



The quarterly newsletter of the
Magnolia DX Association, Inc.

Edited by N5YY

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Upcoming Events

- **DECEMBER 12: Annual DX Dinner (K5D DXpedition by K4UEE)**
- **Schedule of events for next year will be determined by the new MDXA officers announced at the annual DX Dinner on 12 Dec.**

President's Corner

November 2009

Well, 2009 has almost come and gone and it's definitely been a year of growth for the club. Our first year as an incorporated, not for profit organization and also the club's first year in its more than 30 year history of having formally elected officers. It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as your president this year. I feel your first elected board of directors has worked hard to do what's in the best interest of the club as a whole. I know that not all members have always agreed with all of our decisions and the board itself has not always been in total agreement with one another on the best direction for the club. But I hope as you look back on the year you see that taken on a whole the club is better and stronger than it was last December. I appreciate the support and cooperation my fellow board members have shown and all MDXA members owe them a debt of gratitude. Our VP – Glenn, K2FF, Treasurer – Ed, KA5VFU and Secretary – Charlie, WD5BJT... TNX guys... it's been a fun ride. While I made a decision several months ago to not seek reelection as a 2010 officer I am looking forward to continuing my service to the 2010 board and club in my role as Past President. By the time you are reading this we will know that outcome of the elections and regardless of that outcome I offer my wholehearted support to the members of the 2010 board to help them continue the good work begun this year.

A lot of good things happened this year in the club. I honestly feel that the MDXA has the BEST license training program in the country, both for first time licensees and those who want to upgrade. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our training coordinator, Dan Miller, AE5JG for his outstanding efforts in organizing the classes and to the trainers, Vic – N5YY, Ed – KA5VFU, Dan – AE5JG, and Charlie – N2PKW. I also feel we have had a higher quality and quantity of technical programs at our monthly breakfast meetings this year than ever before. TNX to Glenn, K2FF for lining up the presenters, and more importantly, the presenters themselves who have generously given of their time and talents to educate and inform fellow members. For Field Day we went back to basics and held an all outdoors event. Chuck, WS1L did a great job of organizing and leading our effort. While an all outdoor event at the end of June may not be for everyone, I do feel it is an important aspect to Field Day and should be kept in mind in the future. In October we had a terrific picnic well attended by members and extremely well organized by Dan, AE5JG. Late in the year we began another education activity that I think is really important and something I'm personally involved in and happy to see. Approximately 12 hams, some newly licensed, some who have been hams for awhile are participating in a CW and Operator Training class being taught by myself and Vic, N5YY. The dedication and commitment of these hams to improve their operator skills and learn a core competency of ham radio is very refreshing and encouraging to me personally. I fully expect by the time you are reading this a dozen of your peers who weren't sure they could ever learn code will be 15-20WPM CW ops. They have worked hard and should be congratulated. We'll be wrapping up the year with what I think will be a great DX Dinner Banquet with a quality program on the K5D Desecheo DXpedition by Bob Allphin, K4UEE, good food, outstanding door prizes and great socialization.

I tend to try to focus on the positive and learn from the negative things that happen in my life, and then put them behind me. I think the same can and should be applied to the MDXA. We are a diverse group of extremely talented and warm-hearted hams and most that I have come in contact with LOVE to share their love and knowledge of our hobby. That diversity sometimes brings differences of opinion. This is our opportunity to learn and grow together as a club. If we keep our differences of opinion from becoming

personal, we are all better off and the club just gets stronger. That is my hope for the MDXA in 2010. That we continue to focus on the positive things (and there are many) that began in 2009, and learn from the few negatives that occurred. Long time hams and members should look for ways to encourage and help our new members. New members should seek out that help and knowledge and look for ways to help others as well. That's what this club does best. Continue to volunteer for the various activities the club sponsors. The MDXA is no different than most organizations in that the bulk of the "heavy lifting" ends up being done by a small group. This is another opportunity for us to do better.

Finally, I wish ALL MDXA members a very happy and blessed holiday season. May Santa bring lots of goodies for your shack this Christmas and I hope 2010 will find your logs filled with new DXCC entities to add to your totals.

73/GUD DX
Randy – W5UE
2009 MDXA President

An editorial by N5YY

I would like to use this month's editorial space to deliver a special thank you to all the MDXA members that aided me in my recently completed antenna project. A rather high percentage of the local member population was present at one or more days during the project. Other individuals have come over to individually assist with burying cable, driving ground rods, and such. How can a person thank friends like that? I thought of sending an e-mail or thank you note to the people involved, but I probably would miss some, and that would not be good. Then I thought of doing this formal in print "thank you note".

"My Friends, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It would not have happened without you".

A special 'Thank You' goes to Gerry, N5UCF.

He did the climbing.

You know, similar things have been happening each weekend all over the coast recently to many MDXA members. It is almost like this is a special antenna growing season. As has been said, "This is just another indicator that if we each do the things we are good at and capable of, and assist each other willingly, we are capable of accomplishing almost anything." And it certainly has been a good and a productive year for the MDXA community.

Who Said The Band Was Dead?

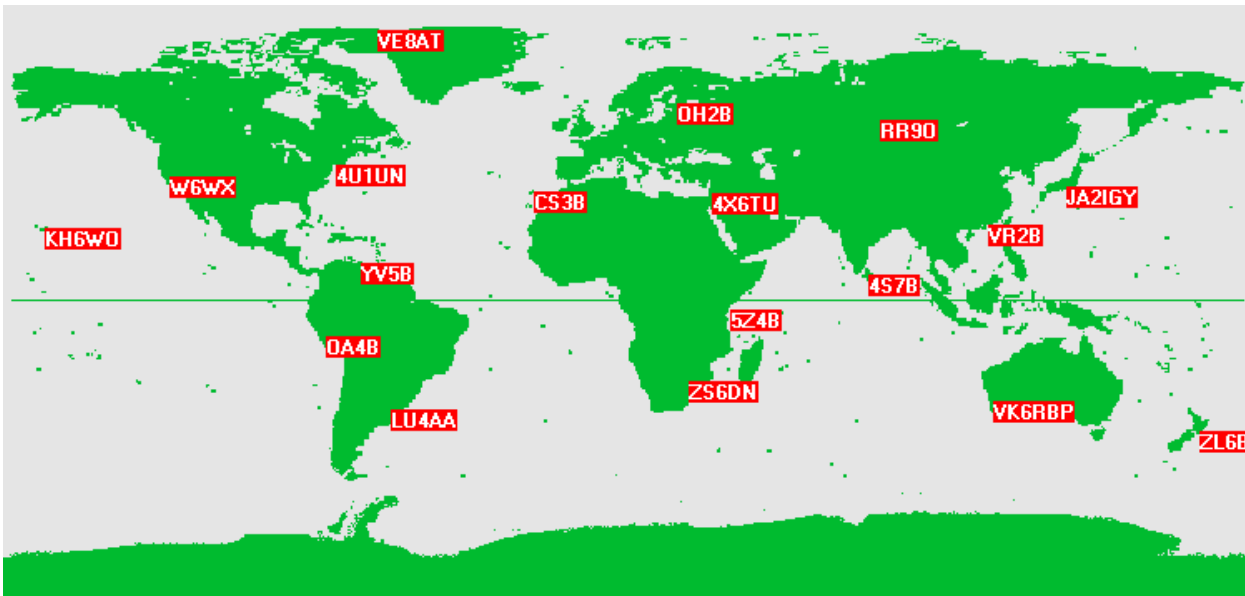
By Glenn – K2FF

Question: How can you quickly tell if a given band is open to a particular area of the world?

