

NARS NEWS

The Northwest Amateur Radio Society

Houston, Texas

February 1997

February Meeting: DX QSLing and Recordkeeping

The program for the February NARS meeting will focus on DX recordkeeping and QSLing for DX contacts. Bill Gary K8CSG will discuss his techniques for both aspects, procedures which have been used successfully for over forty years. Often it is one thing to work a DX station in some off-beat location, and something entirely different to get a card confirming the contact. As postal rates continue to race upwards,

QSLing can become an expensive facet of the hobby. Bill will offer some ways to reduce these costs for QSLing many countries.

Bill is a world-class Dxrer himself. He is a member of the ARRL DXCC Honor Role and has worked all countries except North Korea. Bill is the author of the monthly DX News column in NARS News. Don't miss this great opportunity to learn from his vast experience.

Important Dates

Friday, February 21, 7:30 pm – NARS monthly General Membership meeting, Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church – Eyeball QSO's, 7:00 pm

Saturday, February 22, 8:30 am – VE License Exam Session – Tomball Community Center, S. Cherry & Market streets (just South of Main)

Tuesday, February 25, 7:30 pm – NARS Board of Directors meeting, Terra Nova Club House, 5200 Woodville.

Contests:

February 21-23 – YL-OM YLRL CW QSO Party

February 21-23 – CQ WW 160 Meter SSB

March 1-26 – AARL SSB DX

March 15-16 – Bermuda

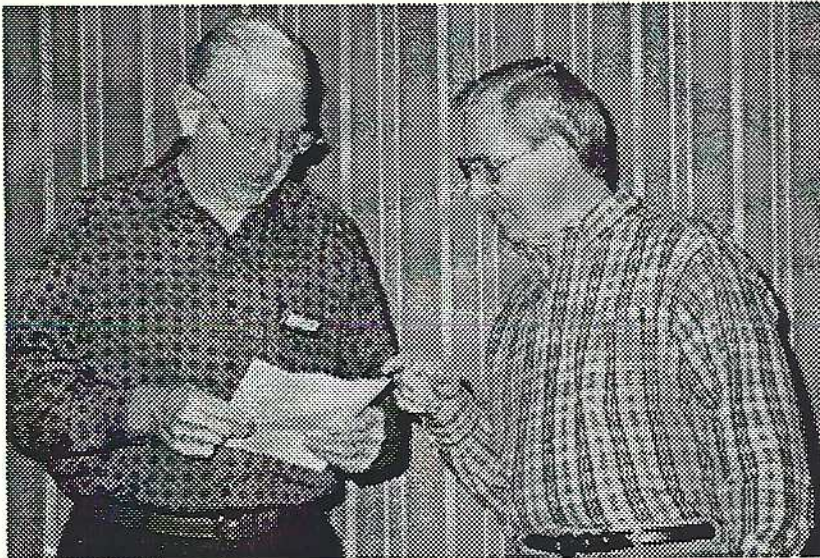
March 29-30 – CQ WW WPX SSB

Notice:

NARS membership dues is \$20 per year, renewable on anniversary of last year's full payment.

NARS News deadline for articles to appear in March issue is Friday, February 28.

Banquet Snap Shots



BREAKFAST

at Victors

4710 W FM 1960

Saturdays

8:00 AM

President's Corner

February 1997

As your new president, the first order of business here is to thank the 1996 NARS board members for their leadership and fine work. KK5LO, N5NXS, K8CSG, WD5DXL, K1OJ, KM5OA, KB5ZXO and KB5WQJ did what it took to make things go well all year. With N5NXS in charge of arrangements, they topped it all off by putting on a fine banquet in January. The Society is fortunate to have five of these guys back as board members for 1997.

Among the highlights of the banquet was the presentation of the NARS Outstanding Service Award for 1996 to K5ZTY. Congratulations Bill.

A big thanks to Houston Amateur Radio Supply, City Electronic Supply, Electronic Parts Outlet, Victor's Delicatessen and Restaurant and Grinnell Fire Protection Systems who supplied nice door prizes for the banquet.

Other big prize winners, beneficiaries of W5PDW's thoughtful generosity, were K8CSG and K5ZTY. K8CSG's Early Bird Hat prize is the envy of many and, it must be said, when worn by the winner, achieves an astonishingly pleasant transformation of an otherwise grim visage. And of the resonator microphone prize now used by K5ZTY, don't we all agree he hasn't sounded better since his eleven meter days?

By the time this is read, the Heard Island DXpeditioners will have gone home. It's a shame that propagation wasn't better, particularly into five land. There was reference to Unheard Island by more than one frustrated operator. Let's hope the solar flux does a real turn-around soon.

