Field Day Was Fun!

Aug 12th, Thursday 7PM: TDXS Meeting Night at the Houston TranStar Headquarters Building, **6922 Katy Road**, Houston TX 77024. See the all the new facilities, upgrades and state of the art communication center for Harris County Office of Emergency Management hosted by Joey Clements W5BAK. Don't miss it! Pre-meeting dinner starts at 5:30PM, at Tia Maria's, **4618 Dacoma St., Houston, 77092**.

Houston Transtar HQ

Editor's Note de Doug WB5TKI

I seem to be doing a lot of reading lately. I just finished Empire of the Air—The Men Who Made Radio by Tom Lewis. It's a fascinating recount of the lives of such pioneers as Lee DeForest, David Sarnoff and especially, Howard Armstrong. I'm currently reading Soldersmoke—A Global Adventure in Radio Electronics by Bill Meara N2CQR. Bill is a career diplomat who has been posted all over the world, and he's had some pretty interesting adventures. He also has lots of musings about the nature of radio communications and electronics. Both books are highly recommended. Of course, I've also been reading (electronically) the Owner's Manual for my new Flex-1500. At 170 pages it is not a casual read, but it has a wealth of information about the radio and about software defined radio in general. On page 6-7 you will find my initial impressions of the radio and the software.

The Prez Sez   de Paul W5PF

August is upon us so it is time to start thinking about the election of officers for next year. Nominations can be made at the September and October meetings and the election will be held at the November meeting. We will discuss the upcoming election at the next few meetings. Please consider volunteering to serve the club.

The Texas QSO Party will be September 25 and 26. TDXS will hold their 40th Anniversary QSO Party as a part of the TX QSO Party. The object is to work as many TDXS members as possible during the TQP. You may also make contacts on the TDXS IRLP node after the TQP from 2000 to 2300UTC Sep. 26. During the contest it is suggested that TDXS members use /T after their call to indicate that they are TDXS members. There are two categories, Member and Non Member. We are looking at the possibility of plaques and certificates for the top finishers in each category. You can work members once per mode on each band. Entries will consist of a list of members worked by band/mode. We will announce where to sent entries. Further details will be forth coming at the meeting and on the TDXS reflector.

Recently I was going through the logs of several of the DXpeditions that I am QSL manager for. I thought it would be interesting to compare the QSL rates for the various methods of QSLing. I have no way to determine whether a paper QSL has been sent directly or via the bureau so I can compare paper QSLs, LoTW QSLs and eQsls.

There are only two of the DXpeditions that I am able to get data on all three methods. They are 5J0E and C91TX. For 5J0E the QSL rates are 31% for paper, 45.5% for LoTW and 26.5% for eQsl. For C91TX the rates are 33.8% for paper, 34.5% for LoTW and 21.6% for eQsl. I am still receiving a lot of bureau QSLs for C91TX so I am sure the rate for paper QSLs will increase significantly.

The total rate of paper QSLs for all dxpeditions is 36.1%. For all dxpeditions on LoTW, including 5J0E, 9H3DX, VP8WWW, 5K0CW and C91TX the rate is 38.7%. For the DXpeditions on eQsl, including 5J0E, VP8WPF, V63PF, J3/W5PF and C91TX, the rate is 21.6%.

It is interesting to note that LoTW has the highest rate of QSling for all DXpeditions where I have comparative data available. For instance for 9H3DX which was the call used in the ARRL DX Phone contest from Malta only 18.2% of QSOs have been QSLed by paper but 46.7% on LoTW.

General conclusions from my data seem to be that electronic QSLing is catching on particularly LoTW. Also that a higher percentage of NA stations are on LoTW than the rest of the world. I know I have a lot of band countries confirmed by LoTW and it has saved a lot of postage.

73,

Paul W5PF

From the Bullsheet Archives by Steve W9DX

Thanks to the generous donation of TDXS Charter Member #4, Dave Evans K5SOR, we are now in possession of TDXS meeting announcement letters, member nominations, field day plans and other club news starting from 1971. I hope to get these scanned, compressed and uploaded to the web in the next month or so. Thanks Dave!

