. The first is John Guida, NJ1V. John holds DXCC and likes CW contesting. At present he has a modest station set up in his new QTH, but he has the hardware and plans to stack two TH-7s, plus have a 40 meter M2 and an extra KT34XA. Sounds like an all-band contester to me. John has been to the meetings and has been on the repeater, so you should have met him by now. John's XYL, Ruthie is also a ham, N5RJM.

Ed Gerber, WD5IQA has been to a lot of meetings. Ed also holds DXCC and has over 300 countries confirmed. While his first love is DXing, you will find him in all the contests on SSB. He was licensed in 1962 and is also a life member of ARRL. Ed's station has to be shared with his wife and kids, W2GCX, KD6OCS and KD6MNP, a real ham family! Please take the time to mark your ballots for these fine gentlemen and return them promptly.

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 April 9 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

The TDXS Bullshead

Field Day is soon upon us. The plans are coming together nicely for an all-out effort in 2A or 3A. (The actual class is being kept a closely guarded secret until the start of the contest-whoops, I mean operating event. We will set up three stations and then open the mayo jar with the actual class in it at the start of Field Day. We need lots of operators, erectors and de-erectors. We promise no one will be killed by over work. We will return to the old custom of having BBQ on Saturday. This is going to be the best Field Day ever so mark your calendar for June 21, 22, 23 and come to the next two Club meetings to get more information.

One other tidbit is the plan to have many of the latest and greatest new rigs set up for you to try out at the various stations. See you Tuesday night!

73, Chuck (ke5fi@wt.net)

TEXAS QSO Party May 4-5 1996

Sponsored by the **Texas DX Society** 1400Z May 4 to 2200Z May 5

Classes: Single op, Multi-single and Texas Armadillo Expedition Mixed Mode Only

Exchange: Send QSO# and Texas County or State/Canadian Province

Rules:

Texas stations work everyone. Others work Texas only. Only one transmitted signal at a time. CW QSOS must be made in CW subbands, except on 160. Work stations once per band/mode for QSO points, work Texas Armadillo stations again on same band or mode as they change counties for multiplier credit only. Mults count only once regardless of band or mode. CW - 1.805 and 40 khz up, Phone - 1.850, 3.850, 7.230, 14.250, 21.300, 28.450.

Scoring:

Score 2 pts/QSO on phone and 3 pts/QSO on CW. Final score is QSO points x Texas Counties (max 254). Texas stations multiply by states, Canadian Provinces and Texas Counties. DX counts for QSO points only.

Awards:

Texas Wine Baskets and plaques to top class finishers. Special awards to Texas Clubs with most logs submitted.

Special awards to multi-single and Texas Armadillo Expedition with the most Novice/Tech operators (list them with a /T or /N in your list of operators on summary sheet).

Work 50 or more Texas Counties for Special Commemorative Cap. Work all 254 Texas Counties for free air fare to the 1996 Houston Ham Convention!

Send logs and summary sheet via mail, disk or E-mail within 30 days. Texas DX Society POB 540291 Houston, Texas 77254 E-mail: KB5YVT@AOL.COM

Results will be posted on the Internet Contest Reflector or sent with a SASE or via E-mail.

TQP 96 is supported by NA Contest Software from LTA @ (216) 565 9950 and TR Contest Software @ (512) 416 - 7010

DXAC Doings - de Jim, N5DC

Look for a full P5 operation, reported by reliable sources to be up about the middle of April. Hopefully they will setup a station, that will remain after they are gone. Incidentally "they" is not Martti. It is a group from region 3 of the IARU.

The DXAC is still mulling over the deletion of Mt. Athos, at this writing, I do not favor deleting it, but am open to input, either for or against deletion.

My congratulations to all the TDXS gang, whos call's were in the recent ARRL DX Honor Roll listing.

