

# NARS NEWS

The Northwest Amateur Radio Society

Houston, Texas

November 2006

## November Meeting Communications from the Moon, How'd they do that?

I remember watching the TV as Neil Armstrong took those first steps on the moon. The fact that they got to the moon was remarkable enough, but how did they bring that TV signal back 1/4 Million miles with portable equipment, in 1969? How did they design and test that equipment without the use of fancy computer controlled test equipment? (They didn't even have an MFJ-259.) I will talk about how RF and Microwave measurements were done well before automatic spectrum and network analyzers were common. Surprisingly, most of these measurements were done with mechanical apparatus using fairly simple scientific principals. Many of these same techniques can be used today using inexpensive instruments and a little RF trickery.

*George Carlson KC5RCC*

## Slate of Nominations for 2007 from Nominating Committee

As every November rolls around it is time to vote on next year officers. The Board has submitted to the membership the following persons to be voted on at the November 17th general meeting:

President	Jerry Whiting KB5VGD
Vice President	Mike Bragassa K5UO
Secretary	Chuck Sanders NO5W
Treasure	Joe Sokolowski KD5KR
New director	Bill Denton W5SB (2 year term)
New director	Marty Fitzgerald W5MF (2 year term)

## Important Dates

**Friday, Nov 17, 7:30 PM** – General Membership meeting, Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church – Eyeball QSOs, 7:00 PM.

**Saturday, Jan 27, 8:30 AM** – VE License Exam Session, Tomball Community Center, S. Cherry & Market streets (just South of Main). *NOTE* \*There will *NOT* be a VE session held in November or December\*

**Tuesday, Nov 28, 7:30 PM** – Board of Directors meeting, Ponderosa Fire Station, 17061 Rolling Creek drive.

### Contests

Nov 18–19 ARRL Sweepstakes SSB  
Nov 25–26 CQ WW CW  
Dec 1–3 ARRL 160M  
Dec 2–3 TOPS Activity  
Dec 9–10 ARRL 10M

### Wednesday Lunch Bunch – North

Nov 15 BJ's Restaurant & Brewery  
Nov 22 Casa Imperial Mexican  
Nov 29 Strack Farms  
Dec 6 Pepperchino  
Dec 13 Luby's Cafeteria  
Dec 20 Jason's Deli

### Wednesday Lunch Bunch – West

Nov 15 Jason's Deli  
Nov 22 Goode Co BBQ  
Nov 29 Skeeter's  
Dec 6 Charlie's Hamburgers  
Dec 13 Cafe Express  
Dec 20 Willie's Grill 290

### Wednesday Lunch Bunch – Medical Center

Nov 15 Jason's Deli  
Nov 22 Buffalo Grille  
Nov 29 DJ's Old Timey Hamburgers  
Dec 6 Marco's Mexican Bar & Grille  
Dec 13 Silver Palace Chinese Buffet  
Dec 20 Pappas Barbecue

### Monday "Tail Draggers" Lunch Bunch

11:00 am, Aviator's Grill, Hooks Airport

**Notice:** NARS membership dues are \$20 per year, renewable on anniversary of last year's full payment.

*Deadline for articles to appear in the next issue is the last day of this month.*

**BREAKFAST**  
**at Denny's**  
7720 Louetta  
**Saturdays**  
**7:30 AM**

## President's Corner

*November 2006*

I hope everyone enjoyed the 2M antennas for emergency use program put on by Charles Birkhead, AD5VQ. The portable mast is a useable item for those setting up a portable station.

November is Election of 2006 NARS Board members. YES you can nominate your self.

Results of those responding to reading the President's report was a TOTAL of 10. Four on Oct 14th; one on Oct 15th; two on Oct 16th; one on Oct 18th; one on Oct 20th; and one on Oct 23rd. I had asked those reading the column to please email me with "read presidents report" in the subject line.

December Show & Tell meeting is an opportunity to tell what you have done and learn from what others have done. The projector and a computer will be available for those having a Power Point presentation; just bring the Show & Tell item and the presentation on a USB drive. Please let me know if you plan to present so we can plan accordingly.

*Mark K5GQ*

## Events

*Your Radio Skills Are Needed*

Events officially sponsored by NARS include Buffalo Bayou Regatta (October) and Sunmart Texas Trails Run (December). Events supported by NARS members include Houston Marathon, MS 150 and Wings over Houston.

