



The Bullsheet

The Official News Bulletin of
The Texas DX Society
An ARRL Affiliated Club

The Texas DX Society, Houston TX K5DX@tdxs.net December 2017

**The next TDXS Monthly Regular Meeting is on
Thursday December 14 at the Tracy Gee
Community Center
3599 Westcenter Dr. Houston TX 77042.
Visitors are welcome. (Map on page 3)**

**Pre-meeting Dinner: Thursday Dec 14 at 5:30pm
CST
Pappa's BBQ
9797 Westheimer Rd. Houston, TX
Houston TX 77042**



Editor's Note by Allen Brier N5XZ

Boy, if you like reading, this is the issue for you! I received a nice autobiography from Mike N5MT, then an interesting article on contesting software from Roy AD5Q. Both are, well, long, but interesting. Please sit back and enjoy both, along with the rest of the articles in this issue of the Bullsheet!

We, the TDXS contesting team, has been doing our fair share of contesting lately, with Sweepstakes, RTTY contests, the ARRL 160 and 10 Meter contests, etc. I participated in my very first 160 contest after putting up an inverted-slanted-L off of my 18HT tower and up to the top of my big tower (thanks again to KS5V for his assistance!). 450 Q's for 7 hours on the second

night, not too bad, I think. Then two weeks later, the ARRL 10. What can I say, band conditions were just horrible! I would use the word deplorable, but that has taken a new, more positive meaning as of late! I thought my count of 292 would be very low, but has it turned out, most of the country had the same, horrible conditions and my count turned out to be not all that bad! However, we are still not getting enough member participation to break out of the "Local" category (for ARRL contests anyway) and up into the "Medium" category. I do want to thank those who did turn in logs for TDXS, so keep those cards and logs coming! (to paraphrase).

In the way of DXing,

the following stations were worked at N5XZ: RI1ANC, 3C1L, 9U4M, VK9/M0VFC, 6W1QL, J5T, 3XY4D, VK9MA, 5N7Q, C21JY, TO2SP, 5K0T, RI1ANO, 9G5W, ZD7BG, HK0HF, S01WS, 3B9FR, 3B9HA, ZA1WW, etc. So in spite of the poor band conditions, the DX keeps rolling it.

BTW, before the 10 meter, contest, I made a mistake and let Windows 10 do an update. After the update, W10 didn't recognize my video card any more. Turns out I had to buy a new one at Best Buy (the cheapest one they had!) but I'm back in business now. Moral of the story, don't let W10 do an update BEFORE a contest!!

73, Allen N5XZ

Inside this issue:

The Prez Sez by Robie AJ4F	2
TDXS Meeting Minutes by Robie AJ4F	4
DX Chairman's Report by Orville Burg K5VWW	5
Contest Chairman's Report by Jim Burrough N5DTT	6
TDXS Biography: Mike Davidson N5MT	8
The Pre-History of Contest Software by Roy Radlek AD5Q	12
TDXS Board Members	18
TDXS Birthdays	18

I am looking for more autobiographies of TDXS members to add to upcoming Bullsheets. If you would like to have your illustrious ham radio history please send them to me via email.

BTW, MERRY CHRISTMAS,

HAPPY HANUKKAN AND

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



The Prez Sez by Robie, AJ4F

The Prez Sez

December 2017

The TDXS has had improved contest participation in November.

ARRL Sweepstakes – CW 4 with Dave - K5GN taking honors with over 211K points

ARRL Sweepstakes – SSB 7 participants - Allen - N5XZ > 74k points

CQWW CW – 9 participants – Kim - K5TU > 1.3 million points

We did not get the required 10 entries to qualify as a medium club in the ARRL Club competition for either the SSB or CW Sweepstakes. Qualifying as a medium club extends the geographic range for which members can submit entries. We want to make some “noise” in the club competition so, plan on making some QSOs in the upcoming ARRL 160 & 10 Meter contests and submitting your entry!

I conducted an informal poll on the TDXS Facebook page to determine which contest software was most popular. Initially, I received 9 responses and here is how they broke down: N1MM+ - 6, WriteLog - 2, and N3FJP - 1. This was in line with my expectations. However, a short time after I posted the results, Dave K5GN contacted me and informed me he uses Win-Test. In our discussion as to why Dave chose Win-Test he cited two familiar reasons – a long history as a user (familiarity) and configurability of the program to meet Dave’s needs. Dave also mentioned another program used by several top contesters, DXLog by 9A5K. I had not heard of this program before. Anyone else have experience with it? Roy Radlek – AD5Q communicated with me regarding his early efforts with contest software both as a developer and a user. Roy documented his experience in a paper titled [The Pre-History of Contest Software](#). His paper was written in 2013 and I have asked that it be included later in the Bullsheet. I believe you will find it interesting. Do any other TDXS members have contest software development or user experiences they would like to share? One last thing on the topic of contest software, I have learned recently that several TDXS members are using CW Decoders for contest operation. I knew of these programs, but I have never seriously considered using one. WriteLog has a CW reader built in and N1MM+ will interact with either Fldigi, CW Get or a TNC. Since I use N1MM+ and experiment with Fldigi I decided to give that combination a try. I made about 20 QSOs on 20M this setup and Fldigi copied most stations very well. Just like me, it has a bit of trouble with those operators who have a pronounced “swing”. My point behind this is – Are you using the program that best fits your needs? Have you exploited all the relevant features of the program you are using? Do a little experimenting and keep an open mind.

(cont.)

The Prez Sez by Robie, AJ4F

We all had a great time at the “Old Codgers Dinner” with more than 20 participants. Thanks for Orville – K5VWW for organizing the event. Officers for 2018 were elected at the dinner:

President – Robie Elms – AJ4F

Vice President – Membership Keith Dutson -NM5G

Secretary - Doug Seyler – WB5TKI

Treasurer – Orville Burg – K5VWW

Vice President – Meetings – no nominations or volunteers for this office. We agreed to share this responsibility among several members during the year.

