

The Texan

Newsletter of the Texas NTS CW Net (TEX)

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Hello TEX'ans! Is it just me, or do the months seem to be going by as though they were only a week or two long for you, too? We've nearly completed another year of TEX. It is becoming somewhat challenging as the winter nights approach and the skip zone lengthens in and out due to less sunspot (and sunlight) activity.

Rotten FCC R&O a "Done Deal"

The massive hijack of nearly 75% of the available CW and digital frequencies on 80 meters, as embodied in the FCC Report and Order, has not been modified, contrary to what many of us had hoped. The 3600 to 3700 KHz range will become Extra Class-only, SSB territory come December 15. The 3700 to 3750 range will become Advanced / Extra-only SSB territory. That's a full 150 KHz out of the former 250 KHz, or a decrease in CW/digital bandwidth of 60%. Of the remaining 100 KHz, 20% will be more-or-less unavailable for NTS CW usage due to RTTY and other digital usage (3580-3600, nominally). Another 25% (3500-3525) is of no use for networks since it is also extra-only. That means that all NTS and public service CW activity, as well as casual rag chewing, is going to be squeezed into an allocation that is only slightly larger than ¼ of what we currently have (55 KHz – 3525 to 3580 – vs. 205 KHz – 3525 to 3750 less 20 KHz digital). Expect nightly QRM, and plenty of it, with essentially 4 times the number of users for each KHz that we previously had.

As a result of this ridiculous re-allocation, we have no choice but to relocate TEX along with the vast majority of the NTS CW system. After careful consideration and some monitoring of current frequency use, we (consisting of myself, Rodney, and Jack, W5TFB, the CAN manager) have selected 3552 KHz as the new TEX frequency. The changeover for TEX, RN5 (to 3567), and CAN will occur on Sunday evening, December 10 local. 3552 is also used by CAN and PAN, but not EAN. Our late session will be just prior to PAN, so if for some reason there is a need to keep that session (which normally closes within 10 to 15 minutes) going beyond 10:25, the NCS should QSY the remaining operation down at least 3 KHz prior to the start of PAN at 10:30. There does not, at present, appear to be a conflict with the early session, which is more likely to go over ½ hour on occasion.

We intentionally chose this frequency to help keep it relatively clear of non-NTS activity as an aid to the area nets. At that time, we thought EAN would also select 3552, but it did not. PAN has been on 3552 now for several weeks. Due to my TCC Fox schedule, I have used 3552 to QNI PAN with good results, so it does appear at least feasible. We will have to wait to see how bad the QRM is once everyone is forced to move. The main problem is likely to be selecting appropriate side frequencies on which to pass traffic, rather than the NCS frequency.

Jack, WØUCE, has put together a matrix of NTS CW nets, which you can find at:

<http://4rnc4.homestead.com/80mCWNETMATRIX.html>

As of this writing, TEX is on the matrix along with all the higher-level region and area NTS nets. Jack has done a great job and continues to refine this matrix. As it grows ever larger, he may need to split it into 2 or 3 pieces in order to show all the section and some local nets in a manageable form.

As you will see from the matrix, there are other nets 3 KHz above TEX for the early session. Thus, NCS stations are strongly advised to send stations only DOWN in frequency (at 3, 6, and 9 KHz down) to handle traffic. Those of you who operate SSB nets might be more comfortable finding a “hole” in QRM to pass traffic, although it has been my past observation that the voice nets rarely use side frequencies unless there is a lot of traffic from different sources. The practice of sending “QRL?” prior to using a side frequency, while generally unnecessary with our current allocation, will become very important once we are all squeezed in.

Also note that the net frequency of 3552 is only a starting point. NCS and member stations should monitor carefully and if there are stations within 500 Hz of 3552, look for a clear spot within +/- 2 KHz. Everyone should try to procure 500 Hz (or less) narrow CW filters, if possible, since we will likely need to squeeze in on those boundaries. Contest weekends will present a unique difficulty.

Note that I have indicated (in the roster) all stations that are capable of operating in the 3600-3700 range after December 15. It includes the majority of regular net participants. Thus, we may very well assign stations to go to 3643 to pass traffic as a side frequency or even use 3643 as the net frequency on CW contest weekends. We will wait to see just how terrible the QRM levels are before deciding on alternate frequencies (which will also include 160 meters).

Long Skip and 160 Meters

Those of you who QNI regularly have noticed that the 7 PM net session has been subject to long skip several nights the past month. Some nights, the band “came back” around 7:15 to 7:20. Other nights, it was OK at 7 but “went out” around 7:10. NCS stations on the early net should be sensitive to this occurring regularly. Look for a station far away from your QTH and have him/her call for QNI as soon as you have

completed the QNA callup and a couple of QNI requests (and found someone you could copy, as well). When no liaison stations show up, that should be your clue that the band may be out with long skip.