Plan to help with one or more of these events in 2006.

Following is a report from N5NXXS.

NARS members have responded to provide radio communication for the SUNMART TEXAS TRAIL ENDURANCE RUNS on Saturday, December 9, 2006. My list of volunteers was quickly filled at the October meeting to help with this event. I still could use a few names for the list since unexpected events have come up in the past. More than once I have worried that I would be more than one operator short. This is a great opportunity where a new HAM with a new HT or mobile radio can get experience doing a public service event and might not feel confident in filling a position alone.

Close to 1000 runners traverse a course through the tall pines of Huntsville State Park. They will be running in two races, one is 50 kilometers and the other is 50 miles. Yes, I said MILES. This will last from 7am to 7pm. All of the runners, which are ages 16 to 80+, have been the most appreciative for our continued help with this event.

Some will be needed in the morning and others in the afternoon. You don't have to worry about lunch or refreshments. These will be provided by the race committee. This event has it all. Some of the positions out on the course test even experienced HAMS. You might have to walk in more than a mile with all your equipment. Some use a HT set up to cross band from the mobile radio from the car in the parking lot. There are two positions where you can drive right up to the aid station. I have to set up a net control station in the ranger's lodge. That means a 30 foot mast with antenna and coax run into the building. Then I set up a dual band radio on a table and connect it to the power supply. All this takes place in about 30 minutes after arriving at the park.

With this event, you can have a dinner, too!!! All the HAM volunteers, and their spouses, have been invited to attend a pre-race banquet at the Sheraton Hotel on JFK Blvd. Friday December 8, 2006 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Dinner line starts at 6pm with a Sunmart program afterwards. Dress is extremely casual. Check the web page link on the w5nc.org for more information. What a deal!!!

So mark your calendars for December 9 and contact me to sign up for a most enjoyable time. If you don't believe me, ask someone who was there last year.

*Paul Owen N5NXXS  
paul.owen@flash.net*

# DX News

## *“For All the NARS DX News Fit to Print”*

DX IS! Yes . . .

DX IS . . . what you make of it.

QSL's from DX stations:

Continuing on with some tips on beginning DXing; the subject of QSL's and particularly "QSLing" is imperative.

This is a big and sometimes controversial subject. There is no "one-way" to address the subject. The DXer has to be flexible and sometimes do a lot of research.

Various choices to QSLing:

1. Direct to the other station.
2. To his QSL manager
3. Via the League's outgoing bureau ("buro")
4. Via DX QSL Service (WF5E)
5. Direct to their QSL bureau
6. Log of The World ("LoTW")
7. And probably other ingenious methods . . .
8. Receiving QSL's.

I will address each of the above methods:

1. Direct to the other station.

This is probably the preferred and fastest method. But there is a price; but probably unavoidable. This may require some research. Most times when you hear the DX station operating he will pass along his QSL information. It is probably best to follow that method, only; as that is what he requires. If you are looking for an alternative; it may be only via the bureau. Going direct requires a good address and return postage. Remember, you want the QSL card; not him. Postage costs vary around the world. Germany and some other European (EU) countries, being the higher locations. Count on including \$2.00 with your QSL card. Other countries might be satisfactory with just \$1.00 included. Sometimes it may be a big full blown DXpedition to a more rare country that may request (but not required) a small donation to help defray the costs of the DXpedition. There is nothing wrong with this request. These large scale DXpeditions can cost several hundred thousand dollars. Most likely the location is so remote and weather hostile that it requires a ship to standby in the event an early evacuation is required. That doesn't come cheap! There most likely will be a helicopter required to safely land on the island. The heli has to standby also (\$). Please feel comfortable throwing in a few extra dollars; many, if not most of us have done this. These are the

"full-blown-large-scale" DXpeditions. There are lesser expensive DXpeditions that it may be well to help along financially, too. Your choice!

