January 2005 Volume 01-2005

Nacogdoches Amateur Radio Club

2005 CLUB OFFICERS

President: Kent Tannery – KD5SHM

VP: James McLaughlin – N5VOO

Sec/Treas: Army Curtis - AE5P

JANUARY MINUTES

The January meeting of the Nacogdoches Amateur Radio Club (NARC) was held as scheduled on January 5th. Twenty members and three guests were present. **President Kent, KD5SHM**, opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Christ Episcopal Church. Each person present introduced himself. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as published. Treasurer's report was read.

Robert – KD5FEE reported that the new web hosting site is up and running with the club web site. Check out http://www.w5nac.com Many thanks to **Robert** for porting the previous web site done primarily by **Kevin – KD5WX** over to the new host. And many thanks to **Marshall – K5QE** for arranging for the new host.

Army – AE5P, gave an update report on the heliax situation, and the lawsuit status.

The second annual Shuttle Columbia Special Event Station and Reunion is planned for Saturday, February 5th at the Knights of Columbus Hall. Events will run from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. We plan to have food for lunch available for a donation. There will be two HF stations and one VHF station. Everyone is asked to wear a name tag.

Army – AE5P made a motion to donate $150 to Christ Episcopal Church as a thank you for their letting us use their facility for our meetings and VE testing sessions each month. Approved.

Reminder of the ARRL VHF/UHF contest the weekend of January 22. Several club members are planning rovers, and of course **Marshall – K5QE** will have his beautiful contest station going full tilt.

Tommy is back! **N5DUX** is back from Austin, and has agreed to take over as web master for the club.

John – N5AIU gave a report on the NISD School Club. They have qualified for the WAS90 award, as has John personally. Congratulations to all.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Show and Tell:

Tommy - N5DUX showed off a new ICOM T-90A HT.

Army – AE5P showed off his WAS-90 certificate just received.

Will – KI5KO brought the 12 latest issues of QST. N5AIU took them for his school club kids.

Tim – KD5ING showed off his new Apple I-Book computer.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Rover on 222

Last September I was a rover working 3 bands (2m, 432 and 6m) but for the January VHF contest I added a fourth band to the rover, 222. I was really not sure how this was going to work out but I knew there were others out there who had this band and it would get me more points by having another band to work so it was an adventure waiting to happen.

I again started the contest down around Wharton, Texas and when 1pm, Saturday, occurred I began working stations, mainly on 2 meter. Then I heard K5QE calling for me so I worked him on 2m and they wanted me to switch to 432. The car was already pointed their direction so we made a contact on that band and then they wanted to switch to 222. I was equipped with a Down East Microwave transverter and a TE Systems amplifier, with built in pre-amp, so I met them on 222.100mhz. The band was quiet when I flipped to it as the overall noise level was very low. I heard them calling for me so I tuned them in. Wow, this was louder than 432 and as loud as 2 meter but without the noise. I was impressed and thrilled that it was all working from this distance.

I drove south into Bay City, Texas and set up to work from a new grid and K5QE heard me working the new grid and was ready to work me on all the bands. I was only about 30 miles from Wharton but when we switched to 222 I could not hear them. They were loud in the last grid but nothing in this one. Dave, K5MQ, who was working the K5QE 2 meter station told me to check the equipment. I looked in the backseat and the transverter light was coming on and the amp and pre-amp light seemed to come on when I called but I could not hear them. Next, Dave suggested turning off the amp and preamp to see if I could hear them without the preamp engaged. There they were loud and clear calling for KD5SHM/rover. I instinctively picked up the microphone and called them back telling them that I could now hear them fine. They

responded with their grid square and said they had a good copy on me also, although they were hearing me the whole time.....I was the one not hearing. Then it struck me!!!!! Holy cow!!!! I was talking back to them with no amplifier. I asked Marshall how much power was going out of the transverter because the amplifier was off and he responded that it was around 20 watts. Twenty watts all the way back to Toledo Bend! Amazing! Dave said he knew what the problem was (stuck relay in the preamp) and told me to just leave it off and keep going. I did turn the amp back on, just without the preamp.

I picked up 23 contacts on 222 throughout the contest so having this extra band helped. (I had 31 contacts on UHF for comparison purposes). This new band worked so well that I began using it first to get the car/yagis pointed at the person I was contacting before switching to UHF, which was a softer band (not as loud). I was constantly amazed at how well 222 worked. It seemed to be as loud as 2 meter, but without the background noise (like 432). I was almost wishing that I had loops on this band so I could work it while driving.

I had heard from others that 222 was a great band but did not get popular as 2 meter because it was "easy" to convert commercial radios from the commercial 2 meter frequencies down into the ham 2m band and there were not many commercial groups using 222 to work from. I have searched on ebay and the net for 222 radios and they are very hard to come by as VERY few companies build a 222 SSB radio (I am only familiar with one) so to get this band everyone is using a transverter. Antenna profile is between 2m and UHF (222mhz is between 148mhz and 432mhz) so the rover antenna yagi worked fine.

