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# The DX Bulletin

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PROPAGATION: Jun 28-30, Low Normal; Jul 1,2, High Normal; Jul 3, Low Normal; Jul 4,5, High Normal; Jul 6, High/Low Normal; Jul 7, Below Normal; Jul 8, High/Low Normal; Jul 9, Low Normal; Jul 10, Below Normal; Jul 11, 12, Low Normal. TNX N4XX.

AS USUAL, everything you need to know for this week's DXing is in the Calendar.

Your editor recently sent a letter to a local newspaper, describing how we hams are affected by events in the Falklands, Poland, Afghanistan, etc, thinking it might be a little good public relations. The paper responded with a request for a full-blown interview for a feature article. We got to thinking that the article might at least be guaranteed greater accuracy if we wrote it ourselves. You know what happens...you tell a non-ham you work the 20 Meter Band and they think you are in a rock group. So here's our interview with ourselves! We will leave out the questions and just provide the answers.

## HAM RADIO: WINDOW ON THE WORLD

I've been a ham twenty-one years, since I was twelve. A friend and I learned the Morse Code for Cub Scouts, learned that the only thing it seemed good for was a ham radio license, so we got beginner's permits. I built a station for about a hundred dollars. Today, while I have about three thousand dollars invested in equipment, you can still work the world for a tenth of that if you buy wisely.

Many of my young ham friends got very interested in electronics and ended up being engineers and scientists. I went the other way, to liberal arts college, and never regreted the decision. My small college only had one other ham that I knew of. Places like M.I.T. are loaded with hams, and most universities have "club stations" for their students. M.I.T.'s is W1MX, one of the most famous and it is over sixty years old.

While hams do all sorts of useful and interesting things, the two most important have been extending the frontiers of radio and communicating. Around 1920, the powers that be (government) thought that the very longest wavelengths, lower in frequency than the AM broadcast band, were the only ones usable for radio communicating. Hams proved that the "short waves" were not only usable but vastly superior to the longer wavelengths. Thus, we were able to carve out a sizable amount of frequency space for ourselves when the world's governments decided it was time to regulate radio users.

Later, in the 1930's, hams further extended the upper limits of usable space, first to a band about where VHF television is now, then higher and higher, into the regions of UHF TV, FM broadcast, and even higher.

Connecticut is a great place to live if you're a ham, because the atmosphere is permeated with radio history. Around 1915, radio amateurs were still limited to communicating only over very short distances. For example, if you wanted to get a message from Hartford to Springfield, you used a "relay" station in, say, Windsor Locks. Hams around the country built up a network of such relay routes. Then, a Hartford scientist and inventor named Maxim saw the need for some coordination, and he began publishing a small magazine for the purpose. Later, he and a friend founded an organization named, aptly enough, the American Radio Relay League. It is based in Newington and has about 150,000 members.

Trying to talk to another ham ever farther

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away seems to come naturally to most of us at one time or another. The state of the art is such that I can go upstairs, turn my radio on, and talk to a ham on each of the six continents within a half-hour. That's on the "short wave" bands. At the higher frequencies, something like a thousand miles is what we would call "DX." And you'd have to wait for a weather front to be in the right position or for an aurora borealis to help your signal on those frequencies.

I still have the very first "QSL card" I got from talking to a ham in another country: St. Vincent island in the Caribbean. It was later that it occurred to me that in terms of distance, talking to California was a greater achievement by a thousand miles. But I didn't have to rush out and buy a world atlas to know where California is! I learned a bit of geography that day, and that's how all this "DX" business started. Eventually I had QSL cards from a hundred countries and qualified for ARRL's DXCC award. Over the next fifteen years, on and off, I continued "chasing" other countries and islands which were credited for more awards. Today, I've got all but twelve out of 318 possible.

Yes, we DX hams were familiar with the Falkland Islands long before they were in the news. See, they're plainly marked here on my wall map, and their callsign prefix is VP8. Not only that, but the other group which was occupied by Argentina, the South Sandwich Islands, are even more obscure but hams know about them, too. The Falklands have always had plenty of ham radio activity, but the S. Sandwich group is in the category of "very rare."

Radio equipment among the British on the Falklands was seized immediately after the Argentinians landed, and the hams on the Argentine mainland were put off the air for most of the period of fighting. The Argentinians have since returned to the airwaves and we expect to be hearing signals from the Falklands any day now.

As for Poland, their radio amateurs have been off the air since the Russian invasion last December, and there is no indication of when they might be allowed on again. Their equipment was, for the most part, confiscated by the authorities.

