



The Bullsheet

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

The Texas DX Society, Houston TX K5DX@tdxs.net November 2014

November 12, Wednesday, 6:30 pm: The 2nd annual "Old Codgers Night" at the Lasagna House in Sugar Land, TX

November 12, Wednesday, 6:30 PM— TDXS Meeting Night at the Lasagna House, 16089 City Walk, Sugar Land, TX 77479. This will be the second annual "Old Codgers Night". A good time will be had by all. Storytelling and reminiscing will be the order of business. TDXS member #1, Richard King, K5NA, has indicated that he and

Susan will be in attendance. We hope to see a very large turnout for this auspicious event. Please do not hesitate to bring your spouse, girlfriend, neighbor or friend. Let's see how many of the early member numbers we can gather.

Editor's Note by Allen N5XZ

I'm not sure what's happening with ol' Sol these days. During CQ WW CW, the sunspot numbers exceeded 200 and of course band conditions were spectacular, especially 10 meters. There were CW signals heard way past 29.200! We don't get the very often, except maybe when we're lucky in the 10 Meter Contest in December (BTW Chuck, W5PR has an article on that in this very issue.) Cross your fingers for those conditions! Remember last year, they were great then, too.

Then the ARRL CW Sweepstakes came along, and conditions were still very good. This year I made a sweep! Hopefully, I didn't bust any of the important QSOs, so I can finally get one of those fine Sweep mugs! (As if I need another coffee mug!)

I hope you enjoy the articles this month. Looks like Dave, K5GN really put a lot of effort into his, and it's quite interest-

ing. I can say I am lucky enough to have had the opportunity to operate from the other side of the pileup.. From Siberia, Chad and Alaska...and also as W1AW/5. Let me tell you it's a experience beyond compare! I'm sure Dave is going to miss it. Cookie, Bob and Ron have some great articles, too, so don't miss them!

As I mentioned, conditions were excellent during the month, I was lucky to bag 4U1ITU, VU2MUD, E2A, S01WS, T30D, YJ0X, S0S, T32AZ, 5W0AG, ZK3E, 5Z4/DJ4EL, 4S7VG, TX5Z, 7Q7VW, ZK3Q, YJ0X, 4W/G3ZEM, VK9LM, 5R8M, VK9XSP & FT4FA. So as you can see, there's still tons of DX out there! I am also WAY behind in my QSLing, so one of these days, I'm gonna have to get back to that chore. I also received a buro shipment which was 6-1/2 inches tall. Good thing I use www.globalqsl.com to answer buro cards. I strongly recommend it...check it out if

you haven't already. You can design up to 10 cards for 10 different calls, and all you have to do (after sending them some money, of course) is upload an adif file and they do the rest...fill out the cards and send them to other burro's. you never have to touch a card! It may cost a bit more, but the time savings are incredible!

I'm hoping to get the hole dug for my 18HT vertical soon. I postponed it a week because I am not sure where the Comcast cable runs under the yard, and I think it is right where I plan to put the tower. I am expecting them in the morning to re-route the cable so the tower and radial field are no where near it. I'll let you know how it went!

For now, good DXing and I'll see you in the contest!

Allen N5XZ

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The Prez Sez by Bob, W5UQ

Prez Sez

Prez Sez for November 2014:

By Bob Hardie

November TDXS meeting is a Dinner Meeting and the "Ole Codgers Annual Meeting". Please be sure to RSVP to Orville Burg, K5VWW at his email address: Orville@rubyglass.com

We plan to have a great time so come out and visit, no matter your age.

ALSO, bring your spouse.

This is the time of year that we spend with the family and holidays. So be sure to mark your calendars for the **November 12th, Wednesday night Ole Codgers Dinner Meeting,**

but also **December 11th at Tracy Gee for John Firey's program on vintage ham radio.**

He always has some wonderful pictures of the projects he tackles each year as well as stories and pictures of equipment we all love to see.