Answer: Tune in to one of the many HF beacons strategically located around the globe.

Okay, you might say that still leaves plenty of questions...like, “what frequency?” and “what time?” and “what callsigns?” and “for what exactly am I listening?” These are all very good questions and again with very simple answers. DXing involves a whole lot of listening.

The Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF) and the International Amateur Radio Union (IARU) have long teamed up to operate a worldwide network of HF beacons. Volunteers at strategic locations send a series of CW transmissions on 14.100, 18.110, 21.150, 24.930, and 28.200 MHz. The picture below shows the physical beacon locations and respective callsigns:



<http://www.ncdxf.org/beacons.html>

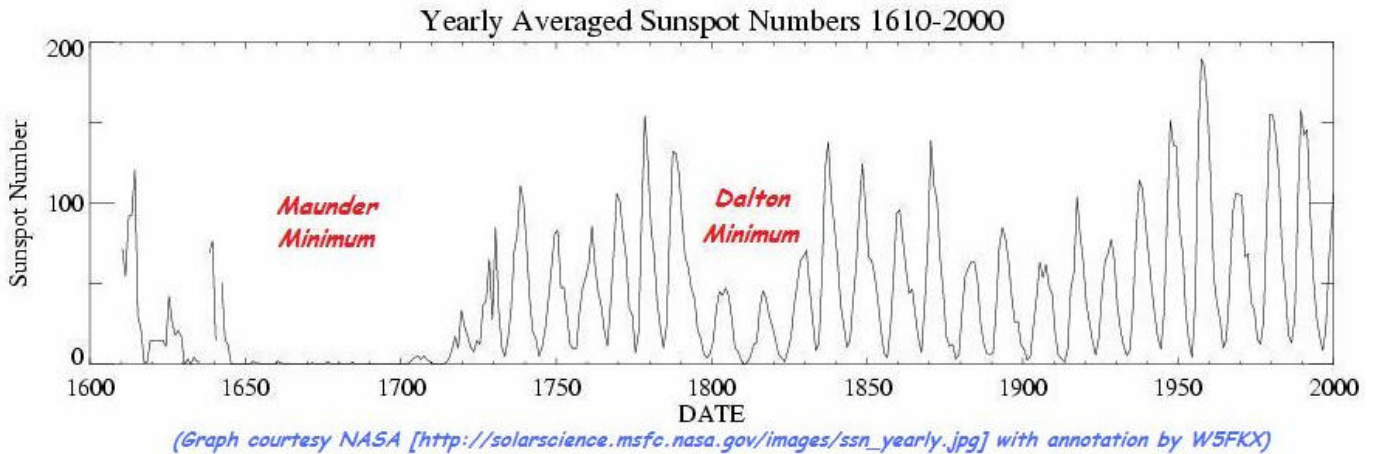
The above callsigns are sent in CW at 22 words per minute and followed by four one-second dashes. By varying the power output of the transmitted dashes one can easily get a quick idea of the true band conditions...is it open or not. Day and night the beacons transmit every three minutes. The callsign and the first dash are sent using 100 watts output power. The second dash is sent using just 10 watts of power. The third dash is reduced in power even more by using only 1 watt. And then comes the real QRP transmission using only 100 milliwatts! You can find the official transmission schedule and status at <http://www.ncdxf.org/beacon/beaconschedule.html>.

Many hams will scan a particular band, hear no activity from other hams, and assume the band is dead. Well, if everyone is “listening” and no one is “transmitting” we can all come to the wrong conclusion! Many DXers will miss one another simply because no one calls CQ CQ CQ DX.

So don't rely on neighbors to tell you if the bands are open or not...always check the beacons!

Solar Activity, the Maunder Minimum, and Solar Cycle 24

The earliest known recording of sunspot observations was by the Chinese in 800 BC, but it was Galileo who is credited with beginning the "modern" interest in this solar phenomenon. His use of a telescope in 1611 to study and describe the remarkable waxing, waning, and mobile spots on the surface of the Sun laid the foundation for our current database of Solar data. However, it was not until 1843 that German astronomer Heinrich Schwabe showed that there was an apparent periodicity to the number of observed sunspots over the years, having an approximate 11-year cycle between peaks, as can be seen in the graph below.



The long delay (1600s to 1800s) in the realization of the cyclic nature of sunspots is probably due to the fact that, according to records, from 1645 to 1715 there was a period of extremely low sunspot numbers -10 or fewer per year! In the mid-1970s, solar scientist John Eddy published a paper describing this 170 year period of very low solar activity and named it the *Maunder Minimum* in memory of solar astronomer, Edward W. Maunder (1851–1928). During this period, the world was experiencing average daily temperatures about 2 degrees cooler than usual, and the era was known as "The Little Ice Age". Interestingly, the possible relationship between reduced solar activity and Earth cooling led to research that showed a strong correlation between sunspots and levels of the carbon-14 isotope in ancient tree rings. Using C¹⁴ as a sunspot surrogate, several other periods of decreased solar activity over the last millenia have been noted: the *Spörer Minimum* (1420-1570); the *Dalton Minimum* (1790-1820); the *Wolf Minimum* (1280-1340); and the *Oort Minimum* (1010-1050).

What does all of this mean for Solar Cycle 24? Will it be normal? Low? Is there a possibility of a new Ice Age? These are not easy questions to answer for several reasons. First - *and this underscores how little we know of our Sun* - there is no reliable method of predicting the extent of future solar activity beyond a few months at a time. As it is, we don't even know when a solar minimum (or maximum) occurs until six months after-the-fact when a smoothed sunspot number is determined for the mid-month in question. Solar scientists are still split as to what to expect in the coming years. Secondly, predictions of global cooling today may well be confounded by the warming contributions of population and industry expansion, factors not present in earlier times.

So what should we hams, and especially those of us who are avid DXers, expect? Well, I'll tell you more in a year or two ...