Incidentally, for those with Internet access, check out the NARS web page. It's a fine piece of work and offers a variety of links that can access about any place a ham needs to go for info. For example, it took only a few key strokes to find out if a presumed contact was really logged by the Heard Island operator.

Give some thought to what topics you would like to hear about at monthly meetings, places to visit on a field trip as a club group, or learn about in a workshop. You'll have an opportunity to list your thoughts at a meeting soon.

Jim Kirk KJ5X

2425 Augusta Drive No. 38
Houston, TX 77067
21 January 1997

Mr Ken Harlan, KA5AKG
12034 Laneview
Houston, TX 77070

Dear Ken,

I am writing to thank you and the users of your repeater for your help with supporting communications for the 1997 Houston Marathon. One hundred-twenty amateur radio operators plus seven non hams (who drove or navigated the transport vans) provided communications for 137 positions for this marathon. We were organized into seven nets, which used five 2-meter, two 70-cm repeaters, and several simplex frequencies.

This was a notable year for the Houston Marathon. This was the 25th running, there was a new title sponsor, the Methodist Health Care System, and the Marathon was run under the "worst weather conditions we've ever experienced on marathon day".¹ Even so, "everything came off as scheduled and the 'well-oiled machine' performed as expected."²

All amateur radio operators who were on the roster checked in and made their way to their assignments, many of which were exposed to the weather, and all remained at their stations until dismissed by their respective net control stations. Tom McBryer reports that for the Marathon 71% registrants finished, and that 671 of the more than 1100 registered for the 5K run finished. Although there is no way to count those that started, anyone monitoring the Administrative and Transport Nets knows of the many runners who were picked up and returned to the warmth of the George R Brown.

Communications is always important for assuring the safety and welfare of the runners and public at such a large and complex event. It was particularly important to this year's running of the Houston Marathon. Your support is recognized and appreciated by those responsible for its organization.

I shall endeavor to thank each participant personally, but I would appreciate your reading this letter on any nets that use your repeater and publishing this letter in the newsletters of those clubs whose members routinely use this repeater. If you have any questions or comments about this event, please call me at 713-977-9754.

Sincerely,



Carl Hacker, KB5LDY

c. David Hannah, Race Director

¹ Mary Anne McBryer, Methodist Health Care Houston Marathon Newsletter, Jan '97

² ibid.

TRANSTAR TOUR MARCH 1

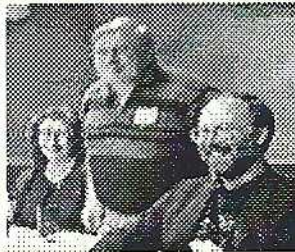
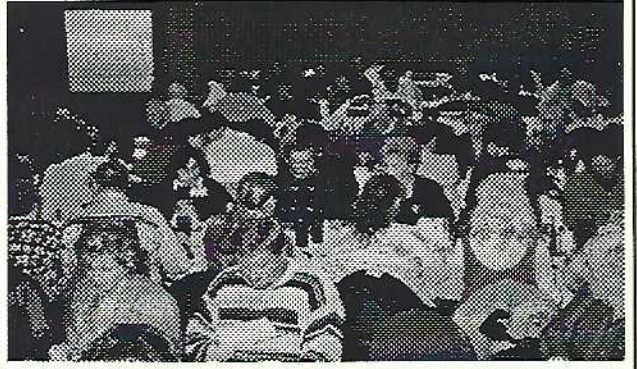
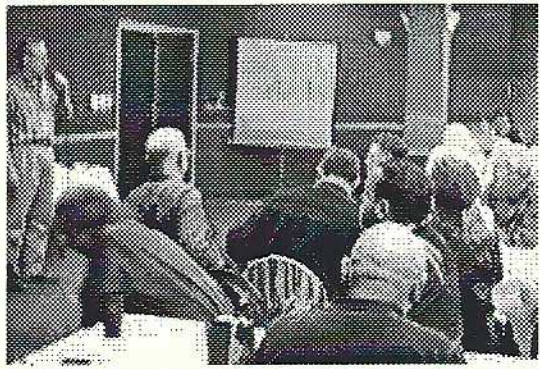
Bob White KF5ZL, Operations Supervisor of the Houston Emergency Management Center and longtime NARS member has agreed to conduct a tour of the Houston Transtar facility, 6200 Katy Road beginning at 10 AM, Saturday, March 1.

The tour of course is subject to cancellation if emergency conditions dictate. Maps showing the general location of the Transtar building will be available at the February meeting. The 146.66 repeater should be monitored for directions and info.