The end of the year is nearing and our Annual TDXS Banquet in January is running up on us fast. Before you know it we'll all be sitting at the banquet and having fun. And speaking of that, Lance Rurnfield, WD5X and I are working on a neat place to have it this year. It looks good that we will be going to Brady's Landing at 8505 Cypress St, Houston. And we will have a room with a good view of the water. It will be a private room too. The date has been set for Saturday, January 17th, with January 24th as backup date.

One important item is to be able to tell the restaurant how many are coming. So RSVP and paying in advance is important. We will need to have all reservations and payments in one week before the banquet date. And we will let you know the amount and definite date by the December meeting. Thank you all for your cooperation on this.

Not many of us made the October meeting at Tracey Gee. Pat Rieff, W5STAR was our guest speaker and I found her

presentation to be very informative and enjoyable. It was so good, that she just might do an encore performance in a year or so. I'm sure that all who were there would enjoy even more of her "space weather" information. Let Lance and I know if you have an opinion on this possibility of an encore.

This month's Prez Sez is short. Please tune in next month for a list of the new TDXS Officers and Chairpersons. And by the way, we still need a Contest Chairman(appointed) and Membership Chairman/VP (elected).

Have a good month everyone.

Bob Hardie

TDXS 2014 President



Contest Chatter by Joe W5ASP

CONTEST CHATTER

I'm sure that every member of TDXS is aware of the exceptional performance by Chuck, W5PR in the ARRL 10 Meter contest over the

past years. He has consistently placed at or near the top of the pack, often defying the whims of propagation by turning in logs filled with contacts no one else even suspected were out there. The following article reveals some of his

"tricks of the trade". I suggest you read carefully, pay heed to his advice, and have a blast on Ten.

Until next time ... "dit dit" ... Joe, W5ASP

Taking a Spin on Ten by Chuck Dietz, W5PR

Are you still missing a few countries on 10 meters for 5BDXCC? Want to work DXCC on one band with all the contacts on the same weekend? On the same day? All these will be possible on the second weekend of December when the ARRL 10 Meter Contest comes to a radio at your shack. The sunspots are still holding up so the propagation should be good. In the CQWW and ARRL DX contests, you might miss a rare one because he was on some band that was open to another continent, but not the USA. In the 10 Meter Contest, all participants are on one band and all you have to know is when you will have propagation. One could do quite well in this contest with a small yagi on a pole with "armstrong" rotation if he knew the times and directions to turn the beam. I will disclose my take on that later.

First, what are the rules and protocols for taking a "spin on ten" during the contest? All stations everywhere can work all other stations for credit with multipliers being states (US and XE), provinces and DX countries. The contest starts at 0000 GMT (6:00 pm local) on Friday evening, December 12th and ends at 0000 Sunday evening. One is limited to sending in a log for only 36 hours of the 48 hour period. This is rarely a problem with the propagation on 10 meters normally opening less than 18 hours of each day. If you submit a log, you should have off periods (30 minutes or more away from the rig) clearly marked in the log or submit the log electronically in the "Cabrillo" format. Most logging programs will automatically produce the log in the correct format and even email it

to the sponsor's email address. Another feature of the 10 Meter Contest is, unlike most of the other big HF contests, one can enter CW only, phone only or both modes. (CW contacts must be below 28.3 MHz.) I usually enter phone only, but I operate some CW in the evening and early morning when I have worked all the SSB stations I can hear. Don't worry about leaving the CW contacts in your phone only log. When "Phone Only" is selected, it will be noted in the header of the Cabrillo format log and the CW contacts will be only used as a check log which could aid in the log checking. Another feature of the categories is your power. One can enter "High" (1500 watts), "Low" (150 watts or less) or QRP (5 watts or less). To be in the "Single Operator" category, no packet spotting can be used, however, there is a new "Single Operator Unlimited" category where one can use spotting assistance, but it is "Both Modes" only. I think a lot of stations will opt for the new "Unlimited" category. The "Exchange" that stations give each other is the state you are in for US, Mexican and Canadian stations. It is helpful to have a map or list of the Canadian call areas and XE states so the right abbreviations can be put into the log. These multipliers can be printed out from the end of the 10 Meter Contest rules on the ARRL website.