Another choice for return postage is International Reply Coupons or "IRC's" issued by all Universal Postal Union member post offices around the world. Their www site will give you full details plus where IRC's are accepted. ([http://www.upu.int/irc/en/2006\\_version.html](http://www.upu.int/irc/en/2006_version.html)) You can buy these at your local post office. You may have to explain to the clerk what it is as they do not receive too many requests for IRC's. Have them look up "Section 372 of the International Mail Manual". Their individual coupon cost allows one unit of first class airmail postage worldwide. This would be equivalent to US\$0.84 from the US and around US\$2.06 equivalent from Germany . . . It's a real money saver VS: dollar bills. Unfortunately, there has to be exceptions: Republic of South Africa and some other countries charge different rates for different distances. So, one IRC won't work.

Sometimes DX managers are very active hams that receive these with QSL requests will offer these for sale at attractive prices. Just be sure they are the issue currently in use . . .

One other alternative to greenstamps (currency) and IRC's is the airmail stamps that country uses. Cheaper than IRC's, more reliable than green stamps (that get "lost" or stolen) and EASY for the DX station to just write out the QSL, stuff it in the envelope and send it back to you. William J. Plum is a well known and reputable dealer in worldwide postage stamps. He has no web site but a price list can be obtained via email at [plumdx@msn.com](mailto:plumdx@msn.com). Using foreign postage stamps can be, on a small scale, a risky investment in that postal costs are changing all of the time and you could be using stamps that are insufficient in the true amount needed. Don't expect the recipient to kick in the difference. The stamps should be used rather promptly because of this cost volatility.

Where do I send the QSL card: There are internet DX bulletins put out by several good sources on a daily or weekly basis, the prime one being Bernie McClenny's (W3UR) [www.dailydx.com](http://www.dailydx.com). These are usually on a subscription-paid basis.

These bulletins invariably post the QSL information. Many times on the DX spotting clusters you can 'hit' on the callsign and it goes to QRZ.COM or another site and will show the mailing address. Also look for some additional data the operator may have posted; like - QSL information. For example: "Direct or via the bureau"; "QSL manager only"; "No bureau cards"; "No LoTW (or eQSL)"; "Direct w/ SASE \$\$\$ only", and so on. It is best to follow that information to a "T" if you want the card. Don't waste your effort doing otherwise.

Besides QRZ.COM there are several other beneficial www sources:

1. [www.qsl.net](http://www.qsl.net)
2. [www.ik3qar.it/manager/](http://www.ik3qar.it/manager/)
3. [www.nfdxa.com/K4UTE/K4UTE.HT](http://www.nfdxa.com/K4UTE/K4UTE.HT)  
ML
4. 425 DX News: [www.425dxn.org](http://www.425dxn.org)
5. [hamcall.net/call/](http://hamcall.net/call/)

If the callsign is not shown on any of the callsign lookup databases, that does not mean anything is wrong. Perhaps the callsign and / operation is too new to have a listing. Wait awhile or go to a DX cluster and with an "announce-FULL SYSTEM" command, type in something like "a/f QSL info for xxxx?" and see what comes back . . . Get a good address!

QSLing: I would recommend not putting any special commemorative stamps on the envelope. Better yet; have the post office stamp it with their label-type stamp. This will deter any stamp collectors along the way from 'borrowing' the mail. In China at BY1QH, I received QSL requests with the stamps neatly cut off; thank you! I wonder how many didn't go to that trouble and just took the mail; knowing full well what else was inside? All incoming mail was placed on a table in the main floor lobby of the dormitory, where BY1QH was located. Not so much a problem in Europe or Japan; but highly recommended elsewhere. Do not make the envelope feel 'fat'. Conceal the money such that it cannot be visible through the envelope exterior. Many DXers will purchase airmail envelopes that are both American sized and European sized (larger); for two reasons:

1. QSL's from other countries can sometimes be larger and not properly fit into American sized envelope without folding them.

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2. You can put your money and QSL card inside the American-sized envelope and then, unfolded . . . and unsealed put into the European-sized envelope. This both conceals the contents very well and makes the envelope as thin as possible.

W4MPY, the “QSL Man” has these for sale. See <http://www.qslman.com/>. Even if you do not use the above method; it is highly recommended to use European-sized envelopes for the return envelope. Under no circumstances expect the recipient to provide envelopes . . .

QSLing direct is by far the fastest method. Secondly would be via a QSL manager if that is the only choice. Most, if not all of the tips in this section have application in the next methods– sections discussed.

### 2. QSL Managers:

Many individual DX operators and all DXpeditions use QSL managers. The workload is such that one person needs to concentrate on this service. Many DXers in unreliable mail regions of the world will use QSL managers; thank you! Unfortunately, not enough do . . .