We need to begin developing goals and objectives for 2018. Please provide your input to any current officer or TDXS board member. My most immediate concern is how to increase participation in our activities – officers, meetings, programs, and contests.

73,

Robie – AJ4F



TDXS Meeting Minutes by Doug Seyler WB5TKI

TDXS November 2017 Meeting Minutes

Olde Codgers Night

Date: November 15, 2017

Location: Rudi Lechner’s German Restaurant, Houston, TX

Attendance: Members: Doug WB5TKI, Robie AJ5F, Ed W5GCX, Jerry K9GEM, Orville K5VWW, Curt WG5H, Mike N5MT, Chuck W5PR, Ron K5LLL, Mike K5UO, Randy KR5LM, Richard K5NA, Kim K5TU, Buzz N5UR, Bob W5UQ, Elva KG5HIE, Paul W5PF, Keith NM5G, Bob N5ET.

Guests: Lynn Seyler, Xenia Gerber, Toby Aulman, Janice Mullen, Kitty Marosko K5KAT, Susan King K5DU, John Stevens K5JS, Georgina Frantz, Beth Dutton, Terresa Keblis.

The November was the annual Olde Codgers Dinner, held this year at Rudi Lechner’s German Restaurant on Gessner in Houston. We had a great turnout with 29 members and guests. There was a buffet, and the food was excellent, as was the conversation.

A short business meeting was held, which consisted of re-electing the current Board of Directors for another year. There is, however, a vacancy for VP Programs, and the current Board will pursue a solution to this vacancy.

Membership now stands at 210, with the last new member being Gary Antley KI5LR.

All in all a very enjoyable evening!

73,

Submitted December 4, 2017

Doug Seyler WB5TKI

TDXS Secretary



DX Report by Orville Burg K5VWW

DX Report by Orville Burg, K5VWW

2018 looks like it will be a really great year for DX with DXpeditions already scheduled and preparations being made for several rare entities including:

- Bouvet Island, 3Y0Z**
- Baker Island, KH1**
- Ducie Island, VP6D**

In addition activity is planned for **Macao, XX9B**; **Spratley Islands, 9M0W**; and **Saint Brandon, 3B7A**.

These should provide several ATNO and band slots for all.

Anticipation of the forthcoming **3Y0Z** DXpedition to **Bouvet Island** scheduled for late January 2018 is increasing. A sea container with all the equipment is approaching Punta Arenas, Chile and will rendezvous with the 20 operators on January 13, 2018 at King George Island in the South Shetlands.

Currently, this week, the weather on Bouvet is forecast for Gale force winds at 40 mph with temperatures hovering at 0°C.

Of particular note is the fact that the Bouvet team have announced that the use of **FT8** will be made on a secondary basis when band conditions are otherwise not favorable.

ZC4MK, Cyprus Sovereign Base Area, will be activated by **GØKOM** on CW on 40M-10M bands from December 5th - 12th.

Senegal, 6V1A and 6W will be active by 3 DXpeditions from December 15th until December 17th, December 21st until January 15th, and December 25th through January 12th on all bands on all modes.

D4C from **Cape Verde** will be operational during the 10M contest December 9th and 10th.

Several other operations are planned and/or scheduled so keep tuned.

Good DX,
Orville, K5VWW



Contest Chairman Report—by Jim Burrough N5DTT

Hello again. As expected, November has been a great month for contesting. With both the Sweepstakes CW and Phone Contests and the CQ WW DX – CW, there have been great opportunities for participation in North American and International contests. These contests have been great for experienced contesters to compete and a wonderful chance for new contesters to make great progress on collecting the WAS and DXCC awards. No one can argue with the efficiency and opportunity that contests provide to achieve these important goals.

On reflection, this may be a huge selling point in getting more people interested in contesting. Newly licensed Generals and Extras have shown an obvious interest in HF by upgrading. It is only logical that more experienced operators communicate to them the benefits that contesting can provide. Think about it, is there a more efficient way to collect states and countries? Is there a better way to test and perfect operating skills? Is there a better way to test and perfect equipment?

There has been some TDXS participation in November contests. Those that reported on the 3830scores website are listed below:

ARRL Sweepstakes CW

Single OP High Power

Call	SO2R	Remote	QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
K5GN	x		1274	83	24:00	211,484	TDXS

Single Op LP

Call	SO2R	Remote	QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
KE8G			614	78	15.75	95,784	TDXS
KI5LR			316	74	22	46,768	TDXS

SO Unlimited HP

Call	SO2R	Remote	QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
N5XZ			928	83	23:10	154,048	TDXS

ARRL Sweepstakes - SSB

Single Op HP

Call	SO2R	Remote	QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
KJ5Y			116	54	4	12,528	TDXS
KØNM			25	19	0:52	950	TDXS
W5DPT(LOUIS)			1	1	:45	2	TDXS

(continued)



Contest Chairman Report—by Jim Burrough N5DTT

Single Op LP

Call	SO2R	Remote		QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
KI5LR			464	79	20	73,312		TDXS
AJ4F			218	70	11.5	30,520		TDXS

SO Unlimited HP

Call	SO2R	Remote		QSOs	Sections	Op Time	Score	Club
N5XZ			456	82	5:28	74,784		TDXS
W5FMH(KEØHWZ)			477	75	14:57	71,550		TDXS

As I said at the beginning of this report, contesting offers many opportunities to perfect our amateur radio craft. Unfortunately, fewer than usual numbers of our TDXS members are participating. Maybe this is because of Harvey. That is my problem. I am out of my house in a location intolerant to amateur radio operation. I lost my truck to the flood, so I have no ready access to my Fayette County QTH where I could operate in a Field Day type operation. I may be able to correct this problem in time for ARRL 10 Meter, the next ARRL Affiliated Club competition. That is my goal.