Now that I have the rules and categories covered, what direction do I point the beam to work some juicy multipliers? When the contest starts the first evening, I have my highest antenna at 318 degrees to take advantage of JAs who will (hopefully) be plenti-

ful for a couple of hours or so. This direction also works for the other Asian countries which may come in. My lower antenna will be parked toward VK and ZL who will be loud but not as plentiful as the JAs. I combine the two antenna systems on different towers with an Array Solutions Stack Match box at the shack. An hour or two into the contest there is usually a window to BY and other deep Asians. Occasionally, there will be a long path opening over the South Pole into Europe and Asia between midnight and 3:00 am local time, but, as much fun as that is, I don't usually waste good sleep time on the chance there will be an opening. If VK and ZL stay open up to midnight, it is an indication that this long path might open.

The next morning there is an opening at about 5:30 am local time to Africa that no other part of the country seems to get. Unfortunately, few or no African stations show up so I don't usually get the rig on that early. I start the morning with 7/7/7 elements on Europe and 6 elements on South America. Later, when the Europe opening is full bore, I sometimes move the top 7 to SA to take full advantage of the long path opening to Asia that can open off and on through the morning as well as the South Americans. At that time, I will move the 6 element to straight east looking for ZS and other Africans. Around 3:00 to 4:00 pm local, the propagation shifts back to ZL first and then to VK, Pacific and Asia and the fun starts over! Give it a try, you won't be disappointed!

DX Report by Willis "Cookie" Cookie K5EWJ

From the DX Chairman

Winter is fast approaching in the Northern Hemisphere which brings us indoors and turns our interests to DX. Likewise, summer comes to the Southern Hemisphere and makes DXpeditions to the several uninhabited islands that are too cold for temporary shelters in the winter time. The DXpedition to Lord Howe (VK9DLX) is ending and the expeditions to Christmas Island (VK9XSP) near Australia, TX7G to Marquises and 4W/K7CO in Timor Leste will be gone soon.

There are many categories of DXpedition ranging from the Holiday style where the ham operates mostly for his own pleasure, but still makes some nice DX to the major DXpeditions where a team of experienced operators operate for a short period from an entity that is normally uninhabited or politically off limits. Such places are activated only occasionally and take a great deal of political negotiation and logistic planning. They are also very expensive because they require a great deal of travel, equipment and provisions. A recent example is the activation of Amsterdam Island last winter which required chartering a small ship to travel from Australia to south of India near the Antarctic circle. This DXpedition required funding of about \$700,000.

Such an expedition is currently on Tromelin Island near Madagascar with a French group of operators. This is the first time that Tromelin has been activated since 2000 when around 50,000 contacts were made and it is now on the list of top ten most wanted entities. This small island has no permanent inhabitants and is occupied only by a small team to conduct weather observations and protect the flora and fauna. The French team has obtained permission for a 10 day operation from the French Government who owns the Island. All equipment and supplies must be flown in by small airplane and there is no place for landing a boat and only a 3400 foot landing strip made of packed sand. Many trips will be required to bring in the crew and their equipment and supplies. The budget for this trip is about \$90,000 according to their web site.

The team has constructed a very nice web site, <http://www.tromelin2014.com> that includes a list of the planned equipment and their plan of operation. They tell a lot about their plans and have some very informative pictures of the Island which will show you that they are not off to a five star vacation resort. They will need to erect tents for living and operating and bring in everything they will need to operate, generate power and subsist for the time they will be there. Please study the site and it will tell you what you need to