73,
Don W5FKX

My Ham Radio Travel Buddy

Travis Casanova, W5GED SK

By
Bill Musa, K5YG

I first met Travis back in 2001, at the MDXA activation of Dauphin Island, W4D. Then again; on the W4D 2002 Dauphin Island and the K5C 2003 Cat Island expeditions. Our first road trip was when Travis and I traveled to Orleans Island, Quebec Canada and on to Gallix in Zone 2 for the 2007 CQWW SSB Contest in October 2007. I arrived at Travis's farm, which is 35M SE of Memphis, TN on Sunday, October 12, 2007. After winding through his beautiful Pine Forrest I came upon the W5GED Ham Shack. His "Shack" overlooks a large pond surrounded by an 80M Sky Loop, mounted on 60ft power poles. Rising above his "shack" were three large towers with various mono band beams covering 20 though 6M. My first thought was: Wow, what an impressive Antenna Farm! Wish I had space like this!

After a warm welcome, I got the grand tour of his shack, which included a couple FT-1000 MK5s, HP Tuners and a couple Henry Amplifiers. Next, Travis gave me the tour of "The Farm". Travis and his sons were avid hunters and the Tree Farm made an excellent Hunting "Camp", complete with Food Plots, Tree Stands, miles of trails and a Bunk House. Back at the Bunk House, Travis showed me his Reloading Station. Besides Amateur radio, Travis enjoyed Hunting, Target Shooting, Re-loading, Cooking and World Traveling. While in Canada I was treated to some of the best meals, all prepared by Travis. Travis had one rule and that was to clean your own dishes and reset your spot on the table.

We packed up my Chevy Tahoe and after a good night sleep left early Monday for the long trip North to Quebec, Canada via Nashville Tennessee, Louisville Kentucky, Cincinnati, Columbus & Cleveland Ohio & Niagara Falls. We stayed over near Niagara Falls and toured the Falls the next morning. Syracuse and Watertown were last of U.S. cities before crossing into Canada.

The first order of business, after finding the Rental House on Orleans Island, was to go food shopping. That is when I discovered that Travis was an experienced "Camp Cook". We ended up with 2 carts full of enough food to last the next 3 weeks! Travis made enough soup the first day to last all week. Travis and I had a great time on our Canadian Adventure, returning back to his Farm in early November 2007.



Why Do I DX?

Why do I sit in front of my console for hours on end listening, spinning the dial, checking packet clusters, and jumping to the latest "DX Spot!" on the 2m repeater.

What does it do for me? What gain is it in my life? Why do I chase the band fills and the never ending search for the new one?

When I first became licensed I intended to get licensed for the good of humanity, to give back to the public what I could in the form of public service. I still do this but there is not a disaster or public service need in the area every day. Ham radio operators have so many avenues they can use in the hobby. Anyone can find something to do in the hobby and we ALL have one thing in common we ALL are HAMs. Every one of us were tested in some form or fashion to get our initial license. Now back to my initial question. Why Do I DX? Could it be the love of making that 15K kilometer contact from a coat hanger hanging from a tree limb in my back yard using 25 watts? No, that is just a bragging right I can use at the next meeting or DX net. Could it be the thrill of busting through the 5000 operator pile up after sitting for three hours of calling? No, that is just part of the game. So what is it?

To get to the bottom of this I have to take a closer look at myself. If this gets too deep please don't take offense I am just taking a look at me and how I see things.

I wake each morning not knowing what is in store for me from the time I get up until I go back to sleep. I know I have things that I need to do each day as each of us do. Each of us searches for something in life. We have diverse religions and cultures. When referring to us I mean everyone not just Hams. Each day I believe that if I can do one thing good for someone or touch one person's life in a positive manner I have accomplished greatness for the day.

How does this fit into my hobby? Before I mentioned I got licensed to help others and give back. Well I found out that DXing is a sport to some a passion for others. Not every Ham can be a DXer just as not everyone can be a Ham. Almost anyone can be taught a test and get a license today but how many Non Active Hams are there? I would care to wager that there are as many if not more in the US alone that have not used a radio in the last six months than who use one on a daily basis. That leaves a bunch out there that only use one on contest days or the weekend warriors.

Sitting listening to static in headphones trying to hear the slightest fluctuation in the waiting for the bands to pick up have given me patience and listening abilities that I never thought I could have. Who makes the first contacts with the DXpeditions that are out there? Not the DX Cops, or the insensitive ones who tune up on top of the distant station. It is the seasoned operators who make the most contacts, the ones

who given the time and devotion to make themselves the great operators. I found a way to make myself a better operator by listening, then practicing. These all add up. What if I were doing this waiting to hear a contact from a rescue operation that was taking place and I had the closest station to the operation? Could I do it? What if the message I just passed was to bring food and water to stranded people. Well all the hours trying to find the distant DX sure makes me a viable resource in that situation. DXing sharpens our skills, and brings a group of people together to reach a common goal.

What I realized I have is a family in the DX community. We all are after something in life and have our own reason to be there. I found why I am here. I am here because I have a Desire to Learn, Share, Inspire, and Prosper from all in life.

I am a DXer because it helps me meet my goals and I will be ready if I need to help others.

Why do I DX?

I AM A DXer TO HELP OTHERS.

K5MOZ

Chris

AMATEUR RADIO IN THE OLD DAYS AS I REMEMBER--PART TWO

By Joe Butler, K5JB

I said we would start Part Two with the old days of Amateur Radio. However I cannot leave all our newly licensed folks without touching on the still number one communications mode known as Continuous Wave, CW for short. I am by no means an expert on the subject but I will tell you about a few things that helped me accomplish the Morse code. Some are easy but others require your concerted effort.

1. Forget about practicing SENDING CW in the beginning. It will only take your valuable study time away and will not help you in learning the code.
2. DO NOT look at the code as Dots and Dashes. ALWAYS think of them as DITS and DAHS.
3. Start first with characters only. Numerals come more easily and you can progress to them after you become proficient in characters.
4. Set aside a period of time daily when there are no interruptions to practice and be dedicated to it. Do not over practice. If you are tired or cannot concentrate on your practice session without interruption, stop for that day.
5. Everyone progresses at a different rate so do not become discouraged. Everyone that learns CW will run into what are called Plateaus. This is when you are not progressing beyond a certain point. This is normal so don't give up. Just keep practicing and soon you will find you have progressed beyond that plateau and are on your way to the next one. Oh yes, there will be a next one somewhere up the road so expect it. Just remember, "you can't get to the promised land without first going through the wilderness".

6. Learn faster by reading in dits and dahs any characters you have learned from every sign you see or printed matter you pick up. No I don't expect you to do this out loud. Do it in your mind. Doing it out loud may result in a call for the man in the white coat and they will be taking you to La La Land.

Soon you will find you can read all print in dits and dahs.
Make up things and practice in your mind.