A QSL manager might just be a ham friend or it may be a ham that does this for many stations. Just remember that you want the QSL card; not the DX station or the QSL manager! Follow the QSL managers (if) published instructions. Make his life easier:

1. Print or type very neat and readable, in ink.

2. Use 24 hour GMT/UTC time exclusively; no exceptions.

3. “01.04.06”: Is that January 4 2006 or 01 April 2006? For the most part of the world, except America, “day/month/year” is the norm. To be sure since the QSL may be going abroad from – America; spell out the month, e.g. “01 Apr 2006”. Don’t make the recipient look up in both formats. Thankfully, computer programs are used for labeling and the program is going to show – and print – what the computer says; not what you say. Rather impersonal, but accurate and time efficient.

4. QSL managers, most likely don’t care about the quality or fanciness of your QSL card. Just be sure that your call is printed very clear and obvious. The same for your write-in of the recipient’s callsign. The QSL manager may look after 20–30 DX stations QSL chores.

5. On the backside (hopefully blank) of the QSL card print in the center the QSL

managers call. Next to that put a “Tks OM” – as a courtesy. Above, spaced a bit put the DX stations call with a “via”.

Refer back to Section 1 above for related subjects as they would apply to QSL managers.

### 3. Via the League’s outgoing bureau:

The ARRL has a service for outgoing QSL’s.

(<http://www.arrl.org/qsl/qslout.html>)

If you are not in a hurry and don’t mind waiting twelve months to two years; the ARRL’s outgoing QSL service might be advantageous to you. Print the DX station’s callsign (and QSL Manager if used) on the blank backside. Then, sort your QSL’s by prefix, alphabetically; bundle them up and send them to the bureau. Cost is \$1.00 for ten QSL’s; \$4.00 for first one-half pound and so on. Cannot be used for USA to USA QSL’s. They are then shipped, usually every three weeks to the DX stations home country QSL bureau. For example, G5CON will go to the U.K. equivalent of the ARRL; the RSGB for distribution to UK hams that have envelopes on file. (See “Incoming”, later) If G5CON is on a DXpedition elsewhere, it still goes to the RSGB. As not all countries in the world have QSL bureaus, be sure and check the same link above to see what countries support a QSL bureau. Other details can be found on the above ARRL www site. Be sure or feel comfortable that the DX operator or manager will honor bureau QSL’s. Most do, but not all.

### 4. Via an independent QSL service:

Perhaps there are others; but I only know of Les Bannon’s (WF5E) “DX QSL Service” in Midland Texas. Cost now is three QSL’s for \$1.00. Les claims a QSL turn-around time between sending direct and what the league’s QSL service will do. Les also has a list of operators and managers that will not use independent QSL services. See his site for details.

### 5. Direct to their bureau:

One other alternative to save some money and also speed things up a bit, especially when they require “via the buro”, is to jump the ARRL’s service and send the QSL direct to the operators home country QSL bureau. There is a use for this method on rare occasions.

6. Log of The World (LoTW): Probably a ‘sign of the times’ because of increasingly high postal costs is to use the ARRL’s

LoTW. You upload your log to the ARRL LoTW site; the DX station also does this and in so many words, they are matched up and shown as a confirmed QSO’s eligible for credit with the ARRL’s awards; but not CQ Magazine awards (as yet?). The disadvantage to some is that there are no hardcopy QSL’s for your collection. Some of these QSL’s are quite beautiful and a lot of hams like that. It may be for the foreseeable future, both methods of QSL confirmation will be active. Probably ten years from now the LoTW program will have grown so much so as to not represent at all what it is today; which is a very normal happening with new technology. It will be better and more acceptable, I am confident. It’s a good omen.

### 7. Other ingenious ways:

Think about it as you learn DXing and DX QSLing. Perhaps you can blend the above tips into something that works for you.