73 see you in the pileup(s)

Field Day - de Bob, N5RP

1996 Field Day is starting to come together for a 2A effort. There is the possibility of a 3A effort, if enough manpower is discovered to be available at the "bang of the starting gun."

The actual date of Field Day has yet to be decided by the full membership. This issue has never actually been discussed as a formal matter before the floor. It is the august opinion of this writer that we hold our TDXS Field Day on the same date as the ARRL event.

The two HF stations will be captained by N5DC and KG5U. AB5TV and AK5B will assist Jim with his station. KZ8E and NJ1V will assist Dale with his station.

WB5N will be captain of the VHF station. K5LLL and KB5IUA will assist Dave with his station.

The novice station will be "manned" by KC5LCK, assisted by KK5DK for the necessary sweat equity needed to build the station.

W5ASP will act as quartermaster for the dispensing of antennas and cables.

A third station for HF will be erected by KE5FI and N5RP for standby service, either in going to 3A as a last minute decision, or taking advantage of propagation runs.

Packet and satellite arrangements are still being manipulated, as we speak.

KC5CP is in charge of all bonus point activity.

Contest Time in Old Mexico – de Madison AB5TV

The most closely guarded TDXS secret, as far as I am concerned, is that our club expended considerable time, money and talent a number of years ago just south and west of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to establish a contest station, XE2FU. When Tom Taormina K5RC dropped this one on me last November at the Houston Ham Convention, I knew it was only a matter of time until I would be on the way down there. Tom ran a slide show on one of the TDXS excursions as the DX luncheon speaker at the convention, and raised a considerable amount of interest in the unwashed, including me. Dave WB5N and I talked it up, and found that the smoldering passions for a trip there for

ARRL DX-CW in mid-February were burning in the hearts of Earl KZ8E, Dale KG5U, and Bob N5RP, not to mention those other souls who were unable to clear their calendars for the trip.

I should say at the outset that we are indeed fortunate to have our Mexican amateur contingent from Nuevo Laredo, as well as several American hams in Laredo, available to us. Any stories you may have heard about how friendly and helpful they are is probably grossly understated: they really went out of their way to make sure that we had had food, power, fuel, information and anything else we needed to make the trip a success. They even supplied Fernando, the chef, who knocked out 2 great dinners for us at the expense of the local buffalo and goats. Fernando is a magician with a stewpot and some peppers!

After finding that it had been so long since anyone had been there that RP had to take his socks off to count the years, we figured that there might be some antenna work to do before we could go on the air. Dave called Juan N5LNU in Laredo, who was quick to report that all of the aluminum appeared to be up in the air, though the exact condition of the antenna was more than a mere visual from 150 feet away could determine. We planned an extra day to fix whatever the problems might be. After all, how much can go wrong with aluminum in a dry climate? we asked ourselves. The answer is to remember that even dry air contains moisture, which condenses as dew, even in Mexico. More on that later, however.

As the time approached, we got commitments for rigs, tools, amps, coax, connectors and operators, and mentally began the preparation for the trip and contest, not knowing exactly what was left down there from the last

adventure but knowing that whatever it may have been, it was still there. We packed up everything we could think of, and tossed it in Earl's Blazer. It is well that his is the full size version, since we had so much stuff we barely had room to pack the people in. The result was sort of like a hog on roller skates as we trekked off to the South.

There is a universal truth in going anywhere: the later you leave, the later you get there. We made our raucous departure from RP's house about 9:30 Thursday night and hit Laredo (but nothing else in between) in time to retire at 2 a.m. We managed to get a little sleep, but not much, since we were scheduled to meet Juan and the Mexican hams at the H.E.B. Gigantica at 0800. Juan had informed us earlier that the International Bridge in Laredo was no longer manned by any XE2 licensees, so we would have to cross with the masses. Fortunately, the line was short, and the driver of the only car in our 4 rig caravan to get the red light to pull over for inspection didn't see it in time to stop. ("Not to worry, officer. We are from out of town.") (Traffic on the bridge is like Houston's - once things get going, you had best not tarry lest you get rammed from someone in a rush behind you. That would have been the story if we had been shot at.)