Ten years ago this month August 2000: The August meeting was held at Pappa's BBQ on the southwest freeway with a program on APRS by Carl Hacker KB5LDY. Jim Lane N5DC said plans were being finalized for the installation of a new mast for the 2m packet cluster at the DeMontrond car dealership and volunteers were needed to help hoist the 450 pound mast into position. Contest Chairman Dale Martin KG5U was seeking team members for the upcoming NAQP- SSB, and NA Sprint CW and SSB events. DX Chairman Buzz Jehle N5UR reported that the FR/F6KDF/T Tromelin DXpedition was pounding into Houston on 12m long path, and some members had worked them on 10m as well.

Twenty years ago this month August 1990: The August meeting was held at Gabby's BBQ on north Shepherd. KE5IV (now W5AAC) and N5RP reported the final Field Day score of 12,266 points, just

missing the 2A all time record by 83 Q's. We managed to make 1550 CW Q's, 2583 SSB Q's, plus 900 bonus points. N5RP said "tempers are back to normal, we all love each other again, dirty clothes are washed, and in some cases burned"! A big thanks to Bob Burns W5SJS for letting us use his Brenham ranch for FD once again. Repeater Chairman Jim Lane N5DC said we would be moving a new antenna to One Houston Center to avoid some of the intermod problems at Greenway Plaza. We planned to continue using the Greenway site as an alternate repeater or for digi use. Sid Leach K5XI wrote a great report on the multi/single TDXS team effort in the WRTC contest with Tom Taormina K5RC and Rick Niswander K7GM from Sid's station. Plans were being made for TDXS participation in the upcoming Houston Ham-Com to be held November 9th with calls for volunteers to help organize the DX and Contest forums. DX Chairman Bob Walworth AK5B (now N5ET) reported that a good way to check propagation to ET, 4W and 7O part of the world was to check 14.290 at 02:30Z and listen for our very own Chuck Coleman K5LZO/MM region 1 who was on his first ship board assignment as a radio officer. As luck would have it on a ship bristling with 35 antennas, Chuck had use of a 35-foot vertical on the tallest

mast fed by a Harris KW. In other DX news, the ZS1 Penguin Island operation was over and the League had approved documentation for the 1S0XV and 7O1AA DXpeditions.

Thirty years ago this month August 1980: The monthly meeting was held at the Marriott Brookhollow, with happy hour starting at 6PM and dinner at 7:30PM. A surprise program was presented by Bill Eckenrode W5SG. Bullsheet Editor Tom Taormina K5RC laid out plans for TDXS participation in the Houston Ham-Com conventions for 1980-1983, with members running the DX and Contesting forums, and special programs for planning, organizing and winning Field Day. ARRL had approved Houston as the site for the 1983 ARRL National Convention. Leading up to that, we managed to snag the Texas State Convention for 1981, and West Gulf Convention for 1982. Calls went out for volunteers to help man the TDXS hospitality suite during those conventions, and to gather up your QSL cards for our annual display of all DXCC countries (current and deleted) plus club member cards. K5RC also gave a report on the results of voting on the March survey that covered a range of topics on club focus and direction.

Contest Chairman's Report by Cookie Cooke, K5EWJ

July was not a great month for contesting. I did not receive any member reports of contest activity. It seems that everyone was tired out from Field Day which was a lot of fun this year even though the scores were a bit less than last year. This week end, Aug 7 & 8 was the Ten-Ten Summer QSO Party and several members made an effort, but poor conditions on ten meters kept the scores down. I have not had any reports as yet, the contest has only been over about 3 hours but the rumors that I have heard is that the top stations had a little over 100 contacts.

The results of the 2009 CQWW SSB contest were reported in the August CQ. HC8A in Galapagos was first in the world for single operator with 14,987,592 points. Top multi operator station was AO8A with 24,644,952 using just two transmitters. Top USA was K1LZ with 6,265,620 points. Top USA multi operator station was K3LR with 19,419,972. Member K5ZD/1 came in #5 in USA Single Operator with 4,005,534. W5PR scored best in area 5, single band 28 MHz with 36,360 points. K5EWJ was second place in all-band, high power for area 5 with 382,658 points. Interesting that N5DO in Alpine scored 587,860 with low power for area 5, more than K5ER, first in area 5 high power with 559,721. NR5M was 6th place in the USA and 1st in area 5 for multi-multi with 7,160,074.

