

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- Fill Up the Air Waves
- Short Skip
- Honor Roll Deadline
- CQ WW 160m CW Contest
- Proposed Budget
- DX Contests
- Frank McGonigal, W6DSQ, SK

How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call Jason Amos at (256)963-6833

Fill Up the Air Waves

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

A low sunspot count does not mean a cessation of HF propagation, as recent 160 meter contests show. It does mean we may have to use our imaginations to challenge ourselves: to play the radio game with the hand we're dealt.

A solar minimum is not a blight upon the entire radio spectrum: impishly, it concentrates on HFers. That leaves us 160m (and it seems 80m performs very nicely many nights as well), the world above 50 MHz, and those many occasions when despite the macroscopic dip in our 11 year calendar, there are good days.

A paucity of 15m, 12m, and 10m log entries over the past year or so, plus the help and encouragement of N4KG, added 160m to my capabilities. I am so encouraged by the Stew Perry and CQ 160m CW contests that I may become bold enough to give the CQ 160m phone contest a try later this month. Those of you with a 160m column devoid of calls on your WAS and DXCC sheets, but with a tree (or as in my case, a neighbor's tree) can duplicate this success. Bandwidth percentage-wise, 160m is a more astounding expanse to explore than even 10m or 6m, and right up there with 80/75m.

Another approach to slaying the sunspot

dragon is to move beyond HF in frequency. "What about DX?" you say. Take a cue from KC5ACR, who has WAS on VHF/UHF and is closing in on his DXCC, according to recent ARRL Letters. His secret? Antenna height. KC5ACR is International Space Station expedition 12 commander Bill McArthur. Some might say he has an unfair advantage, but he's certainly resourceful!

Active bands elbow-to-elbow with QSOs is a great show of the readiness of the amateur community to communicate, and a powerful deterrent against spectrum-grabbing. It is difficult to defend ourselves against the notion that our spectrum could be more effectively used if we don't fill it. For some of us, a good rag-chew is just as satisfying as a new country (maybe that's stretching the point), but others gravitate toward the thrill of contests or breaking DX pile-ups.

As a way to promote increased activity, CQ Publications has three new awards — see W4UR's article "Some New DX Challenges Available for 2006" in January's LongPath for explanation. These provide a mechanism for formal acknowledgement of accomplishments not al-

Fill Up the Air Waves, cont'd on p. 2

Antenna Optimization using MultiNEC/EZNEC and MMANA

Program by Tom Homsley, N4WBS

Last month's program showed us the ropes of EZNEC. This month, N4WBS covers more tools for our antenna modeling arsenal, building on EZNEC basics to perform optimizations based on various criteria. Tom will also introduce MultiNEC and MMANA. Be there with questions, tips, and techniques.



The LongPath Staff

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Mike Maples, K4ADK

Jason Amos, KD4BJW

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Jared Cassidy, KQ4VT

Meeting started at 19:00 local time.

Tom welcomed our visitors Jerry Montgomery, Jane Schartau, Kevin Hibbs, Steve Bell, Peggy Bell, Lloyd Barnett and Hans Schautz.

Discussed DX Worked by the group with some interesting stores shared.

Minutes from the November meeting were approved.

Jason gave the treasures report as \$2786.11 on deposit and some dues had been collected. Note that dues are now payable. Also Jason made note that everything was in order from the previous years Treasure.

Tom mentioned the Christmas Party and location from the previous month. Tom mentioned the new officers as they appeared in the Jan 06 LongPath.

Tom also presented the DXer of the Year Award to Tim Pearson. Some discussion of it being the Craziest DXer of the year with the trip to California to work that illusive last one.

Tom mentioned having some calendars with important dates marked and passed them around.

New Business:

Membership application accepted for former member Lloyd Barnett, W4RFZ. Welcome back Lloyd.

Ed Clark motioned to Adjourn and Barry Johnson seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason-KD4BJW

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Fill Up the Air Waves

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ready handled by other awards. This is a powerful incentive for those of us with spare space on our walls, and we hope the bands become filled with award seekers.

All hams have exhibited initiative in getting licenses in the first place. Let's not forget we can challenge ourselves to achieve goals peculiar to our individual desires and capabilities. Here are a few individual challenge ideas, and how I could respond to them:

- New modes. I've never run AM phone, RTTY, packet, SSTV. I have the equipment to run them all.
- New bands. While meaningful 80m and 160m coverage have only recently been added to my RF arsenal, I have only a handful of 6m QSOs to my credit, despite numer-

ous recent openings. I plead laziness.