After a nice tour through Nuevo Laredo, in which we saw many wonderful sights not visible from the Boy's Town tours ("Hey, Senor, want to meet my seester?") we were able to locate the former dirt road south of the city which led to the site on the ranch belonging to Enrique XE2FU. Almost prophetically, the road goes right by the cemetery.

While it is suffering from the acute lack of a grader over the last 5 years, it is passable at speeds not to exceed 10 kph (everything is metric there). The rains, when they do come, must arrive by the barrel, judging from the huge ditches which have been hewn in the rock-hard red dirt.

When we arrived on site, we could see that most of the antennas appeared to be where they ought to be, though the 40m monobander had a bit of a droop, and one of the two 15m yagis was hanging straight down the third tower. Closer inspection showed us that there was no coax up at all on the three towers, but we had brought enough along to get by. We found a good supply of hard line, though kinked, and enough coax and wire to get everything we wanted on the air. After chasing away the attack hornets (about the size of a B-17) protecting the coax which had been stored in a small shed, we pieced together 2 dipoles for 80m and 160m, and started working on repairing and connecting what was left.

Everyone took a turn or two on the towers, except when the wind was kicking to about 35 knots. To our amazement, we found the droop in the 40m beam was caused by about 5 gallons of water captured inside the boom by the endcaps. The traps were corroded but

The TDXS Bullsheets

serviceable. Unfortunately for us, among all the hardware we had only one piece of steel wool, and no screws at all to replace those which had rusted away. Earl and Dave fashioned a 40m loop, however, that proved to be a great hose to the USofA, so all was not lost.

Everyone pitched in, and we were on the air by the opening gong at 0000Z Friday night, although the antenna work continued for the entire time we were there. Earl made the first contact of the many which were given, and held strong for several hours thereafter. Hearing my first pileup directed AT us instead of BY us was quite a sobering experience. For those of you wishing to experience this without having to travel to a foreign QTH, try the PED Pileup trainer in Chaos mode. After awhile all those CW voices out there become recognizable, and now and then when you give a partial call and a question mark, the lids quiet down enough for you to establish a contact. A thousand Qs later, it is almost, but not quite, old hat.

Enrique, our host, apparently forgot to send his license renewal in recently, so we used Ricardo's call sign, XE2KB. For all those whom we told prior to the trip that we were going to be XE2FU, we apologize, at least a little. You elitists who did not work us should have recognized XE2KB by our loud signal and superior operating technique. Even though we never got the 15 meter matched pair into service, we were able to put forth excellent signals on all bands, including 15, with the other equipment we had available.

The contest itself went well. We had just enough operators so that everyone got plenty of action, but not too much. We had just enough cold to keep us awake. We had just enough food to keep body and soul together, and we had a dog and cat for entertainment when we wanted someone to talk to on a subject other than amateur radio. We managed to keep good rates up, especially during the day, and even in the dead of night there was enough action to stay awake. The highest rates were by Dale KG5U and Earl KZ8E, both of whom topped 250/hour for a time. The lowest was about 20 at 3:30 a.m. Sunday, when even the night owls had conked out for the most part. As everyone knows, 10m was impossible, though we did fairly well compared to other scores we heard. Our TS-440 and Heath SB-200 amp played well through our antennas, though we are confident that an additional day and some antenna hardware would have permitted us to have a monobander on 40m, an array on 15m and 10m, and our dipoles up 30 feet higher.

Our hosts were there to see we were provided for. Fernando did a great job on keeping us warm with hot food at night, and the locals turned out in force to keep us entertained. The weather was very cold (close to freezing both nights) and breezy, but the guest house had lots of

room, plenty of beds, and tight doors and windows to keep the wind out.