For me, ham radio was what really started my thinking about world politics and about

how fortunate we are in the U.S.A. Two items come to mind: when I was about fourteen, a ham in my hometown with a powerful station was able to contact hams in the U.S.S.R. every day, and he had many, many QSL cards from them. When he began sending his own QSL cards to their central clearing house there in Moscow (direct mail is not allowed) the bureaucrats returned his cards en masse. Why? Because he had a photo of him in front of his radio rig, with lots of commercial Heathkit gear. It was very impressive, and obviously the Russians did not want their own hams to see what it was possible for an American ham to have. Incidentally, this is not true today.

That same ham allowed me to use his station to "work DX," and I immediately noticed that Morse code signals from the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European spots like Poland, Bulgaria, etc., did not have the clear tone and pitch most U.S. hams' transmitters put out. I learned that much of their equipment was very rudimentary, made from left-over WW 2 radios and such, and that's why their signal quality was poor. Again, this has changed, but the Communist countries still mostly work with homemade equipment, purely for economic reasons.

There were always plenty of stations in Czechoslovakia to talk to, until one night in the summer of 1968 they disappeared from the airwaves. By this time I was in college and minoring in political science, and I of course knew the reason immediately!

Here are some photos of foreign hams who have visited my house. This one is from Germany, and I met him when he made a business trip to the company I used to work for. Here's my friend Nao, who came from Japan a few months ago to work here. These two gents are from Norway, this one visited from Venezuela a few years ago, and I first "met" all of them on the radio. If someone ever shows up from Africa, I will have hosted visiting hams from all six continents.

You don't have to be a ham to imagine the thrill of having someone in the Kazakh Republic of the U.S.S.R. recognize your radio callsign, and say "Hello, Jim, how are things with you today?" We hams are our own private "United Nations."

Your newspaper readers know that the People's Republic of China is finally beginning to throw off the world isolation perpetrated on their country by the "Gang of Four" in the 1960's and 70's. Several area manufacturers have sent representatives to China, and the Chinese have reciprocated with visits to firms in Connecticut. When I polled my newsletter subscribers about what countries they have not been able to contact yet, about 90 per cent of them mentioned China, which has had no amateur radio activity for almost twenty years. Obviously, the first step in isolating your citizens is to prohibit them from radio contact with the outside!

Well, China is coming back on the air, thanks in part to some gentle encouragement by several hams who have been in China the past two years or so. They are going about it slowly, to be sure, and it seems that every ham who visits now comes back with a different impression of the situation, but that only adds to the mystery of an already mysterious country. It's not hard for us hams to imagine how difficult it must be to try to negotiate a business arrangement with the Chinese!

When a station comes fully on the air from Beijing or some other city, an incredible demand will greet them. Estimates of the number of hams around the world who will want a contact and QSL card from China run as high as 50,000. So understanding their trepidation isn't very hard to do. It will be quite a welcoming ceremony, won't it?

Another mysterious country is Burma, which most people remember only from the WW 2 campaigns fought there. About a year ago, two amateur stations popped up, operating from a remote region of the country called the Karen State. This area happens to be on the edge of the infamous "Golden Triangle," which includes parts of three countries (Burma, Thailand, and Laos) and which is the source of most of the world's supply of raw opium. A Japanese visitor to the area brought out photos of the two stations, manned by armed, uniformed soldiers. When attempts were made to validate the operation in order to give hams awards credit for contacting the stations, the Burmese government disavowed knowledge of the operations and stated flatly

that absolutely no radio communications by hams into or out of Burma are allowed.

Interestingly, despite this, word now is that someone stationed at the West German embassy in Rangoon is operating a ham rig from there. It may well be that the situation in Burma now is much the same as that in a number of other countries: while amateur radio is officially prohibited the government does not choose to police the airwaves and prosecute offenders. This is precisely the case in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Hams sending QSL cards and letters to Turkey are advised to never make any indication of amateur radio on the outside of their envelopes. In fact, amateur radio has been prohibited in Turkey since the 1930's, but most of us have contacted and received correspondence from there.

Hams from the U.S.A. and other countries visiting some places have been forced to become "instant diplomats" in order to gain permission to operate their radios. Just when it seems that any amateur radio operation is out of the question in a place like, say, Bangladesh, the person with the right connections shows up, greases a few palms, and is on the air. Occasionally a "bad apple" will make the wrong moves and set back amateur radio in a developing country for a period of time, but mostly those countries realize that if they are ever to advance technically amateur radio in their country will be a valuable asset, just as it has been in the developed nations for over half a century.