The Transtar building is the city of Houston's new communications center and is splendidly equipped to monitor by video city freeways and to handle emergency communications of all kinds including a room dedicated exclusively to amateur radio communications.

NARS volunteers have manned the HF, VHF and UHF amateur equipment stations under emergency conditions in the past and will likely be called on in the future.

Banquet Photo Gallery



DX News

Don't you ever try to go there, it's to dream of, not to find. The Honor Roll's glory is always, mostly in your mind...

The new year began with the solar flux index at 72, with A and K indices of 3 and 1. Pretty much the same numbers we have seen for most of a year now. The SFI moved up and down a few points, reaching a high of 77 for the month. Poor propagation was a hallmark of this DXpedition (Heard Island), period. The absolute lack of sunspots for over a month implies the bottom of the cycle. Following that period, the gradual improvement in the solar flux index appears to indicate that the upturn has begun. At the end of January the A index was in the teens, not a particularly good sign. We hope we have seen the last of numbers in the sixties for the SFI!

DX Worked: TN7A (Congo Republic); D2EV (Angola); VR6DB (Pitcairn Island); TZ6VV (Mali); D44BC (Cape Verde Is.); 9X4WW (Rwanda); 5V7MD (Togo); TI9CF (Cocos Isl.); OD5NH (Lebanon); VQ9KH (Diego Garcia); XF4CA (Revilla Gigedo); SV9ANH (Crete); TF3GC (Iceland); 4X4FR (Israel); VK0IR (Heard Island—two contacts).

DX Heard: OY9JD (Faroe Is.); V51CM (Namibia); 4F4IX (Philippine Is.); Y11FLY (Iraq); 4X6UO (Israel); RN3QO (Russia); EZ8AQ (Turkoman); S79MAD (Seychelles); 7Q7RM (Malawi); 7X4AN (Algeria); ER5DX (Moldavia); Y11AU (Iraq).

Mike K5NZ reports he worked TN7A for a new country on 40 meters.

The Heard Island DXpedition got off to a slow start at the first of the month. Their plan to leave Reunion Island on Jan. 3 was pushed to Jan. 5 by a strike in France. Ferry crewmen went on strike and the DXpedition ship's crew struck in support. They were worked almost daily (maritime mobile) after they left Reunion and headed straight for Heard. Their planned stopover at Crozet enroute was cancelled due to the lost time because of the strike. Their anticipated startup date on Heard (January 15) was not jeopardized by the late start. First reports of the Heard Island DXpedition beacon appeared on the packet cluster system on January 12, indicating the team had arrived safely.

VK0IR came on the air from Heard on January 14, working Europeans as the morning progressed. K5NZ was one of the anxious listeners. Mike reported a contact with Heard when the grayline came around. The next reports came from College Station where Al, W5CA and two of his DX buddies also claimed to have worked the DXpedition. Many are calling but not making much progress. One wonders how many of the callers can actually hear the

DXpedition station. Signals here have not been notably strong, but can often be read. On Jan. 22 Jim Kirk (KJ5X) called to tell me he had just worked Heard on 20-meters. Within one minute I also had him in my log. Thanks for the call, Jim!

Dick, W5VHN, happily reported he had contacted VK0IR on Heard Island. On Jan. 22 he showed up at the Lunch Bunch brandishing an Internet printout which confirmed that W5VHN was indeed in the log. Nice going, Dick! Later, W5PDW and W5FW reported contacts with Heard. KM5AO confirmed a couple of days later that KJ5X and I were both in the Internet log of the DXpedition. W5MJ was another of the fortunate fellows who worked them. On their last day, K10J walked into his shack and found them on 20 CW, called and worked them. W5BA says he had a couple of broken contacts, but has not checked the Internet log to determine if either of them might be good. Some of the other fellows, mainly those who are antenna-deprived, tried without success to work Heard Island. On the morning of January 27 the operation shut down at 1122Z as the team prepared to depart the island after some 78,000 QSOes.

A leading DX survey reveals the following as the ten most wanted DXCC countries as the New Year begins: North Korea (P5), Heard Island (VK0), Bhutan (A5), Auckland & Campbell Islands (ZL9), Scarborough Reef (BS7), Kingman Reef (KH5K), Andaman Islands (VU4), Kure (KH7), St. Brandon Island (3B6,7), and Bouvet Island (3Y). This provides several opportunities for relatively inexpensive DXpeditions as propagation begins to improve. DXing could again become lots of fun, should these improvements occur. Which ones do YOU need? QSL ROUTES: 5V7MD via AB7BB; 9X4WW via XN5NT; V51CM via WA2JUN; D2EV via DL3KNQ; Y11FLY via KK3S; OD5NH via P. O. Box 80903 Beirut; 4X6UO via WB3CQN; XF4CA via XE1BEF; Y11AU via WB3CQN; VK0IR via W4FRU.

