

The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- Contester, DXer, and Rag Chewer
- Short Skip
- DX Banquet
- Psychological Testing
- DX Contests
- Hamvention Forums
- For Sale
- Proposed FD Site

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

The Contester, the DXer, and the Rag Chewer

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

Hams who actually get on the air may be categorized into rag-chewers, contesters, DXers, and combinations of the above. I imagine myself to be a combination, and early in my ham career assumed everyone else was.

A lesson in this matter was delivered once when I heard a station calling CQ on a favorite 40 meter QRP frequency in the midst of a contest. I stopped searching-and-pouncing for a while to answer his call. After a few exchanges, I said I heard him calling through all the contesters, and thought his intrepid spirit deserved a QSO. The other fellow said politely he wasn't a contester, and that contesters obliterated the QRP frequencies. No doubt I was one of the recent culprits.

He certainly had a point—many a time I've been QRMD in the CW portion of the bands by RTTY, and on 40 meters by area I phone, but that's "them". He referred to other CW operators—"us"! Being a QRPer, most other contest operators could pound his signal into the noise floor, but if he had been running the legal limit, would contesters take umbrage at a rag chewer usurping their part of the band? I suspect so.

The ham school of hard knocks has also taught me the distinction between DXing and contesting. As a neophyte (I guess "rank amateur" would be inappropriate) DXing and contesting seemed to have a lot in common: the running station sent an optimistic signal report

and maybe another short tidbit, and on rare occasion, his call, while the search-and-pounce station returned the same signal report lie, added his own tidbit, and if in a polite mood, a 73 or TU. After embarrassing myself once or twice by equating these exchanges in the DX and contesting environments, I began to sense — if not understand — some subtle difference.

All this goes to show there are hams of different stripes, and the new ham eventually learns the nuances, and perhaps begins to categorize himself. Here is the great pitfall: latching on to only one category before you have the experience — hours in front of the rig — to make an informed decision.

Let's take contesting as an example. The first contest I remember was CW WW WPX SSB, a month or so after I was licensed. Back in those days 10 meters was actually open for business, and there were contesters where a mere tech plus could work them. Imagine my surprise to learn these contesters were not especially interested in a nice rag chew when 59 and a number would do. Fortunately, I got to work my first field day before my next solo contest, and learned plenty about contest protocol. I also learned that both rag chewing and contesting were fun, and that each had its own set of rules.

This experience with contesters only sunk in so far. When I encountered my first DX station,

The Contester, the DXer, and the Rag Chewer, cont'd on p. 2

A Slingshot, Wire, and a Tuner

Program principally by Tom Russell, N4KG

Hear about a multi-band antenna you can build on the cheap. We'll cover supports, tuning, modeling, and completely unscientific testimonials as to performance. Don't miss it!



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The March meeting of North Alabama DX Club was called to order at 7:00 PM on March 14, 2006.

There were members in attendance. (KD4BJW has the sign in sheet so I can't tally those present) We had one visitor, Ray Smith AB4JI. Discussion about recent DX worked by members included many working the recent Peter I expedition, 3Y0X.

Vic K4RVH, standing in for Jason KD4BJW, gave the treasurer's report stating the funds on deposit amounted to \$3106.13.

Minutes of the February 2006 meeting were approved as published in the Long Path.

No membership apps were received in the previous month. Members were also reminded that dues are currently due and those not yet having paid are likely to soon receive their last and only written reminder in the mail.

General discussions included the published update of circumstances around the brief KP5 expedition, recent new solar predictions, and Barry W4WB's recent acquisition of an Icom IC-7000 along with his possible opera-

tion during an upcoming trip to Ukraine. Also noted was KD4BJW's recent completion of the three Emergency Communication training classes.

In new business, Ron W4VM requested approval for purchasing a relay board PCB designed by Gary N4TXI to be installed on the .30 repeater to facilitate remote control and monitoring. After a brief discussion and motion was made and carried to fund the \$42 cost for the relay board.

Field Day planning is beginning and the tentative location this year is the Space and Rocket Center if concerns for sufficient space are resolved. Tom KG4CUY will use his email distribution list from last year to communicate info relative to FD.

Meeting was closed at 7:26 PM and followed by a program from John N5DF on circuits to measure RF power and SWR.

Respectfully submitted,

Vic K4RVH, substituting for Jason KD4BJW while he works at resolving newly discovered harmonic impact at home, his new daughter Christen.