have the best chance to work them. The team plans to have 7 operators who will man several stations to operate on 160 thru 10 meters, use KW AMPs and first class Elecraft K3 transceivers and directional antennas. They hope to make 50,000 or more QSOs and remove Tromelin off the top ten most wanted entity list. The island is very near our anti-pole (the other side of the world). The propagation promises to be very interesting. You will need to experiment to find the proper beam heading because it depends on where the ion clouds are located and the path can be very strange. We found this to be true for Amsterdam Island in January and propagation should be similar. When a group plans to activate a Rare DX entity they do their best to confirm this entity for as many as possible. They usually take the loudest stations first for practical reasons. They can hear them and copy their call signs. They can make more QSOs quicker and hopefully move on to the operators with less well equipped stations. Take some time and listen to the pile ups and you will get a better understanding of the difficulty in operating from a rare place. You can help them by being very familiar with your equipment. Learn how to set up your transceiver for split operation and remember to do so. The kilocycle police are very annoying as are the intentional and unintentional jammers, but if you hear a lot of up, up, ups, be sure they are not talking to you.

It is easy to understand why with thousands of people begging for a contact the DX operator needs for them to move off his frequency and spread out. It is really difficult to pick out a call sign to answer with so many calling and he needs for you to hear him clearly so that he can direct the pile up. The police are aggravating enough, so don't be a part of the aggravation. Try not to call after the DX has chosen a station. Let him finish that contact so that at least one person can leave the pile up. Be sure that you can hear the DX station clearly before you call, so that you will know if he calls you. It takes a bit of experience to get it right, so do the best that you can.

Every DXpedition considers making a lot of QSOs a top priority. They are there to work everybody they can, including you and me. You need to have patience. It is understandable that the operators with the big stations will have an easier time being heard and the weaker stations have a better chance toward the end of the period. But, you never know when the weather or politics will end the fun, so don't wait until the very end to try. You would like to work the station on every band and every mode, but you only need one contact to have the entity on your mixed mode list. I personally have never worked Tromelin,

so I am writing to myself as well as to you. If you can possibly afford it, make a donation. They all take Pay-Pal and usually ask around \$25 Euros. For this, they will often send you a card when they get back, send you emails periodically and confirm by LOTW. But if the DXpedition goes sour because of weather or politics you can expect to lose your money. The bills have to be paid even if the Expedition does not work out. It takes years to plan and the expeditions need up front money, so contribute early if you can. Not all of us can contribute money. Few of us can contribute as much money as all of them ask, but we can determine our priorities and contribute to the ones we consider most worthy. So pick your targets and put whatever money you decide to contribute where you think it will do the most good. The reason I got on my soap box was to answer some questions about how to find out things you want to know about the operation and how to work them. I was asked specifically what frequencies the DXpedition will operate and you will find this quickly for any decent expedition by accessing their web site

. You can find the site you want with Google and you can read everything the organizers think you want and need to know. This is free, a price we can all afford and we all have a computer we can access. You will find a lot of interesting things about the entity, the equipment, the organization, the frequencies and other things. Yes they will do their best to raise money, but so do every political party, every charitable organization and everyone else who wants money. You are accustomed to picking where your money goes! The key words to Google are the Entity name and the call sign. If you don't find a site, it is a vacation expedition that doesn't particularly need your help and probably will not put up a big signal, but work them anyway if you can. They are fun too!

Another great source is the Internet Cluster, often known as a Packet Cluster. It shows the current frequency of any station that a user chooses to post, along with the poster's call sign and remarks. Most good loggers have a Telnet option and can access the cluster and compare it to your data base to tell if you need a contact with the entity. Use it, it is free. The data base is worldwide, so you will need some filters to keep the DX from scrolling off the screen, but there are filters to show only what you want to see. TDXS maintains a cluster which is K5DX, telnet (75.148.198.113). It is free, it is great, use it!

An Aggie in Zone 21 by Dave McCarty K5GN Part II

Can You Really Live in A7?

