



The Bullsheet

The Official News Bulletin of The Texas DX Society
An ARRL Affiliated Club

The Texas DX Society, Houston TX K5DX@tdxs.net February 2009

What You Need to Know About Estate Planning

Feb 12 Thursday, 7PM:

TDXS Meeting Night: [Tracy Gee Center](#), 3599 Westcenter Dr, Houston.

Program by Susan Bulgaqwicz, JD on estate planning. A timely discussion

on things you need to do as we get older. Bring your spouse! Pre-meeting dinner get-together starts around 6PM. Spouses are welcome!

The March TDXS meeting will feature a program by Cal WF5W and Mike

K5UO on their recent DXpedition operation as 5K0CW on San Andres Island, Colombia.

Highlights are on Page 4 of this issue.

2009 Greater Houston Hamfest is March 7, 2009

Time: 8AM to 2PM -- registration begins at 7 AM

Location: Ft. Bend County Fairgrounds, Rosenberg, TX

Hwy 36 just south of Hwy 59

About 30 miles S/W of downtown Houston

Admission: \$5, Children under 14 free.

Over 120 tables will be available for fleamarket-type tables. Pre-registration for sellers allows choice of tables ahead of time and free power (500W) if requested at time of pre-registration.

Tailgating: This year free tailgating is introduced. There is plenty of room at the fairgrounds for this. Buyers will have early access to tailgate sellers

before main hall opens at 8 A.M.

The final schedule is available at www.houstonhamfest.org.

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Editor's Note de Doug WB5TKI

As I put the finishing touches on this issue of the Bullsheet I've got the radio tuned to 10 meters for the 10-10 Contest. I don't have much of a 10 meter setup — 100 watts to a ground mounted SteppIR vertical with not enough radials doesn't cut it when the condi-

tions are poor. However, suddenly we have a pipeline to North Carolina and I'm getting 59+ reports!

10 meters is an amazing band, and has long been one of my favorites.

Recently I received a very interesting article from Scott Straw KB4KBS.

Scott notes that although he is not (yet) a member of TDXS and the tone of the article is aimed at non-hams or new hams, he thought that we might find it interesting. I think that you will agree with me that it is interesting indeed.

The Prez Sez de Paul W5PF

We had a good turnout for the TDXS Banquet 2009 on Saturday January 31. A total of 33 members and spouses attended the festivities and enjoyed a good evening of fellowship. In addition to the food and drink several Certificates of Appreciation were awarded. Buzz N5UR was recognized for 13 years of dedicated service as the QSL Forwarding Manager, thanks Buzz for all you hard work. Bill K5WAF and Trish were received a certificate for their work on last year's Field Day. Doug WB5TKI got one for his work on the Field Day GOTA station. Steve W9DX the 2008 President and Mike N5MT the 2006-7 President were presented plaques in appreciation of their contributions. Thanks guys.

Several certificates were awarded to folks who could not make the banquet. Included are Dave W5BXX for his continued support of the club's dxpeditions and contest efforts through the Topp Fund; Glenn WB5TUF for his work in providing and maintaining the TDXS repeaters, DX cluster, packet node and IRLP node and Ruth Dietz for again hosting the TDXS Christmas party. Chuck W5PR was recognized for his uncanny ability to buy beachfront property 3 days before it actually became beachfront property. The prestigious "Yagi-on-a-Roll" award went to Cookie K5EWJ for his numerous contributions to the TDXS contesting efforts in 2008.

The last week in January saw another TDXS Dxpediton, this one to San Andres for the ARRL 160M CW contest. Cal WF5W, Mike K5UO along with Rob HK3CW operated as 5K0CW both in the contest and for a couple days before and after. Yes, that is 5 not H. I am assured by the team leader that no members at any time sent HK0CW. There were some antenna problems that handicapped

their efforts on 160, but that is part of the story that they will tell in an upcoming meeting.