Jim Kirk worked XF4CA (Revilla Gigedo) on the first call from his mobile rig after calling and calling with no success from home the day before. John, W5PDW, reported working V51 (Namibia) and VQ9 (Chagos Islands) for new countries.

The ice storm of January 12 wreaked havoc for some. Many people lost power for varying periods. Others lost antennas to ice and icy limbs which fell. Bill, W5SB, was out of power for some 48 hours, resorting to #12 wires connected to Marion's car battery for powering his radios for the NARS nets. He also lost a pine tree which fell across his housetop.

Jim Smith, VK9JS, had done some notable work in promoting DX in addition to leading

the 198 3DXpedition to Heard Island. Another objective may be nearing fruition. Jim and his Heard Island DX Assn. (HIDXA) have been trying for nearly two years to provide some improved equipment for Mani, the only active ham in the Andaman Islands (VU4). After much frustration and repeated efforts by the HIDXA, Mani has finally confirmed that he has received the equipment shipped by the HIDXA. Many Deserving DXers hope that Mani will begin to appear on the air more frequently and with a more readable signal than before. If so, Jim Smith's efforts may finally pay off for DXers worldwide.

The Andaman Islands are a small group off the east coast of India in the Bay of Bengal. Never easy to work, they have generally been available only when a group of Indian operators mounted a DXpedition successfully. Similarly, the Laccadive Islands (VU7) in the Arabian Sea on the west of India are difficult to work, and are difficult (politically) to take DXpeditions to and then to operate from.

Bill Gary, K8CSG

Special Interest Group (SIG) List

K5ZTY, Bill Stietenroth
893-3901, General Help

W5SB, Bill Denton
281-469-8331, General Help, Antennas

K10J, O J Quarles
281-955-1555, HF, General Help

WA5REJ, Allen Majeski
281-353-8652, General Help

WA5SAJ, Larry McCain
281-469-6709, General Help

W5MJ, Madison Jones
281-350-4330, General Help, CW

K8CSG, Bill Gary
281-537-9240, General Help, DX

KC5EQZ, Bill Rister
281-537-8596, ATV, General Help

K5WNO, Deral Kent
281-548-7476, RS12/13, Satellite

KC5RCC, George Carlson
281-376-8307, Electrical Design, Troubleshooting

KA3BKU, Don Bedell
281-370-6576, Packet

N5BA, Brian Derr
894-5942, VHF

KC5JZO, Bob Argo
281-288-7430, Computer Operating, Win'95

WD5DXL, Keith Dutton
281-351-7683, Computer Programming

W5NKZ, Jerry Smith
444-4491, HF, Advanced OSCAR, Antenna

KB5DTB, Joy Smith
444-4491, HF, Advanced OSCAR, Antenna

N5WIZ, Harry Gage
281-370-7488, Basic Advice - RFI

W5VHN, Dick Rooney
281-288-8424, Satellite

K5GO, Mark Tyler
281-587-0256, Interference

Contest Connection

This is the time of year for all of you to get those antenna projects finished, your key or microphone polished off and hit the air waves. This is contest season. Lots of good contests to enter, just about a contest for everyone. From the XYL-OM contest on Valentine's weekend to the world wide biggies. From 10 meters to 160 meters. From VHF to nose bleed. Now is the time.

Usually I throw my doors open for some select contest but on January 19th I had the occasion to operate in someone else's shack. The ice storm took down several of my antennas so that I could not have been competitive on all bands. So several of us opted to go elsewhere to operate. The shack was actually in the middle of a lumber yard: West Side Lumber to be exact. I'm sure you have noticed the big towers at the corner of 290 and 6. We were invited by Madison Jones W5MJ to the 'Yard' to operate the January edition North American Qso Party. In addition to Madison and myself was Jim KJ5X, Larry WA5SAJ, OJ K1OJ and Millie KC5UTP. Margaret Quarles furnished the Pizza and Gary Lantner KC5HOR was a late nite visitor.

It was kinda nice to operate from another shack. The 'Yard' has a nice compliment of towers and antennas. There is only one permanent radio there. Madison brought the other rig and we assembled a two transmitter multi-operator station for the contest. The power limit was 150 watts so we ran the Kenwood TS 940 and TS 440 bare foot of course. It was tempting to switch on the Alpha that was setting there idle, when the Q rate got down, but no, it remained cold.