Qatar is very different and yet very similar to America. We lived in Milan Italy for a year before moving to Doha. I went to work with the project team, taking a tram and a subway train from our 6th floor apartment in urban Milan to the engineering contractor's office on the other side of town. There we had to learn Italian because nobody spoke English. Getting around in public transportation, buying meat at the butcher, negotiating prices, getting a haircut the way you want it – very difficult. But the words were written in a familiar alphabet with familiar pronunciation and root meanings ... 'rapido' means 'fast' ... 'pronto' means 'ready to go' ... and 'spaghetti' means 'spaghetti', so you can figure it out eventually. Understanding the people was much easier. Stop your ears and the subway crowd looks like NYC. Check the menu and you're at your favorite place on Westheimer. Go to a Catholic Mass and it works the same as at Our Lady of the Lake.

When we got to Qatar – freedom! Or so it appeared. We had our own car, we drove it wherever we wanted without dealing with trams and pedestrians. We went to big shopping malls and grocery stores to buy what we needed with prices on the labels. It is big, new, laid out for cars, a lot like Houston. The common language is the language of money: English. Yet ... after a month or two, it all seems very weird.

First of all there is the cultural separation. The Arabs are the first class people. At first you don't realize they have tribal distinctions among them, but you do figure out quickly that you're just a second-class westerner. And then there are the third-class people, the "third-country nationals" who are the imported labor.

India, Pakistan, Nepal, and the Philippines were the best represented, but Afghanistan, Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Indonesia are there in droves, too. In the previous article I mentioned meeting people from 100 countries. The world has come to Qatar to share in the wealth coming out of the ground. Yet these three layers of society – locals, westerners, and TCN's, live separate lives all in the same space. You see each other driving on the roads (TCN's are drivers and bus riders, mostly) and in the shopping malls (TCN's looking, Expats shopping, and locals conspicuously consuming to outspend their friends and neighbors). But then all go home to vastly different situations.

My family and I – as with most of our western friends – lived in a small gated community called a compound, though it was not the sort of miniature city one may have heard about in stories from neighboring Saudi Arabia. Security was not really an issue. Because of the relative wealth of the country – and the fact that it is really a police state and terrorist activity within the country strictly and ruthlessly kept in check – there is very little ad hominem crime and almost zero terrorist threat, so the guards at the gate were mainly just a formality. The scariest thing in Qatar is driving. A single female could walk home at 2am and never be bothered.

Some of our friends lived in stand-alone villas with no problem. With the growth of the city, a number of western expats now live in high rise apartment buildings instead of compounds.

Most of the natives live in true villas of varying size. Some are like palaces, but most are two- or three-story stand-alone houses. Each house has a tall wall around it to provide private space for the family. This is very important to the Wahabbi

(strict orthodox) Muslim Qataris – only in private may their women uncover their hair and (traditionally) face and remove the black outer coverall robe called the abaya.

The Qataris able to hold a job are quite well off through various wealth sharing schemes set up by the government. Yet many are in debt up to their eyeballs, due to lack of spending discipline. Imagine if your grandfather and all of his peers was a sheepherder living in tents made of wool and camel hair and cooking with camel dung. His son, your father, was spoiled by his father when he gave him a precious piece of wood to play with. Today you cannot decide whether to buy your 16-year-old son a second Land Cruiser or trade them in on a Porsche for his birthday. Would you know how to spend your money wisely? Would you know how to avoid spoiling your children?

The TCN's however, live on practically nothing. I used to be shocked by it, yet I learned that most who came to Qatar without professional qualifications were coming from situations of extreme poverty and were happy as larks to be sending half of their meager salaries home every month to feed their extended families. A good situation for those laborers was to sleep four to a room in air conditioning. Some had it a lot worse.

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An Aggie in Zone 21 by Dave McCarty K5GN Part II (continued)

You may be hearing a lot in the news about Qatar and its labor policies and practices. Like most third-world countries there are rules and there is how things really get done, but it is really only the bad apples that give the whole country a bad name. Unfortunately, there are more than a few. The Arabs have a long history of slave labor. Two things contribute to it: the tribal nature of the culture, similar to Africa, and the Islamic understanding of the believer being truly human, and the kaffir or unbeliever being less than half the value of the believer. Add to this the universal human tendency to selfishness and domination, and you get exploitation of the gaps in the labor laws. Our project team had to work constantly to ensure that our contractors and their subcontractors were holding to our requirements for humane treatment of their labor force.