Coming up on March 7th is the Greater Houston Ham Fest sponsored by BVARC. The details are included elsewhere in this issue of the Bullsheet. BVARC has asked TDXS to set up and operate a station on site to provide the attendees with a chance to get on the air. If there is enough interest K5LBU has volunteered a radio and amp and WF5W will bring a tower trailer and antennas. These folks can't do it alone so we will ask for volunteers at the meeting this week and go ahead with the project if enough folks step up. Come to the meeting and see what you can do to help.

Speaking of this month's meeting, we will have a program on estate planning by Susan Bulgaqwicz JD. Susan is a former ham and has helped WF5W with this important task. For those of us who have procrastinated long enough this is a very timely program, bring your spouse and find out if you are adequately prepared.

The subject of QSL Forwarding by the club has recently come up for much discussion. For many years the club has forwarded member's QSL cards through the QSL Bureau system as a benefit of membership. With the change of QSL Forwarding Manager as well as the increasing costs of providing this service the TDXS Board of Directors has decided that it is appropriate to issue a written statement of our policy. Here is what the board has decided:

TDXS QSL Forwarding Policy

The TDXS club sponsored and managed forwarding of QSL cards via the bureau system is a privilege of mem-

bership. Full and Associate Members are fully entitled to use the service for their own QSL cards. The service is funded through club dues and is designed to cover the forwarding of only member cards.

There are some good DXpeditions coming up soon and we are in the middle of the contest season so there is no excuse not to get on and work some new ones.

73 es DX de W5PF

From the TDXS Archives:

Ten years ago this month, President Earl Morse N5TU was waxing eloquent about the mystical powers of the TDXS Presidential Jawbone of the Ass. Roy Radlek AD5Q had an inter-

esting article about the merits of out of phase headphones for copying weak DX. Finally, Bob Perring N5RP wrote enthusiastically about a new logging program called DX 4 Win-

dows by ZL1ANJ.

Upcoming Contests and Operating Events:

Feb 14, 0000Z - Feb 15, 2359Z: [CQ WW WPX RTTY Contest](#)

Feb 21, 0000Z - Feb 22, 2400Z: [ARRL International DX CW Contest](#)

Feb 12 - Feb 26,: K5D DXpedition to Desecheo Island

Feb 27, 2200Z - March 1, 2200Z: [CQWW 160m SSB Contest](#)

Repeater Report de Glenn WB4TUF

The VHF repeater is fully functional after the antenna repairs back in November.

I am planning a trip to the UHF site on February 16th for general mainte-

nance and checkout.

The DX Cluster is operating normally on telnet.

The antennas and feed lines are scheduled to be installed this month

at my office. This will restore packet, IRLP, and Igor.

San Andres, revisited... by Cal WF5W

Mike K5UO and I along with Rob Reyes (HK3CW) went to San Andres last week, as many of you know. (We worked many of you) Our old friend "Murphy" was present during the 160 contest but all well that ends well, had 2290 Q's all over the world most on 80/ 40 meters. The 160 contest was not a bust but was for sure a struggle. Our antenna just wouldn't go up on the old tree we had used before; it had died so we could only get it up to 40 feet, not high enough. BUT it worked gangbusters on 40 and 80.

The Amp borrowed via Tom Rum , the Tokyo Hi Power at 600 watts worked well and was even better to carry at 22 pounds. We also borrowed the Super Antenna from Virgil Stamps, it is a 3 element yagi weighing in at 12 pounds and fits into a 3 foot long bag that is a carry on. Super Super, it is named correctly. That will certainly be a carry on for future DXpeditions .

Lucy and Manrique along with the two watch dogs were all present at the 2nd time . Good to see folks you know. This location is Ham

friendly. Our chicken wire was rolled up and waiting as well as our 20 foot pole.

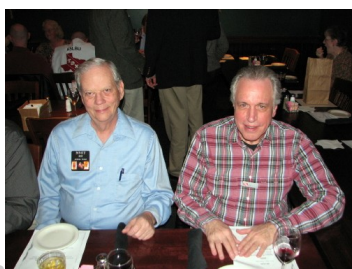
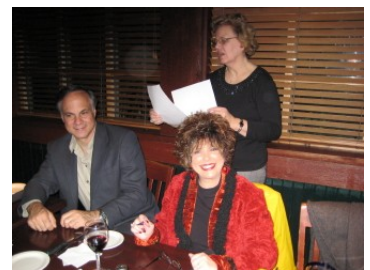
Good time had by all and will have pictures and a program on the DXpedition for the March meeting. C U Then.