Although we had somewhat of a disappointing score, we all had a good time. We had 900+ Q's for

150,000 points. In comparison to the November NAPS operated from my shack, we had 961 Q's for 161,000 points but using only one transmitter. The January edition of The National Contest Journal shows us finishing 7th nationally as WA5DWX in the multi-op single transmitter. Many of the NARS members participated in that one.

Just hot off the press is the results of the ARCI QRP contest. This is the granddaddy of them all in the world of QRP. The Texas Yahoos just blew away the competition in the 1996 ARCI QRP contest. Team 'Texas Yahoos' included Mike W5NN (K5NZ), OJ WA1YIA (K1OJ), Bill K5ZTY and myself WA5DWX (W5SB). This foursome finished first with 2,453,157 points. The second place team, New Jersey QRPeanuts #2 had 961,590 points. Mike finished in first place with a whopping 1,000,932 points. Bill ZTY was third with 828,606. OJ had 566,475 and I finished well down the list, but not last - all this with 5 watts or less. This was my first solo effort on a cw contest. I did mostly hunting and pouncing, but I had a lot of multipliers. I'm ready for the F1 button (CQ contest) next time.

I have a new 160 L antenna that I just put up and have not had too much opportunity to use it. It's an elevated radial type as suggested by ON4UN. The vertical section is about 90 ft and the horizontal section is about 35 ft. I use two 127 ft elevated radials running off through the trees maybe 12 to 15 feet above the ground: no ground on the antenna. It's feed with 100 ferrite beads on the coax at the antenna end. The result was 1.5 to 1 SWR at 1.830 KHZ with no trimming. The initial test showed it to be as good or better than my 160m dipole at 70 ft. The up coming 160 contest will be the proof. I also have

two receiving U's for 160 as well as the dipole.

Try a little contesting. I think you will have a ball. Until next time ... the shack is open.

Bill Denton W5SB
bdenton@tenet.edu

VE Session Results

Six candidates and eight NARS VEs participated in an examination session on Saturday, January 25, in Tomball. Eleven elements were taken, with seven of them passed. One new Extra Class, one new General Class and one new Technician Class amateurs wore smiles upon leaving the testing site. One other candidate received a CSCE for Element 2. VEs participating in the session included Bill Gary K8CSG, Jim Kirk KJ5X, Bill Denton W5SM, Bill Stietenroth K5ZTY, Rudy Novotny KB5ZXO, Larry McCain WA5SAJ, Pat Bement KK5VN and King Waters KK5LU.



by Keith Dutton

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Did you know that NARS is raising funds for a DX Cluster station to augment our digipeater site? Several members have already pitched in and we have about two thirds of the estimated \$650 needed. Also, there have been computer and other equipment donations to reduce the amount needed. Yours truly has offered to host the site remotely from an empty mother-in-law cottage. Sooooo, all we need is a few more donors and we will have the green light to proceed. If you are so inclined, we welcome your donation of \$5, \$10 or \$20.

Please note the business ads on the back page of the News. These firms supplied the door prizes given at the Banquet. If you see one of them you might want to express your appreciation.

What's The Big Deal About Qrp ?

Someone asked me this question on the air a while back. Before I answer the question, maybe I had better explain what "QRP" is, because I don't think the guy that asked the question had a clue. The three letters "QRP" is an abbreviation used in morse code to mean, "Shall I decrease transmitter power?" or "I will decrease transmitter power." Over the years it has been adopted as a moniker by a group of hams that operate at the power levels of 5 watts or less CW and 10 watts PEP or less SSB. I am a QRP'er.

The answer to the question is, "The fun." The radios are small, the power is small, the requirements to get started are small, but the fun is BIG. It is one aspect of ham radio where you can still build your own radio and have one that will perform as well as the commercial rigs. There is always lots of activity in the QRP community. There are operating events to have you on the air several times a week, and a national contest about once a month. There is a QRP convention at the Dayton Hamvention in May each year that starts on Thursday before Hamvention and runs for four days in conjunction with the Hamvention. QRPers are encouraged to build things, your radios and accessories, antennas, test equipment, etc. There are many books on the design and construction of transmitters, receivers and transceivers. If you're not the cookbook engineer type, there are many excellent kits for all levels of building skill, and if burning solder is just not your thing, there are commercially built rigs that have all the bells and whistles.