We still need to get more logs in for the ARRL contests. As W5DPT did in the Sweepstakes – Phone, he operated 45 seconds, made a contact and turned in a log. He was one of 8 from TDXS to turn in a log. Under the new Affiliated Club Competition rules. fewer than 10 logs will put the club into the Local category. This restricts participants to a 35-mile radius out from the current club center point. Fortunately, everyone submitting a log in SSB Sweeps this time was within the circle. We would much prefer to get 10 or more logs in where we can have the entire STX section as our area. This is important for the club’s members who have contest station QTHs outside the 35-mile circle. These contest stations can be real contributors to a great club score. We need to support them. Enough said.

Speaking of good club scores, TDXS did well in the NAQP Club competitions back in August, before Harvey. TDXS (Operators WB5TUF, N5XZ, K5DD, KG5LRP) took 8th place in the RTTY party, TDXS Eclipse (Operators K5DU, K5TU AJ4F, WG5H) took 9th place in the SSB party and TDXS (Operators W5FMH, N5XZ, WB5TUF, WG5H, N5DTT) took 34th place in the CW party. Way to go!

Until next year,

Jim, N5DTT

Contest Chairman



TDXS Biography: Mike Davidson N5MT

I was born on July 26, 1947 in a small hospital in the middle of Cajun country in Houma, Louisiana. My first joke came as a result of my birth, as the delivery doctor asked my mother what was my new name which she told him Michael a Davidson. The doc thought for a minute and came back with the comment to my mother “Well Mike was using his initials backwards and forwards, DAM MAD when born.” So over the years I have tried not to use my first comments and be a quiet Cajun that has never had the accent!

I thought when I was in junior high school that I was going to be a pharmacist but a cousin gave me a Hallicrafter receiver that I connected to a long wire and began my task of listening on the air to mostly broadcast stations. I did not know what ham radio was until I meet a neighbor that showed me his station. Well, I soon found that my new radio had a hot ground, so I learned what not to touch! In high school most students took Biology in the tenth grade and my Biology teacher made us do a science fair project for class. I decided that my project would have a mouse as the animal part of my project but the major part was going to be a rocket to push the mouse up into the sky. I created a steel rocket with the help of a machine shop and made a safe rocket fuel out of zinc dust and sulphur. I notified the FAA about my rocket launch in a cleared sugar cane field outside of Houma and it went up about 600 feet with the mouse as a passenger. No radio on board my first rocket but I learned a lot about engineering that my research books had not told me about the hobby. I got a good grade for the Biology project as my teacher was at the launch site. I entered the project in the regional science fair and won some awards fairs with the project. Then in my senior year, I had to improve the design and made the new bigger rocket out of aluminum with a mouse compartment, a radio for direction finding and a parachute. My buddy Tom N5EY, was the license holder for the 40-meter frequency we used on the transmitter. Well, this projectile never launched due to technical problems with too much water at the launch site in south Louisiana. I did test the rocket and I calculated that it pushed out 2700 pounds of thrust for about one half a second burn time. Estimated altitudes for this amount of thrust are about 3000-6000 feet. If it had launched from our marshy location, we would have lost it in the wet brush and the radio would probably not been of help to finding it.

I had a few hobbies while in school, where I spent most of my free time being a high school photographer. I could develop film and print black and white prints and I had my own darkroom plus the darkroom at school. I would take pictures for the weekly newspaper and the year book.

I graduated high school and looked for an engineering school in state, there is LSU and Louisiana Tech. I chose the smaller university, La Tech, where I found a home up in the piney woods of north Louisiana. I continued being a school photographer at Tech and started my path to be a mechanical engineer. It did not take long before I gave up my student job to put more focus on grades. But I was spending more time at the campus computer center where I was a good Fortran programmer. My electrical engineering roommate was a year older than I but he was not a ham. The year before we met, my roommate set up a AM broadcast station in his dorm room. The FCC came up from Baton Rouge, found his station and shut his AM signal down. Something about too many watts being fed into the fire sprinkler system of the dorm room and the AM transmitter was putting out too much ERP for their liking.

The year was 1968 and the Industrial Engineering department at Tech decided to create a Computer Science (CS) program and open it up to all students. I was more interested in the CS program than mechanical engineering, so I was one of about ten that changed majors and was admitted into the program. I began working again as a student programmer helping math and engineering students to use Fortran, COBOL and IBM assembler. I was the second person to graduate with a BS in Computer Science and I stayed at La Tech to start an MBA in management science in the school of business instead of joining the Air Force during the Vietnam War. I finally got my MBA after I started working as a System Analyst for Pennzoil in Houston in 1972.

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TDXS Biography: Mike Davidson N5MT

My last year at La Tech, I was a faculty member where I was teaching COBOL, Tech Drafting and Computer Science while having a side job of teaching Data Processing at Grambling College, down the road about 5 miles from La Tech.

I went to work for Pennzoil here in Houston in 1972 as a Programmer/Analyst. The work was great and someone asked me to be a judge in the computer science/math section at the local regional science fair. That introduced me to another hobby and soon the head judge put me in charge of the CS/Math group along with another coordinator, so there were two of us backing up each other. Well after 44 years, I have judged a lot of science fair projects and the Computer and Math groups have been split apart. I have been a judge at the International Intel Science Fair twice and it's great fun for me and the students. The Houston Science Fair sends three grand award winners to the Intel Fair each year from the Houston area.