7. Now that you know the characters, you are ready to start on the numerals. These will come much easier. Each numeral has five parts made up of dits and dahs same as characters but there is a difference. Numeral 1 through numeral 5 all start with dits and numeral six through numeral 9 all start with dahs.

Example: 1 has 1 dit, and 4 dahs. 2 has 2dits and 3 dahs and so forth until you reach 5 which is 5 dits.

Now we switch. From numeral 6 through 9 we start with dahs. Numeral 6 has one dah and four dits and you progressively add one more dah and drop a dit until you reach number 9 which has four dahs and one dit. What about numeral zero? Five dahs will do it.

8. Learn from the beginning to copy behind. That means you are copying words and keeping them in your head while you are writing down those words and numbers that you have already heard. If you don't practice this and learn to do it, your ability to copy higher speeds of code will be very limited.

9. If you expect to ever copy higher CW speeds and write down what you copy, you must start from the very beginning to use cursory writing. Yep, same as you would do if you were writing to your Sweetheart!!

10. You can of course print what you hear but your speed will be severely limited. If you do intend to print, you will have to learn to print fast and the only way you can do this is to learn to use the least number of pen or pencil strokes possible for each letter of the alphabet. Example 1: Letter "A" start your pen or pencil at the bottom left, come straight up and

over to the bottom right then up half way and straight over to the left side. You do this in one continuous stroke without lifting your pen or pencil. You must learn to use this with the least amount of movement for each letter. Some letters will be easy to do and others will take you some time to develop this printing technique.

Example 2: For the letter "B", start at bottom then come straight up and over to your right, swing left and that makes half of your B, come straight back out and around to the bottom left where you started and you have it. All this takes 2 continuous movements without lifting your hand. You can see, you make a "P" the same way but with only one continuous movement.

If you become really proficient and fast with this method you can eventually expect to copy without mistakes from 20-25 words per minute. I find that not everyone is able to accomplish this. There are NO efficient substitutes for using the Cursory Method.

I hope this will help you to learn CW more easily.

In Part 3 I get to start telling you what we had to work with 62 years ago. It took us years to accomplish what you folks can do today in one weekend.

73, (Not 73's)

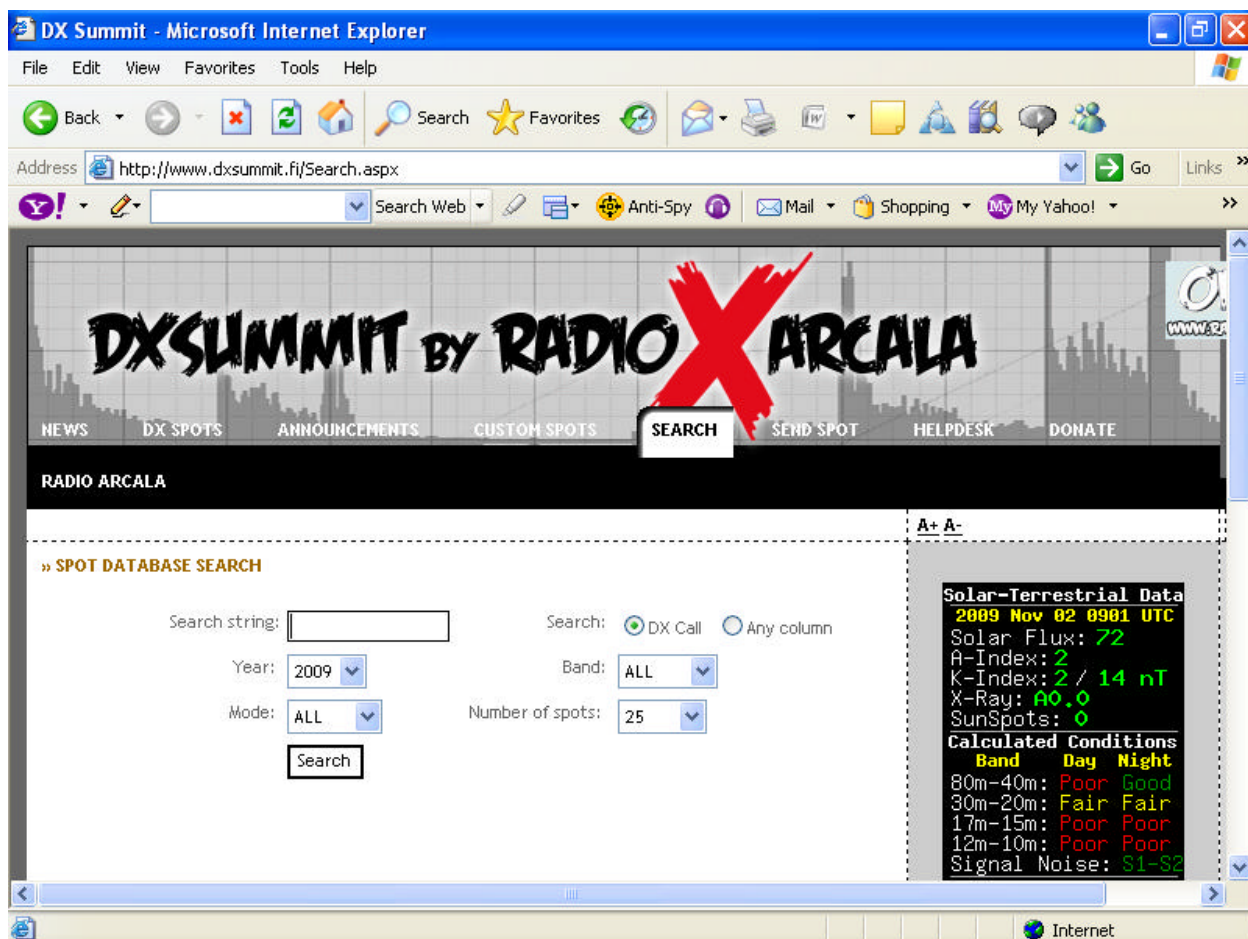
DX Summit...Uncover Habits Of DXers

By Glenn – K2FF

So you're checking out your DXCC status and realize there are a few holes you would like to fill. Perhaps you need Mauritius (3B8) or Chagos Islands (VQ9) or some other entity...you fill in the blank. Well, after looking at various DX bulletins you realize that there are no scheduled DXpeditions to either of these locations. So what should be the next step? Visit DX Summit!

DX Summit is a web site hosted by Radio Archala out of Finland. The site provides DX cluster spots along with the standard functions like sending spots, viewing announcements, etc. But it's their "search" function that really comes in handy to quickly search for hams operating from a specific country, or the habits of a particular operator.

The following snapshot shows DX Summit's main SEARCH screen layout...very simple:



<http://www.dxsummit.fi/Search.aspx>

You'll notice the main fields are: Search String, Year, Mode, Band, Number of Spots, and whether or not you're searching for a DX Call or Any Column. The difference in the last two is that "any column" will search for entered callsigns regardless if they were DX or the Spotter.

