



The LongPath

A North Alabama DX Club Publication

Special points of interest:

- A Dying Art Form?
- This month's program
- K4BFT FD Results
- FT5XO from NA
- Nominating Committee
- DX Contests
- Short Skip

How to Join

- * Come to a club meeting;
- * or send in an application by mail (form on www.NADXC.org)
- * or call Vic Holland at (256)721-9106

Morse Code—A Dying Art Form?

Anonymous

I am a CW operator . . . and proud to be. But, for more than five years now there has been a gradual though persistent attack on the justification for requiring a proficiency in international Morse code in order for individuals to obtain amateur radio licenses. The latest bullet aimed at this target was fired on July 19 by the FCC, which has now proposed totally eliminating code proficiency as a test requirement for all U.S. amateur radio licenses. Does this mean the inevitable end of CW as a widely used mode of radio communications? The fact that it might prompts me to record this short history of my own relationship with CW / Morse code, which has now spanned more than fifty years.

When I was first licensed in 1955, code testing was a necessary and accepted part of the examination requirements for issuing all classes of amateur licenses that carried HF operating privileges (i.e., Novice, General, and Amateur Extra). Testing requirements then were set at 5 words per minute for Novice, 13 words per minute for General, and 20 words per minute for Amateur Extra. (Two other classes of licenses that had previously included a required code proficiency test – Conditional and Advanced – were no longer

being issued at that time.) Although it required some effort to learn “the code,” I developed the ability to meet the rather modest speed requirement without too much difficulty. After all, 5 wpm was really not very fast. I passed my Novice examination, realizing that this was just the point of entry into the world of amateur radio. I would have to jump over more licensing hurdles down the road.

My Novice “ticket” had a term of just one year and was non-renewable. It only permitted me to operate CW (using crystal controlled transmissions) within small frequency segments on 80, 40, and 15 meters, and restricted my transmitter final amplifier input power to a maximum of 75 watts. In spite of these rather limited privileges, being able to actually communicate by radio with other people many miles away using Morse code was a huge thrill for a 14 year-old kid. That thrill came with a price, though, since I knew if I didn't upgrade to a higher class of license before my Novice license expired, my tenure as an amateur radio operator would be rather brief.

Upgrading from Novice to General class required passing a 13 wpm code test (and a more complicated written examination). Achieving that

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P5/KA2HTV

Program by Barry Johnson, W4WB

DX from North Korea is a function of more than F-layer propagation. Getting an individual ham on the air involves negotiating a maze of planning, transportation, customs, politics, and bargaining. There is even the occasional technical issue. Hear Barry tell about it. The business meeting begins at 7:00 pm, the program around 7:30.



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The July meeting of North Alabama DX Club was called to order at 7:00 PM on July 12, 2005.

There were 16 members in attendance. Once again the attendance sheet went missing. Sorry. Visitors in attendance were Steve KD4TFN.

Vic K4RVH gave the treasurer's report stating the funds on deposit amounted to \$2672.83. Expenses from the previous month were \$87.32 for program materials, \$123.62 for a PowerGate to go on the repeater, and \$100 for Ballet Room deposit.

Minutes of the June 2005 meeting were approved.

No membership apps were received in the previous month.

Tim KU4J displayed his #1 DXCC plaque recently received.

Tom KG4CUY gave report on Field Day activities. Tom also expressed his thanks to all those that helped with FD and particularly Tom N4KG and Chris KF4MMF.

Announcement that Bill Moore NC1L from League HQ will not be available to attend the banquet after all was made. Other League officials will be available but no one from HQ capable of field checking cards would be present. It was expected that the Leagues new COO, Harold Kramer WJ1B, would be in attendance.

Tom KG4CUY announced he was seeking volunteers to be on the nominating committee in preparation for year end elections. If you are interested please get in touch with Tom.

Tim KU4J reminded everyone to send their station pics for an electronic slide show to be displayed at the hamfest.

Members were reminded that banquet tickets were still available for \$29/ each.

The meeting was closed and followed by a program led by Michael KF4BOG on setting up web sites.

Respectfully submitted,
Vic K4RVH

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Hamfest Update

The LongPath Staff

This year's Huntsville Hamfest features enough activity to make even the crustiest old timer sit up and take notice.