- WAS—I forgot about WAS endorsements when I got my CW. What about band endorsements, QRP, SSTV, digital modes, and all the others? KH6 and KL7 are DX, after all. (They're really DX for me on 160m!)
- Starting Over. What about getting my first 100 countries again, but at this point in the solar cycle? 52 of my first 100 are on 15m and 10m. That would be a real challenge!

Ask yourselves what you can do to fill up the airwaves. Then get out there and do it. You and future hams will be glad you did!

73, Tom, KG4CUY

ARRL International DX (CW) Contest This Month

One of the major CW DX contests will take place this month during the weekend of February 17, 18, and 19. It's the ARRL's International DX Contest, and a great opportunity to pick up some new DXCC entities. The contest begins at 0000 UTC on Saturday February 18 (1800 CST Friday evening) and ends at 2359 UTC (1759 CST) on Sunday, February 19. The companion SSB version of the contest will take place the weekend of March 3, 4, and 5. See the ARRL's website for additional details and rules, which were also published in the December 2005 issue of QST.

Archive DXpedition Information

One of the helpful sources of reference information concerning prior DXpeditions can be found on Bernie McClenny's "Daily DX" website, at www.dailydx.com/dxpeditions.htm. It lists many DXpeditions that have taken place in recent years, along with links to their individual websites. If you're trying to recall some specific information about a rare DXCC entity you've worked in the past, this might fill the bill. While you're at it, you might consider subscribing to Bernie's DailyDX or WeeklyDX newsletters. In these publications, Bernie (W3UR), who also authors the regular "How's DX?" column in QST, provides some very up-to-date information about current DX activities and those that are soon to take place.

Hurricane Relief Effort – Part Deux

Following comments that appeared in the November 2005 issue of QST, the February 2006 issue chronicles some additional experiences of amateurs who volunteered their time and services to provide communications and other emergency assistance in the aftermath of last summer's hurricanes which devastated the Gulf coast. Greg Sarratt (W4OZK), Alabama Section Manager, offers some personal reflections on his own experience, and there is also a list of some of the many amateurs (including some NADXC members) who provided volunteer assistance.

Dayton Hamvention Approaching

After having turned the calendar over to a new year we now realize that the 2006 Dayton Hamvention is now just about 3-1/2 months away. If you're planning to attend the annual "extravaganza" scheduled for May 19-21, but haven't yet reserved lodging accommodations, better hurry. Time is flying by faster than we realize!

Other Operating Award Options

For those interested in "competitive" operating activity, but who are a bit frustrated by the cyclically lower level of DX activity, why not consider one of the

many aspects of the ARRL's Worked All States (WAS) award program. In addition to the basic WAS certificate, other specialty WAS awards and endorsements are also available. Chasing some "domestic DX" might be a good way to maintain a more active operating routine and keep your level of on-the-air activity higher. Complete information about the WAS award program can be found on the League's website at www.arrl.org/awards.

Support An Injured Ham

Many of you may have read in the national news media that the sole survivor of the recent Sago coal mine disaster in West Virginia is a licensed amateur, Randy McCloy (KC8VKZ). As a gesture of concern and encouragement for him as he continues to recover from life-threatening injuries, please consider sending him a get-well card. His mailing address is: Randy McCloy, P.O. Box 223, Philippi, WV 26435. I'm sending Randy a card . . . how about doing the same yourself? You never know how much a small but thoughtful expression of support like that can mean to a person in distress, especially when it comes from a stranger who shares a common interest.

73 es gud dx . . . de W4UR

Those of us who enjoyed the "Hopalong Capacity" humor from the "Apple Slices" website (Joe Fairclough's Weekly Reader from the JHS 22 radio club) should note that the joke was actually the product of Michael Best, WD4DUG,

who does the "Apple Slices" website. Michael has a new joke there every week. It's worth the trip! The "22 Crew" site can be found here:

<http://home.triad.rr.com/michaelbest/>

Chuck, N4NM

[Check out Week 49, 2005—ed.]

Honor Roll List Deadline

As reported by Mike Maples, K4ADK

This is a reminder that the deadline for the next Honor Roll list is rapidly approaching.

In order to show in next list that will appear in August 2006 **QST**, you must be current on the DXCC Honor Roll as of March 31, 2006.

Applications must be postmarked no later than March 31, 2006.

In order to qualify for the DXCC Honor Roll you must be within the numerical top 10 of the overall entities on the DXCC List. There are 335 current entities on the DXCC list, making the minimum level for the Honor Roll 326 current entities. (Deleted entities do not count towards this level).