### 8. Incoming DX QSL’s:

What goes out hopefully will come back! When you use the ARRL Outgoing QSL services or an independent QSL service, the cards will come back via the bureau. The fifth callsign area incoming QSL bureau is managed by volunteer-members of the Oklahoma DX Association. (<http://www.okdxa.org/buro/>)

You must keep a small supply of suitable self-addressed-stamped-envelopes (SASE’s), based upon your anticipated radio activity, on file with the call district volunteer club that handles your call. Also, be sure to replenish the stamps if the postal rates change. If you prefer, they can make up envelopes for you with one unit of postage for 60 cents each (minimum of five). Make checks payable to “W5 QSL Bureau” and mail to P.O. Box 2591 Claremore, OK 74018. Please furnish printed or typed labels with your current address if you choose this option. Within the individual clubs, certain amateurs work or handle callsigns based upon the first letter of the suffix. For example, “K5UO” is managed by the club member (“sorter”) who manages fifth callsign calls beginning with the letter “U”: Morrie, KB5UNX. They have specific rules or guidelines. Please visit the above www site for specifics.

That completes this subject for October. My apologies for the length of the subject matter.

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### DX Reports:

Received DX reports are very much on the light-side this month. Maybe with winter approaching they will improve (hint-hint)

1. K5JDB, Jim has a list of contacts made in October. Thanks Jim!

a) XF4DL worked on four bands. b) 3C0M, Pagalu Island c) TJ1QQ, Cameroon d) 9Y4NZ, Trinidad & Tabago e) ZL8R, Kermadec Islands.

In addition Jim received some good QSL's from the bureau and via the mail; all IOTA QSL's: LU/PY2DXX, SA-008; VP8RAF & VP8DIZ, SA-002; M8C, EU-011; 9A8DST, EU-136; ZD8Z, AF-003; CS94MD, AF-014; SM6/DL1HTW, EU-043; TK/IK2WZM, EU-014; CA0YAM, SA-001; FO5RH, OC-046; YJ0IR, OC-035; "and a rather 'interesting' QSL from CU3AK, EU-175". You must show that card to me sometime, Jim!

2. K5UO, Mike: Rather slow in October also; but there was DX to work. Several large-scale operations occurred that allowed an excellent time to work a new-one or to work a new band-counter or

mode.



Mike on CW

Interesting new band counters worked in October:

9V1VV 80m CW #256/80m b) D20VB 80m, 30m CW (#255/80m) c) HR9BFS 6m d) XF4DL 30m, 12m CW (all I needed.) e) ZK2PX, 30m CW f) ZL8R, 160m CW #141/160m g) 5W0JB 15m CW

Interesting QSL's received this past month:  
TX5T Mayotte 40m #313/40m

Went to Nicaragua October 25-30 for the CQWW SSB test as a Multi/Single along with 2

fellow TDXS members as YN2EJ. Good operation. Managed 17 hours of operation myself of about 43 hours total during the test. Lost 4.5 hours Saturday due to Granada city loosing its electricity. Worked a bunch of CW prior to the contest.

Notable DX operations:

1. 3C0M Annobon Island, AF-039 and a good one for DXCC - always! Now! QSL via the bureau or via EA5BYP. Online logs at [personal.telefonica.terra.es/web/ea5yna](http://personal.telefonica.terra.es/web/ea5yna) after the operation ceases.

2. E5: N7OU (E51NOU) and W7YAQ (E51YAO) will be active from Penrhyn Atoll, OC-082 North Cook Islands (ex-ZK1) on November 4-18. Then on Rarotonga, OC-013, South Cook Islands on November 18-28; including the CQWW CW contest. Mostly CW with some SSB and RTTY.

3. VK9 Cocos-Keeling Islands. N0KV and W0YG are active now as VK9CGG until November 20. Been most active on all bands including the WARC bands. QSL via W0YG.

Thanks for your time and patience in reading this

*73 es gud DX,  
Mike Bragassa, K5UO*

## NARS Satellite News Report

FM birds are probably one the best choices to start your satellite experience. Keep in mind all birds that are currently up there for Amateur Radio use are LEO's (Low Earth Orbit). Because the birds are fairly close to the earth, they pass overhead fairly quickly and their footprint (area that the bird has line of site communications) is relatively small. Coast to coast contacts as well as contacts into Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America are possible with fairly modest setups for periods of up to 10 or 15 minutes if you catch the right pass.

The most popular one of these birds is AO-51. When this bird is in FM Repeater V/U High Power mode, it is very easy to listen for and at times work with a handheld and rubber duck. In July of 2005 I had a chance to do exactly that from the top of Pikes Peak in Colorado. The only real advantage of being 14,000 feet plus in the air was that there would be no trees around to block my signal as it passed over. I successfully made a number of contacts into Texas, Arizona, and California.