A couple of times a year, there is a QRP field day besides the ARRL field day in June. It is great fun to take the rig that you put together, hook it up to a battery, put up a portable antenna out in the boonies somewhere and work all the other guys across the country that are doing the same thing. Most of you know the thrill of working a DX station in some far off corner of the world with your commercial radio running a hundred watts or more. You ought to experience the excitement of working that station with a radio that you built yourself using five watts or less. One of the awards that is given in the QRP world is the "Miles Per Watt" award. Divide the distance from your station to the station you worked by the power that you used and get the miles per watt. My first QRP DX contact was with EA8BLV in the Canary Islands, great circle distance of 4667 miles. I did it with two watts on my Heathkit HW-8 on 20 meters. That's 2333 miles per watt. Not much by record book stats tho; in December 1989 WA6YPE and K7IRK used 6 microwatts to make a 218,333,333 miles per watt contact. I'm sure they didn't hold a long conversation at that power level, but it is fun to see how low you can go.

The QRPers have an organization similar to the ARRL. It is QRP Amateur Radio Club International, or QRP-ARCI for short. The ARCI publishes a journal four times a year titled "QRP Quarterly." They sponsor QRP contests, awards, the QRP Hall of Fame, and the "Four Days In May" symposium/convention at the Dayton Hamvention in May. There are many regional clubs which publish their own newsletters and host events during the year. Among them are the Colorado QRP club, Northern California QRP Club, Northwest QRP Club, Michigan QRP Club and Northeast QRP Club. Membership in these clubs

costs from \$10 to \$15 per year and they put out excellent quarterly newsletters. Some of these clubs are responsible for designing and kitting some of the best QRP radios available.

All of the clubs mentioned here sponsor one or more radio contests per year starting in January with the MI QRP QSO Party, ARCI SSB Sprint, ARCI Novice Roundup; February - NE QRP 79'er Sprint, NW QRP Sprint, CO QRP Winter QSO Party; April - MI QRP Sprint, ARCI Spring QSO Party, (my favorite) NOR CAL QRP To The Field; May - ARCI Homebrew Contest at the Dayton Hamvention, ARCI Hootowl Sprint; June - ARCI Milliwatt Field Day; July - ARCI Summer Homebrew Sprint; August - CO QRP Summer QSO Party; September - MI QRP Labor Day Sprint, (my other favorite) NE QRP QRP Afield; October - ARCI Fall QSO Party; December - ARCI Holiday Sprits Homebrew Sprint.

Besides these main event contests, there are smaller contests that go on. On the first Monday of each month there is a Spartan Sprint that lasts for two hours in the evening in which the object is to make the most contacts with the lightest radio gear. The score is reported in Qs per pound. You weigh your transceiver, power supply, keyer, key, antenna tuner etc, divide by the number of contacts you made and figure the number of Qs per pound. This contest is sponsored by the Adventure Radio Society, a backpacking/hiking/camping group. Then there is the Foxhunt on 40 meters. This goes on from the first of September to the end of May. Two nights per week there is a contest to see who can find and contact the Fox on 40 meters.

There are also Novice Foxes that schedule themselves into the weekly schedules, so there could be as many as four Foxes per week. There are prizes at the end of the contest for the Fox with the most contacts, the Hunter with the most contacts and the Novice with the most contacts. Each one will win a QRP radio kit.

To keep up with all of this, you need to be a member of the QRP-L group on the internet Email. If you would like to take a look at it you can subscribe by sending an Email message to listserv@lehigh.edu as follows: skip the subject line, and in the body of the message, on one line, say SUBSCRIBE QRP-L John Doe K5ABC (use your name and call). You will get an intro message and instruction sheet by return mail.

Well, if I've peaked your interest and you are wondering how you can get started with some of this, the easiest thing to do is just turn the power down on the radio that you already have. All radios can be turned down to 5 watts out on CW. Now you're ready and haven't spent a dime. Not much fun was it? It doesn't seem like it's any fun until you spend some money on it does it?

There are lots of kit radios to build. Prices range from about \$75 to \$325. Features range from single band CW transmitters to multi band SSB transceivers. There are kits for antenna tuners, audio filters, frequency counters, keyers, SWR/wattmeters, etc. The kit business is alive and well in QRP.

Some of the companies offering kits are: Oak Hills Research; S&S Engineering; Wilderness Radio; MXM Industries; Ten Tec, Inc.; Emtech; Kanga

USA (British Kits); Small Wonder Labs; and several others that I can't think of right now.