Another factor is realizing you live in a police state. You have to have a sponsor to be there if you're not on a short term tourist visa or business visit. To be a resident is to go through rigorous health and background checks, and navigate an arcane bureaucracy with ever-changing rules. Nothing is allowed except what is permitted, unlike American where anything is allowed except what is prohibited.

Another factor is the driving. Westerners drive predictably and defensively. Arabs drive as though they really believe that if Allah wants them to live they will live and if to die, they will die. Wahooo! TCN's drive scared to death until they learn to drive like Arabs, and then, look out! And the traffic jams make everyone impatient. I had the pleasure of driving across country away from the city center to reach the industrial city where we built the plant. But driving on a two-lane road with trucks that went 40MPH and cars limited to

70MPH meant lots of risk taking and risk takers. No accidents for me but I saw several fatalities.

Another is the relentlessness of the heat. Even with A/C in every room the windows and outer walls still radiate heat into the rooms.

But the life of an expat in Qatar can be very nice in spite of the strangeness.

Our home was a two-story 2300 sq. ft. 4-bedroom, 2 ½-bath, concrete duplex, one of less than fifty such "villas" in the compound. Every room had its own air conditioner with an evaporator and fan mounted on the wall and the compressor and condenser on the rooftop. The refrigerated pool (with a sun shade over it) was right across the street, next to the simple clubhouse and exercise room. Larger compounds had more residents and huge recreation centers (but bigger crowds and more competition for the resources).

Unlike in neighboring Wahhabi Muslim Saudi Arabia, women can drive in Qatar and non-Arab Muslim women are not required to wear the abaya anymore. It used to be best if a woman would cover her hair, but today this custom is largely ignored. During our four years there, the expats shifted from conservative dress to showing shoulders and knees – a huge shift for this culture. The Arabs feel it too, as more and more of the Qatari women would go without a veil, would allow some of their hair to be seen, and would wear abayas with colored fabric adornments. Some find this troubling.

The polite thing for men is not to show the shoulder or the knee, but when you see a dark-skinned Arab youth with his jeans slung low on his buttocks, a Pittsburgh Steelers uniform jersey above it, and a

NYPD ball cap slung to the left on top, you know you're not doing too badly in shorts.

Inside the compound, you can dress as you liked. Women could wear bikinis at the pool. Men went shirtless or wore t-shirts, shorts and flip flops.

Everywhere you'd want to go is air conditioned. Walking from the car to where you want to be can be a short trip through hell. Temperatures in early summer may reach above 50C (122F). Later in the summer the humidity sets in and heat index values approach 140F on a daily basis. Most expats have the freedom and money to send their families home for the summer.

The good news is that crime is so low and subsidized gasoline so cheap that you could just leave your car running in the parking lot while you went shopping and it would be nice and cool when you returned!

Western food products are available for a price, and so are many luxury goods. Some call Qatar a third-world country where many people can buy a Lamborghini or a Bentley.

The westerner whose sponsoring organization would permit it could put up a bond and obtain a license to spend up to ten percent of your monthly salary on alcoholic beverages per month. There is one store in the country for this purpose – a very busy place. You could be ejected from the country if caught taking the goods anywhere but straight home! Just as we left, this license was expanded to include buying pork. Real bacon!

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An Aggie in Zone 21 by Dave McCarty K5GN Part II (continued)

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Certain western hotels were also given licenses to operate bars. Secret police monitored the locals who frequented these establishments. The Belgian Café in one of the big hotels downtown was a very popular place.

Probably the best thing we found in Qatar was our semi-official house church. The Emir recognized that bringing western expats to his country to help him and his people exploit their mineral wealth would be helped by allowing a certain degree of religious freedom. Not only did the church provide a respite from the relentless call of the muezzin, but it also brought together the various cultures under one roof.