At the conclusion, Fernando provided us with another stew, the boys brought out the Coronas, we took a number of photographs, and called our score into the Contest Reflector. Our total score was 3725 QSOs x — mults for a total of — points, good for third place in the DX claimed score category. Considering 2 of our 4 ops had never been on a DXpedition before, we were pleased with the result. We had a wonderful time, learned a lot, left the place a little better than we found it, stayed out of trouble, gave some Qs to the folks back home, and all marked our calendars for the next time. I, for one, am going through the tedious process of getting a Mexican call, so that by WPX-CW time at the end of May we can do it again.

The lessons I learned are too many to count, but some of the more important ones are to take coax, hardware and tools, be prepared to do some climbing, practice a little so you can keep the rate up, don't forget to bring bottled water and bug spray, and don't count on getting across the bridge in less than an hour. The customs agents and their canine friends are out in force, so keep it legal. Other than that, it was a blast. Give me a call with enough advance notice on any random weekend to arrange it once I get my Mexican call, and we can go do DX from Mexico.

XE2KB M/S ARRL DX ~ Richard, K5NA

It was suggested to me (K5NA) that going on a big-time TDXS DXpedition was a good way to get bad into the swing of TDXS activities. So I signed up along with many others to go along. However, I was totally unprepared for the massive, last-minute cancellations that left only Mike (AA5NK) and myself as participants.

Since I had never been there before and Mike hadn't been there for 3 years, I tried to mildly suggest that maybe a total cancellation was in order. However, Mike was anxious and determined to go and I had promised to support whatever effort there was going to be by the TDXS. I just didn't want to let him down so reluctantly I packed to go.

Well the bottom line is that I am glad that Mike was stubborn about going. Even though I had never met Mike or the XE gang, I had a GREAT time. The XE crowd includes some of the nicest people I have ever met. They treated us royally.

Mike and I met on 2 meters in Laredo on Thursday night. We found a hotel room for the night and inventoried what we had brought. We found that we were sorely lacking in hardware to put a station together. Mike had his IC730 and AL80, but the transceiver relay would lock up when

The TDXS Bullsheet

keying the amp. Also, the IC730 didn't have 160 meters. Luckily I had the IC706 installed in my truck which would work on 160 meters. But I didn't have a way to key an amp and I didn't have a way to connect a boom mike headset to the IC706.

So on Friday morning Mike and I stopped at the Laredo Radio Shack and spent \$60/70 to get parts to build cables for attaching headsets and relays and plugs for keying amps. It turned out the stop was unnecessary since Ricardo offered his Father's TS930 and SB220. He even had an amp keying relay. For the contest we used the TS930 with Mike's AL80 and a Heil headset that I had brought. That combination worked great.

The old-timers that know me from the old Field Day efforts know that I never go anywhere to operate without taking lots, and lots of stuff. I had thrown in the Heil headset along with coax jumpers, extra computer, power supplies, computer cables, adapters, beverage transformers, wire, etc, etc, etc. The truck was really loaded down in the back and it was enough to cause the Mexican customs officials to chase me down after first flagging me through. As I crossed the border they noticed all the boxes in the back and made me partially unload the truck so they could check what was in the boxes. I think they decided that I was just another "crazy Americano" after seeing all the wire and junk and let me go.

When Mike and I arrived at the site, I was impressed at the nice view from there. It is certainly a good operating location. Since it was already afternoon (Friday), Mike and I quickly went to work on the antennas. Ricardo wasn't there and the other XE folks didn't know which antenna was which. Of course, Mike and I didn't have a clue and we had to figure everything out from scratch.

We first unrolled the coax to the 20M antenna noticing that there were many kinks in it. Finally we realized that we were unrolling the wrong coax. So we rolled it back up and unrolled the other piece. After we did that, we discovered that the 20M yagi wasn't working. It had 5 (or better) to 1 SWR and was always 2 or more S-units below the tribander. So that was all wasted effort. The tribander was working on all three high bands so we weren't in any big trouble because of that.

