

The Texan

Newsletter of the Texas NTS CW Net (TEX)

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September 2006



Hello again TEX'ans! The months seem to be getting shorter and shorter, but at least the band conditions on 80 (other than the QRN from T-Storms) seem to be getting a little better.

Thanks again to Floyd, N5EL, for doing a great job minding the net while my wife and I went on a week's trip to Alabama this past month. You have probably noticed that he has not checked in much in the last two weeks. I am sorry to report that Floyd is having some health issues and will not be very active on TEX until they are resolved. I wonder if we burnt him out (recall that he had 100% QNI in July – 62 out of 62 and handled dozens of orphan messages). Thank you for all your hard work, Floyd, and excellent, professional support. We really miss you and hope you will soon recover enough to rejoin the fray, even if only occasionally.

As a result of this, Floyd asked to be relieved of his duty as assistant manager of TEX and recommended Rodney, W5DY, as his replacement. Rodney has accepted, as you can see in the header above. Many thanks to both of you fine operators and I look forward to a bright future for TEX.

Floyd had a few comments to pass along to us TEX'ans: "I've always tried to put my "BEST" into anything that's challenging, like when I was supervisor over Welding and Fabrication at Alcoa. When I left there, I missed the guys that worked with me, not only those in my department but every one connected. Our Mechanical Engineer Master Mechanic boss held a large meeting when he was being transferred to another plant and we were given an opportunity to comment to him from the floor. My statement was, "It has truly been a joy to WORK WITH YOU, Lewis". Later as he made his final speech he referred to that by saying, "The statement Floyd made is the secret for everyone to go by; it's not you working for me, it's us WORKING TOGETHER WITH EACH OTHER". So I can relate the same feeling to this great group of CW operators in the TEX NET.

Like old General Doug Macarthur's statement "Old Soldiers Never Die, They Just Fade Away", my signal is not going away, just fading for awhile. I'm still good for many dits and dahs yet, and you guys may hear me just any time on the net. It is a real pleasure to work with so many fine CW ops."

In Memoriam: Many of you know about Floyd's twin brother, Lloyd, N6EL, from past articles in the newsletter. I regret having to report that Lloyd became a silent key this past month. He had not been active on the radio for a few years due to health issues. Lloyd served 22 years in the U.S. Navy, was a trainer for the military, and worked for the Border Patrol. He also worked as a volunteer Sheriff in Calaveras County, CA. He was honored with a military memorial including a 21 gun salute. Godspeed, Lloyd, and our deepest condolences on your loss, Floyd.

NTS Topics:

This past month a set of papers was sent out for comment regarding the use of Winlink 2000 (WL2K) for traffic handling and a better tie-in between the "classic" NTS (of which TEX is a part) and the Digital NTS (now called NTSD). Do not confuse NTSD with DNTS, the daytime NTS cycle. NTSD is comprised of several "hub" stations that operate the Winlink "classic" software that automatically routes messages, based on zip code, among the various nodes. It can be accessed either through the use of HF Pactor or, for some areas, VHF packet.

The proposals were written by Al, W3YVQ, of the Winlink committee. I have concatenated the 3 files (cover letter and 2 documents) into a single document that you can access on the TEX website if you are interested in learning more. The feedback (which I have also supplied) to date has not been favorable regarding the applicability of the WL2K system (which is essentially an E-Mail based system) to traffic handling of non-Email type messages. The "Classic" Winlink (version 3) has been functioning well for traffic use for several years. A lot more definition of lower level details, particularly how to tie together NTSD and the NTS for message delivery purposes, is still lacking. Feel free to read the proposals and provide feedback to me, which I will forward as applicable to the NTS area staffs.