So let's get back to the example of needing perhaps Mauritius (3B8) for a new DX entity. Simply plug in the following data and hit enter: Search String = 3B8, Year = 2009, Mode = All, Band = All, Number of Spots = 25, and leave the default DX Call button selected...hit search.

The immediate results will show a few calls, one being the very active 3B8CF. So let's target this specific operator to see how he tends to operate. Keep everything in the search criteria the same as above with the exception of adding the suffix "CF" to make a complete callsign. Upon hitting the search button again you'll get the last 25 spots for 3B8CF which shows he likes CW and most all bands. Now since you just put up a homemade 40m dipole, you decide to narrow your search to just that band. So again leaving all the criteria the same with the exception of the band, change it to 40m and hit search again. You should see that apparently Jacky likes 7.005 or very close to it. Thinking this might have just been a coincidence, you decide to expand your number of spots from 25 to 100. WOW...does 3B8CF operate a single frequency crystal rig? Maybe so, but take notice on the far right-hand side where the date & times are listed...notice anything? WOW AGAIN...does 3B8CF only operate during the 0200z hour? Maybe so, but, what you have done in a matter of just a few clicks of the mouse is discover that Mauritius should be targeted as such: 3B8CF, 7.005 CW, between 0200 – 0230z! Search results below:

AD5VJ	7005.2	3B8CF	CW LG89, up 1	0217	31 Oct	Mauritius
NE1B	7005.1	3B8CF	Jacky QSX +1	0203	31 Oct	Mauritius
NE1B	7005.2	3B8CF	SNN in NH	0201	31 Oct	Mauritius
YL2FN-@	7000.2	3B8CF	Up 1	0211	30 Oct	Mauritius
KF3B	7002.0	3B8CF	up 1 - loud	0207	30 Oct	Mauritius
LY7M	7002.2	3B8CF	cq	0204	30 Oct	Mauritius
AD5VJ	7005.2	3B8CF	CW LG89	0209	29 Oct	Mauritius
KORF	7005.2	3B8CF		0201	29 Oct	Mauritius
WB3CQM-@	7005.0	3B8CF	REAL 599 IN NCPA	0154	29 Oct	Mauritius
KSKLA	7005.3	3B8CF		0153	29 Oct	Mauritius
WT2P	7005.1	3B8CF	UP 1	0224	28 Oct	Mauritius
W5SWV	7005.1	3B8CF	559 TX good op	0216	28 Oct	Mauritius
W2QN-@	7005.1	3B8CF	up 1	0159	28 Oct	Mauritius
I3MLU-@	7005.0	3B8CF		0158	28 Oct	Mauritius
W6PU-@	7005.3	3B8CF	579/NM with my beam towards Eu	0228	27 Oct	Mauritius
W7XA	7005.0	3B8CF	qsx up 1 569	0222	27 Oct	Mauritius
K2ZF-@	7005.2	3B8CF	UP 1	0215	27 Oct	Mauritius
PR7AR	7005.0	3B8CF	QSX 7006 :)	0222	21 Oct	Mauritius
W1YY/7	7005.2	3B8CF	CQ	0159	21 Oct	Mauritius
4J9M-@	7005.2	3B8CF	up 1	0231	20 Oct	Mauritius
K4IT	7005.0	3B8CF		0229	20 Oct	Mauritius
LU1DP	7005.1	3B8CF	up 1-- 559 for Argentina	0222	20 Oct	Mauritius
LY2BAW	7005.0	3B8CF	tnx, wkd lup	1630	19 Oct	Mauritius
W6PU-@	7005.4	3B8CF	589 coming in over Eu up 1Khz	0208	17 Oct	Mauritius
W8QID	7005.2	3B8CF	Cq	0206	17 Oct	Mauritius
4L6QC	7005.2	3B8CF	up 1 > 589 in 4L	0231	16 Oct	Mauritius
KQAP-@	7005.2	3B8CF	QSX UP1, nice signal in KS	0217	16 Oct	Mauritius
UX1UA	7005.2	3B8CF	almost same freq VP2/KG9N	0203	16 Oct	Mauritius

Moving on to the next entity of choice (Chagos Islands – VQ9 for example) finds the following: VQ9LA is quite active and likes to operate on 30m. So let's go right for the big picture and search 100 spots on VQ9LA on 30m. After a little study the results indicate that Larry likes 10.118 as one of his primary operating frequencies. Sometimes he will go one or two lower making the primary window no more than 3 KHz wide. And looking at the times he's been spotted by stations in NA...I would target 0130z +/- 15 minutes! Search results shown below:

Call Sign	Frequency	Operator	Time	Date	Location	
N5LZ	10117.9	VQ9LA		0113 02	Nov	Chagos Islands
NI7F	10118.0	VQ9LA	QSX 10118.8 worked LP	0155 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
WA6TFZ	10118.0	VQ9LA	up up up 599 in so cal	0142 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
W6KY	10117.9	VQ9LA	QSX 10118.94 Up 1	0140 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
AC6DX	10118.0	VQ9LA	tnx. now qsx up worked LP	0136 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
W6VX	10118.0	VQ9LA	Louder now on LP	0129 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
LU2EMH	10118.0	VQ9LA	CQ DX	0121 01	Nov	Chagos Islands
NC5S-@	10116.0	VQ9LA	up 1+	0129 30	Oct	Chagos Islands
W5GZ	10116.0	VQ9LA		0122 30	Oct	Chagos Islands
K2FF	10116.0	VQ9LA		0117 30	Oct	Chagos Islands
K1ESE	10116.0	VQ9LA		0106 30	Oct	Chagos Islands
W6CHP	10118.0	VQ9LA	Up 1	0148 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
UA3QAM	10117.9	VQ9LA	up 1	0144 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
K6RIM	10118.0	VQ9LA	Moved here - Up	0138 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
KH7XS	10110.0	VQ9LA	up 1	0130 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
K6RIM	10109.9	VQ9LA	Up 1 - Loud	0127 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
N7NW	10109.9	VQ9LA	up 1	0115 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
AE6RS-@	10110.0	VQ9LA	Thx, vy loud in W6 cq	0057 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
YL2GP-@	10110.0	VQ9LA	fb SIG,TNX!	0046 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
W2TX-@	10110.0	VQ9LA		0041 28	Oct	Chagos Islands
W8FJ	10118.0	VQ9LA	CQ	0150 24	Sep	Chagos Islands
JG1EIQ	10105.9	VQ9LA	looking for N.A. CQn	1355 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
UA0APV	10106.0	VQ9LA	599	1355 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
UN7CM	10106.0	VQ9LA	tnx	1223 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
UN7CM	10105.0	VQ9LA	tnx	1222 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
VK3HJ-@	10105.9	VQ9LA	Thx Larry, up 1	1219 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
VK6DU	10106.0	VQ9LA	cq cq	1141 23	Sep	Chagos Islands
WB2UFF	10116.0	VQ9LA	599 nwnj calling cq	0152 23	Sep	Chagos Islands

So, while most people look at the active clusters for current/real-time spots, take advantage of “history searching” to find the “habits” of particular operators. Many times on some of the harder (rare) ones, by the time the station is spotted it may be too late. By using historical data to “plan your DX hunt” and be there ready when your target starts calling CQ DX, chances are greatly increased of checking one more needed entity off your needs list. DXing is like baseball...you’ll win some and you’ll lose some, but, you have to suit up for every game!