2009 Annual Banquet photos courtesy of W9DX and WB5IUU

The 2009 Annual Banquet was held at Texas Land & Cattle restaurant on the west side of Houston. We had 33 folks in attendance, including 12 XYLs.

The food was good, the conversation lively, the room jam packed and "Santa" was in the room.

Here is a sample of the pictures from the event:



The Secretary/Treasurer's Report de Bill K5WAF

Club Dues – Now Past Due but Please Get Them In!

Our 2009 TDXS dues were due at the end of January. If you haven't sent them in yet, please take a moment and do it now. Dues should be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer, K5WAF, or bring to the February meeting.

K5WAF's address is: 10825 Lake Forest Drive, Conroe, TX 77384.

As of February 4, 2009 dues have been received from 28 Full and Associate Members: K5PFE, K5TU, W5JWM, K5FK, ND5Q, N5DC, N5MT, N5ET, W9DX, K5UO, W5MJ, W5GCX,

N5UR, N5DD, K5LBU, W5PF, W0MM, WB5TUF, N5KTN, K5WAF, WF5W, W5DKJ, NM5G, WB5TKI, WB5IUU, K5EWJ, K5DD and NI5DX.

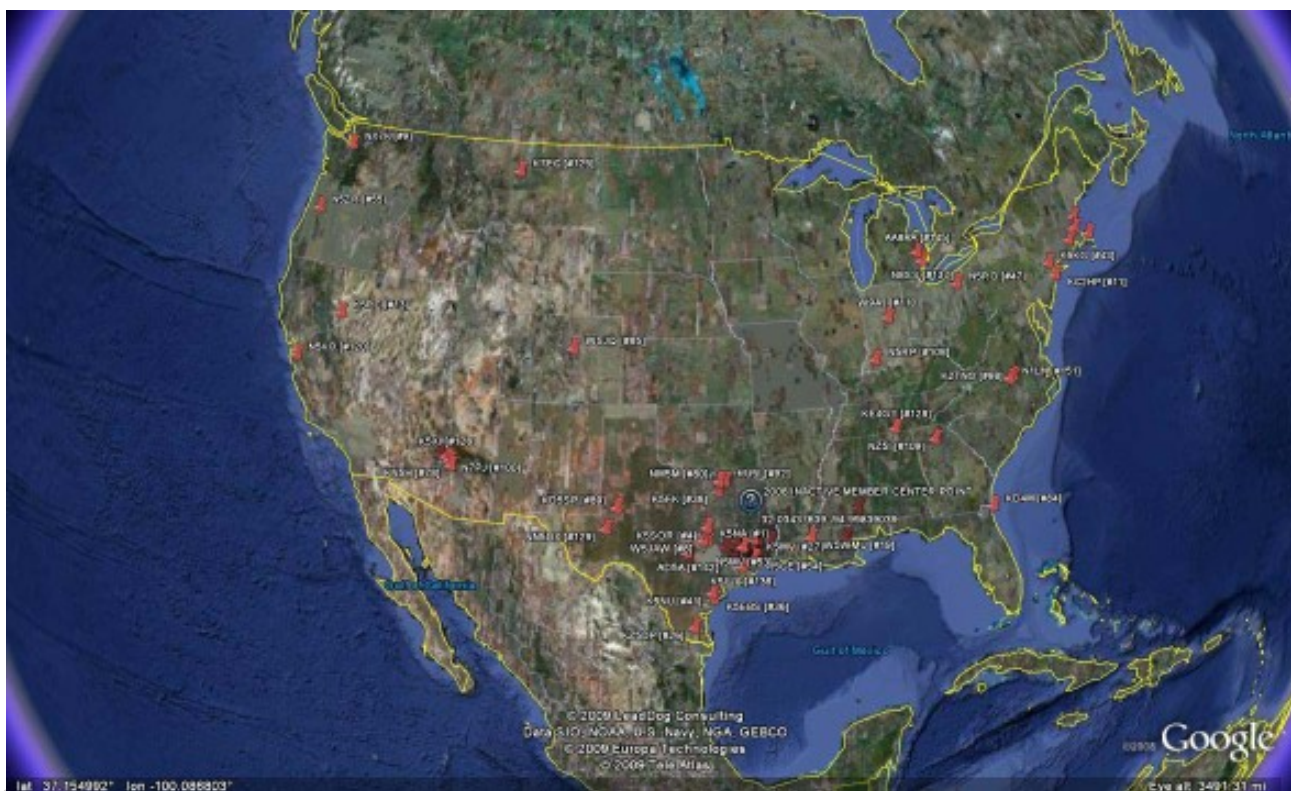
Feature Article de Bill K5WAF

WHERE DO OUR MEMBERS LIVE [PART 2]?

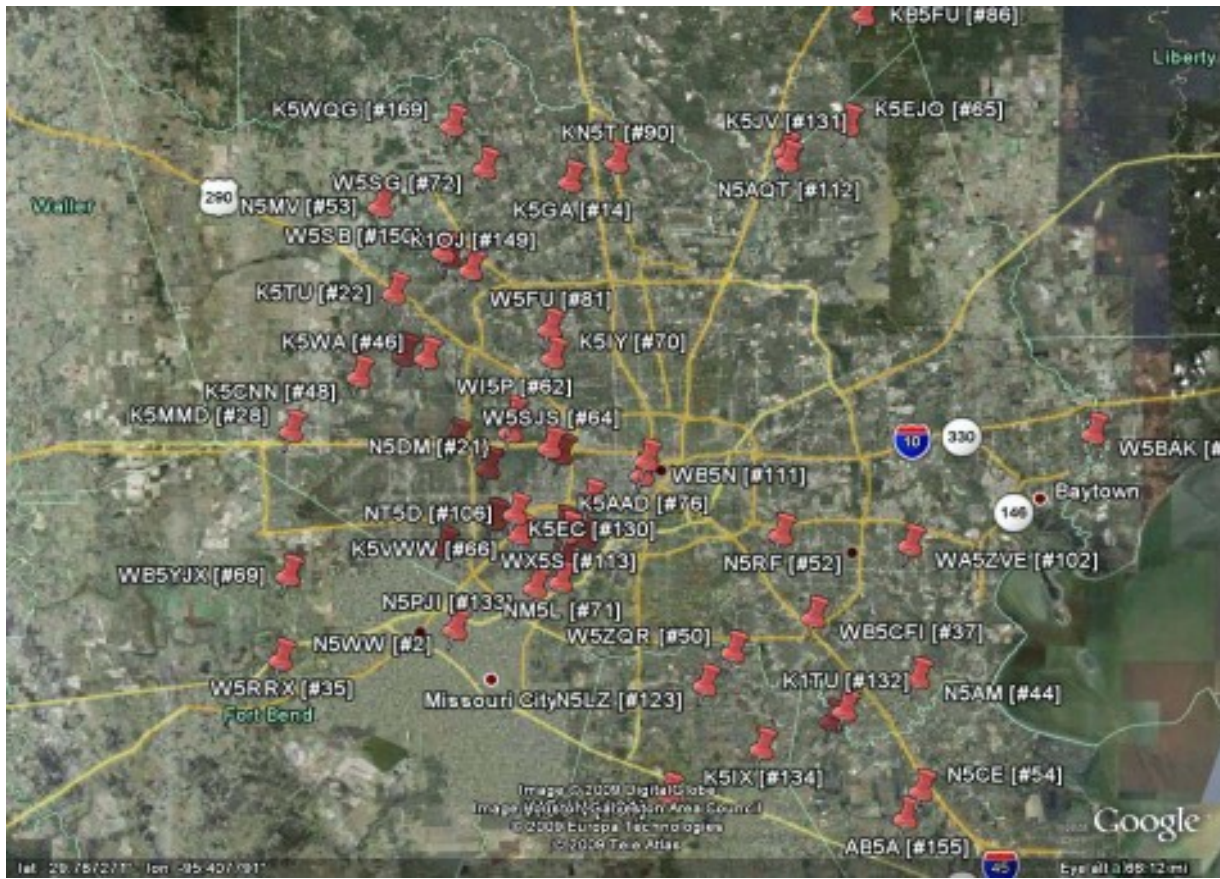
Last month we put together a couple maps showing where our 2008 Full and Associate Members lived. In part, this is to make sure that we are trying to keep meetings and events as central as possible. In part, it is to satisfy curiosity since the Houston area is so large. This month we will try to complete the picture with our 122 Inactive members. [Note, if