The Contester, the DXer, and the Rag Chewer

(continued from p. 1)

it as an FG on 40 meters. At the top of the hour, I heard FG calling CQ. Figuring this was fair game, I launched into one of my customary rag-chewing exchanges. The FG responded with a polite combination of Q signals, French, and a 73. As I QSYd for my next conquest, I could hear murmurs of "lid" through the ether, despite that fact I was working CW.

Lack of protocol notwithstanding, I made the amazing discovery that contesting and DXing both yield new countries. Eventually, I stumbled upon this same technique for snagging new band-countries, and am on the verge of testing this method for band-country-

modes. My hopes are high.

My advise to the new or newly-reactivated ham is to broaden your horizons. If I had to choose from among DXer, contester, and rag chewer, I'd call myself a rag chewer, but you can bet that doesn't keep me off the air during a contest, or out of the DXpedition pile-ups. I've even chewed the rag with a few contest and DX powerhouses (generally when they were desperate), discovering real operators live there, with both ends of the QSO ending up none the worse for wear. Try it. You'll like it!

73, Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

New Technology Breakthrough – A Progress Report

A year ago, *Short Skip* reported news of a scientific discovery that appeared to have the potential to totally change the design of radio communications equipment. Research in the field of viscous fluid cavitation indicated that solid state electronic devices could be replaced by microscopic tubular containers filled with a new and mysterious plasmatic liquid. Low power level signals would be manipulated by a process called synchro sinometric equitension, and higher power level signals by quadrature lipoid interossitation. Unfortunately, and in spite of its promising beginning, further development of this concept has now been delayed due to the inability of the Halb Affe - Haesslich Atem (HA-HA) Society, a renowned German organization, to raise additional funds. Hopefully, we'll have better news to report next April.

Is Morse Code Really Outdated?

The "Correspondence" section of the April issue of QST included an interesting comment by Steve Wilson (KØJW) concerning the argument made by many that Morse Code is an outdated communications mode and should be eliminated. Specifically, he noted that the statistical summary of QSOs made by the 3YØX DXpedition showed that approximately 50% of all the DXpedition's QSOs were logged on CW com-

pared with about 45% on SSB, the next highest percentage mode. The aggregate stats are not consistent on a continent-by-continent basis, but regardless of how you slice it CW still has a huge following. Maybe Morse Code is not so outdated after all – you betcha!

A Special Moment in History

A unique and significant moment in history recently occurred, but likely went unnoticed by most of us. At exactly two minutes and three seconds past one o'clock last Wednesday morning, April 5, the time and date could have been identified as "01:02:03 04/05/06." How about that?

ARRL Approves 3YØX for DXCC Credit

The ARRL's DXCC Desk recently approved the 3YØX DXpedition to Peter I for DXCC credit. A couple of other DX operations have also approved. See the League's web site (www.arrl.org) for details.

FCC Still "Mum" on Eliminating Morse Code for All Amateur Licenses

According to the ARRL, recent conversations with the FCC have produced no indication as to when the Commission will issue a Report and Order following its NPRM&O proposal last July to elimi-

nate Morse Code as a testing element for all classes of amateur radio licenses. The League speculates that later this year we may hear something. In the meantime, we wait and watch . . . tick-tock, tick-tock.

First Vanity Callsign Renewal Dates at Hand

In May 2006, the first of the official "vanity" callsign licenses issued ten years ago by the FCC will expire. If you're among that group, better prepare to submit your renewal application and your renewal fee. The FCC introduced vanity callsign licenses in May 1996, and established initial fees for issuing them. The current fee for issuing or renewing a vanity callsign for a ten-year term is \$21.90, although the Commission has recently proposed a reduction of the fee to \$20.10. If you obtained a specifically requested callsign prior to 1996, the renewal fee is not required because the vanity program and related fees were not yet in effect. If you need to renew a sequentially issued (i.e., non-vanity) callsign license, no renewal fee is required. There's lots more information about the vanity callsign renewal procedures available on the ARRL website. Fred Maia (W5YI) also has written an excellent article on this subject that appears on page 50 in the April issue of CQ magazine. It's good reading.

73 es gud dx . . . de W4UR

Back from Peter I and with plenty of stories to tell, Bob Allphin, K4UEE will be our Hamfest DX Banquet speaker. Bob was scheduled to be last year's speaker, but the Peter I postponement allowed Wes Lambole, W3WL to step

in as speaker, and give Bob an extra year to practice his delivery.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 19th, at 6:30 pm.