We completed station licensing for the Cavalla Historical ARC with receipt of vanity call N5BPS. I am continuing to work on the antennas for the USS Stewart.

Contests coming up:

Aug 14-15 Worked All Europe CW Contest

Aug 21-22 North American SSB QSO Party, New Jersey QSO Party

Aug 28-29 YO DX Contest, SCC RTTY Championship, Ohio QSO Party

Sept 4-5   All Asian SSB Contest

Sept 11-12 Worked All Europe SSB Contest

Sept 25-26 CQWW RTTY DX Contest, Texas QSO Party

Programs, Dxpeditions and Stuff de Cal WF5W

From the V.P., Programs:

We are going to See the Tran-Star site this month. That should be very interesting. Joey is going to give us the grand tour.

From the DXpedition chair:

Finalized the plane ride and the license stuff for the YN2 CQWW/CW November trip (K5KDJ, W5PF,WF5W,K5WAF and possibly W5MJ).

And almost have the 8P6 trip for March 2011 done (W5PF, K5WAF, WB5IUU and WF5W). (same time Keith, NM5G, and co. are going to Nicaragua.)

Rotuma trip (3D2) scheduled for June 2011 is still in some slow progress. (W5MJ,W5PF,WF5W) The Government in Fiji is working very slowly, but we have a contact there who is our advocate (3D2AA) so hope springs eternal. It will be a challenge, NO electricity, No hotel, Sleep in sleeping bags in a lean-to, mosquito netting (have to bring our own). Generator must be purchased in Fiji to take along. No regular transportation to or from the island.
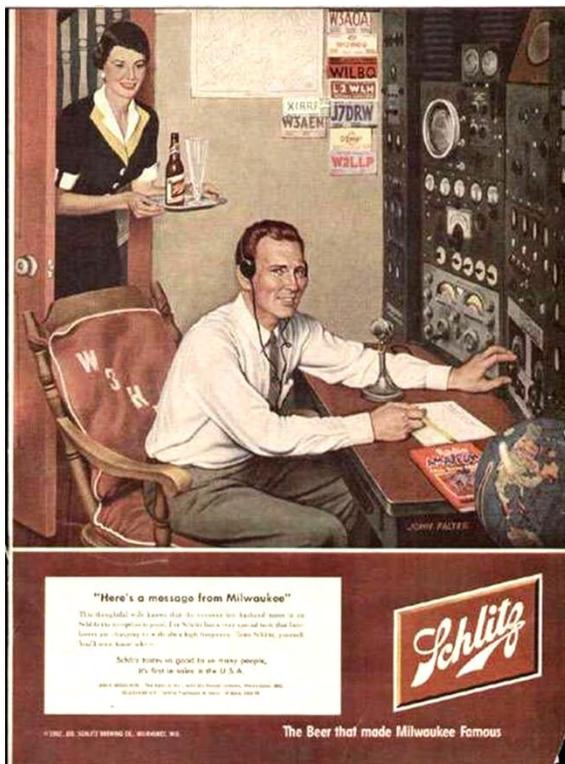
IF it works as we hope, 3D2AA is going to come along to swim and visit.

We are crossing our fingers.

From the QRP shack :

Got the K1 up and running, boy what a rig, have worked about 25 countries so far (including ZL,KH, all over Europe and Russia) and piles of stateside. In fact haven't had the big radio or the amp on for some 2 months. QRP is fun!!!!!

That's' it from the Whitehouse

Cal WF5W

Initial Impressions of the FlexRadio 1500 de Doug WB5TKI

While wondering around the Daytom Hamvention this year I stopped by the FlexRadio booth. My last (and only) foray into Software Defined Radio (SDR) had been to build a Hendricks FireFly QRP CW kit. For whatever reason (probably my inexperience with winding tiny toroids) the results were less than satisfying. But Flex has an excellent reputation for quality products and at Dayton they were debuting their new Flex-1500 QRP SDR. The specs were attractive — all mode, 160 - 6 meters, 0.05 - 5 watts output. One thing that I particularly liked was that they bypassed the need for audio cables and a high-end audio card by doing the A/D conversion in the radio and using a single USB cable to connect to the computer. And then there was the front panel display on the monitor — WOW did it look good. The price point was right, too, so I got my name on the advanced ordering list and waited. And waited and waited. Then in mid-July I got confirmation of shipping, and a day later the rig showed up.