Wall plaques are still available for anyone who is currently on the Honor

Roll. (If you were previously an Honor Roll member you can still order the wall plaque for this achievement). See the DXCC website for the latest order form. (www.arrl.org/awards/dxcc).

73 es DX!

Bill Moore NC1L

DXCC Branch Manager

CQ World Wide 160 Meter CW Contest

As experienced by Tom Russell, N4KG

The CQ WW 160M CW Contest is an annual event that takes place on the last full weekend of January each year from 0000 GMT Saturday (Friday evening in the USA) until 2400 GMT Sunday. In this contest, everybody is allowed to contact everybody. QSO points are awarded based on location: 2 points for same country QSO's, 5 points for other countries on the same continent, and 10 points for contacts with stations on other continents. Multipliers are the sum of the 48 continental states plus Washington D.C., Canadian Provinces, and DXCC Countries (not counting USA and Canada). Early claimed scores, breakdowns, and comments can be seen on <http://lists.contesting.com/pipermail/3830/> Click on 2006 January / subject to receive an alphabetized list by contest name and participant callsigns.

Long Distance Propagation on 160 Meters is the most variable and least predictable of the amateur bands below 30 MHz. It is 'mostly' confined to the hours of darkness with some interesting enhancements that **sometimes** occur during the twilight periods at sunrise and sunset. Peaks may also occur during the middle of the evening with NO propagation at sunset or eastern sunrise. During low sunspot activity, domestic propagation can continue for several hours past sunrise or several

hours before sunset. Bottom Line: You just have to 'be there' when the openings occur (or watch for the Packet Spots, sometimes even from other continents!) "Fickle" is a good way to describe 160M Propagation.

The vast majority of activity was centered in Europe and North America with most stations making most of their contacts on their own continent. This year, propagation between Europe and North America seemed to peak the night before the contest and again in the last hour before the contest. Fortunately, propagation remained 'fair to good enough' to allow many DX contacts to be made 'over, under, and around' domestic activity with good basic stations (i.e. a KW feeding single element vertical, dipole, or loop antennas). Often a European station and North American Station would be 'running' on or near the same frequency. Example: CT3FN was running Europeans 100 Hz below K4ZGB in ALA. (Sorry for the QRM Tom). Narrow CW filters and special receiving antennas such as Beverages, EWE's, or K9AY Loops are a plus for hearing DX stations but many DX stations were readable on transmitting antennas. N4NO worked 40 countries using a shunt fed tower, NO special

receiving antennas, and NO packet!

DX Propagation Friday night was fair to good to Europe and North Africa from most of the Eastern and Central states. Most of N4KG's DX contacts were made between 0300 and 0800 GMT the first night in 51 Countries, 48 States, and 10 Canadian Provinces. European signals peaked between 0500 and 0630 GMT and N4KG was able to 'run' Europe up on 1877 (to get a clear listening frequency) for 30 minutes at the end of that peak. It was noted that MANY Europeans were spotting / working each other above 1850 KHz.

Saturday night was noticeably down to Central Europe from Alabama but remained good along the East Coast. Sunday evening was also good on the East Coast and in W8/9 but poor in Alabama. Interestingly, Western Europe was weaker than Central Europe on Friday night but reversed on Saturday night. ON4UN described conditions as POOR all weekend and his super-station was never really 'loud' here in Alabama. N4KG picked up VT and ND to complete all 50 states and another 6 countries Saturday night. Most W/VE contacts were made using 100W.

Continued on p. 5

One N4KG Hypothesis states that "There are 'never' two good nights in a row on 160M". This weekend's activity shows that hypothesis may not always be correct, but it is still true often enough to give rise to the notion that 160 Meters is the band that many DX'ers "Love to Hate!" In spite of the frustrations, working over 50 countries in one evening on 160 Meters is quite a Hoot!

LongPath Ads

are available at New Year's introductory prices. Want to buy, sell, or give stuff away? Contact Tom in the advertising department at

duncant1@ds-s.com or 705-2147 (w)

Ask for multi-issue discounts.