For those of you who would like a

preview of the NADXC presentation, the Birmingham DX Club will feature Bob on May 5th. For details, check out the BirminghamHAM Fest web site,

w4cue.com/fest.html.

FCC Psychological Testing Proposal

As reported by Tom Homsley, N4WBS

Following the outrageous behavior of operators on 40 meters during the 3Y0X DXpedition, the LongPath has obtained an exclusive notice that the FCC is proposing that all amateur radio operators pass a psychological test before being granted their license. "This is an attempt to clean up the airways and eliminate "spectrum rage" that is running uncontrolled on the airways" says Chief Spectrum Police Captain

Emil Heisseluft of the FCC Enforcement Bureau . Professor Heisseluft is working with the Lauton Institute Dictorate preparing the question and answer test that everyone will eventually get to see. This test will be translated into Italian for use by the Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni (Italian Communications Authority) since some of the most egregious epithets were posted on

the DX packet system by operators in that country. For example,

de IK7MCJ: why do you stop to make the pig on 7023?

de I1WXY: cops are worst than the idiots all them have the brain fired from their mother.

Saga of the Twin Brothers

By the LongPath Staff

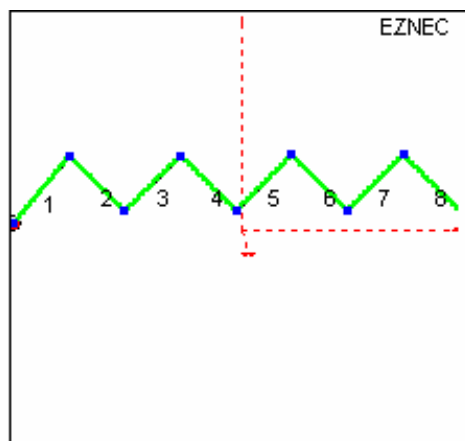
It was long ago, but not really very far away. Identical twin brothers were born on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, at the precise moment of the great Hispaniola temblor. One rolled down hill toward the Haitian coast, and the other, toward the Dominican coast. Their mother was lost in the quake. The Haitian was shortly discovered by his Polynesian father Ehi and his sister Sis, and the displaced Beaucoup de Dits family took up residence on the coast. He was named Mal Chance. Across the island, the Dominican was adopted by Tom and "Mom" Muchas Dahs, who named him Felix.

Young Felix always had an eye on adventure, and at 18 joined the Dominican navy. On tour in the Black Sea, he left for shore leave in Sebastopol, on return to mistakenly board a river ferry which took him up the Danube to Bratislava, where he lived under the alias Bohumil, and took up dairy farming. Cows being perpetually surrounded by flies, he was eventually bitten by the ham bug, and became OMOMOO.

During the Duvalier era, Mal Chance secretly listened to American broadcast stations at night on a bimetallic detector he made from two 16th century Spanish coins which had washed up on the beach during a storm, and so learned English. For a while, these sta-

tions came in loud and clear, but eventually, salt spray buildup inside the tin can he used as the resonant circuit raised the frequency he could receive until it got to the 11 meter band. Here again were voices he could understand.

Meanwhile Bohumil's farm prospered, and he had to build more corrals for his cows. Ornamental bamboo farms had become the rage in Slovakia, catering to rich Austrians, Czechs, and others to the north of the Carpathians. Bohumil bought some bamboo to make new corrals, and got the idea these nice long poles might make great supports for that new antenna design brewing in the back of his mind. He threw together the design below, which he dubbed "the multi-band periodic double inverted W".



Mal Chance had by this time found gainful employment in the sugar cane fields. Between having all the sugar he could eat, and his proximity to a usually quiet lagoon in which shoals of fish hid to escape sharks patrolling just offshore, he had plenty to eat, at no cost. He was therefore able to save his meager wages, and eventually had enough to purchase the "Hey Good Buddy Special" radio he learned about from his two coin, one can receiver. It was springtime, when every young man's thoughts turn to antennas. While a nice salt-water ground plane screamed for a vertical, Mal Chance held to the 11 meter notion that bigger is always better. From the same schedule 120 XS sugar cane he used to build the hut he lived in with Ehi and Sis, Mal Chance fashioned four long supports, stringing between the tips wire he scavenged from bales of cane. He disdained the catenary shape of the wire between supports, and his aesthetic drove him to tie the unsupported wire centers between the poles to short pieces of left-over cane stuck only a few inches into the sand. Thus was Mal Chance's antenna born. He called it somewhat optimistically "the multi-band periodic double inverted M". True to his 11 meter ethic, he assigned himself a call, HH5SIS, in honor of his sister.