I was getting closer to becoming a ham radio operator after I moved to Houston and the CB radio craze was letting people talk from their car at a cheap price. I found the Houston ARC and started going to meetings and learning CW. I passed my Novice license at the ARC and became KA5BYF in August 1978. I soon converted an eleven-meter beam antenna into a ten-meter ham antenna and used my Yaesu FT101 with a straight key so I could get my code speed up to General class speed and pass the next code test. After operating on CW for a few months, I finished my Worked All States award. I then went downtown to the FCC office and passed my General written and code test. I passed my Advanced test about a year later and got call KC5CP but I wanted more frequencies so I relearned the code by sound and passed my Extra in 1982 at the Arlington ham-fest which was about the time that I joined the Texas DX Society. I did not change my call until the vanity calls became available and I tried to get N5MD for my initials. Another ham in north Texas got the call first so my second choice was to get a short call for CW and I asked for N5MT and got it in 1996.

I found that my four element Ten meter beam was just too low to the ground, about 20 feet. I had my DXCC from the ARRL and was slowly working more countries on Ten but I needed more height and power! I wanted something bigger and my neighborhood had no tower restrictions, just my small city lot. I found a used 60 foot Rohn fold-over tower for a good price and added another ten-foot section to put three 10-15-20 four-element HF beams at 70 feet. I added 40 and 80 and later a 160-meter sloping antennas plus vhf/uhf, so the country count started rising much faster with the 70-foot height advantage. I got rid of the old Yaesu radio and went with a Kenwood 830 and then a 930 HF radio, which were a lot more sensitive on receive.

I got interested in the 1010 International group on Ten meters sometime after I got my General license in about 1980. Since my best antenna was Ten, it produced the most new countries plus the propagation was great during that Solar cycle. I remember one day, I removed the two finals out of the Yaesu FT101 and just had the low power driver tube in the radio, which I believe was less than a watt. Using my four el beam on Ten, I had a three-way QSO with South Africa and Brazil, all at the same time. I then turned the beam to the southwest and talked with Australia and New Zealand with the same low power setup, it was the most miles per watt that I ever operated. During this period of the Solar cycle and using high power, I remember hearing the echo of my signal coming back around from a global hop which I have heard twice at my station.

I first used an SB200 amplifier when I got my General and then upgraded to an SB220 for a few more watts. Then I found an Alpha 76A that gave me a few more watts again and I am still using the Alpha today, but the old amp it just does not give me full legal limit on Ten. It does well on 40 and 80.

Well my job with Pennzoil gave me some experience with online systems and an IBM product called CICS. I went to college with a computer science friend that was now at one of the hospitals in the Texas Medical Center and he offered me a better job with a pay raise and more online work. My first job in the Medical Center was with Hermann Hospital for two years and then I moved to Methodist Hospital where I stayed for twenty-four years.

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TDXS Biography: Mike Davidson N5MT

. I got to design the disaster recovery system for the hospital and we conducted a total of thirty disaster recovery test while I was there. Our first test was a flop due to a Technical support problem but the last twenty-nine were all successful disaster recovery tests.

I got my Novice ticket in August 1978 and was fortunate to talk with Panama/Canal Zone before it became my first deleted country. I put East Germany in the log before it became a deleted country and I was able to talk with the only 1010 member from E Germany before it became deleted. Over the years I now have eleven deleted countries and my total worked countries count is 350. My DXCC challenge count is just more than 1400 entities/countries, when I make my next pending update.

The 1010 International group tries to have similar awards like the ARRL awards. The DXCC award is called the Countries Award and I am presently the manager of that award so I have all the computer records of the six-hundred plus members that hold the Basic Award which starts at twenty-five countries and not one hundred like the ARRL DXCC. Each 1010 member gets assigned a member number and to get credit for a 1010 contact, exchange name, number and state/country with the other 1010 member.

There have only been about fifty 1010 members that have been able to talk with one hundred 1010 countries. I was the fifth person to work one hundred countries on 1010 and now I am the only member that has worked more than 200 countries. I hold the world record of 304 countries worked with a 1010 contact. I have also been the 1010 DX Editor since 1990 which is just a bit longer than my 1010 Countries Award Manager job.

The local 1010 club is called the Space Houston On Ten or Houston SHOT and it was formed before I got my ham license. When I joined 1010 in 1979, I was soon to become the local Tuesday night net control with my good beam antenna. Since that time, I have been on the local Tuesday net about 1900 times over the past thirty-eight years. It has been fun talking with more than 17,000 members that I have in my computer log. I may never get credit for talking to all these members as you have to send in a log of 100 contacts to get credit for what is call a 1010 bar award, it's still a lot of work even when the computer does the selection and printing.

Back at Methodist Hospital, the year 2000 was approaching and we were changing online and batch programs to take care of expanding the year date changes from two digits to four digits. Everyone was so scared that the computer system was going to break on January 1st 2000. No way, we had a disaster recovery system that was testing all these programs and telling us what needed to be fixed. On January 1st 2000, we had no program failures as a result of the date change. The hospital decided it had too many on the payroll and gave more than a hundred of us an early retirement package and I retired in February 2000 after twenty-four years of service with Methodist Hospital. My Computer Science degree gave me the programming/analysis skills that I needed and my MBA gave me the knowledge to retire early.

So, I then had more time for working DX and it helped. I cannot remember what date I worked P5/4L4FN in North Korea but I helped Ed Girgadze to become a 1010 member and I did all the paper work for Ed plus his membership fee, and Ed then became the only ham and 1010 member living in P5 and licensed! We were fortunate to have a local Houston ham named Bruce KK5DO to become the QSL manager for Ed. So, there is only a hand full of hams that have logged Ed as a 1010 country and Ed has given about 2500 hams around the world credit for North Korea with the ARRL DXCC program by getting his P5 license!

Well, the 2017 Harvey flood made history on Sunday, August 27th when it put forty plus inches of water in my section of Houston. Brays bayou became full about 5 a.m. that Sunday and it kept raining for many more hours as predicted. By 7 a.m. the water was up to my car in the drive way and I knew at that point that if it kept raining as expected, the water would be in the house that morning.