Installation

I put Anderson Powerpole con-

nectors on the power cable

and plugged it into my RF Projects SLA Power-Pak battery, installed the software and drivers and then started up the Power SDR software. The software is in beta, and the CD that came with the radio was version 2.0.5, which was super-

ceded by 2.0.6 and then 2.0.7 within the span of a few weeks. The Flex folks are very active

on their message boards and maintain have quickly responded to reported bugs.

I would recommend downloading the manuals and software before ordering if you are not already familiar with the Flex radios and SDR in general. The can be found [here](#). The radio uses 1/8" stereo plugs for phones and key, and RJ-45 mic connector. I found that the Yaesu MH-31 microphone from my FT-857 worded just fine. Audio power is fine for headphones or self-powered speaker. The Flex-1500 has a built-in keyer, or you can use an external keyer or straight key. It has a BNC antenna connector, as well as BNC transverter connectors. It also has something called a Flexwire Peripheral Interface Bus which makes available audio and digital and control lines through a DB-9 jack.

Operation

I plugged in a lightweight pair of headphones, turned on the rig and then fired up the software. By the way, it is important to start up the rig before the software, since the rig is

Initial Impressions of the FlexRadio 1500 (cont.) de Doug WB5TKI

not seen by the software until it appears on the USB line. The software starts up with the radio in the "Off" position. There are a number of setup options that need to be set before starting the radio, especially surrounding the Audio and DSP settings. These are explained in the Quick Start guide (also available for download) and in the enclosed Errata sheet. The software puts a fair amount of load upon the CPU, and PowerSDR displays that information in the lower left portion of the dashboard. This should never hit 100%. I'm using a dual core 2.8 Ghz machine with 4 GB of ram, and my cpu usage usually varies between 15% and 45%. I'd like to use this rig with a small netbook, but I'm not sure that it has the horsepower.

So how does it perform? Receiver appears to be very clean and sensitive. I have on occasion switched to another programming running on the computer and the audio starts motorboating. Switching the PowerSDR On switch off and on resets whatever got corrupted. Not a big problem, but I have seen someone else on the message board report this as well. SSB transmitted audio reports have been very good. I found the internal keyer to be essentially useless due to latency (time lag) in the audio. I will try reducing the buffer size for CW to see if that helps. Otherwise using my trusty old MorseMachine on CW works fine. There are several ways to tune the radio. One can left click and drag on the display (I like to Panadaptor), or one can use the mouse wheel, or move the cursor under one of the digits in the frequency display and use the mouse wheel, or finally a couple of companies make USB physical tuning knobs for us old folks who like to turn a dial.

The Bottom Line

I like this radio, and it is all that I have been using since it arrived. I've made lots of CW and SSB contacts with it. As with any new product it has some glitches to be worked out, but since so much of the operation is based in software it is much easier to upgrade than a traditional rig. So give it a try. You can download the PowerSDR software and try it out in demo mode to see whether you like the interface. I still like to spin the knobs on the traditional-style rigs, but I think that SDR is the wave of the future, particularly as computers become more and more powerful. And the Flex-1500 is a great way to step into the future of ham radio. I may get one of those USB physical tuning knob, though.

Texas DX Society Boardmembers

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VP Membership	Bob Mennell, WB5IUU	bmennell at consolidated.net	
VP Programs	Cal White, WF5W	cwhite314 at sbcglobal.net	
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How to reach US

On the World Wide Web **http://www.tdxs.net**   email address: **k5dx@tdxs.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 August

Jim Lane - N5DC

Evie Lane - W5XYL

Frank Wyatt - KC5M

Richard King - K5NA
George Wagner - K5KG

Bill Wibker - WI5P

Kirk Kridner - KV5Q

Randy Thompson - K5ZD

Brent Levitt - NT5D

Eric Silverthorn - NM5M

Trey Garlough - N5KO

Please notify the Editor if I have missed anyone.