you're doing the math on the total membership, there are also 23 Silent Keys and 2 Honorary Members.

Inactive Members: Though the majority of Inactive Members still live in the Houston area, there is still quite a representation across the country – from New England to Washington in the Northwest, from Florida to California.



Feature Article de Bill K5WAF (concluded)



The offer always stands for any member whether active or inactive to join us at a meeting, Field Day or any other TDXS event. You are always welcome.



My Experience at NR5M de Scott Straw KB4KBS

As a newly transplanted resident of Houston, Texas (I don't consider myself a "Houstonian" yet), I had high on my list of priorities the check item of meeting local Amateur Radio Operators and getting involved in, or at least acquainted with, a local Ham organization. To that end, and on the advice of a Ham in the Atlanta area, I contacted the Texas DX Society via the e-mail at their website. I was replied to quickly, and during exchanges with several members, received an invitation to visit with a contesting team at a multi-station location near the Houston area during the CW portion of the North American QSO Party contest.

The NAQP series of contests are a favorite for many Amateurs because they are shorter than most events in that they last only 12 hours (versus 24 or 36). A single operator may only work ten of the contest hours, so a two-hour window for dining with the family or doing chores can be scheduled before, during or after, the event. This adds to the lure and draw of the contest. A team of operators, either sharing a single transmitter, or using two transmitters simultaneously can operate the entire contest period, which runs from Noon to midnight in Houston. There are other rules specific to operating, that I'll explain later. This particular event, the CW portion, involved using only the Morse code to make contacts.

My invitation was to visit the ham radio "shack" of George DeMontrond, whose call sign is NR5M. The term shack is a common phrase in the Ham world to define the operation area for the equipment. Often, it is merely a table in an unused bedroom, office area, basement, or garage. Occasionally it is an entire room attached to a home or in an out building. In the case of NR5M, however, it describes a small house on a ranch that is populated with no less than six tall towers greater than 100 feet in the air and lots of wire and cable connecting them to a

room of this house that has been converted to a command center for full-on aggressive contesting.

I arrived around 2:00PM, after the contest had begun, and was really totally unprepared for the sights that I saw. First of all the idea of an entire house devoted to a contest station was a new concept to me. Granted, it was a small, 1600-1800 square foot building, but it was clear that it served one purpose – Radio Contesting. The living room was Spartan but functional; the major piece of furniture was a large screen TV for watching football. The kitchen was a "come and go" facility designed for quickly grabbing nourishment during brief breaks in the action before diving back in. Yes, there was a bathroom; these gentlemen are not pigs, they're Hams.

The "war room" was beyond belief as well. I had always heard about these places but I had never seen one in person. Even pictures that I had seen on the Internet of other similar set-ups didn't do it justice. There is a phrase adopted from the sporting world sadly, to describe something that is garishly larger than life and almost "freakish" in appearance – the term is "on steroids". I find even that reference inadequate when comparing an "average" Ham Radio station to this one. There were ten fully functional, state of the art, top-of-the-line transmitters. Each one was connected to a dedicated computer with two-way data exchange between the rig and the CPU. A flat panel monitor above the radio displayed the contest logging software that included data about the radio – frequency, mode, and other pertinent information. These computers were all networked together and the software allowed each operator to see all of the entries to the contest log as they were entered. It also displayed the other stations' modes, frequencies, and recent contacts also. Of course, there were a lot of other gadgets and accesso-

ries as well that facilitated interconnection of the radios to the widely varied collection of antennas outside on "the farm" and other operational aids. A master display at one end of the room was capable of displaying each station's info in side-by-side windows for quick reference and the amusement of spectators.