"Saga of Two Brothers", cont'd on p. 5

No stickler for legalities, Bohumil amused himself communicating with anything on the air. A Soviet military convoy had inadvertently deposited a Ulyanov model 126L14 transceiver when it became snowbound one winter. Bohumil hosed off the pair of 4CX25000s when he dug it out of the ice the next spring, and it played well with the #4 wire from which the inverted W was fashioned. Hams were his first choice for QSOs, but utility stations, broadcasters, and even Soviet over-the-horizon radars were also on the menu. The impressive 126L14 covered 100 kHz through 50 MHz.

It was a good time for sunspots when Bohumil discovered 11 meters. As the wary reader by now no doubt suspects, Bohumil and Mal Chance did indeed find each other on CB channel 3. The path between the M and W antennas was virtually bullet-proof between 23:00 and 01:00 every day for months. After a few QSOs, the two realized they had more in common than antennas. They recounted in brief their lives histories, and found they both were born on the same day - the day of the great Hispaniola temblor. Bohumil mentioned he was a native Dominican, and that his given name was Felix. The truth was out: they were twins.

Years passed during which they held their daily schedule. Mal Chance heard through the US 11 meter grapevine about a new ham allocation in the 60 meter band. With an impending downturn in the solar cycle, the brothers felt low-band coverage would be mandatory. Felix's rig already covered 5 MHz, and the Mal Chance thought the Big Buddy Special probably did even when the knob said "Channel 3". The antenna was the problem.

Felix had always had a mathematical side, and often wiled away the hours between milkings reading great works

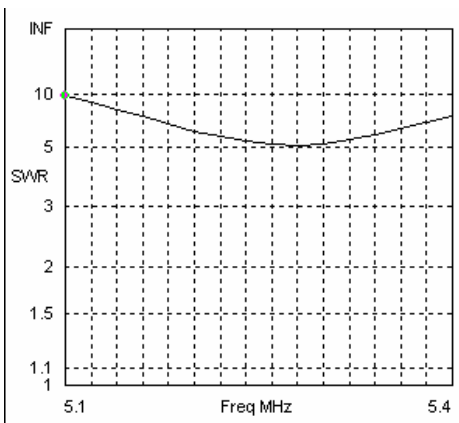
LongPath Ads

like KU4J's on page 7 are available to one and all. Want to buy, sell, or give stuff away? Contact Tom in the advertising department at

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

Satisfaction guaranteed, or we refund the listing fee.

of long departed French mathematicians. Pondering the antenna problem, it didn't take him long to plot the loci of improbability for both his multi-band periodic double inverted W, and his brother's inverted M. Amazingly, these intersected around 5.2 - the point at which SWR and frequency in MHz are equal. See below.



This was clearly good news for our brothers, but there was a catch. The $f=SWR$ bandwidth of these antennas being very narrow, the brothers would have to move from full-carrier AM to CW. No problem there - with calls like OMOMOO and HH5SIS, Felix Muchas Dahs and Mal Chance Beacoup de Dits were destined for great CW accomplishments on the 60 meter band. In the years to come, they would achieve special recognition, especially outside the US, for virtually defining DX on 60 meters.

NADXC Officers

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

DX CONTESTS for April include:

Meta DX Contest, (ANY mode), DC – Daylight

Apr. 1, 000Z, to 999Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus anticipate score

(If you match your prediction, you may submit it as your score in any subsequent contest)

Do NOT see N4NM for details.

EU Spring Sprints, (CW), 80-10M

Apr. 8, 1600Z to 1959Z

Exchange: Both calls, Serial number, your name.

See page 100, Apr. QST.

Japan Int'l. DX CW Contest (CW), (80-10M)

Apr. 8, 0700Z to Apr. 9, 1300Z

Exchange: RST plus CQ zone; JAs send RST plus prefecture #

See page 100, Apr. QST

QRP ARCI Spring Party (CW), 160-10M

Apr. 8, 1200Z to Apr. 9, 2400Z

Exchange: RST plus State/Province/ DXCC Country and ARCI # if member

See page 86, Oct. QST

EU Spring Sprints, (SSB), 80-10M

Apr. 15, 1600Z to Apr. 11, 1959Z

Exchange: Both calls, Serial number, your name.

See page 100, Apr. QST.