Results from some Alabama participants are as follows

Call	QSO	VE/W	DXCC	Hours	Score	Station
N4KG	479	59	57*	13.3	210K	100W / KW Inverted L East, GP West, Beverages
N4NO	408	53+/-	40			KW to shunt fed 90 ft tower / beam NO RX ants
K4SAV	636	56	24	20	130K	KW to Inverted Vee at 50? ft
KY5R	235	49	32	11		KW to Inverted Vee at 70 ft + NE Beverage
KG4CUY	137	41	2	6	13K	100W to 140 ft Inverted L w/GND Rod / NO radials

N4KG multipliers included

All 50 states + Wash. DC, VE1 / NS, VE1 / PEI, VE2, VE3, VE4, VE5, VE6, VE7, VO1, VO2

NA / SA C6 CO HI KG4 KL7 KP2 KP4 V2 V3 VP9 XE ZF PJ2 (only SA)

EUROPE CT CU DL EA EA6 EI ES F G GD GJ GM GU GW HA HBO I IT9 LX OE OH OH0 OK OM ON OY PA SM S5 SP T9 UA UA2 YO YU Z3 9H

AFR / AS / OC CT3 EA8 V5 7X / ZC4 (only Asia -NEW) / KH6 (only Oceania - ZL was active)

NADXC Officers

President: **Tom Duncan**, KG4CUY duncant1@ds-s.com or 256-539-7544

Vice President: **Bob DePierre**, K8KI depierre1@comcast.net or 256-534-8163

Secretary/Treasurer: **Jason Amos**, KD4BJW kd4bjw@arrl.net or 256-963-6833

Director: **Mike Maples**, K4ADK mmaples9@comcast.net or 256-534-6563

Director: **Vic Holland**, K4RVH k4rvh@arrl.net or 256-721-9106



IRCs for Sale
By Jerry Rossano, N4JR

I'm QSL manager for a few DX stations and I have about 50 IRCs I'd like to sell for \$1.25 each. They are the new, large IRCs.

Anyone interested may email me at n4jr@hiwaay.net. I hope to make it to your March meeting.
73, Jerry, N4JR

ARRL 4th Call Area QSL Bureau
"R" Letter Sorter
Jerry Rossano, N4JR
798 CR 350
Hollywood, AL 35752

2006 NADXC Budget Proposal
by NADXC Officers and Directors

Below is the proposed budget for 2006. For comparison, last year's budget and actual figures are also shown. Please review these figures, and be ready to discuss the budget at the February meeting. A vote to accept the budget, with potential modifications, will be held following discussion.

	2005 Budget	2005 Actual	2006 Proposed	Notes
General				
Income				
Dues	785.00	755.00	755	
Contributions		10.00		
TOTAL INCOME	785.00	765.00	755	
Expenses				
Reproduction & mailings	50.00		25	
Web site upgrade	100.00	105.84	75	
Misc	100.00	82.80	100	
Awards	150.00	116.52	125	
Repeater	100.00	123.62	100	1
Packet Cluster	200.00	82.80	150	2
DX Sponsorship	100.00		200	3
Programs	150.00	87.32	100	
TOTAL EXPENSES	950.00	598.90	875	
General Net	-165.00	166.10	-120	
Hamfest Banquet				
Income				
Tickets (55@\$25)	1375.00	1392.00	1440	4
TOTAL BANQUET INCOME	1375.00		1440	
Expenses				
Meals (55@\$18)	990.00	1017.45	1020	
Speaker Travel	200.00	176.00	200	
Door Prizes	100.00	100.27	100	
Misc	25.00	100.00	100	
TOTAL BANQUET EXPENSES	1315.00	1393.72	1420	
Banquet Net	60.00	-1.72	20	
TOTAL NET	-105.00	164.38	-100.00	5

Notes:

- 1 - No carry over; \$ 30 earmarked for power
- 2 - \$ 117.20 carry over; \$ 30 earmarked for power
- 3 - Includes \$ 100 carry over
- 4 - 2005 actuals were 48 tickets @ \$ 29; 2006 estimate is 48 tickets @ \$ 30
- 5 - In summary, our 2006 budget spends \$ 100 of the \$ 164.38 gain from 2005.

XE International RTTY Contest (RTTY), 80-10 meters

Feb 4, 1800Z to Feb 5, 1759Z
Exchange: RST & Serial No. or XE state/district
See page 99, Feb. QST

CQWW RTTY WPX Contest, (RTTY), 80-10 meters

Feb 11, 0000Z to Feb 12, 2400Z
Exchange: RST & Serial No.
See page 99, Feb. QST and <http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/>

RSGB 1.8 MHz Contest (CW only), 160 meters

Feb 11, 2100Z to Feb 12, 0100Z
Exchange: RST plus Serial No. (& UK district)
See page 99, Feb. QST

ARRL Intl. DX Contest, (CW), 160-10 meters

Feb 18, 0000Z to Feb 19, 2400Z
Exchange: RST plus State/Province; DX send RST plus pwr
See page 88, Dec. QST

CQWW 160 Meter Contest (PHONE), 160 meters

Feb 25, 0000Z to Feb 26, 2400Z
Exchange: RS plus State/Province/DXCC Entity
See page 102, Jan. QST and <http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/>