We measured the wires hanging on the tribander tower and figured out it was a joint 160/80 meter dipole. However, the SWR was horrible and Mike climbed the tower to investigate and found that the wire were only wrapped together at the feed point. I had brought a heavy-duty gas powered soldering iron and Mike cleaned and soldered the wires together. The SWR was still high (2.5 to one on both bands) but the amp tuned it with no problem and we went with it. Then we tried to find the 40M delta loop that "worked like a hose". We could find nothing

hanging on the other towers. In the storage shack, there were 3 pieces of wire that might have been it, but we didn't have time to figure out the puzzle. Mike and I still didn't have a clue and, by now, it was getting late in the afternoon. So we borrowed Enrique's low 40M dipole that he uses for Sunday 40M ragchews. The dipole was hung as a sloping dipole from the tribander tower. It turned out to "work like a hose" anyway.

Meanwhile I ran a 600 foot beverage due north. I wanted to run two beverages and I had brought enough hardware to do that. The intent would be to have an east coast and a west coast beverage. So due north was a compromise. By now it was about an hour or so before the contest and time was getting critical.

We quickly set up the TS930 and AL80 as the primary station. We set up my IC706 as a receive-only station using the beverage antenna. Sometimes Mike and I would operate side-by-side and we found that occasionally we would hear someone on the beverage that wasn't heard on the transmit antenna. It was very effective on 80 and 160 and we even used it at times to listen on 40 and 20 meters. It was funny how it would pick out stations that weren't very loud on the transmit station. Sometimes the listener on the beverage would write down a call from the pileup on a pad and the transmitting operator would work first the one he heard, then immediately call the second station written on the pad.

Mike had a laptop and I had a laptop. I networked the two together so we would always have a backup BIN file and both operators would have access to SUPER-CHECK-PARTIAL. We barely managed to get everything ready before the contest started. Here are the band notes:

10 meters - We had a small opening on Saturday and no openings on Sunday. We would try 10M every hour and would usually get one W0 in Colorado to answer us and then we would be stuck there for 10 minutes. Best hour here was 132/hr at 17Z on Saturday.

15 meters - Had an early opening on Saturday and a late opening on Sunday. We were afraid that it wasn't going to open at all on Sunday. The bottom line is that we called CQ too many times with out answers. We were not competitive on this band. Best rate here was 155/hr at 19Z on Sunday.

20 meters - The old standby. However QSO rates were slower than they should have been. That may have been partly my problem because I hate 20M SSB in a contest. I have a real problem hearing through the QRM. We called many CQs here without answers and lost our frequency a few times to other DX stations. We were not competitive on this band. Our best rate was 175/hr at 00Z on Saturday.

The TDXS Bullsheat

40 meters - The sloping dipole was a big surprise. We felt competitive on this band and our totals reflect that. I think it is probable that the location, more than the antenna, made us competitive on 40 meters. Could we do better with better antennas and/or more power. Our best rate was 179/hr at 03Z on Saturday.

75 meters - Same as above because I think the location offset poor antennas. This band should produce 1500+ QSOs. Our best rate was 138/hr at 04Z on Sunday.

160 meters - Same as above again. It should be an embarrassment to be beaten by any other DX station on 160 or 80 meters. We are competitive because we are close to the USA. However, I think we worked 90% of what was possible on this band anyway. Our best rate was 93/hr at 06Z on Saturday.

XA5T WPX CW – de Earl KZ8E

It look like there is enough interest in another expedition to XE2FU, This time using the very attractive call XA5T for the WPX contest.

I plan to leave Thursday afternoon early evening again, cross the border Friday AM, and return Monday AM. So far N5RP, WB5N, KG5U, AB5TV, NJ1V, and myself have shown an interest. Who else wants to go?

Damn the heat lets go play.