Here are some tips:

You will need a dual band hand held that allows for full duplex with a good rubber duck.

You will need a computer or access to the internet. Check AO-51's schedule at <http://www.amsat.org/amsat-new/echo/ControlTeam.php>. If the bird is turned off or not in V/U mode, you're wasting your time looking for it. While viewing the schedule, you'll want the "Voice Uplink" to be V (VHF) and the "Voice Downlink" to be U (UHF) or H (High Power UHF). The VHF uplink frequency is 145.920 with a PL tone of 67 Hz and the downlink UHF frequency is 435.300.

Go to the following website to determine a good pass: <http://www.amsat.org/amsat-new/tools/predict/>. A good pass is one that has the highest elevation. The closer to 90 degrees the better your chance will be. This website will ask for your grid square or lat/long.

Armed with this information, set up your

dual band radio and go outside during the period of time for the pass. Move your hand held vertically and horizontally back and forth in all directions until a signal can be heard. If time permits and once you get good at it, you can shift the frequency of the radio plus or minus slightly, 5 or 10 kHz, off of the specified frequency to allow for Doppler shift. Then key up the repeater much the same as a ground mounted repeater and make your call.

Don't be disappointed if you do everything right and still hear nothing. Keep trying. One of the other variables in all of this is luck. If the bird is in an attitude where its antennas are pointed away from you, you may hear nothing.

OK, now you know how to do it. Get out there and give it a try. Let's hear some reports.

Send any updates on Satellites to me, so I can include them in this column.

*Marty Fitzgerald W5MF  
Fitz6@swbell.net*

## *Public Service*

The Sunmart Texas Trails Endurance Run is coming up on December 9Th. This is one of the largest endurance runs in North America and NARS provides the communications for it. They rely on us to see that every one who starts the race is accounted for at the end of the day. It starts before daylight and ends after dark. Communicators can work either a half day or all day. A 5 watt Handy Talky with sufficient battery power for the day is all that is needed for this event. If you can help with this one contact Paul Owen, N5NXS, at n5nxs@flash.net and volunteer.

The Buffalo Bayou Regatta was flooded out again this year. That's two out of the last three years. Anyway, Paul Franz, W5PF, had his team together and was ready when they called it off. Thanks to those who volunteered. (Paul is keeping your names for next year.)

There was a Coast Guard emergency drill Tuesday morning October 24Th that simulated a cruise ship in the gulf with 2000 sick passengers on board who needed evacuating to hospitals. It was a table top drill and there was little amateur radio involvement but Methodist Hospital Med Center wanted to test communication links with Willowbrook Methodist during the drill so we did. It was the first use of the new radio equipment installed at Willowbrook. We were successful with both repeater and simplex communication with the Med Center complex. The

emergency preparation people on both ends were pleased. We now have eight volunteer communicators on board for Methodist Willowbrook: N5NXS, N5BA, K5VUU, KA5AKG, KQ5U, KD5EIJ, K5CX, and K5ZTY. Thanks to these guys for volunteering and for jumping through the hospital's hoops to get the badges giving us access to the hospital.

I forward the Amateur Radio Info Mail column from Mike Hardwick, N5VCX, to the NARS email reflector when it comes out. There are many opportunities to volunteer your services to the community on this list and some of NARS members do so. However, for a club that has almost 200 paid members, I would think more would volunteer for public service. Most of these events are half day events. Get out and meet hams from other clubs, watch a foot race or a bike ride from a water station or emergency vehicle or shadow an official. It's more fun than mowing the lawn or going shopping on Saturday morning.

All of you CERT trained members should be registered on the Harris County Citizens Corp web site so you receive the periodic messages from Judge Lindsey and you should be logging your volunteer hours on your page. The county gets grant money from Homeland Security proportioned to the number of volunteer hours recorded in the county. Providing Amateur Radio communications for these public events is

logable volunteer time. You should have already logged the 24 hours you spent in CERT training and remember to log any subsequent volunteer time you put in.