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TDXS Biography: Mike Davidson N5MT

Well at 11 a.m., the water first come in the back door of my house and the water kept rising until it was about 5 inches deep by 2 p.m. that afternoon. The rains slowed to drizzle and finally stopped and I could see the water starting to drain out the front door! I talked with the neighbor across the street and they offered a second floor room where we could stay for a few days, which would extend to eight. The rains finally completely stopped and the street drained and the power came back on and I came back to a wet house.

With the power back on, I started to dry out the house. We had some friends from my church come over to pull up wet carpet to allow the house to dry out with the wood floors now free of the flooded carpet.

We made a decision not to repair the 65-year-old one story house which is up for a pending sale. Margie and I are both from Louisiana, so we plan to move closer to relatives sometime after the first of the year 2018. I am actively looking at real estate in the Baton Rouge area of Louisiana and the closest relatives in that area have helped us move two loads of stuff out of the house already. The seventy foot tower and the seven antennas mounted on it, came down in November. The tower and all antennas are neatly stacked in the back yard waiting to be moved to a new home. I just finished working the ARRL Ten Meter contest with a vertical antenna and my amplifier, I found only thirty-three contacts on mixed mode for about 900 points. The Ten Meter contest was my first contest in December 1978 and it was the last one of 2017. So I have one more antenna to take down whenever we make the final move from Houston.

Thanks for all our TDXS friends and helpers over the years that have helped us grow here in Houston. I am hopefully to get a new antenna farm sometime in 2018 so I can get that next new country in the log whenever that new entity gets selected and approved by the ARRL DXCC.

73 Mike Davidson N5MT



The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

This article is a wee bit retro, but contains important suggestions that would enable a smoother data entry of callsign and exchange information (especially corrections) in all contests. I am Roy, AD5Q, and I have been programming computers since 1967. Through the 1970's this was primarily on mainframes writing accounting systems in assembly language, and in 1980 I switched to programming PC's. As the ARRL DX CW Contest approached in February 1981, I had an idea for a program that would log, dupe and score the contest in real time. I wrote the prototype in less than a week and used it in the contest. It was a dramatic departure from paper logs and dupe sheets. I accumulated fairly decent QSO totals with ease. It was a beginning. This was, beyond any doubt, the way to go.

I don't remember if I sent in the logs for that first contest. Development continued, mostly during 1981-82. There was debugging to do during the contests (sometimes after many hours of no sleep), and sometimes I lost data (DX contacts & mults). When the data was corrupted, I didn't send the logs in. I know that the first version of the program, the prototype, did not compute the run rate. This was added for the IARU in July (back then it was a different contest called the "Radiosport"). There were a few differences in the statistics I displayed, such as overall rates per band, and total time spent on each band. My short term QSO rate was computed based on the most recent 15 minutes, instead of the last 10 QSOs. As with all software, I kept adding features. My original intention was to offer the software package to testers at a fair price and make a modest living at it.

My point here, is that I don't think anyone else was doing this back then. Relevant software articles in NCJ were mostly about programs you would use AFTER a contest, such as to enter the callsigns worked on each band and produce the required hard copy dupe sheets. I could be wrong, but I think I was the first to have a program that logged contest QSO's at competitive rates, duped, decoded the callsign to determine the country mult, continent and QSO points, displayed mult totals for each band, and therefore scored the contest - all in real time. If you know of someone who did this prior to 1981, please write.

At that time, radio hams and testers did have computers. Most commonly they were Commodore 64's. I decided that this platform was unsuitable for testing for two reasons: 1) the keyboard had a spongy feel and was not good for accurate typing. 2) there was no system clock for logging the QSO time. The original version of my program ran on a Radio Shack TRS-80 Model II (their serious small business PC at the time) using their proprietary operating system (TRSDOS) and interpretive BASIC language. This platform had limitations. As you may already know, Radio Shack sucks. W2NSD published a magazine dedicated to their computers, and Radio Shack refused to carry it in their stores because he was critical of the manufacturer and its policies.

After logging several hundred QSO's the limitations became obvious. String space became constricted, slowing processing and ultimately forcing a long pause for "garbage collection". With over 1,000 contacts in the log, this would take up to 2 minutes AND become more and more frequent: unacceptable. By CQWW SSB in 1981 I had switched the operating system to Pickles & Trout CP/M, and re-written the program in a compiled version of Digital Research CBASIC called CB80. Also, the callsign dupe table was handled in Z-80 assembly language within a block of memory instead of with BASIC strings. This eliminated the Garbage Collection pauses, greatly increased the speed, and enabled me to develop for any Z80 PC running CP/M. This was at the time the standard platform for small business computing. By mid-1982 I had separate modules for the ARRL DX Contest (either DXCC or stateside mults), WPX, RadioSport (aka IARU), CQWW, Field Day, CQ/M and the 10M Contest. I also had a more general database for everyday QSO's where I could combine them with all the contest logs and do DXCC tracking and QSL's. I eventually added modules for the NA Sprint and 160M contests. All these old logs are in my current DX4Win database.

I continued to polish up the program, tweak out the remaining bugs, and was getting ready for the great migration of testers from their Commodore 64's to the CP/M platform (which didn't happen). There were challenges. The maximum memory on a Z-80 PC was 64k. There were no standard hardware calls in CP/M PC's for things such as cursor positioning on monitors, no standard keyboards, and no standard hex values returned for keystrokes such as arrow keys. All software in those days had configuration routines for the monitor and keyboard. The main challenge for me, however, was the CPU clock. I had to access it using PEEKs and POKEs into upper memory, and first had to find the memory locations where something was ticking away the minutes and seconds. It was an overnight run. Once it found the clock in memory, an algorithm had to determine the format: decimal or hex seconds, minutes, & hours - or a single hex value for the time, in seconds. Only then would I have a configuration setting that controlled how I would read and write to the system clock on a particular PC with PEEK & POKE. These early clocks also drifted a lot, so there was another long run where I would calibrate the clock against WWV, and apply an offset correcting for the drift every time a QSO was saved.