The radios are grouped in pairs, for each of the major contesting bands: 1.8 MHz, 3.5 MHz, 7 MHz, 14 MHz, 21 MHz, and 28 MHz. Each pair of radios uses a shared transmit antenna. The operators sit side-by-side; one is anchored on a single frequency "broadcasting" the call sign of the station inviting other contest participants to reply. The other operator scans up and down the band for other "broadcasters" and contacts them. The ironic twist is that the anchored operator is called the "running" station. The other operator is called the "sweeper station". Sometimes he is called the "search-and-pounce" station. The rules for the NAQP contest state that a maximum of only two radios are allowed to be transmitting at any given time. To help with this limitation, and since only one radio can use the transmit antenna at a time, some pairs of radios have an electronic lockout system that prohibits the alternate radio from transmitting when one is in use. Even so, a set of pre-determined hand signals and close attention is mandatory for the pair to collaborate successfully. In the space of sixty-seconds, each radio in a pair may transmit eight to ten times, but never simultaneously. Using this system, and two paired teams, the maximum exposure is maintained while staying inside the confines of the rules.

The running station normally takes precedence over the sweeper station, but it is not uncommon for both stations to alternate sending contest information to two different distant stations in a choreographed manner. One way that this is facilitated is by use of pre-programmed

messages that are stored in the radio's computer. By pressing a preset key on the computer keyboard, the computer will transmit the message to the radio, which then broadcasts it. It isn't totally automated, however. There are Morse code keyers at each position that see lots of use as the distant station asks for repeats or info that can't be satisfied with the programmed responses. Additionally, the decoding of the distant stations is all done aurally. The most sophisticated computers and the most advanced software are even at their best, no match for the human ear and brain of a top-notch CW enthusiast.

The first thing that hit me as I entered the room was the eerie silence. There were four operators positioned at radios with headphones on. They were intently focused on the audio entering their ears. Their hands were poised over the computer keyboard and their eyes were fixed on the computer monitor. One member of the symbiotic pair, as if he were a traffic cop, would wave his hand toward his partner signaling him to either proceed or halt transmitting. A fifth operator, at a third location, was scanning up and down the band segment for that pair of radios. He was listening, and recording the frequency locations of "running" stations on that band. In time, one of the two operating duos would take a break. One of those team members would join this fifth man and they would begin an assault on that band of frequencies.

The one noise that constantly interrupted the tedium was the ring of "the bell". Each time a significant milestone was reached, the news was shared to the others by ringing this larger, fire alarm-sized bell that was similar to what would be found ringside at a boxing match. One of the more prolific milestones is a score multiplier. In most every contest, the objective is to contact as many other stations as possible. In the NAQP, the focus is on North American geo-political entities (individual US states, Canadian provinces, Mexico, and island countries in the Caribbean). Contacts with any other

Amateur Radio station (including non-North American stations) counts for one point and only one contact with that station can be made on any individual band of frequencies. They can however, be contacted on each of the other five contesting bands, so theoretically that other station could be contacted on all five bands for a total of five points. The information that is exchanged during the contest to verify the contact is the operators name and his location. This information is dutifully logged in the contesting software. Each time a new geo-political entity is contacted, a multiplier is earned. There are 107 possible multipliers. At the end of the contest, the total score is calculated by multiplying total of number of contacts by total number of multipliers. The significance of multipliers cannot be over emphasized. Late in the contest, adding even a single new multiplier can be equivalent of hundreds, even thousands, of individual contacts.

Eventually, as the various operators "came up for air", I was able to meet them and found them all to be a likeable lot. One of the idiosyncrasies of Ham Radio operators is that, generally speaking, surnames are superfluous. A name and a call sign are usually adequate, and many long and fast friendships have been built over the airwaves between individuals who only know each other by their first names. Moreover, in the case of CW, many times the two operators have never even heard the other's voice. The operators at this contest were (in no particular order) Bill, K5GA, Roy, AD5Q, OJ, K1OJ, Mike, K5NZ, and Dennis, NT5TU. George - NR5M was the host of course and served well as the coxswain for this synchronized crew. Kenny, KZ5KG was the station's technical manager.