In its most recent Report and Order listing the much discussed rule changes and frequency re-farming, the FCC stated that one of the key purposes of Amateur Radio is to provide emergency communications to the public. A section of the Department of Homeland Security 2007 Appropriations Act, Hr 5441, formally includes Amateur Radio operators as a part of the emergency communications community. President Bush signed the bill into law October 4Th. Radio amateurs are among the entities with which a Regional Emergency Communication Coordination Working Group must coordinate its activities.

Hams have been using public service as a lever to keep and gain frequency spectrum for years. Now we are being asked to step up and do what we say we can do. All Hams need to look around and assess their situation and determine what capabilities they have to help out in a communications emergency. All should get some basic level of emergency communications training so in the event of an emergency, they will know how to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

*Become Active! K5ZTY*

## **VE Session Results**

The results of the regular October VE session, held on 10/28/2006, are in. We had twelve candidates, to which; 0 – code tests; 9 – Technician tests, 5 – General tests and 3 – Extra tests were given. Six candidates earned a Technician license, one earned his General class license and two earned their Extra class ticket.

Congratulations are in order for new Technicians: Alfred Poindexter – KE5LDW – Houston; Donald Reisert – KE5LDX – Spring; Paul Muraski – KE5LDY – Spring; Ryan Frazier –

KE5LDZ – Spring; John Mulkey – KE5LEA – Tomball; and Patrick Compton – KE5LEB – Spring.

One candidate earned his General class license, great job: Robert Sims – Call Sign Unconfirmed (KB6VJ expired) –

Two Extra class licenses were earned by: Mark Stringfield – AD5YV – Spring; and Richard Hall – K5GZR – Houston.

The volunteers for this session were, Keith Dutson – NM5G, Sarah Connell –

W0HXO, Eddy Reynolds – K5WQG, Gregg Erlenbusch – W5IDX and Martin Rogoff–N5GPS; my special thanks to these folks for their time and help; we simply can't do these sessions without our volunteers.

This was the last regular session for 2006, the next regular session will be held on 01/27/2007.

*73, Norm Covey/K5OS  
NARS VE Session Manager*

# A Thousand Marbles

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the garage with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it:

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind; he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whom-ever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles." I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. It's too bad you missed your daughter's "dance recital" he continued. "Let me

tell you something that has helped me keep my own priorities." And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles."

"You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now, stick with me, Tom, I'm getting to the important part. It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail", he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays.

"I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy. So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear.

"Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help

get your priorities straight.

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure that if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time.

"It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. This is a 75 Year old Man, K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!"

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast"

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile.

"Oh, nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. And hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."

*Anonymous*



# QUA\* Gary Schneider K5WTF?

My original introduction to my latest interviewee was at Field Day. His wife, Kelly said, my husband Kevin is the one they can't get off the radio. She meant the "Get on the Air" station. Kevin Colby enjoyed every minute he spent that day. Here is K5WTF's story . . .

Kevin was born in Galveston. His Godfather inspected shipyards around the world, so at 12 he spent six weeks in Seville, Spain. His favorite phrase was "No, not another museum!"

His freshman year of high school was at A&M Consolidated in College Station. His parents had both graduated from the university. He began having problems as a sophomore and as most parents do, they threatened to send him to military school. They always tell us as parents to be consistent and follow-through – well, they did. He found himself on a plane to Dulles and at the Fork Union Military Academy. He hated it, but looks back on the experience as a good one.

He then came back to Allen Academy in Bryan for his junior and senior years. He enjoyed Allen because the graduating class was only 30 and he played varsity football. They won state his first year and then went to the semi-finals his senior year.

Between his sophomore and junior years he again visited his godfather, this time in South Korea, for three months. He remembers camping on a mountain with his sister and three others from Sweden. He came back speaking a few words of Korean with a Swedish accent! He also enjoyed the Ti Kwon Do lessons – talk about learning the real thing!

Immediately after high school Kevin

joined the Navy. He went to what he affectionately calls "Great Mistakes". The only Navy boot camp still in existence located in Great Lakes, Illinois. He left as first snow was falling to be stationed in Orlando, where it was 98 degrees! He was trained at the naval nuclear power training command base. It was intense and he and the Navy decided that his ADD characteristics were not a good match for being a nuclear operator! But, he did meet, in his class, Kelly. (Ladies, you must see her scrap booking and photo albums!)