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The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

All for nothing. Doctor DX was released, and it somehow ran on a Commodore and did the CQWW! The contesters on the local repeater loved it, but I was devastated because it sounded like I had competition. I then figured out that it was just a toy simulator and didn't actually log the contest. This was in late 1983 I think. But somewhere during 1983 and '84 I came to the conclusion that there was so much software copying going on that I was not going to make back my development costs or any profit by distributing the software. At the time, all software was distributed on floppy, and cracking the copy protection schemes on floppy disks was great sport. I would sell maybe 4 or 5 copies, and everyone would have my program. I found something else to do, development stopped, and you never heard of my programs. To this day, I don't think anyone has made back their development costs on logging software of any kind.

And so, for at least the first half of the 80's I did all my contest logging using software, while everyone else continued to log and dupe with pencil and paper unless they also wrote their own code. There was no software for sale that a serious contesteer would want. In the rare on-air SSB QSO's I had with other contesters, most didn't even believe me when I told them what my software did. Eventually, CT was released. It was for MSDOS, not CP/M, and it was a better program anyway (but buggier). NA followed, and I was looking forward to migrating to them myself. They did some neat things that my software didn't. They interfaced to the radio, and they sent CW. Hey, the screens were even in color!

Huh?

My software never sent CW.

If you have read this far, take a break. Go ahead and roll on the floor laughing. But keep reading. We are getting to the fun part.

No F1 key? AutoCQ? No INS/PLUS. No callsign key. No ESM (Enter Sends Message). None of that. I am not saying things were better that way, but we are now leading to the main reason I am writing THIS article at THIS time: SMOOTHER DATA ENTRY. The single feature of my archaic software that would be a widely appreciated improvement to modern contest software such as WriteLog, N1MM and Win-Test; is the way I did the data entry for the exchange – especially callsigns and fills. The rest of my program truly belongs in the trash.

Throughout the 80's and into the early 90's, I did ALL my sending by hand with a paddle and only a WB4VVF style AccuKeyer. There was NO memory, even for a CQ. Thus, I operated entire contests, sending every single CQ, and every single dit and dah – BY HAND, while logging with computer. This means, that every minute of any run – even really slow runs – I was fully occupied either sending or entering data. There was no such thing as making corrections to the log while a CQ message was being sent automatically.

My station during this period was a tribander & wires. First a tri-band HF Quagi at 70 ft, and after 1987 a KT34XA at 104 ft. I converted the software to MSDOS around 1987, still using Digital Research BASIC (CB86). I had some fairly respectable scores, but had a goal of 2000+ QSOs by hand keyer. CT was finally released later in the '80s, it was a better program than mine, but I really wanted to top 2000 Q's by hand before making the switch. There were several contests, including 2 ARRL CW's, where I had over 1,800 Q's by paddle only. So I guess that was my limit. In any case, the data entry scheme I used for thousands of QSOs was ultra smooth and proven by time – making corrections to callsigns and exchange information very easy. It had to be, because the demands of manual sending left no slack whatsoever.

My first hands-on experience with CT wasn't until my first multi-op invitation: the 1992 CQWW at AA6TT. I made one more attempt at 2000 Q's with my own stuff after that, the 1993 WPX, and finally switched to NA. When I saw that CT and NA were tabbing from field to field to do data entry, I was R.O.T.F.L. I instantly saw the special problem they would encounter regarding the ARRL Sweepstakes. And I had the solution all along. I was not about to upgrade my old mono-chrome software and compete with these products (especially since I was no longer interested in programming in any form of BASIC), but felt it was a good idea to make a contribution to the state of the art. So I wrote an article for the NCJ detailing the way I had been doing data entry since 1981. The emphasis of the article was on the SS exchange, and also on callsign entry and any other exchange info. It was an approach that encompassed ALL data exchange and callsign entry for ALL contests.

The article was rejected by the NCJ editor as “too arcane” for publication. Hmmph. I didn't quit there, and ultimately mailed hard copies (this was before Internet) to 4 other people – all very well-known calls. Two of them were the authors of NA and CT (TR didn't exist yet). I don't know what happened after that, or if anyone communicated with other software authors. It seemed that everyone just blew me off. I am very used to that. I truly am too arcane for NCJ. It's not something I can change. I am autistic, but with an IQ of 162. It's called Asperger Syndrome, and it's the reason I rarely work SSB or 2 Meters, or show up at social functions like Dayton and Visalia. I am mostly out of the loop, and deeply involved in a wide spectrum of interests that are too arcane to discuss on the ham bands. Excuse me here, but I needed to say that. So you know. I have issues :-D

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The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

I felt vindicated when a new program, TR, incorporated my suggestions regarding the SS exchange. Though I suspected that somebody forwarded my article to its author, I don't really know and have never asked. It's extremely likely that he arrived at the solution independently. The problem with tabbing all the fields in the SS exchange is obvious, and so is the parsing solution. It became the most widely promoted feature in his program for several years running, and it's very popular. I bought a copy of TRLog and tried hard to use it (and also all the others at some point), but I've never used it in the SS. There are other things about TR that I very much don't like, and which will not be referenced in this post. I liked NA much better for SO2R, which is probably true of anyone who has tried it.

There were other suggestions in my 1980's article that were not implemented in TR, and I think they would also be popular now regardless of whose software adopted them. They are based on the same principle as the so-called "TRLog Method" of breaking down the SS exchange based on the syntax of the data, and were originally deployed in my own software for the 1981 fall season and all supported contests thereafter. It is the continued popularity of the TR formatted SS exchange in Windows software that encourages me to write this documentation, as I am suggesting that the technique be expanded to support all contests, and include a more flexible entry of callsigns.