Newt, KJ9J, who is located in Pharr, Texas, along the far southern border with Mexico, is in a unique position to assist, when he checks in. There were some nights that he was the only station I could hear above a whisper here in north Texas, some 600 miles away from him. All stations less than 500 miles away (the majority of you) were simply skipping over me, and vice-versa.

The 10 PM net has fared somewhat better, it seems. That is contrary to what I had expected to happen, but I am glad it is so, at least so far. As we go deeper into the winter season, things are likely to change continually, so NCS stations at 10 PM should also be sensitive to a possible long skip band outage.

Expect there to at least be QSB every night with unstable E and F-layer ionization patterns. Think of it as a challenge that adds some variety to your net operation ☺

Now, how about 160 meters? As I write this, it is the middle of the ARRL 160 meter contest weekend (Saturday). Hopefully those of you with 160 meter capability have tested out your setup during the contest.

I put up a 280 ft. end-fed wire that goes from the shack on the 2nd floor, up through the ceiling, across the attic, down through a vent to the back fence, wraps around 3 sides of the fence and then around the garage and other side of the house. I had no idea how long 300 ft. of wire would be. The length is a bit longer than a half wave on 160 because it would not load properly at the high-impedance (high voltage end) of the wire. However, after reading some tips on the Internet, and lengthening it another .05 wavelength with a quarter wavelength counterpoise wire from an MFJ artificial ground, it does load on 160 with a minimum SWR of about 1.5:1. My tuner does not have quite enough inductance to get the SWR any lower. The 2:1 SWR bandwidth is not very wide, running from about 1810 to 1840.

Upon returning from a trip out of town late last night, I got on 160 and found that I could hear dozens of stations from all over the country very well with that antenna. However, only those within about a 700 mile radius could hear me calling them. I suspect it is because the low (about 5 ft. around the fence) antenna has NVIS characteristics that make it no good for DX operation (it sure hears well, though). I had many contacts with STX stations, so hopefully the antenna will work for TEX usage this winter.

Note that 160 gets better the later it gets, so it may not be suitable for use at 7 PM, but may be viable by 10 PM. When T-Storms are anywhere around, it is pretty much unusable due to the very heavy QRN.

NCS stations should print out (and keep handy) a new copy of the net roster that appears in this issue. The stations with 160M capability (and thus may be assigned to

go to 160 – recommend 1823 KHz as a starting point), are indicated on the roster along with those who may be sent to 3643 to pass traffic once we switch to 3552 on the 10th of December.

Feature Stories



Hello out there... Please send me your “feature” story or article to go in this space.

While I did not receive anything from TEX members, Scott, W7IZ, who is the STM of Oregon and NCS of the PAN net I check into for one of my TCC skeds, sent along this picture of a “Real” Ham Shack. He does not know who the ham is, but he said the looks of the shack were quite familiar ☺

TEX Mailbox:

As reported last month, Lee, K5UN, was in Martinique for the CQWW CW contest over the Thanksgiving weekend (and remained there another week). I was blown away to hear Lee QNI to TEX last Saturday night as TO5X from there! Guess I need to send him a QSL for that somewhat rare DX contact (particularly since I was using my 160 meter antenna as a full-wave end-fed 80 meter antenna at the time). Thanks for taking time out from your contesting to visit us, Lee. We'll expect a little write-up about your experiences when you get the chance.

...

Scott, N7NET, wrote that his ham activities are taking a holiday. But he has an APRS Tiny Trak operating on a part time basis.

He and an old motorcycle friend from Oregon are planning a June motorcycle ride -- Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Arkansas, and Missouri, riding his CB-900.

If nothing goes sour his movement can be tracked via

<http://www.findu.com/cgi-bin/find.cgi?call=n7net-6>

If you access that web site, you will see where he is located (which is only a mile or two from my location to his home). Let us know when you are leaving, Scott. Should be interesting to watch how APRS works.

...

Doug, KA5KLU, reports that his second book, "Isla de Blanca" as well his first book "Wahnayah", is now available on: www.barnes&noble.com, www.amazon.com, and www.publishamerica.com. I'm looking forward to reading it myself. If you are interested in an autographed copy (as I am), contact Doug about possible availability.

...

Floyd, N5EL, is slowly recovering from the angioplasty and stent surgery. He still has intermittent pain in his shoulders, back, and neck that prevents him from sitting for long periods of time at the key or computer. Taking his meds and trying to get some exercise and eat healthy will hopefully improve things over time.

...