Doha began as a fishing village on a natural bay on the east coast. Before oil there were pearls and this is where the original old family wealth came from. Divers with nose clips and loin cloths would comb the bottom of the bays and the Gulf to harvest the oysters. They got so good at it that they wiped out the population. At the same time, the Japanese developed cultured pearls and the natural pearl industry tanked.

After oil was found on the west coast, Doha remained the center of commerce and began a fantastic expansion that has not yet stopped. When I first came to Doha, the tallest buildings were a pair of 15-story offices and a 12-story hotel. Today,

you can only see the hotel because it is built on a parcel jutting out into the bay. Google can show you today's city profile from across the bay.

The city has grown out rapidly from the original areas near the bay. Like Houston, the suburbs are now far flung and the traffic is terrible. The number of cars and trucks has quadrupled in the last ten years. You can imagine that road construction has not kept up. Ambitious future plans include a metro, a series of freeways, and a causeway across the water to Bahrain.

The architecture in the downtown tower district and other key areas of investment is quite fantastic. With money to burn, some of the structures are wildly shaped. Many of the buildings are mostly empty of tenants, as the tendency in recent years was to build on speculation and more square feet were put up than were needed. Yet the downtown area is a thriving busy place.

Most of the rest of town is rather similarly constructed – villas and offices of concrete and glass, all painted various shades of beige and light brown to hide the dust.

As you can imagine from the summer temperatures, the place is a furnace for much of the year. Winters are mild and can be wet, but it gets less than an inch of rain per year, on average. It is funny to see the guards wearing down parkas at 60F. But that's what happens to your blood there.

Qatar truly is a desert country with so little rain. Once you leave the cultivated and beautified developed areas the greenery and flowers simply stop, replaced by sand and rocks in which only a

few thorny shrubs and stunted trees can grow. After the winter rains, an amazing amount of grass and small shrubs come up, but spring turns quickly into summer to dry out the soil and shrivel the growth.

There are several types of terrain. The sand dunes in the south are spectacular – very large and gracefully shaped – but are a dwindling resource. They are mined as a source of high-quality sand for construction. Also, the prevailing northwest winds have them slowly marching into the Gulf. A favorite pastime in the cooler months is dune-busting in 4WD vehicles, dune-buggies and four-wheelers. This has become rather dangerous as the number of participants per square mile has increased dramatically.

The central and northern part of the peninsula is rocky desert. Little in the way of blowing sand and lots of exposed limestone. Generally this is the bleakest landscape you can imagine. NASA contracted to test its Mars rovers here. Standing in great contrast in this area are a few natural springs which are surrounded by small farms producing dates, okra, and other vegetables. The coastline is dotted with sandy or rocky beaches. One section of the east coast is dominated by a mangrove forest. On the west coast the limestone outcroppings run right into the salty water between Qatar and Bahrain.

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An Aggie in Zone 21 by Dave McCarty K5GN Part II (continued)

A popular part of the local culture is to stake out a winter campsite. Some are quite elaborate with tents, lights, generators, portable buildings for sleeping, kitchens, and baths. The camping season runs from November through March. There is fierce competition now for the prime spots. You haven't lived until you've spent the night with your Arab buddies in the desert watching satellite TV and feasting on chicken, fish, and lamb cooked by their household help, or driven over the top of a sand dune and down the steep leeward face in a dune buggy or Land Cruiser.

The malls are full of western and eastern stores, from Massimo Dutti to Miss Selfridge of London to Monsoon. Some grocery stores cater to western brands while others focus on eastern staples. The world's Largest Dairy Queen is right in the heart of restaurant row, where you can find Chili's, Applebee's, and other familiar names. But westerners are not shut out of the Asian opportunities, from Beijing to Lebanon and everything in between.

Though some people say that really the only thing to do in Qatar is eat out, there is a lot for an expat to do. There are movie theaters all over town (though anything steamier than holding hands gets censored, which can really chop up a Hollywood flick) with American and Bollywood current hits. The Emir sponsors the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra which brings in great talent from Europe and other parts of the world and spills over into smaller chamber music and solo performances.