Note that Doug, KA5KLU, maintains a Winlink Classic station and connects using HF Pactor each day to pick up Texas traffic. He and his wife Lucy, N5RLQ, then manually take as much of that as they can handle to TEX and other nets for delivery. Recently Pat, KD5TXD, and her husband Charles, WB5IZD (who is the primary digital op at their QTH), have been taking some of the traffic from Doug to help lighten the load. Doug writes, "I run WinLink Classic. It does not directly connect and operate with the Internet. Most ops who run Pactor 1 use Airmail for Kantronics TNCs and WinLink Classic with AEA PK-232s. I love WinLink Classic since it works perfectly with ARRL radiogram traffic, which WL2K does not. I connect with David/W4ZJY..AL, Leon/WB5ZED..MS and sometimes with Arley/WB5NKC..OK. I can connect with Pat/KD5TXD on Pactor but she checks into nets in the mornings and that's when I am on Pactor." Doug also reported that the only way he was able to get messages INTO the disaster areas last year was using CW. The NTS system planners should carefully note CW's utility.

It is evident to me that we need a much better system of tying together NTS and NTSD as well as defining the scope of operation for each, since it seems that NTSD duplicates much of the higher level (region and area) functionality of the classic NTS.

Did you ever wonder how all that W1GMF, N1IQI, WB5NKD, and other bulk traffic gets into the system? It is via the NTSD with computer-to-computer transfers. That is not to say there is no work involved in gathering the address and telephone information for the addressees and entering the data, only that actually sending the messages, once composed, is more-or-less automatic using the Classic Winlink software. This would have been a wonderful resource for outgoing health and welfare messages from the shelters set up after the hurricanes of last year. Sadly, the Red Cross reportedly decided not to allow the outgoing H&W from shelters unless all shelters would be included. I have not verified that report, which came in a response to the WL2K documents from a Midwest ham, so I'd appreciate it if any of you have additional information. We certainly did NOT receive very much of the H&W traffic via the NTS that I was expecting to receive last year.

TEX Mailbox:

On a lighter note, Ken, K5RG, forwarded a link to pictures from the Eastern area traffic handler's picnic. I have heard several of the pictured attendees on CAN, so it was interesting to me. The web site is quite humorous as well and has some NTS links, so give it a look if you have time. The URL is: <http://4rnc4.homestead.com/2006picnic.html> which is on the 4RN Cycle 4 website.

Ken noted that the 4RN website has a link to NANPA: the North American Numbering Plan Administration web site at <http://www.nanpa.com/index.html>. This site provides a mapping capability that relates state geography to telephone area code. Another link provides info on a numeric telephone area code. Ken said he always wonders where telephone area codes that show up on his Caller ID are coming from and this web site has a capability to determine the location and administrative background.

On the news front, Ken is working on setting up PACTOR with the acquisition of a Special Communications System (SCS) PTC-IIpro terminal controller. (Another toy, but that is what retirement is all about!!) He said he has always been interested in the digital NTS, so he is about to find out how it all works. Wiring up the cables is the progress to date (boy if that isn't a time consuming activity with three cables to a bunch of small DIN plug pins). As of this writing, Ken has not yet gotten it on the air.

Ken is also associated with the Johnson Space Center (JSC) Amateur Radio Club. They are about to construct a new building at the JSC that will shut down W5RRR for a year as they demolish the old building and put a new one on the same foundation. So he and other members are packing up the club's shack and Ken brought home the Yaesu FT-1000 station to work on it over the next year. Of course his FT-1000D is in the front of the "to do" queue as it needs some work on the automatic antenna tuner.

Most of us on TEX are either retired or semi-retired, so the "retiree" jokes sent along by Ken may give you a few chuckles (or a slightly red face if you recognize yourself in them ;-)

Question: How many retirees are needed to change a light bulb?

Answer: Only one, but it might take all day.

Question: What's the biggest gripe of retirees?

Answer: There is not enough time to get everything done.

Question: Among retirees what is considered formal attire?

Answer: Tied shoes.

TEX Net Topics

The following shows the current NCS and liaison station assignments. Thanks to Jack, W5TFB, for offering to take the hard-to-fill Friday night early NCS slot. We still have 2 open late NCS slots. I also made some minor adjustments to backups. Please consider filling one or more of the open slots on a regular basis.