Harold Kramer, WJ1B, is the League representative—don't miss his forum presentation, "ARRL's Long Term Strategy", at 13:00 in Room 1.

The Young Ham of the Year award will be presented to our own assistant section manager for youth, Rebekah Dorff, WG4Y, on Saturday afternoon. Many a

NADXC member has been a ham since Methuselah was a youngster, but how many had their DXCC at age 10?

The DX Banquet dinner menu is a fresh garden salad followed by top sirloin and chicken, with double chocolate layer cake for dessert. Hear Wes Lamboley, W3WL, tell us about the Microlite Penguins FT5XO DXpedition. Wes will also present a forum at 10:00 on Saturday in Room 2 titled "Five DXpeditions of the Year".

K4BFT Field Day Results

The LongPath Staff

K4BFT Field Day 2005 final results have been sent to the ARRL, thanks to Bill Walker, KX4V. The Big Fat Turkey

posted 2161 CW QSOs, 2583 SSB QSOs, and 810 bonus points for a total claimed score of 14,620.

NADXC Members Listed on DXCC Honor Roll

The August issue of QST included a list of those amateurs who held DXCC Honor Roll status as of March 31, 2005. The following twelve NADXC members were among those listed: N4KG, KU4J, KØBS, W4NKI, K4XH, N4NO, W4NK, N4VN, WA4OEJ, KR4OJ, K4KFH, and N4VB. (If I've overlooked anyone please let me know.) Congratulations to you all for holding such a noteworthy status in DXing. The rest of us will just have to try harder to catch you. It should also be noted that since the date of the QST list, Tim Pearson (KU4J) has received his "No. 1" Honor Roll plaque, recognizing his confirmation of QSOs with all 335 current DXCC entities. He joins Tom Russell (N4KG) as a member of that elite group.

Daily DX or Weekly DX Is Worth a Look

For a couple of years now I have subscribed to *The Weekly DX*, a weekly e-mailed newsletter published by Bernie McClenny (W3UR). Many of you recall Bernie's having been the guest speaker at our NADXC DX Banquet a couple of years ago. He is also a world class DXer and author of the "How's DX" column that appears each month in QST. Bernie's *Daily DX* and *Weekly DX* newsletters are recognized by DXers around the world as up-to-date and authoritative sources of information regarding all kinds of DX activities. It isn't my purpose here to promote Bernie's newsletters to other NADXC members, but based on my own favorable experience, some of you might also find them interesting. To learn more about them, and for information about how you can get a free "trial" look at them, check out Bernie's website (www.dailydx.com).

Motorola Offers New BPL Option

In the midst of the continuing angst among amateurs that BPL technology will be deployed and potentially cause severe HF/VHF radio interference comes news of a possible glimmer of hope. In May, Motorola announced a different concept of Access BPL data transmission - called "Powerline LV." Simply put, Motorola's approach would involve introducing broadband data only on the low voltage (LV) power lines from distribution transformers to customers' homes instead of carrying it on long runs of medium voltage (MV) lines running above ground throughout many residential developments. If proven feasible, this might eliminate much of the risk of interference associated with MV line BPL transmission. Other characteristics of the proposed Motorola system have been positively received by the ARRL, although no pilot systems have yet to be placed into operation. By no means should we think the risk of potentially severe BPL interference has now been eliminated. Motorola has simply demonstrated that other less interference-prone Access BPL technology might be available. There will likely be much more published comment on this subject in the weeks and months ahead, so stay tuned.

Kudos to N4KG - Again!

Once again Tom Russell (N4KG) has demonstrated his contesting prowess. In the 2004 CQ WW DX SSB contest last October, Tom recorded the highest score of all U.S. participants in the QRP category, and third highest score among QRP participants world wide. Congratulations to Tom. We'll wait with interest to see how he did in the CW version of 2004 CQ WW when those results are published.

Ten-Tec Announces the ORION II

Ten-Tec has just announced the introduction of the ORION II, the second generation of its top-of-the-line HF transceiver. According to the company's website (www.tentec.com), the new radio should be available for initial delivery in October. Production of the original ORION will be discontinued at the end of the summer. If you're interested in more information, check the website.