Make the DX Summit web page located at <http://www.dxsummit.fi/> one of your favorites. It will fast become a valuable tool you use, especially as your DXCC totals increase and your all time new ones decrease!

National Wildlife Refuge Week
Special Event Station – K5W
Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge
Gautier, Mississippi – October 16th & 17th, 2009

Randy Becnel – W5UE

The adventure began with an email from Bob, K4UEE in early July addressed to the leadership of DX clubs around the country asking for our consideration to activate stations from within National Wildlife Refuges during National Wildlife Refuge Week. As Bob described, this was part of an ongoing effort by the KP1-5 Project to establish a long-term partnership between amateur radio and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I reviewed the resources provided on the web site established by the KP1-5 organizers of the event (<http://nwrweek-radio.info>) and found lots of useful information, including confirmation of what I had already suspected; that we would need to obtain permission from the refuge to setup and operate. Since the Magnolia DX Association already had a good working relationship with the National Park Service through our activations of IOTA stations from Mississippi Barrier Islands, Cat Island - K5C in 2002 and 2003 and East Ship Island - K5S in 2008, this event seemed a natural. Cat and Ship Islands are two of a series of barrier islands that sit about 10 miles south of the MS coastline in the Gulf of Mexico and are part of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, administered by the National Park Service. All three of our activations had required a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow overnight camping and setup of amateur radio stations, making us familiar with the process. I brought up the idea at our July Board of Directors meeting and it was approved as a club function. I volunteered to lead the effort and immediately enlisted the assistance of Glenn, K2FF to help me get the ball rolling. Glenn had been responsible for coordinating with the NPS on our IOTA SUPs and I knew that he could point me in the right direction quickly.

First order of business was to find and select a wildlife refuge somewhere along the MS Gulf Coast to operate from. I wanted something relatively close to my QTH and a majority of MDXA members. A quick Google search discovered two NWRs listed along the coast, the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR and Grand Bay NWR. Both were located in Jackson County in southeastern MS. A little more research determined that Grand Bay NWR was undergoing major renovations and wasn't going to officially reopen until November of 2009. So, we narrowed our focus to the MS Sandhill Crane NWR. K2FF and I decided to take a ride out to the Sandhill Crane NWR after work one Friday afternoon in late July and scout for potential operating locations and to see if we could setup a meeting with the refuge manager to discuss our proposal. As it turned out, refuge manager Ted Rentmeister was in

his office and was kind enough to make time to speak to us that day. We explained who we were and the idea of amateur radio being a part of NWR Week. We shared a lot of the information from the NWR Week Amateur Radio web site with him. He promised to review it and get back with us on next steps for the SUP. A few days later I had an email from Ted indicating he had reviewed what we had left for him and he thought it sounded like a good project and in keeping with the charter of the NWR program. He provided the information we would need to submit to support processing of our SUP and assigned one of his rangers, Doug Hunt to work with us. Since all was sounding very positive, I began the next steps of identifying station components and preparing our SUP submittal.

From the beginning I envisioned this as a low-keyed, single station, daylight only activity. I knew that the refuge would not be able to support something on the scale of our 4 day, 3 night 2008 activation of K5S/K5Z from East Ship Island (<http://www.k5s-na082.com>) with our 4 operating positions, 40m 4-Square, 2 x 2 element SteppIR yagis and various verticals, nor were any of us in the club ready to take on something of that scale at this time. So, I set out putting the components together for one small station. I wanted this to be something that I could setup each morning and take down each afternoon by myself if necessary. At this point I was going on the assumption what we would be providing our own power. K2FF has 2 Honda EU-2000i 2KW ultra-quiet generators and I knew that one of these would be perfect for our needs so I asked if we could use one and he of course, agreed. Next up was the rig. This was a no brainer.... My Yaesu FT-920 is a veteran of several MDXA Field Days and IOTA activations. It is also a hurricane Katrina survivor. When my QTH was flooded during Katrina the 920 was totally submerged by flood waters. I was able to get to it the next day and spent the next several weeks rinsing out the brackish water, cleaning everything and drying. Amazingly enough, when I got the courage to reapply power, it worked fine and hasn't missed a beat since. Next was the antenna. I wanted something that would be easy to deploy, not intrusive to the refuge habitat, multi-band and a good performer. I was just about to settle on another trusted old friend, the Carolina Windom 80, when I came across some references to the Buckmaster Off Center Fed (OCF) 7 band dipole. I studied the information on the Buckmaster web site about the antenna and was intrigued that a single dipole antenna could be naturally resonant on 80, 40, 20, 17, 12, 10 and 6M without a tuner. I posted a question to the MDXA reflector asking if anyone was familiar with the antenna and/or had any first-hand experience using one. I received very useful insight from Pat, W5THT, one of our resident antenna gurus about the pros and cons. Bottom line; he recommended it for my intended use. The deal was sealed when Glen, K4GSG said he had one and used it regularly. I spoke to Glen about it at length and decided to order one myself. I received it a week or so later and testing at my QTH was very encouraging. As advertised the antenna loaded without a tuner on all 7 bands (both CW and SSB sub bands) with an SWR of 2:1 or less (mostly less)! A few on-air signal reports from stateside and DX stations confirmed that the antenna was performing well. Our operation would be

contained in one of the club's 10'x10' mosquito mesh tents used on our IOTA expeditions and Field Day to protect us from the always present bugs and unpredictable nature of October weather in south MS. Add in support equipment like Heil headset, keyer for CW, and laptop for logging using N1MM logger, folding table and the station was complete!