Floyd is still maintaining some schedules with Pat, KD5TXD, who has really been improving with her CW, as you have certainly noticed. Pat also writes, "I have also been making more CW contacts. You and Floyd should be proud of me. I think I have finally come out of my shell. I have even been invited to make a regular sked with a total stranger. Who would have ever thought that... I also have to laugh at the folks who greet me as OM on CW. Now, how am I supposed to explain to them that I'm not an "OM"? I hope they aren't disappointed when they get my QSL card and see "Patricia". 73 to all. Pat KD5TXD." Yes, Pat, Floyd and I, as well as the entire TEX gang, are proud of you and your progress. Keep at it. New challenges lie ahead, but don't ever get discouraged.

...

Thanks to Scott, W5ESE, we may be getting some new sources of traffic. Scott has contacted the W5 QSL bureau about getting the calls of stations who have cards waiting that need to supply an envelope and/or additional postage. According to the feedback he has received so far, at least one of the sorters (they break the job down into groups of letters, such as B and C) may be willing to supply that information. Scott further writes, "The bureau sorters could send us a "quick list" (by email) like this: W5ABC - needs SASEs; K5XYZ - needs 3 2c stamps; AD5YZ - needs SASEs.

It would be up to traffic handlers to get addresses and phone numbers (if we can find one), draft the radiograms in standard format, then list them on the traffic nets."

It sure sounded like a great idea to me. To date, Jerry, K5YAA, who is the W5 QSL bureau manager, has responded that at least one of the sorters might be interested in supplying this sort of information. Scott has contacted him but not received a response yet.

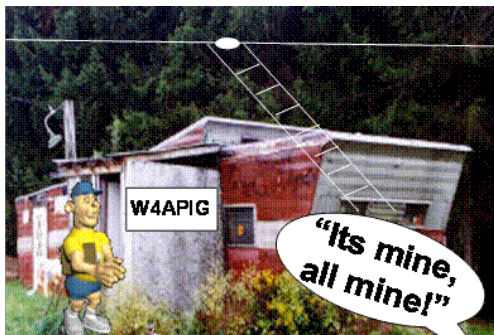
If you are able and willing to help format some radiograms for transmission on TEX (likely to RN5), please let me know. Depending on the number of responses we get from the QSL bureau folks, there may be a little work for several of us along with Scott.

...

Martin, NV5D, who lives a short distance from me (I use 2 or 3 watts when chatting with him after net and am still S9+ there) is getting more active from his Allen QTH. He will be taking a senior's trip to Branson, sponsored by the city of Allen, the first week of December.

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Finally, I received the following from Jim, KB5W, the RN5 manager. It was created by Jack, W0UCE, I believe. I sure got a chuckle out of it, even though the topic is serious.



FCC & ARRL's Xmas Gift to Pig Farmers

Twas the night before Omnibus and all
through the land, Pig Farmers await SSB
on even more band.

Its ours, its ours they shouted with glee.
Longer antennas they hung from tall trees.

Bubba with Four kw, Bobby Ray with five,
they just can't wait to bring 3.6 alive.

Then out on the lawn there rose such a
clatter, Bubba ran out of his trailer to see
what was the matter.

And what, just what, did his drunken,
bloodshot eyes see? The ARRL delivering
spectrum protection for ya'll and me.

Old 1AW rolled over in his grave, cause the
CW Band the ARRL did NOT SAVE!



FCC Official

ARRL Board
Member

UCE 11/24/06

TEX Net Topics

The following shows the current NCS and liaison station assignments. There have been a few changes / swaps. Since Lee, K5UN, will be having a lot of problems with Friday nights, his RN5 liaison slot has been swapped with Jack, W5TFB, for Wednesday and Friday. Lee now has Wednesday and Thursday RN5 and Jack has Friday and Saturday RN5 in addition to his Friday early NCS slot. Thanks to Jack, Sam, W5CU, and Rodney for filling in while Lee has been away.

TEX CW Net Weekly Schedule

Local	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
NCS #1	W5DY	KA5KLU	K6JT	AC5Z	W5TFB	AC5Z	W5GKH
Backup	W5GKH		W5TFB	K6JT	W5DY	W5DY	
NCS #2	W5GKH	KA5KLU	K6JT	K5UN	N5PWG	W5DY	W5GKH
Backup			W5DY	K6JT	K6JT	W5TFB	
RN5 #1	W5GKH	KA5KLU	K5UN	K5UN	W5TFB	W5TFB	W5CU
Backup							W5GKH
RN5 #2	W5GKH	KA5KLU	K5UN	K5UN	W5TFB	W5TFB	W5CU
Backup							W5GKH