Another Peter I DXpedition Attempt in the Works?

Word is out that the twice postponed 3YØX DXpedition to Peter I has now been rescheduled for early 2006, probably in January or February. Details are expected to be published in early September. Maybe the third time will be the charm for Bob Allphin (K4UEE) and his intrepid colleagues. Let's keep our fingers crossed. The DXpedition's website (www.peterone.com) will have continuing information about the status of the preparations.

Fall/Winter DXing Is Getting Closer

Believe it or not, we're less than seven weeks away from the autumnal equinox! That means it's time to start checking out antennas before the fall/winter months arrive, bringing with them perhaps some better DX opportunities. Hopefully, propagation conditions will also improve by then, notwithstanding the continuing downward slide we're on toward the current solar cycle minimum. Fall and winter surely couldn't be as bad for DX as this summer seems to have been at my QTH!

73 es better dx . . . de W4UR



"CW", Continued from p. 1

higher code speed at first sounded like a pretty formidable obstacle, but I found that once I got on the air and began exercising my CW operating privileges, it didn't take long for me to become comfortable with my newly learned radio "language." That sense of comfort then led to a gradual increase in code speed, easing the transition to the General class testing requirement. So after building up my code speed, doing some serious studying, and cultivating an intense degree of courage, I took and passed my General class exam about ten months after my first amateur QSO. My "novice" label had been removed and I was now in the mainstream of amateurs.

In the mid-1950s there was no practical need to go beyond a General class license, and most active amateurs were satisfied with reaching that goal. Since you didn't gain any additional operating privileges by upgrading to Amateur Extra class, there was no motivation to develop the necessary 20 wpm code speed proficiency. As a result, most Extra class amateurs at that time seemed to be very experienced CW operators who were fully capable of 20 wpm code, and were well versed in the technology on which the more difficult Extra class written examination was based. My General class license suited me just fine, and resulted in many satisfying hours of "air time."

Then, in 1967 the FCC implemented its "incentive licensing" structure (and resumed issuing new Advanced class licenses). This action resulted in prohibiting amateurs not holding Amateur Extra class licenses from operating in specific portions of several HF bands. General class licensees (like me) who wanted to retain their previously unlimited operating privileges

had no choice but to upgrade to Amateur Extra class. So after several months of concentrated study and effort (especially to increase my code speed), and armed with another load of courage, I took and passed my Amateur Extra class exam in 1968. That achievement (especially mastering a 20 wpm code speed) is still a point of great pride to me, as it probably is to others who upgraded to Extra class in the immediate aftermath of incentive licensing.

In 2000, the FCC implemented the most recent major changes to the amateur license structure, which reduced the number of amateur license classes to three – Technician, General, and Amateur Extra. Also included among the changes was the elimination of the 13 wpm and 20 wpm code requirements for General class and Extra class licenses, respectively. Five wpm became the uniform code speed requirement for all amateur license classes. Many amateurs who had worked so hard to develop a 20 wpm code speed and obtain their Extra class license felt betrayed by the FCC, and that the value of their license had been diminished. Because the "old" Extra class licenses represented a higher testing standard than those based on the new 5 wpm requirement, it was no longer easy to identify the 20 wpm Extras . . . except on the CW bands! Although most "high speed" Extras have long since accepted the FCC's action, some hard-bitten old timers never will forgive the FCC for abandoning the 20 wpm code requirement.

The next major event in the de-emphasis of Morse code as a universally recognized mode of radio communications occurred during the 2003 World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-03), held in Geneva, Switzerland. One of the actions taken by this conference was the adoption of a revision to the international *Radio Regulations*, permitting each country to determine if proficiency in international

Morse code should be a requirement for its own amateur radio licensing. The movement to eliminate code proficiency as a required amateur radio communications skill had taken a world-wide leap. Since then, several countries have already acted to eliminate code proficiency as a licensing requirement.