REF French Contest (PHONE), 80-10 meters

Feb 25, 0600Z to Feb 28, 1800Z
Exchange: RS plus Serial No.
See page 102, Jan. QST

UBA (Belgium) Contest (CW), 80-10 meters

Feb 25, 1300Z to Feb 26, 1300Z
Exchange: RST plus Serial No.
See page 102, Jan. QST

ARRL Intl. DX Contest, (PHONE), 160-10 meters

Mar 4, 0000Z to Mar 5, 2400Z
Exchange: RS plus State/Province; DX send RS plus pwr
See page 88, Dec. QST

OTHERS:

Dutch PACC Contest

1200Z, Feb 11 to 1200Z, Feb 12

FISTS Winter Sprint

1700Z-2100Z, Feb 11

Asia-Pacific Spring Sprint, CW

1100Z-1300Z, Feb 11

RSGB 1st 1.8 MHz Contest, CW

2100Z, Feb 11 to 0100Z, Feb 12

Russian PSK WW Contest

2100Z, Feb 24 to 2100Z, Feb 25

CQ 160-Meter Contest, SSB

0000Z, Feb 25 to 2359Z, Feb 26

DARC 10-Meter Digital Contest

1100Z-1700Z, Mar 5

RSGB Commonwealth Contest

1000Z, Mar 11 to 1000Z, Mar 12



Mr. DX Contests, N4NM

AGCW QRP Contest

1400Z-2000Z, Mar 11

Dates & times often change or are misprinted in the journals; beware.

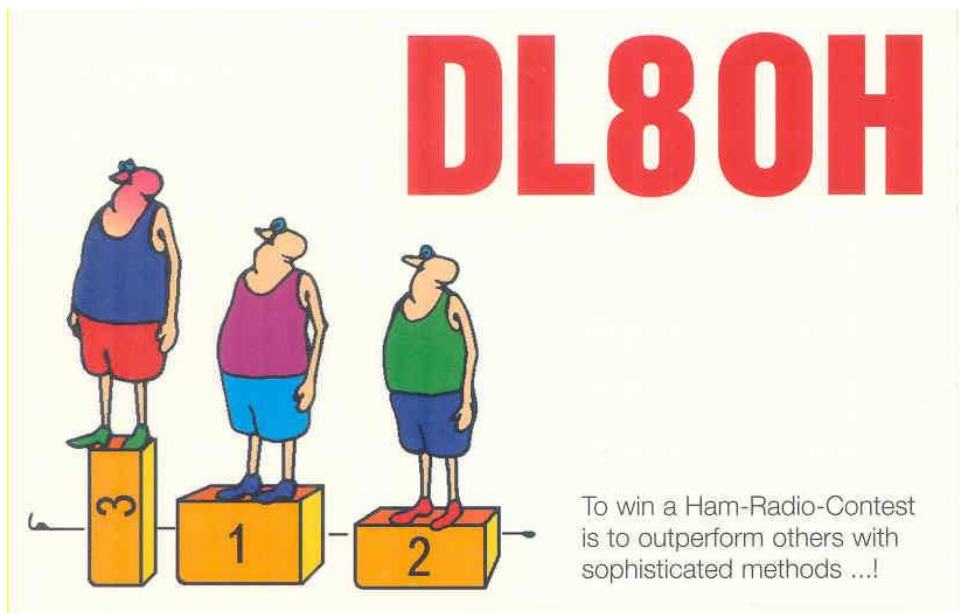
Chuck, N4NM

Unusual QSL Card

By the LongPath Staff

This card was received by Tom Russell, N4KG. We're not sure which contest's winners this depicts, but it is timely given the impending Winter Olympics. Clearly all three participants are thinking outside the box, but participant 3 made the most of his box. Maybe the red nose is a hidden advantage.

To have your unusual QSL card appear in the chronicles of the NADXC, just ferry the card or facsimile thereof to the LongPath QSL desk. We'll take care of the rest.



Frank McGonigal, W6DSQ, SK

By the LongPath Staff

Long-time NADXC member Frank McGonigal, W6DSQ, passed away over the February 4th weekend. Frank lived in Prospect, TN, but worked as a civilian Army employee in Huntsville. He was present at most NADXC meetings until recently, and authored the LongPath DX News column.

Visitation is at the Bennett–May Funeral Home, 931-363-0828, in Pulaski, TN between 6:00 and 8:00 pm Tuesday, February 7th. The service will be held at 2:00 pm Wednesday. The club has sent flowers.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Frank's family.