Having identified the station components I set out to complete the SUP application around the second week of August. I provided a very detailed description of exactly what we would be bringing, when/what we would be doing, how we would be doing it and data sheets on all equipment we proposed using. I also provided some background information on our previous trips to the MS barrier islands and our commitment to ensuring zero impact on the delicate habitats within the refuge. I requested we be allowed to setup and operate during the day on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 16-18 October. The completed application package was submitted via snail-mail to the refuge manager Ted Rentmeister on August 12th with an email follow-up. Ted confirmed receipt of the application and said we would be hearing from them soon. The first week of September I received an email from ranger Doug Hunt saying everything was falling into place for approval of our SUP. He suggested several options for locations on the refuge to setup our station and even offered to let us attach to commercial power that was available at their volunteer campground. K2FF and I decided to take a run out and pick our final operating location and look over what we would need to get power from the campground to that location. We met with Doug on September 11th and found an ideal area very near the refuge visitor center and within 100' of the commercial power source. The location was in a clearing adjacent to the bus parking lot with a few tall Southern Pines that would be perfect to hang our Buckmaster OCF dipole from. Doug approved our location and said he was finalizing our SUP and would have it in the mail to me by Monday, the 14th of September. In anticipation of approval I secured special event callsign K5W for our operation from the ARRL VEC web site and began building our own web site (<http://w5ue.net/k5w/>) promoting the K5W event. I also dropped Brad, K4RT (webmaster for the Amateur Radio NWR site) a note letting him know our plans so he could add us to the list of other NWR activations on their web site. Just about 30 days out and everything was looking good! As a bonus, the refuge was planning special activities of their own in conjunction with NWR Week. They were going to be having "Crane Day" on Saturday, 17 October. This was perfect since it would bring in more visitors than normal to the refuge, giving us the opportunity to highlight ham radio to the public. The SUP was received for my signature the week of 14 September. I promptly signed and returned it for final approval and received it back with all appropriate signatures the first week of October. We were "good to go".... Now, all we needed was a little cooperation from Mother Nature.

The week leading up to our event was pretty miserable from a weather standpoint. We had very warm, muggy conditions all week and rain on most days. The weathermen were saying that a cold front would move through by the weekend... I

just kept hoping that it would be in time. I focused on things I could control; gathering up all the components and packing them in a large plastic roller container, checking my list to make sure nothing was missing, and touching base with other members who had said they would be helping out. The morning of Friday, 16 October finally arrived. As predicted, a fairly strong cold front had moved through the area in the wee hours of the morning. I woke up at 5:30 hoping to load my truck and meet K2FF at the refuge for 7am. The front hadn't move quite as fast as I had hoped however because there was still a little drizzle in the area. So I gave Glenn a call and told him I was delaying an hour or so to allow the last of the rain to move out. By 7am I was pulling out of my driveway for the hour drive to the refuge. I touched base with Glenn on 2M and also found that Chris, K5MOZ would be joining us. Glenn and Chris beat me to the refuge and were waiting when I arrived. Ranger Doug Hunt also greeted us and made sure we had everything we needed. We unpacked all the gear and started setting up camp. The mesh tent went up pretty quickly with the 3 of us and then we set up the operating table, rig and computer. Within an hour all that was left was to hang the Buckmaster OCF. We selected a nearby pine with a limb sticking out at about 40 ft, perfect.... Now all we needed to do was put a line over the limb and pull the center of the dipole up and stretch out the legs in an inverted V configuration. I borrowed a "wrist rocket" from Charlie, WD5BJT to help with this job. I had watched others use this handy contraption often at Field Day and it seemed simple enough. Just shoot the lead weight over a limb and pull up a rope sturdy enough to support the dipole. The first shot went over the limb perfectly. Chris retrieved the end of the monofilament line and tied on the rope we would use and I started cranking the Zebco reel to pull the rope over. Well, about halfway up the rope hung on some brush and the fishing line broke... ok, no problem... just reattach a lead weight and shoot it over again.... Well, about 6 shots later I still couldn't catch the limb... Glenn was losing patience and confidence and started looking for something heavy enough for him to hand toss over the limb... He found a deep-well 1 inch socket in the tool box and he grabbed it, tied some nylon cord to it and threw it over the limb... unfortunately, his throwing was better than his tying and the socket came off and went deep into the woods. About this time I finally managed to get the lead weight over the limb again with the wrist rocket. This time we tied a lighter weight nylon cord to the monofilament and pulled that right over. Then we tied the rope to the nylon cord, pulled it over and FINALLY we were pulling up the Buckmaster. We quickly tied off the legs, ran the feedline into our "shack" and started doing our initial checks. A quick run-through of the bands determined the antenna was loading perfectly on all 7 bands. Around 9:45 local time (1445Z) K5W was ready to be QRV and Glenn sat down at the rig and started calling CQ on 20M SSB. It didn't take long for him to get a pretty steady string of stations calling in. Glenn, Chris and I took turns operating for the rest of the morning before being joined by MDXA members David, W5DAW and Darryl, K5CQT. We continued to share operating time working mostly stateside on 20M SSB. During the day a few of the rangers came by to see what we were up to and

we enjoyed talking to them about the refuge and telling them about ham radio. Around 4pm local (2100Z) we got a call on 2M from Floyd, N5FG telling us a lot of the local members were wanting to work us but couldn't hear us on 20M. So, we QSYed to 75M and were able to put several members in the log. After working all members who wanted a QSO we decided to wrap up day one on 40M. Glenn got a nice little run going until we finally pulled the plug just before 2200Z. We felt that 125 QSOs for day one was pretty good and were looking forward to the rest of the weekend. Doug made life even easier for us by telling us it would be fine to leave our antenna and tent up all weekend. Perhaps he had watched us hanging the Buckmaster earlier in the morning and took pity.... ☺ So, I packed up the rig and computer and headed home to a nice warm shower and dinner.

I woke up early Saturday to a beautiful morning, even if a bit chilly. It was a cool 45 degrees and no clouds. I knew that I would be without K2FF because he had planned a family trip to Natchez, MS for the annual Hot Air Balloon Festival, but a few other members had said they would be by to help out. I arrived at the refuge around 7:30 and was greeted by Glen, K4GSG. He helped me get the station set back up and we were back on the air before 8. Darryl, K5CQT joined us shortly afterwards and we started logging QSOs again. Doug greeted us early again saying they had donuts in the office and brought the only bad news of the whole weekend. It turns out that there was a construction company on-site doing some renovations and their boss was concerned about liability issues with us being there on Sunday when the refuge was closed and no rangers on-duty. Even though they had approved our SUP for Sunday they were asking our cooperation to shut down Saturday afternoon and not operate on Sunday. Of course we were a little disappointed, but would comply with the request. Determined to not let this put a damper on our event we set out operating and enjoying the beautiful day. About midday the refuge began getting busy with visitors enjoying the special activities for Crane Day. Several came by our tent and were curious to know what was going on and we were happy to spend time with them talking about the hobby we love so much and our involvement in the community. As it turned out Saturday was also the MDXA fall picnic. I regretted having to miss that event but the K5W event was also important to me. Jerry, N5UCF had said that he would volunteer to setup a station at the picnic and give those in attendance an opportunity to contact us. I thought this sounded like a great idea and would also be an opportunity to make club members at the picnic feel like part of the K5W event and visa versa. Shortly after noon I got a call from Jerry saying several members were waiting to work us, so we QSYed to 75M and worked a string of members from the picnic. Jerry then said there were some who wanted to work us on CW so I moved down to the CW portion of the band and worked several in that mode. Including Jerry, who is taking part in my CW class and he gave me the honor of being his first ever CW contact. The QSOs were interesting on Saturday. During the day we worked a few other Refuge stations and since it was also Boy Scout Jamboree weekend there were a lot of those stations on and several called in and we enjoyed speaking with many of

the scouts. About 4pm we decided to call it a weekend and went QRT. The three of us began breaking camp and packing up. Everything was in the truck and we were heading out before 5pm.