Holyland DX Contest, (CW/SSB), 160-10 M

Apr. 15, 0000Z to 2359

Exchange: RS(T) and Serial # or Israel District

See page 101, Apr. QST

ES open HF Championship, (CW/SSB), 80 & 40 Meters

Apr. 15, 0500Z to 0859Z

Exchange: RS(T) and Serial number

See page 101, Apr. QST

YU DX Contest (CW & SSB), 160-10M

Apr. 15, 2100Z to Apr. 16, 0500Z and Apr. 16, 0900Z to 1700Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus ITU zone

See page 101, Apr. QST

EA QRP Contest, (CW), 80 – 10 Meters

Apr. 15, 1700Z to Apr. 16, 1300Z

Exchange: RST plus A(= QRP), B (=QRPP) plus M(=EA QRP member)

See page 101, Apr. QST

DX Columbia Intl. Contest, (CW/SSB), 80 – 10 Meters

Apr. 22, 0000Z to Apr. 23, 0000Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus Serial Number

See page 101, Apr. QST



Mr. DX Contests, N4NM

SP DX RTTY Contest, (RTTY), 80 – 10 Meters

Apr. 22, 1200Z to Apr. 23, 1200Z

Exchange: RST plus Serial No. plus SP province

See page 101, Apr. QST

Helvetia Contest, (CW/Digital/SSB), 160 – 10 Meters

Apr. 29, 1300Z to Apr. 30, 1259Z

Exchange, RS/T plus Serial number (Swiss add canton abbr.)

See page 101, Apr. QST

OTHERS:

Yuri Gagarin DX Contest (CW)

2100Z Apr. 8 – 2100Z Apr. 9

ARCI Spring QSO Party 1200Z,

Apr 8 to 2400Z, Apr 9

UBA Spring Contest (SSB)

0600Z – 1000Z Apr. 9

Continued on p. 7

Unusual QSL Card

By the LongPath Staff

Pierre is about to feel the brunt of the rolling pin as the XYL rhetorically asks if he knows what time it is. The card's recipient, N4KG, surmises the fashionable slippers double as guards against the floor-mounted power supply.

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.



Dayton Hamvention Antenna Forum

Reprinted from The Daily DX

(From March 31, 2006 Daily DX, vol. 10, no.59; reprinted with permission.)

The Dayton Hamvention is just under seven weeks away. K3LR, Tim Duffy, will be the Antenna Forum Moderator. The Antenna Forum will take place on Friday May 19th from 1 to 3:30PM at Hara Arena. The following presentations will take place.

"Another Way to View Propagation Predictions for DXing and Contesting" by N6BV, Dean Straw.

"Design, Construction and Maintenance of Antennas and Towers for Storm Survival and Long Term Reliability" by W3LPL, Frank Donovan.

"Construction of the Largest SteppIR

Yagi Stack in the World at K9LTN" by NOAE, Brion Gilbert.

"Tips, Tricks, & Tools of the Trade" by K4ZA, Don Daso

"The BIG Antennas at Contest Station VE6JY" by VE6OH, Mitch Mitchell, and VE6JY, Don Moman.

For Sale

Rohn 25AG3 - Top Section

Rohn AS25G - Rotator Plate

Rohn BP25CG - Concrete base plate

10' Mast

All in mint condition (stored inside).
Current new price \$300+

Will sell for \$100

Contact Tim-KU4J 653-9959

DX Contests

(continued from page 6)

JIDX CW Contest 0700Z,

Apr 8 to 1300Z, Apr 9

RSGB 80m Club Championship (SSB)

1900Z-2030Z, Apr 12

YLRL DX to NA Contest (SSB)

1400Z Apr. 11- 0200Z Apr. 13

TARA Skirmish (Digital)

0000Z- 2400Z Apr. 15

RSGB 80m Club Championship

(Data),

1900Z-2030Z, Apr 15

RSGB 80m Club Championship (SSB)

1900Z-2030Z, May 1

ARI Intl. DX Contest,

2000Z May 6 - 1959 May 7

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

Chuck, N4NM

Proposed Field Day 2006 Site

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY



The drawing below shows the proposed field day site at the Space and Rocket Center. We are in the final stages of negotiation with the Space and Rocket Center on using this property, so it is not yet a certainty. Many thanks to Space Camp's Melissa

Snider, KI4CWU, for her tremendous help.

We intend to run 5A as usual with the GOTA station at the top right. Your input regarding station locations, or anything else, will be appreciated. The

more who take a trip to the site before field day, the better. Send your comments to Tom Duncan, KG4CUY, or Kevin Bardon, KG4RCP.

Field Day is the weekend of June 24th and 25th, 2006. See you there!