Unlike TR, my method used a single field for the entry of all contest data. TR has a field for the callsign in the SS, and another field for everything else (including corrections to the callsign). The callsign field is not necessary. Now you no longer worry about what field you are in at all. There is a single prompt character, followed by an area to enter anything in any order. Above the entry bucket, there is a 2nd line that is formatted as it will appear in the log. This is for the current QSO. Recently entered QSOs can be shown above the current QSO line, the log can be scrolled, and saved QSOs can be edited with additional corrections. Nowadays this is standard stuff. (My software didn't have this though. Once the QSO was saved, it was gone from the screen. No edits after the QSO, only during. I am not suggesting we go back to that.)

The underlying principle for all this data entry is that it is much easier to type a correction than it is to backspace, press the home key, delete bad characters in busted information, and THEN type the correction. Does that make sense? For the most part, forget about backspacing, tabbing and deleting. Just type fills until it's right. Corrections will automatically overwrite any busted information without the need to tab or position the cursor. Examples follow.

For the purpose of these illustrations, let's use a colon as the prompt character. Also, let's call the individual elements of the exchange "chunks", which are separated from other "chunks" by spaces. The logic will determine if a chunk contains a full callsign, or just a prefix or suffix, or maybe it's part of the exchange. We enter what we copy, and the software figures out what to do with it.

Most of the examples below will begin with a busted call, then show the chunks needed to correct it. A prefix is everything up to the last numeric, and a suffix is everything beyond it. Thus, when correcting a suffix, everything following the last numeric is replaced with the new suffix chunk. To correct a prefix, everything up to the last numeric is replaced. The chunks with slashes are appended before or after the main call, depending on the position of the slash within the chunk.

: W8GT GM N8 VP9/

. A callsign consists of a prefix, a suffix and MAYBE something with a slash before, after, or both. . A full callsign is a chunk containing both letters and numbers, and ending with a letter.

. A suffix is a chunk containing only letters.

. A prefix is a chunk containing both letters and numbers, and ending with a number.

. If a chunk ends in a slash, the chunk will precede the full call after formatting.

. If a chunk begins in a slash, it will follow the full call.

. If a chunk consists of just a single slash (rare), we want to delete the portable section of a call

. When you press ENTER, the contents of the whole entry bucket is processed and the fields are formatted into the log line above it. The prompt line is cleared, but ready for additional input to the current QSO before saving.

. When you press ENTER on the empty prompt line, the QSO is saved and you send your TU QRZ message and update score, totals, rates, etc.

1 0001z VP9/N8GM 599 599 05



The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

: K8 VP8/

We have just processed the first example, concluding that the call is VP9/N8GM. We have also guessed the exchange for CQWW as zone 05 if you want to do that. Now the prompt line contains two additional corrections. We press ENTER to correct the prefix to VP8/K8GM, and the guessed exchange should change to zone 13.

```
1 0001z VP8/K8GM      599 599 13
```

: /

Now, suppose we want to change the above call to simply K8GM, deleting the VP8 part (rarely needed, but supported). Enter a single slash.

```
1 0001z K8GM          599 599 13 :
```

We can keep entering corrections and pressing ENTER to format them into their position in the callsign. When we are done, we press ENTER without any corrections. This saves the QSO (and if you are programming with ESM, this would also send the TU QRZ type message). This entry method WILL effect the way you program ESM, but it should work well.

In a contest like the CQWW, the guessed zone might be wrong with some stations, especially in the USA. Just type the 2 digit zone, or maybe allow a single digit for the zone.

The CQWW is the simplest case, because most of the time you enter only callsigns. Let's try this in the IARU. This is also a zoned contest, but with a difference;

: HG1S HQ MRASZ

This will initially correct the callsign HG1S to HG1HQ, but will next correct it again to HG1MRASZ. What's wrong? We need a way to tell the program that MRASZ is not a suffix. We use a punctuation mark to distinguish between a callsign suffix and the mult field. My program used to use a period, but it should be user selectable (contest configuration). I suggest something very near the ENTER key, and for the purpose of this and further illustration, let's use the apostrophe:

: HG1S HQ MRASZ'

This should process as a completed exchange:

```
0001z VP8/K8GM      599 599 13
```

```
0003z HG1HQ        599 599 MRASZ
```

In the above, I "tagged" the MRASZ mult field with an apostrophe after the mult string. The tag character is a minor inconvenience that allows us to extend the flexible callsign entry methodology outlined above to practically any contest. It is used primarily to mark non-numeric chunks that aren't callsign suffixes. In the IARU, they are used only in anomalous situations (HQ stations). In others, they are part of every exchange. The benefits of entering QSO and callsign information in any order without cursor positioning make this an easy tradeoff. This tag character can be entered either immediately BEFORE or AFTER the exchange data. I always accepted and recognized it either way. In other words, you should NOT attempt to program an exchange where a chunk beginning with the tag character implies a different part of the exchange than one with the tag character at the end. In practice, you will get them mixed up.

Here is another anomalous situation, the ONLY time you will need the tag character in the ARRL DX Contest if you are US/VE:

: OH2BH 'KW

But if you are DX in this contest, the exchange consists of states and provinces and you need to mark them as nonsuffixes:

: K3LR 'PA

If the exchange is a serial number or any other numeric, just enter it. Anything that is all numeric is NEVER part of the callsign.



The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

In the Ten Meter Contest, the exchange can be a number (DX) or a US/VE state/province, which consists of characters. The numeric is no problem. The state/province needs the tag character, either before or after:

: K5ZB 'MA ZD It's Randy.

I have entered a few thousand contacts in the 10M Contest this way. I never had a problem remembering to include the tag character, either on CW or SSB. If the station is US or VE, you know the exchange will need it. When working a stateside station in this contest, I would typically type the tag character while copying the signal report, knowing that the state is sent next. Easy.