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	<i>Open</i>	N5PWG	<i>Open</i>	W5GKH
Backup			W5DY	K6JT	K6JT	W5DY	
RN5 #1	W5GKH	KA5KLU	W5TFB	K5UN	K5UN	W5TFB	W5CU
Backup					W5DY	KA5KLU	W5GKH
RN5 #2	W5GKH	KA5KLU	W5TFB	K5UN	K5UN	W5TFB	W5CU
Backup					W5DY	KA5KLU	W5GKH

TEX/1: 3643 (7143 backup) at 19:00 local; TEX/2 3643 at 22:00 local

RN5/1: 7045 (3650 backup) at 19:30; RN5/2: 3650 at 21:30 local

CAN: 7052 (3670 backup) at 20:30 local

RN5 Backups: W5DY, N5EL, K5JRN, K6JT, KA5KLU, K5RG, W5TFB, K5UN, AC5XK

NCS Backups: W5DY, N5EL, K5JRN, K6JT, KA5KLU, N5PWG, W5TFB, AC5XK, AC5Z

Statistics:

This month Jack, W5TFB, had the most QNI with 46 (75%), closely followed by Rodney, W5DY, with 43 (70%) and Floyd, N5EL, with 41 (67%). Pat again "broke 500" with 33. Bert, AC5Z, came close to the "500" mark with 28 in spite of the fact that he is plagued with what he believes is power-line noise that causes a narrow-band noise source to move slowly up and down in frequency around 3643. If you hear him ask for help copying or for a QNG of NCS duties, that's the reason. Thanks for your efforts, Bert, in spite of what must be a very frustrating nuisance to cope with.

We unfortunately had one session where there was no NCS due to a family emergency and alternates being out of town, so the total was 61 sessions rather than 62. The complete list of stations and traffic / liaison totals are shown in the following table. Traffic was nearly the same as July, averaging about 4 per net session. Net time averaged a little over 14 minutes per session, down about 1 minute from July.

TEX Net Statistics (August 2006)

			Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
Call		QNI							
W5CDX	Wads	0	5						
*		5			1				
AC5CI	Homer	22	22						
		0							
W5CU	Sam	6	8		3				
*		2			2				
W5DY	Rodney	18	43	6	2	5			
		25		3	1	4			
N5EL	Floyd	20	41	2			7		
*		21		1			7		
W5ESE	Scott	19	23					1	2
*		4				1			
W5GKH	Charlie	8	16	4	4	5			
*		8		8	4	1			
K5GM	Pete	4	4						
*		0							
K6JT	Steve	17	38	5			17		
*		21		9	1		20		
K0KJ	Eric	2	5						
*		3							
KA5KLU	Doug	12	16	6	4	2		2	
*		4		4	4				
N7NET	Scott	3	3						
*		0							
N5NVP	Jim	0	1						
		1							
K9PUI	Dick	0	1						
		1							
N5PWG	Jay	2	8						
*		6		5					
K5RG	Ken	4	15						
*		11							
W5TFB	Jack	28	46	1	12				
*		18			8				

			Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
Call		QNI							
W5TV	Tom	2	2						
		0							
KD5TXD	Pat	17	33			1			16
*		16							16
W5UFK	Ken	7	10						
*		3							
K5UN	Lee	7	15		7				
		8			8				
AC5XK	Don	3	3			2		2	
*		0							
AC5Z	Bert	26	28	7					
*		2							
Totals		386		61	61	21	51	5	34
				98%	98%	34%	84%	8%	56%
QTC 1		142	228						
QTC 2		86		Sessions:		61	98%		
Time 1		496	879						
Time 2		383							

A big welcome to Scott, N7NET, who is located in Allen, about 6 miles from my QTH. He has come to us from Oregon. Scott has checked into TEX a few times, but he reports that his time is somewhat limited around the 7 and 10 PM schedules. He also maintains digital contact with the DFW traffic mailbox on the W5ROK packet BBS (which I maintain as trustee of the Rockwell Collins club).

Scott writes the following: "Years ago I published a rag called QNC!, the CW Journal. It was in the days prior to the Internet, and paper and postage finally took it out. However, I've managed to locate a piece sent to me by James Fitzhugh, W5VL, San Antonio (QRZ indicates he's now 99 years young). He remembers the day Fort Sam Houston came on the air, and the unfamiliar sound it made on his crystal receiver.