In the mild winter, outdoor sports of all sorts blossom. The professional men's and women's tennis circuit has big events to either end or begin the annual season. The Qatar Stars professional soccer league games become better attended

and international teams visit to play friendly games. We saw Brazilian national team play several times, including against Argentina and England. The Asian Indoor Track and Field championships were held just walking distance from our compound. For three dollar ticket, we got to sit twenty feet from the track and witness world-record performances.

The winter season also enables several trade fairs and other international events to come to the convention centers in Qatar, bringing books, authors, first-run films and celebrities and so on to town.

And if you're a ham who is willing to step into a different world, through the Qatar Amateur Radio Society you can meet and get to know some great people. That's the subject of Part III – Amateur Radio in Qatar.



Pounding Brass by Ron Litt, K5HM

Like everything else in Amateur Radio, CW has its supporters and its detractors. I am neutral.

If you have the dedication to pursue proficiency with this mode and to copy code at blinding speeds, that's great. It's great that this part of our radio heritage is preserved and that there is even growing interest today. Like Boy Scouts who were trained to use two sticks to start a fire in the past century. Do they still do that or do they prefer the magic of a butane lighter today?

There was a time when I could copy code at 20 WPM with my trusty No. 2 Dixon Ticonderoga pencil. After I got my General in 1955, I pinky-swore that I would always use CW as my primary mode. And you know that among kids, a pinky swear is the most powerful swear you can make.

Only a few months later though, I fell under the spell of AM Phone, spending more and more time on the phone bands. I was running phone patches and participating in the AREC (the predecessor to ARES) emergency nets. Night after night, I roamed the 20 meter phone band, searching for a new country. Pushing the envelope to see how close I could get to the edge of the band without a pink ticket; speaking in tongues to fellow addicts I met on the air. It was not a pretty sight.

There is something about CW that is the purity of ham radio. Like the "Purity of Essence" pursued by General Jack D. Ripper, just before he blew his brains out in the movie, *Dr. Strangelove*. So when I came back to the hobby in 2009 after a hiatus of forty plus years, I promised myself that I would get back to the purity of CW. I am afraid that I haven't made it yet back there yet.

In spite of best efforts of my friends to support me and lend me a key (I don't even own one), I just couldn't get into the discipline of practice. They tried to challenge me with a bet, regaled me with stories of DX contacts on the low end of the bands and listening to W1AW code practice sessions. I have to confess, the magic isn't there. Somewhere along my path, I lost the purity of essence that CW represents. I surrendered to the Dark Side of the Force, SSB.

Its pretty good over here on the Dark Side you know. I have plenty of projects that need to get done and that challenge my skill set. Improving antennas, learning camouflage techniques, installing mobile HF, eliminating RFI, better grounds, more automation and improving my audio. There are plenty of pileups for rare DX or special events and contests, on sideband and CW.

Some though, could see those as diversions from the purity of essence. CW purists believe they can get through when SSB can't but that is only in a perfect world. CW operators still have to deal with bad manners, QRM, splatter and guys running 2 KW against their 100 watts too.

On the other hand, I see SSB as a more personal mode. On CW, you only get to know the operator by their fist; its more like texting, only faster. On SSB you actually hear the other guy's voice, their tone and timbre. The little nuances of speech that make them human. You are face to face! Mano a Mano! Some SSB contests take on the character of an old fashioned bar fight and some rag chew nets go on and on like old radio soap operas.

Perhaps my lack of interest in the "Purity of Essence" that is CW, is the result of fluoridation of the water in the 1950's as General Ripper claimed.

I promise, I will get back to CW . . . someday.

Reporting from the Dark Side of the Force
Ron, K5HM



Cookie, K5EWJ working on his antenna

A few picture of Cookie, K5EWJ working on his antenna which was damaged by a lightening strike.
Pictures by Michael Monsour AC0TX.



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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

TDXS says "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" to these members with birthdays in November

Please notify the Editor if I have missed anyone

Keith Huge - KA5F

Joe Staples - W5ASP

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Willis "Cookie" Cooke - K5EWJ