This data entry is extremely smooth on CW or SSB, regardless of rate. On Phone, many stations use the lasstoo (last two) letters of their call. Just enter what they say. When they follow up with their full calls, you can enter just the prefix if the suffix really was only 2 letters. Copying the suffix first and the prefix last is no problem at all. No backspacing or positioning. The logic will sort it out. Done!

Here are a couple more examples:

: EW5GN EI5/ EI/

It's Barry.

: HB9BRV HB0/ DRV /P It's HB0/HB9DRV/P.

Of course, you can ALWAYS enter full calls.

Now, let's look at the NAQP. It's a problem. : K5NA GA BILLY TX

Here, the suffix, name and state are all letters and the logic will treat all as suffixes unless we do three things:

- . Require full calls in this contest.
- . Identify either the name or state (I would use the state) with the tag character. . Any chunk not containing a numeric or the tag character is the Name.

Therefore:

: K5NA K5GA BILLY 'TX Does it right.

The NA Sprint is similar, but there is also a QSO number in the exchange. So the above QSO might look like this:

:K5NA K5GA 315 BILLY 'TX

So here is the rule regarding the use of the "tag" character and support for flexible callsign entry:

- . In contests where all parts of the exchange are numeric, you may use my more flexible approach to entering callsigns. This means you normally need to type only the portion of the callsign that needs a fill.
- . If the contest exchange includes a component that contains no numerics, you need the tag character to distinguish it from a suffix.
- . If the exchange includes TWO components without numerics, then ONE of them needs to be identified with the tag character. Flexible callsign entry (of prefixes, suffixes, etc.) needs to be disabled, otherwise the other part of the exchange will be treated as a call suffix. You need to always enter the full callsign :-)

We already know about the SS Exchange from TRLog. Here, 2 digit numerics are checks and others are numbers. Following a 2 digit numeric with the single character precedent has the effect of distinguishing the number from the 2 digit check. Prefixes should work fine because none of the other parts of the exchange end in a numeric. I've noticed that TR allows the entry of suffixes, but that's tricky because some call suffixes are valid section ID's. Be careful with that. Most of the time we just enter 123B and 64STX and it works fine. An alternative that would clear up the conflict between suffix and section would involve the tag character, and would only be needed when we depart from the 123B and 64STX format to enter a component by itself. Use it for 2 digit numbers, single character precedents AND multiple character sections. The benefit is that you would be able to enter prefixes and suffixes of callsigns with impunity. Full support of partial callsigns with "TR style" SS exchange.

The Pre-History of Contest Software—by Roy Radlek AD5Q

Any correction to the callsign should also correct the CW message sent when the worked station's callsign key is pressed (TRLog didn't do that).

There are rare instances where stations will send you an honest signal report (other than 5NN) in a contest. Since the signal report is part of the exchange, it is important to log what is sent. Since this is a rare event, we can use a more inaccessible character of the keyboard to tag the report. I suggest something requiring the shift key, such as the colon. Thus:

: 579:

Or, if you want to get fancy and respond with an honest report...

: 579R: 559S:

... where the R and S indicate received and sent reports. If you choose to support the entry of a SENT signal report other than 5NN, however, note that this would effect your CW messages. You would need a new variable for users to insert everywhere in their messages in place of "5NN". The variable would certainly default to 5NN. In Win-Test, for example, it would be something like "\$SENRPT". I think this is optional. Since signal reports other than 5NN are so rare, you may not want to support this in your SENT report, but received reports need to be copied as sent and logged.

You might think this is funny, but I also had a chunk in the following format: "1437Z". This would re-sync my CPU clock to WWV in mid-contest. The feature was necessary back then, because the clocks did drift. In the CP/M standard, a CPU clock wasn't even required and some computers didn't have them.

In all the above examples, Tabs, Home, End, Arrow Keys, Delete and Backspace keys are usually not needed, but they should definitely function normally. Once there are no corrections, just press ENTER to save the QSO. This means that if you know you have entered an exchange correctly and wish to finish the QSO, then you will need to hit ENTER twice. Pressing it just once allows for the entry of additional fills. You might additionally program the PLUS key to finish the QSO, and press it just once. Each contest is a little different, but with a few configuration parameters it should be possible to quickly set up any contest to parse the exchange and callsign info correctly.

Contesting software has moved beyond DOS (and CP/M), but the cult following behind the popularity of TRLog still seems to have much influence over the new programs. Some are using the fine LUA scripting capability of Win-Test to replicate the functionality of TR, even to the extreme of using the same keystrokes. This is retrograde. Both N1MM and Win-Test have duplicated the TR style of entering the SS, but neither have expanded the underlying concept (of using the syntax of the data to identify parts of the exchange) to callsign entry and across all other contest exchanges. In this regard, software has still not caught up to where I was in 1981 with just a floppy driven Trash-80 Model II & CP/M. To this end, I have documented my algorithm and suggest we all play with it some. Good luck. I already know that it works really well.

I will leave it to the programmers to get the ESM messaging working correctly on CW. I really hope somebody does this, especially the Win-Test team. It shouldn't be hard to code, but these entry capabilities need to be embedded into the main program, replacing completely the tabbed entry with a single field for entering data in any order – NOT entered in a separate box with LUA.

Roy – AD5Q

Houston TX

9 Nov 2013



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How to reach US

On the World Wide Web <http://www.tdxx.net> email address: k5dx@tdxx.net

On 2 Meters: 147.96/36 MHz (100 Hz) On 70cm: 447.00/442.00 MHz (103.5 Hz)

DX Cluster—On Packet: Connect to **K5DX** on 145.71 MHz or telnet via IP address 75.148.198.113

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TexasDXSociety/> (new)

TDXS says "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" to these members with birthdays in December:

Please notify the Editor if I have missed anyone

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