If you are one of those who has the knowledge and ability to design your own stuff, you will be in good company. The clubs mentioned here are full of designers, the QRP-L reflector is full of homebrew discussions, and the annual Dayton Homebrew Building Contest is conducted around a rig designed in a design contest that happens on the reflector. If you don't like to build stuff, there are some fancy commercial rigs to spend money on. You probably have seen the Index Labs QRP PLUS, all band all mode rig advertised in QST, \$695.00. TEN TEC sells the ARGO 566 little brother to the Scout for \$489.00. Then there are the Kenwood, Icom, and Yaesu QRP rigs that were built and sold in Japan for the novice class that have made their way back here on the used market. They run around \$300 to \$450 and can be found on sale lists and flea markets. There are also the goldie oldies from Heathkit, the HW 7, 8 & 9s and the Argonaut series from Ten Tec. Then there are always plenty of built kits for sale on the QRP-L reflector that guys are selling to raise money to buy more kits. Some of these people just like to build and don't care much about operating. You can buy the built, aligned and tested kits for about the same as or sometimes less than the raw kit.

Now that you have a rig, where do you start to operate? The quickest way to get your feet wet is to jump in to one of the contests. I know, your thinking, "I've heard those CW contests and they are way too fast for me." Wrong. You haven't heard a QRP contest. Remember, these guys are builders and tinkerers, not hot-shot operators. They are also the most friendly ops on the band. When you call "CQ QRP TEST", or sign /QRP or answer a QRP call, you will automatically become a member of the fraternity. If you haven't upgraded to general yet, there are many novice/tech+ QRPers in the novice bands. All of the contests have novice class entries. The novice Foxes are a big attraction in the Foxhunt. QRPers don't stay novice/tech+ very long. You will find that all QRPers are Elmers and you will do very well at whatever code speed or level of expertise you start at.

You say that you don't like contests. If you listen on the QRP calling frequencies there is almost always someone calling CQ QRP or signing /QRP to talk to. The QRP calling frequencies are, in mhz: 3.560, 7.040, 10.106, 14.060, 18.060, 21.060 and 28.060. Novice frequencies are: 3.710, 7.110 and 28.110. The 40 meter European frequency is 7.030mhz.

I hope this has given you some insight into the world of QRP. It is kind of an underground society. If you don't seek it out, you never hear about it, but when you get involved, it will keep you busy all the time. If you want to try one of the operating events and don't know where to start, look me up and I will help you get started. If you want to join one of the clubs and start getting the newsletter, I will give you the information. QRP is what Amateur Radio has been all about since the beginning: building, modifying, tinkering with and operating radios. Doing it at 5 watts or less is the challenge that makes it fun and affordable.

72, Bill KSZTY

Two Meter Band Explodes

[This special report from GEARVAKf News Service arrived at the GEARVAKf Bulletin just moments ago.]

Mt. Lishnus Observatory, Mt. Idy, Ohio—In a special news conference just concluded, Dr. Avruell U. Harnishe, Chairman of the GEARVAKf Scientific Studies Committee, announced that the two meter amateur radio band has just exploded. Apparently there has been widespread property damage and injury to hundreds of hams operating on the band at the time of the explosion. Emergency rooms report a high incidence of pelvic injuries due to the popularity of the "shack on a belt" mode of operation. There is also fear of widespread damage to the nations telephone infrastructure, due to the number of mobile stations autopatching home (the blast occurred during rush hour) to obtain grocery lists from their spouses.

The blast came at 5:03 PM EDT and measured about 9.2 on the Richter scale. According to Dr. Harnishe, the rupture was so violent that some pieces of the shattered frequencies actually achieved Earth orbit. Other debris from the massive explosion continues to fall through the ether placing all radio frequencies at risk of serious damage from collisions with two meter band fragments.

A statement issued moments ago by the Federal Communications Commission calls the situation "extremely dangerous." FCC spokesman Ralph R. Spiffie said that the two meter band had been "blown to smithereens throughout the nation and perhaps the world." He warned all radio operators to get away from their radio equipment and stay away until the cloud settles.

"Although no deaths have yet been reported among amateurs using two meters at the time of the blast," Mr. Spiffie said, "I wouldn't be surprised if there were fatalities." Dr. Harnishe told reporters that it was too early to assess the long term effects of the disaster, but it was almost certain that two meters was damaged beyond repair.

"We believe the explosion originated on the West Coast and propagated rapidly eastward," Dr. Harnishe continued. "The blast was so powerful that the shock wave made RF frequencies momentarily visible as it passed thru the air," he said. "The most distressing thing about this tragedy is that it could have been avoided. Five years ago we warned people that two meters was going to blow up, but nobody paid attention; now there is no more two meter band," Harnishe concluded.

In 1991, the Scientific Studies Committee predicted that increased use was raising pressure within the band because more energy was being put in than there was being taken out. At that time Dr. Harnishe explained that sensitive modern receiver circuits required very small amounts of RF to produce a readable 144 MHz signal and were bleeding off very little RF energy. Much more RF energy was being transmitted into the band than was being removed through receivers, so the pressure rose dramatically.