They were married in December of 1997 and Kevin was discharged in 1998. Kelly was released on a medical discharge. They moved to Utah, where Kelly's dad was living and Kevin's goal was to work for Novell. He worked at Air Switch installing high speed internet access for the American Fork area, near Provo. When the company folded the city bought the infrastructure.

Having been with the obligatory "dot bombs" he decided to move back to take classes at A&M, his life-time goal. It was a struggle for a year. His aunt submitted his resume at her bank and he was hired at the Wood Forest National Bank. He commuted for two months from Bryan to The Woodlands. He has been with them for five years and is now Technical Operations Engineer. Responsible for daily operations and systems engineering. He says every boring day is a good day.

Kevin and Kelly have a boy, Xander, who is five and a girl, Jenna, who is three. They also have Amber, a vizla (Sarge says it is a dog, he has smelled Kelly's knees!).

K5WTF was licensed as a Tech in

January of 2003. He has passed the written General, but finds the code a challenge. He participates in almost every community service event he hears about.

He spent nine days at Reliant after Katrina. He calls the experience surreal. His first sight was hundreds of people just walking around the outside of the stadium because they had nowhere else to go.

The most memorable experience was passing his first emergency traffic. The Houston police brought a woman who said that her father and brother were in New Orleans in an attic. The father was diabetic and only had eleven hours of insulin remaining. He passed the traffic, but never heard the result.

Kevin is very involved in ARES. He is the AC Logistics for Northwest County and AC IT for Harris County.

He has a Yeasu ft8800 which he switches between his House and car. He has an ICOM T90 handheld. His antenna is a two meter/70 cm in his attic.

His most difficult contact still hasn't been made. The ISS answered, but didn't hear his response. He hasn't given up.

Kevin's response to my infamous question about life was "Just meandering through wherever life takes me." Well, Kevin we hope you and Kelly don't stray too far from NARS. We enjoy having you around.

*Schalee Lodge, KD5WLL  
Ham & Sheez Reporter*

\* QUA: "Q" signal meaning "Have you news of . . . ?"



# *Tomball Bunch Annual Field Day Event held Nov. 3rd & 4th*

You got to hand it to those Tomball guys. They sure do take their time, but eventually get the job done. Hey, they were only four months late, but they did get their Field Day stations operational. Operating under the call sign K5T, they proceeded in saturating the air waves with CQ's, 5-9's and an assortment of "How-Y'all's!"

The bunch consisting of (but not limited to,) Cal WF5W, John W5PDW, Mike K5UO, Bill N5BIA, Paul W5PF and Keith NM5G spent Friday afternoon setting up their stations at the Step by Step School on Cherry Street and by 6 p.m. they were in

full operation with both cw, ssb, and 2 meters. As night fell, so did the temperature, causing a drop in the comfort level. But, these hardy lads "stayed the course" and by morning they were thawing out, feasting on Keith Dutson's home made cinnamon rolls and cups of hot coffee.

The site was visited by numerous folks throughout the event, some wondering just what was going on, and others wanting to take a turn at operating. Friday evening was especially exciting for one of our newest NARS members, ten year old Sean

Baker, KE5KFY and his Mom. Sean made his very first contact on the '066 repeater with Marty, W5MF who was kind enough to drive over to the site and hand him his very first QSL card!

The Tomball Bunch takes a lot of kidding, but in reality their Field Day in November is really designed to stimulate amateur radio activity during the off season and to make the public aware of The Wonderful World of Amateur Radio. Thanks, guys. I'll be back next year!

*Joe, KD5KR*



# Welcome, Congratulations and Condolences

Welcome new members Sean Baker KE5KFY and William Tompkins.

Congratulations to Madison Jones W5MJ for being selected as an operator in the upcoming Lakshadweep Vu7RG DXpedition.

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### VE SESSION (ARRL)

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### REPEATERS

2M: 146.660 / 146.060 (KA5AKG)  
Tone: 141.3  
70 cm: 444.375 / 449.375 (KA5AKG)  
Tone: 103.5

### MEETINGS

#### Monthly General Membership

Third Friday each month at 7:30 PM  
Spring Cypress Presbyterian Church, 6000  
Spring Cypress Road

#### Saturday Breakfast

Denny's, 7720 Louetta, 7:30 AM

#### Wednesday Lunch 11:30 AM

Various locations (Info on 146.660 and  
listed on front page in Important Dates  
column)

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