Now to the latest (and perhaps final) chapter in this evolving story. On July 19, the FCC published a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM), representing a consolidated response to 18 separate petitions it had previously received from various parties, proposing a variety of changes to its Part 97 amateur service rules. Interestingly, among all the issues represented by the petitions, and after more than 6,000 comments had been filed concerning them, the only action proposed by the FCC is . . . "to eliminate the requirement that individuals pass a telegraphy examination in order to qualify for any amateur radio operator license." This means all amateur licenses would become "no code."

In its NPRM, the FCC cites implementation of the WRC-03 international *Radio Regulations* revision as a justification for its proposal. It further supports its position by arguing that the rules change would have three positive effects: (1) it would encourage individuals who are interested in communications technology, or who are able to contribute to the advancement of the radio art, (2) it would eliminate an examination element that may now discourage amateurs from advancing their skills in the communications and technical phases of amateur radio, and (3) it would promote more efficient use of the radio spectrum currently allocated to the amateur radio service. At least that's what the Commission says. Although public comments on the NPRM may be submitted up to 60 days after it is published in the Federal

"CW", Continued on p. 6





"CW", Continued from p. 4

Register, I cannot imagine that the comments filed in opposition to the proposal would prevent its adoption.

By releasing its NPRM, the FCC has officially designated Morse code as an outdated mode of radio communication, no longer a skill necessary to be learned or practiced by U.S. amateurs. Sadly, the evolution of more rapid forms of communication has likely assured Morse code's inevitable disappearance from the ham bands. Modern technology will have succeeded in relegating this once respected radio operator skill to history's landfill. How long that might take . . . who knows?

On a more personal level, the FCC's proposal will also result in the ultimate

demise of a large population of skilled CW operators, who pride themselves on their mastery of what is truly a communications art form. Those of us who have developed, sustained, and used our CW abilities will slowly fade from the amateur radio landscape, leaving the language of dots and dashes to be considered by others as merely marks on paper, conveying no easily discernable intelligence. As we CW practitioners disappear, there is no reason to think there will be others to replace us. We will literally become a dying breed. What effect the absence of CW operators will eventually have on contesting, or on operating awards, or on radio equipment designers and manufacturers, or on the amateur world in general remains to be seen.

For me, Morse code was the first amateur radio operating skill I learned and used. And to this day, half a

century later, it is still my favorite mode of communications. In the world of CW, you can easily distinguish the good operators from those who are not – something that can't always be said with respect to higher technology modes, which often place more of a premium on the equipment than on the operators. For me, communication by Morse code has always been, and will always be, an enduring art form that has provided countless hours of operating enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment. I fully realize that Morse code is of no interest to many current amateurs, and will likely be of no interest at all to future new amateurs. Still, it's just sad to think that future generations of amateur radio operators may never appreciate or experience this wonderful mode themselves. Who am I? I am a CW operator . . . and proud to be! 73.

"Kerguelen" continued from p. 5

the outer circle. The antipode from FT5X is in Southeastern Alberta, near the boundary between Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Montana.

Coordinates for major cities in each VE and W call area were entered into the program atlas and added to the map. It becomes clear that the short path to Canada covers the Northern half of the compass from FT5X while the

short path to the USA covers the Southern half of the compass from Kerguelen Island.

"Kerguelen", continued on p. 8




FT5XO

ÎLES KERGUELEN
 49°30' SOUTH 69°50' EAST
 CQ ZONE 39 ITU ZONE 68 IOTA AF-048

OPERATORS:
 AG9A, G10NWG, HB9A1Z, M0DXR, N6MZ, N0TT,
 SP5XVY, VE3EJ, VK6DXI, W3WL, W7EW & 9V1YC

QSL VIA VE3XN



THIS EXPEDITION WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX FOUNDATION

"NO MORE MR. KILOWATT"

N4KG's 160, 80, 40, 30, 20, & 17m QSL



DX Contests

By Chuck Lewis, N4NM

European HF Championship, (CW/SSB), 160-10 Meters

Aug. 6, 1200Z - 2359Z

Exchange: RS(T) plus last two digits of first year licensed

See Page 85, Aug. QST

TARA Grid Dip contest, (PSK/RTTY), 80-6 Meters

Aug. 6, 0000Z - 2400Z

Exchange: Name plus 4-digit grid No.