So ham radio is more than people with walkie-talkies on their belts and teenagers winding coils of wire on oatmeal boxes in their dank basements. "DXing" is so popular among hams that it is the only facet of the hobby able to support someone like me publishing a newsletter for profit. In fact, there are several other newsletters in the field. Just as every jogger secretly dreams of running the Boston Marathon, most every ham is a DXer at heart.

Sure, lots of us stop when we've contacted a hundred countries, many don't even keep track of our "total." But you will have to travel miles and miles to find a ham who, hearing a "new one," does not have an irresistible urge to make contact!

# CALENDAR

Canton/Am. Phoenix KH1 by SMØAGD possible any time (late word)  
 Gambia C53CC by W4MGN now to Jul 6; Issue 145  
 St. Lucia J6 SL by K5YY now to Jun 29  
 Crozet FB8WG weekends, 1030Z, 1433Z  
 Madagascar 5R8AL on again, Fridays, 1400Z, 21325

Iraq JA1DNG/YI allowed 15 SSB only; try 1800Z  
 DEADLINE DXCC Honor Roll QSLs to Newington by Jun 30  
 Convention VWA State, Jackson's Mill, Jul 3/4  
 Liberia EL2AG by W4MGN Jul 7/8; I 145  
 Burma DF8MP/XZ Saturdays, list, 21270 @ 1600Z;  
 NOT documented for DXCC

St Paul VE1SPI Jul 8-13; I 145  
 Kenya 5Z4CZ by W4MGN Jul 9-12  
 Convention YLISSB Jul 8-11, Milwaukee; KB9OC  
 C. Kiribati Maybe T31 by SMØAGD in July  
 Saipan N5RM/NHØ Jul 10/11

Competition Radiosport, Jul 10/11  
 Burundi 9U5JM by W4MGN Jul 13-19  
 Kenya 5Z4CZ by W4MGN Jul 20/21  
 Comoros D68AM by W4MGN Jul 22-26  
 Convention ARRL National, Cedar Rapids, Jul 23-25;  
 details next issue TDXB

Mayotte FH8CL by W4MGN Jul 27-30  
 E Carolines KC6SX by JABOW Aug 1-7  
 Reunion FRØ by W4MGN Jul 31-Aug 2; I 145  
 Convention NWDX, Vancouver, Jul 31-Aug 1; VE7WJ  
 Mauritius W4MGN/3B8 Aug 3-7; I 145

E Carolines KC6 by AD1S, Aug 4-8  
 W Carolines KC6 by AD1S (Belau) Aug 8-11  
 Seychelles S79ARB by W4MGN Aug 8-11; I 145  
 Marianas KHØ by AD1S Aug 11-14  
 Kenya 5Z4CZ by W4MGN Aug 12-14; I 145

Marshalls KX6 by AD1S Aug 14-16  
 E Malaysia 9M8 by VK9NS/NL, Aug 15-Sep 6  
 DEADLINE Aug 15 for comments to FCC on Docket 82-83  
 Contest All Asia CW Aug 28/29

\*\*\*As we went to press, Field Day preparations for W1AW/1 were being firmed up. A scheme was concocted for operations from eight remote locations (six current and two former staff members) plus the real Newington site (which would not be signing /1). The idea was to let as many people as possible work "W1AW," not to compete. We (TDXB) thinks they should have "hired" former staff members in other states...they could have had a "Worked All States W1AW" competition! W1AW/6, W1AW/7, W1AW/4, etc etc. All perfectly legal.

# CONTRIBUTORS

W8UVZ, WA8CZS, KM9J, WBLFSW,  
 W1TN, W7LR, NI4Y, WB8ZRL, K6IR,  
 KALDOS, VE2CU, K4BAI, W1WEF,  
 WD5AAM, W4VQ, AB8K, WØBW, W7YF,  
 W2HAZ, N8BKB, KP4EQF, WBØOQV,  
 WØUQD, KA3R, W1VV, K1EBY, KØCVD,

Mail reports to reach Vernon  
 by Tuesday. Phone reports to  
 203-871-7699 until Wed morning.

Winner of the June award for  
 best contributions of infor-  
 mation is Brad Fox, KA3R. It was  
 a close race with several  
 others! Incidentally, when we  
 award the freebie, we automa-  
 tically switch the recipient to  
 First Class Mail.

Next issue a "regular" one,  
 with Bandpass, QSL listing, etc.

Please help TDXB save by  
 renewing early. Thanks!

New ARRL DXAC Board liaison is  
 N4MM, replacing the late W3KT.

Bangkok radio club pres.  
 HS1WR passed away Jun 20.

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# NEWSPAPER

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