I published it in the summer, 1992 issue of QNC!. He describes his spark gap transmitter and crystal receiver he used at age twelve, about 1919. Somewhere I have a front cover of an ancient QST, where W5VL is working in the ARRL lab. It's hidden in such a unique place that I don't know where to begin the search. He's been blind for some 30 years. Perhaps our San Antonio members should know that if they plan to drop by for a visit."

Thanks, Scott. I'll save the piece from W5VL for next month's issue as I'm sure the old timers on TEX will enjoy reading it. We're glad to have you with us, and hope you can join us as much as your schedule allows. More DFW area stations are always welcome and certainly needed.

The following is an updated TEX member roster. Some of the stations on the list have not checked in for some time. I will probably start eliminating those who have not QNI'd in over a year starting in the next issue.

TEX Roster

Call	Name	Location / Notes	Call	Name	Location / Notes
KF9AS*	Megan	Dallas	KA5KLU	Doug	San Antonio
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
K5EJL	Joe	Austin	N5PWG	Jay	Pasadena
N5EL	Floyd	Temple	W5RCP	Ron	Houston
W5ESE	Scott	Dripping Springs	K5RG	Ken	Houston
W5GKH	Charlie	West Columbia	KC5T	Bob	Houston
K5GM	Pete	Austin	W5TFB*	Jack	College Station
KB5IZO	David	Irving	W5TV	Tom	Nacogdoches
KJ9J	Newt	Pharr TX (winter)	KD5TXD	Pat	Kingsville
K5JRN	Si	Denton	W5UFG	Ken	College Station
KD5JSS	Dennis	Temple	K5UN	Lee	Leonard
K6JT	Steve	Plano	KS5V	Ed	Bulverde (SA)
KA5KAB*	Carl	Baytown	AC5XK	Don	San Antonio
KØKJ	Eric	San Antonio	AC5Z	Bert	Nacogdoches (Lufkin)

* Stations with unknown or non-working E-Mail addresses.

Operating:

Last month's article on getting fills resulted in some good feedback from several of you. Thanks for your comments. In particular, it was noted that the abbreviation "BTWN" is not standard when asking for fills of information between two words. The more common abbreviation is "BN". Alternatively, Doug, KA5KLU, noted that it is also common to just send the starting word that was last copied, the word "to", and the next word that was copied with a question mark (e.g., for "congratulations on your recent license renewal", to get a fill on "recent license" you could send "your to renewal?"). That's how they taught him in his Navy classes back in the 60's when CW was still an important mode.

Pat, KD5TXD, noted that if you have out of state (or WB5NKD) traffic on the late session of TEX, as long as you will be patient with her (and keep your sending speed down a bit), she can take it for relay via the ARTS net in the mornings.

Charlie, W5GKH, commented that he handles outgoing RN5 traffic on the late session by either giving it to Wads, W5CDX (who was noted as a regular on DRN5) if he should

check in or Charlie would take it himself if he knew he could make the 10:30 AM DRN5 net schedule on 7280 KHz. Charlie also reminisced a bit about past operation on TEX where it was not considered the right thing to bring local traffic to early or late TEX unless you were reasonably sure someone who regularly checked in could deliver the message, especially since TTN was still in session until 7:30. Also, we once had a designated TTN rep on late TEX to take leftover traffic that could not be handled by CTTN, the West Texas rep, or DFW and sometimes the Northeast Texas Net. He also remembered that when he was net manager, he had a waiting list for most of the liaison slots and some slots were even shared on an alternate week basis.

My, how things have changed.

Texas Traffic Net: I have been told, by more than one source, that it is somewhat difficult to move traffic on TTN now. That is the reason that I dispensed with the TTN assigned liaison on the net roster. However, if you are a regular on TTN, do not hesitate to QNI as the TTN representative when the QNA call goes out. Inform the NCS that you will take listed traffic (by city name) if nobody checks in to take it directly and you are pretty sure there will be an outlet on TTN for it. The NCS should not assume the TTN liaison will take leftover traffic. Wait for him/her to volunteer for it, since not all traffic may have a TTN outlet.

Until next month, 73,
Steve K6JT