TEX/1: 3643 (3552 On/After Dec 10) at 19:00 local; TEX/2 3643 (3552) at 22:00 local
 RN5/1: 3650 (3567 On/After Dec 10) at 19:30; RN5/2: 3650 (3567) at 21:30 local
 CAN: 3670 (3552 On/After Dec 10) at 20:30 local

RN5 Backup: W5DY, W5ESE, W5GKH, K5JRN, K6JT, KA5KLU, K5RG, W5TFB, K5UN
 NCS Backup: W5DY, N5EL, K5JRN, K6JT, KA5KLU, N5PWG, W5TFB, K5UN, AC5Z

Statistics:

This month Rodney, W5DY, again had the most QNI with 36 (60%) and Pat, KD5TXD, came in next with 31 (52%).

The complete list of stations and traffic / liaison totals are shown in the following table. Traffic was down even further, averaging 1.7 per net session. Net time averaged a little over 11 minutes per session, down 0.6 minute from September, largely due to those nights where long skip wiped out early TEX. Check-ins were down, slightly, averaging 5.1 per net session.

TEX Net Statistics (November 2006)

			Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
Call		QNI							
N5BA	Brian	1	2						
		1							
W5CDX	Wads	0	4						
*		4							

			Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
Call		QNI							
AC5CI	Homer	4	4						
		0							
W5CU	Sam	10	14		4				
*		4			4				
NV5D	Martin	2	2						
		0							
W5DY	Rodney	14	36	3	1	6			
		22		4	2	2			
N5EL	Floyd	5	5						
*		0							
W5ESE	Scott	17	17			2		13	1
*		0							
W5GKH	Charlie	7	14	5	4	2			
*		7		7	4				
K5GM	Pete	2	2						
*		0							
KJ9J	Newt	20	20	1					
*		0							
K5JRN	Si	3	7				1		
*		4					2		
K6JT	Steve	23	49	5			23		
*		26		7			26		
KA5KLU	Doug	8	14	5	6	2		2	
*		6		5	6			1	
W6LFB	Jim	1	1						
*		0							
N5NVP	Jim	3	9						
		6							
N5PWG	Jay	0	4						
*		4		3					
K5RG	Ken	11	15						
*		4							
W5TFB	Jack	13	20	4	9				
*		7		1	7				
W5TV	Tom	1	1						
		0							
KD5TXD	Pat	16	31						16
*		15				1			15
W5UFK	Ken	5	6						
*		1							

			Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
Call		QNI							
K5UN	Lee	7	13		6				
		6		3	6				
AC5XK	Don	1	1						
*		0							
AC5Z	Bert	16	16	7					
*		0							
Totals		307		60	59	15	52	16	32
				100%	98%	25%	87%	27%	53%
QTC 1		47	101						
QTC 2		54		Sessions:		60	100%		
Time 1		367	663						
Time 2		296							

The following is an updated TEX member roster. NCS stations please note the 3600-3700 and 160 meter capability notations.

TEX Roster

Call	Name	Location / Notes	Call	Name	Location / Notes
# N5BA	Brian	Houston	# K5KV	Benny	Star
# W5CDX	Wads	Crowley LA	# W6LFB	Jim	Denton
# AC5CI	Homer	Caldwell	# WA5MUF	Bill	Watauga
# W5CU	Sam	Edmond OK	N7NET	Scott	Allen
# NV5D	Martin	Allen	# KB5NJD	John	Duncanville
# *W5DY	Rodney	Goliad	N5NVP	Jim	Leesville LA
# N5EL	Floyd	Temple	# *N5PWG	Jay	Pasadena
# *W5ESE	Scott	Dripping Springs	# K5RG	Ken	Houston
# AA7FY	Mark	Fort Worth	# KC5T	Bob	Houston
# W5GKH	Charlie	West Columbia	# W5TFB	Jack	College Station
# K5GM	Pete	Austin	# W5TV	Tom	Nacogdoches
# KJ9J	Newt	Pharr TX (winter)	# *KD5TXD	Pat	Kingsville
# *K5JRN	Si	Denton	W5UFK	Ken	College Station
# KD5JSS	Dennis	Temple	# *K5UN	Lee	Leonard
# *K6JT	Steve	Plano	# AC5XK	Don	San Antonio
# KØKJ	Eric	San Antonio	# *AC5Z	Bert	Nacogdoches (Lufkin)
# KA5KLU	Doug	San Antonio			

Capable of operating in 3600-3700 band

* Capable now or soon will be for operation on 160 meters

I hope you all have a very Merry Christmas. Here's also hoping that the New Year will bring back some of our CW frequencies. Wishing you health and happiness in 2007!

73, Steve K6JT