One of the challenges of Ham Radio is that radio waves are subject to atmospheric conditions that will vary by seasons, but also by time of day. Some of the bands have characteristics that make them ideal for daytime operation. Other bands are nighttime only bands. Knowing when to abandon a daytime band and

start tackling a nighttime band is a critical decision. One of the rules of the contest states that once you change to a different band and begin operating, you are committed to that new band for a minimum of ten minutes. As the contest reached its midway point of 6:00 PM, the band switching decisions becomes critical. If you jump too soon because you hear a few stations on the new band, you are committed to it and stand the chance of missing some final valuable stations. If you wait too late, you've lost valuable time on the new band.

Because the NR5M station could have operating teams on any of the bands, they began a carousel-like rotation during this day-to-dusk transitional period. They would post two operators on the busiest band and put single operators on three of the marginal bands that were either fading out or just coming alive. These three persons would busy themselves making lists of "running" station that they needed to contact on their respective bands. These three team members would then alternate in ten or twenty-minute cycles taking turns being the second on-air station. In time, one of the bands would finally dry up. The operator of the now dead band would then transition to be the second operator on the band that was coming to life and the duo would voraciously attack it.

Many more tactics were employed some more subtle than others, but all were well within the limits of the rules. These contesters know that there are multitudes of opportunities to cheat in the game. However, like golfers, they pride themselves in doing the right thing, even it means accepting a self-imposed penalty. A win without honor is not a win. Besides, with a championship caliber operating facility, there is no reason to cheat.

As the night wore down and the contest neared a close, the number of stations not previously worked began to dwindle dramatically. Multiplier contacts became scarce and the bells rang less frequently. When it was down to the last minutes,

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finding “fresh meat” became a real struggle. Then, at the stroke of midnight local time, it was over.

The raw score totals for the team was astonishing. The numbers of contacts on several of the individual bands were higher than could be remembered and the multiplier total was respectable, if not a record itself. The database of contacts will be submitted to the contest sponsors for adjudication and this process will take several months. In the interim however, a spot check of the raw scores as posted on an Internet “brag board” shows that this station claimed more points than any other and was one of only two that claimed over 500,000 points.

When I finally arrived back home at 1:00AM, I realized that I had just experienced an “Oz” moment. I had been to someplace special and experienced an event that will forever change how I think about Ham Radio. I know that with practice and dedication my skill level will improve. I would consider a high honor to be invited to fill seat at this station some day, but based on level of mastery that I observed in the operators for this event, I know that it will be a long road.

Texas DX Society Boardmembers

President	Paul Frantz, W5PF	w5pf at cebridge.net	
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VP Programs	Cal White, WF5W	cwhite314 at sbcglobal.net	
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	Keith Dutson, NM5G	kdutson at sbcglobal.net	
	Bob Mennell, WB5IUU	bmennell at consolidated.net	
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DXpedition Chairman	Cal White, WF5W	cwhite314 at sbcglobal.net	
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DXCC QSL Card Checker	Bob Walworth, N5ET	rwalworth at charter.net	

How to reach US

On the World Wide Web <http://www.tdxx.net> email address: k5dx@tdxx.net

On 2 Meters: 147.96/36 MHz (100 Hz) On 70cm: 447.00/442.00 MHz (103.5 Hz)

DX Cluster—On Packet: Connect to **K5DX** on 145.71 MHz or telnet via IP address 75.148.198.113

TDXS says "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" to these members with birthdays in February

Dave Blaschke - W5UN

James Clark - N5RO

Bob Cooney - K1TU

Mike Bragassa - K5UO

James Parnell - W5JAW

Charles Frost - K5LBU

Bob Moorman - K5VMX

Don Butler - N5LZ

Marshall Dues - K5MMD

Ronald Amox - K5EJO

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