To reduce the pressure, he suggested that all amateur radio operators listen to two meters for at least six months without transmitting. The no transmit rule would have allowed most of the overpressure to be reduced gradually to a safe level. Unfortunately, nobody listened—either to two meters or to Dr. Harnishe. The result is a disaster of such major proportions that it makes the 20 meter band fire of nearly a decade ago pale in comparison.

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Submitted by Madison Jones W5MJ

Thoughts on E-Mail

It seems that around this time of the year I wax philosophical and bow to the pressure to give the editor something to put in our fine publication. Hopefully it is not to drag it down, but to give us all some food for thought.

In our current golly-gee-wiz-bang world we live in, the Internet has brought great fascination. Electronic messaging around the world by just tapping on our keyboard. Web surfing with mouse to see what all in the world is available.

This all has its place, but I think we may want to step back and look at our roots. The American Radio Relay League, our principle organization takes its name from relaying messages by radio. Gosh—We sure have progressed. Now to send messages to our ham friends we plug our phone into our modem, click on our Internet server's icon, hope we get a connection, get to our e-mail server, and send a message, TO A LOCAL HAM A FEW MILES AWAY!!!!

Last night I connected to the club's packet cluster and hit the "U" command for users. No one. I then connected to IAH. No users. On down to PLD07, SBRK07, and HOU. All no users at the time I ran through them. This was during regular evening hours. I've been playing on NARS lately trying to get my TCP/IP (JNOS) program to run and have seen very little activity. I will admit that this

does not mean no one else is monitoring, but it is a pretty good indication.

I would venture to say that probably close to 75 percent of the families that belong to the club have packet capability. The downside of packet has been that it required a dedicated computer to sit on freq waiting for a call or message. The recent and frequent upgrade and turnover of personal computers has made many older machines surplus and cheap. Not only that, but many of our members now have an old PC taking up space on the floor, shack, or garage (with the XYL wondering why we still have it!) Also, most current TNC's have built in mailboxes to capture mail that is sent to us when our station is unattended. Therefore the computer need not be on and committed to a packet program.

I'm currently as guilty as the rest regarding maintaining a presence on our node. I hope to remedy that situation. KB5TES is working on getting his mailbox running (TESBBS). It is visible on HOUBPQ and he hopes to get it propagated to NARS soon, once he is comfortable with how it works. It is located here in Northwest Houston, so may be more useful and convenient than running to the Sugarland BBS.

I think it's time to hear "I'll leave you a packet message on your TNC (on the BBS)," instead of "What's your e-mail address."

Yes, there are things that are more appropriate to be sent by "twisted pair," but let's not leave the resources we have established to wither away.

This tirade has been directed toward our VHF packet presence, but a look on the HF bands shows a decline in activity. Granted, Mr. Sol has not been very freckled, but it's a dandy time to get on the low bands and learn how to pass traffic on HF. The TEX CW net can always add a few more operators, and you can pass "e-mail" or is it "r-mail" across the country. It's guarantee of delivery is not 100 percent, but that's a factor of hams like you and I being on each end of the path.

One more point that relates to this is that this does not just attack our message handling function, but our operating as a whole. Where's the packet chat? Where's the HF rag chew QSO? There is going to be another W. A. R. C. in the very near future, and everyone wants our real estate in the radio spectrum. HF, VHF, UHF, and microwave are in serious danger of running away to a high bidder. You don't want to try and buy a license for the frequencies you now have for free at the cost these companies are buying our politicians for. With no activity, we have no reason to try and hold on to something we don't use. USE IT OR LOSE IT!

73, *Brian Derr N5BA*

Alex-WA5UHT

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Please send address, phone, email and other changes to Marion Denton at NARS, P.O. Box 690342, Houston, TX 77269-0342.

FOR NARS INFORMATION CALL

Marion Denton, 469-8331, for General Information and Bill Gary, 537-9240, for VE Exam Information or send E-Mail to novotny@tenet.edu

NARS BREAKFAST every Saturday 8 AM at Victors, located at 4710 W FM 1960. Informal ragchew.

NARS LUNCH BUNCH every Wednesday - location decided Tuesdays on the informal morning 2 meter net.

NARS NETS

NARS RAGCHEW - MONDAY 8:00 PM
28.444 MHz
Net Coordinator - Open -

NARS INFO - WEDNESDAY 8:00 PM
146.06/.66 MHz
Net Coordinator Bill, K8CSG

*All telephone #'s are 281 Area Code

NARS REPEATERS

2 M - 146.060 / 146.660 MHz
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NARS Web Page

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NARS Mailing Address: P.O. Box 690342, Houston, TX 77269-0342