We finished the event with about 240 QSOs but success of this event was never going to be measured by QSO counts. We had an opportunity to talk to almost 250 people in 38 states and 4 foreign countries about the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR and their important work and that of other refuges around the country. Visitors to the refuge on Saturday had a chance to see ham radio in action and for us to talk with them about our hobby and importance to the community. The event was a lot of fun and I am already looking forward to participating again next year. I would like to thank the MDXA members who helped and/or stopped by to visit all weekend... Glenn – K2FF, Chris – K5MOZ, Glen – K4GSG, David – W5DAW, Darryl – K5CQT, Read – W4HOZ, Becky – KD5RHB and Nick – K5BQJ. Also, big thanks to Jerry, N5UCF for setting up a station at the MDXA picnic on Saturday allowing several club members to work us. Finally, I would like to thank all of the good folks at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR for making our event possible and providing outstanding support, especially ranger Doug Hunt and refuge managers Ted Ted Rentmeister and Lloyd Culp.



Glenn, K2FF operating with Chris, K5MOZ looking on



Randy, W5UE operating and enjoying a beautiful day





THOUGHTS OF A NEW GENERAL CLASS OPERATOR

Mark Denton, KE5ZWD

Coming into this somewhat elite fraternity, there were all the usual doubts in my mind, mainly, can I even do this?

A little background information first.

Good lord willing and the creek don't rise, I will pass the half century mark this December. I have a 6th or 7th grade formal education with a GED at the tender age of 16. I began "punching the clock" with the grown men (working for pay) at age 6. I was also bringing fish and lean red meat to the table at 6 years of age. I grew up when gas was 25 cents per gallon, we had 2 channels on the black and white TV, you had to get up to change the channels and manually adjust the antenna outside. And, I distinctly remember cold baths in a big galvanized washtub with the water coming from the hand pump my granddad had installed in the kitchen for my grandma. She put a pot of boiling water in it in the winter. I don't remember the first time I saw a computer, but I

put my fingers on one for the first time only a few weeks ago thanks to George, K5JZ.

And that is the extent of my formal education. So people, brother and sister hams, please just understand that there's a lot of this stuff I very simply cannot comprehend/retain from the explanations that seem so simple to you. What comes as second nature to you, I usually have to work really hard at to understand/retain. I care about you all, even the ones who have mistook some things I've said on the two meter repeater, when I said those things only in a joking manner.

Can I even do this?

Numbers being approximate, there were 722,330 licensed hams in the USA in 2007. From surveys in the years spanning 1993-2008, there were 2,141,430 hams in Japan, Thailand, South Korea, Germany, Taiwan, Canada, Spain, United Kingdom, Russia, Brazil, Italy, Indonesia, China, France, Ukraine, Argentina, Poland, India, South Africa and Norway. Compare this incomplete list, that has large ham populations and you get my personal understanding of "elite fraternity".

Having begun my radio career on the 11 meter band at age 12, I could not at first comprehend the term "QRP". I used to run enough power (I now know it was illegal), to talk to Mexico City, north of Jackson MS, west Georgia and east Texas mobile or base, at will, no skip or "sporadic E". Only after passing my Technician Class Test and talking to Terry Lemon (K5OAZ) and Floyd Gerald (N5FG) on my two meter rig did I begin to understand ORP.

In anticipation of passing my General Class Test, I traded one of my 11 meter mobile rigs for a Yaesu FT-757-GXII with the FP-757HD power supply! (What a sucker he was!) But, I digress. After making that trade, Bill Musa (K5YG), equipped me with a G5RV wire antenna and an antenna tuner and I made a contact with Lithuania on 6-12-09.

After that, with the area I was living in, causing TVI with only 100 watts, I only listened/monitored until I moved and acquired an MA5B antenna from Frank Downey (AA5PX) on or at the end of August. As I already had a Ham IV rotor and controler (from another sucker), I began full time transmitting at about 36 feet on a push up pole on September 1, 2009 and made 101 separate DX contacts in 54 days on general class phone bands only! WHOO HOO!!!! Just goes to show you that it can be done. And by the way, my G5RV is up too and I use it.

My original goal was local/regional civil emergency communications. But now, I've caught this "DX bug". Is there a shot or something a doctor can prescribe to eliminate or

at least alleviate this highly addictive attraction? I think not. Now instead of using illegal power to talk a few hundred miles on the 11 meter band, I can use 100 watts or less and talk around the globe! Still totally amazing to me. Legally!

This ham radio path has many directions. One of those directions is Morse Code, CW to the experienced operators. Listening to the extra class bands and learning of the many more, so many more contacts that can be made using CW has only given me the incentive needed to go for my extra class ticket and learn CW.

This prompted me to order the CD-ROM from Ham University to help me study for my extra class ticket and study for my CW. And looking at my J-38, courtesy of Frank (AA5PX) only gives me more incentive to learn. Knowing that I need to learn how to copy code before I learn how to send doesn't deter me a bit.

To the new hams that are still basically in diapers like myself. Learn how to log properly before you start chasing DX. I started by using 24 hour military time and that is a no-no! It took me nearly 2 days to straighten out my paper logs. (refer to formal education and computers).

There are 2 ears and 1 mouth on our bodies for a reason. Remember that always! Twenty, thirty, and forty year experienced ham operators are still constantly learning if they are using their ears. And the honest ones will tell you that freely. The ones that won't admit that, just don't retain what they say. Be polite but let it go out the other ear.

The only dumb questions are the ones you don't ask, remember that too. My experience tells you that. And any experienced operator will tell you the same. Especially MDXA Members. Experienced members that don't know the answer will quickly refer you to another member or elsewhere. I would not be where I am in this hobby today were it not for MDXA and a number of other ham radio operators.

The operators that have helped me to begin this new hobby of mine are entirely too numerous to mention. They include both YL's and OM's. They include a number of different religious denominations also. They include a very broad spectrum of people, human beings, that even include different colors. You never know where help might come from as long as you show that you are trying to help yourself. Thank you all so very much. Mere words cannot even begin to express the appreciation in my heart.

So please simply understand and 73!