See Page 85, Aug. QST

WAE CW DX Contest, (CW), 80-10 meters

Aug 14, 0000Z to Aug. 15, 2359Z

Exchange: RST plus serial No.

See page 85, August QST

YO-DX Contest (CW/SSB), 80-10 meters

Aug. 21, 1200Z to Aug. 22, 1200Z

Exchange: RST and serial #

See page 85, August QST

OTHERS:

SARL HF Phone Contest

1230Z-1630Z, Aug 7

National Lighthouse Weekend

QSO Contest 0001Z, Aug 7 to 2359Z, Aug 8

Keyman's Club of Japan Contest

1200Z, Aug 20 to 1200Z, Aug 21

SEANET Contest

1200Z, Aug 21 to 1200Z, Aug 22

SARTG WW RTTY Contest

0000Z-0800Z and 1600Z-2400Z, Aug 20; and 0800Z-1600Z, Aug 21

YO DX HF Contest

1200Z, Aug 27 to 1200Z, Aug 28

All Asian DX Contest,

Phone 0000Z, Sep 3 to 2400Z, Sep 4

IARU Region 1 Field Day,

SSB 1300Z, Sep 3 to 1259Z, Sep 4

RSGB SSB Field Day

1300Z, Sep 3 to 1300Z, Sep 4



DARC 10-Meter Digital Contest

1100Z-1700Z, Sep 4

All Asian DX Contest (SSB),

0000Z Sept 4 - 2400Z Sept 4

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

Chuck, N4NM

Nominating Committee

By Tom Duncan, KG4CUY

It's that time of the year again! August brings with it not only hamfest, but as the NADXC constitution and bylaws require, the need for the board of directors to appoint the nominating committee.

Elections are held at the October Annual Meeting, and the newly elected officers and directors take office at the December meeting. The Nominating

Committee, in consultation with prospective candidates, produces a list of candidates which is reported to the board in time for publication in the September LongPath, and presentation at the September regular meeting.

Volunteer for the Nominating Committee. You will have a hand in determining the leadership, and thereby the direction, of the NADXC in 2006.

For Sale: Your Stuff!

Members can have their ads placed in the LongPath by simply emailing the Interim Editor at:

duncant1@ds-s.com

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The operating site at Port Jeanne d'Arc is on the North shore of the south-eastern island, overlooking saltwater to Africa, Europe, Asia, and Canada via the short path. The short path to the USA is over land, with mountains in the background to most areas. In addition, the short path to W4 traverses South America adding additional ground reflection loss to the path versus the mostly saltwater path to W1,2,3. These observations may partially explain why signals

were noticeably stronger from the USA, and especially W4, via the Long Path, which benefited from a the saltwater takeoff and path. See the April 2005 issue of the NADXC LongPath for propagation details by band.

A copy of the basic QSL and the group photo QSL are also included. N4KG was pleased to receive confirmation of CW QSO's with FT5X0 on 160 (NEW), 80, 40, 30, 20, and 17 Meters.

On SSB, FT5X0 was only worked (and heard) by N4KG on 40 and 20 Meters, both short and long path. Further interesting information may be found by doing an internet search for Kerguelen and FT5X0. Pictures from the FT5X0 operation may be found at http://www.sn0hq.org/foto/view_album.php?set_albumName=ft5xo&page=2.



The Microlite Penguins. W3WL will fill you in on details at the NADXC Hamfest Banquet.

This Month in Electrical History

The LongPath Staff

1902 — Reginald Fessenden receives a patent for the radio alternator, an electromechanical means of generating continuous wave signals. In the same month, his patent for the heterodyne (i.e., direct conversion) receiver is granted.

1944—J. Presper Eckert and John

Mauchly propose development of the first stored-program general purpose computer. The EDVAC was completed in 1952, a year after the UNIVAC I.

1946 — Howard Aiken and Grace Hopper describe "The Automatic Sequence Controlled Calculator" in *Electrical Engineering*. The largest electromechanical

calculator built to that time, it was eclipsed in 1948 by the all-electronic ENIAC.

1956—George Washington Pierce dies. While at Harvard, where he founded the Harvard Wireless Club, in 1923 he developed the crystal oscillator configuration bearing his name.