Because of my new experience with this band, I can say that I highly recommend it for communications. Hope you give it a try one day,

73 de KD5SHM

V.P.'s CORNER...

Well everyone, this is my first letter as Vice President and I wanted to express my enthusiasm on being an officer for such a fine group of individuals. Before I get started with a column that might bore some people, I wanted to let you guys know I need help. One of my duties as VP is to setup programs for the club which follows every club meeting. This is where you guys come in. What do you guys want to see and learn about? I have a few ideas in my head that should be entertaining at best but please shoot me an email, talk to me during lunch, or yell at me on the radio. I need the ideas which interest you most.

With that being said, let's talk about purchasing and building antennas. During the past month I have been learning about antennas, so much in fact I undertook what I thought would be the daunting task of building an antenna for the rover contest. I started doing research on materials needed, length to cut things, how to solder connectors and an overall antenna cram session. When building antennas I have found that you must get ALL the materials needed before starting the task. Here is a brief breakdown of how I started building the antennas.

Research:

I searched the internet finding different articles on how to build antennas. Since I was going to build a 2m halo and 6m halo I narrowed it down to what looked like to me the easiest antennas to build. This research included parts to get, lengths to cut, and how to tune the antenna once built.

I will say that instructions are not always accurate. After building one of the 2m antennas, I decided to tune the antenna. With the help of KG4LTV and his MFJ-269 (a must if you are serious about building antennas) we started tuning. I figured this was going to be the easiest thing in the world (turn this screw a little, shorten/widen the gap). This was far from the truth. We found that the instructions that I pulled off the internet were nowhere near the right lengths between the elements so we did some modifications and were able to pull the antenna down to 1.5-1.6 on 144.200. For my first antenna this was impressive to me.

For building antennas I suggest the internet. On the internet hit up www.Google.com from here there are a plethora of sites which show you calculators (http://bfn.org/~bn589/antenna.html) if you want to try building one without instructions or sites like www.dxzone.com which has plans to build just about any antenna you can imagine.

Workspace:

I suggest having a clean workspace to assemble the antenna that you are building. The garage floor with no chairs isn't the place. Believe me I know it was hard enough working with low light but having to use the floor as a table doesn't work that well. Soldering and drilling are best done on a work table where you can lay parts out and not lose them. You wouldn't believe how many times we cut the same piece of tube because we lost the other.

HELP:

It is hard to work on something that you have never done before. But when there are three people helping you out it doesn't seem so bad. It took many people to help me build three antennas but in the end it was all worth it. We may have only made 12 contacts while roving as W5NAC/R but the joy of making the antennas and being able to

make a contact on them was worth all the headaches.

When it comes down to it building antennas is a fun activity which is easy and hard rolled into one lesson. At first it might take some time but "patience is a virtue" and building antennas is a lesson. A lesson that has been fulfilling and uplifting as well as frustrating and headache ridden. But in the end when you can't get the 6m to tune…it makes a great art piece or an excellent flying disc.

73 de N5VOO

VE TESTING

Our next VE testing is scheduled for Wednesday, February 16 at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Christ Episcopal Church. Applicants should bring a picture ID, their current Amateur license and any CSCE's, along with a copy of both, and $14 to cover the cost of the exam(s). Take note of the price change; the cost of exams is now $14. Correct change is always very much appreciated.

CLUB NETS

Remember to join us each week for the 2-meter nets sponsored by NARC. Each MONDAY is the NARC ARES/RACES net, at 8:00 p.m. on the club's 146.84 repeater. Remember the 107.2 PL tone now in use. Second, on THURSDAY evenings at 8:00 p.m. is the Deep East Texas Skywarn Net on the club's 147.32 repeater (PL 141.3). The PL is turned off for the net. Please join us for one or both.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday February 2nd at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of Christ Episcopal Church. This is at the corner of Starr and Mound Streets in Nacogdoches. Hope to see y'all there.

VHF/UHF Roaming
A Short Story

For the ARRL VHF contest this past month, W5TV and I "volunteered" to use K5QE's roamer, and see just how many contacts we could make during the contest. The K5QE roamer is actually his wife's Ford Explorer, outfitted with radios and antennas for all bands from 50 MHz through 1296 MHz.

We started the contest just south of Beaumont in EM-20, and managed to work a total of 12 grids during the two days of the contest. Most of the grids were in Louisiana, and saw us spending Saturday night in Pineville, LA, just west of Alexandria.

We had non-directional loop antennas for 6 and 2 meters, and this allowed us to call CQ and work stations while we were mobile in motion. We did work a few stations this way, but frankly it was a little disappointing that more stations weren't active, at least in the areas where we were. We did manage to work back

to K5QE on all bands from all grids, with the exception of 6 meters. 6 just didn't work that well for us, and the lack of propagation certainly didn't help matters.

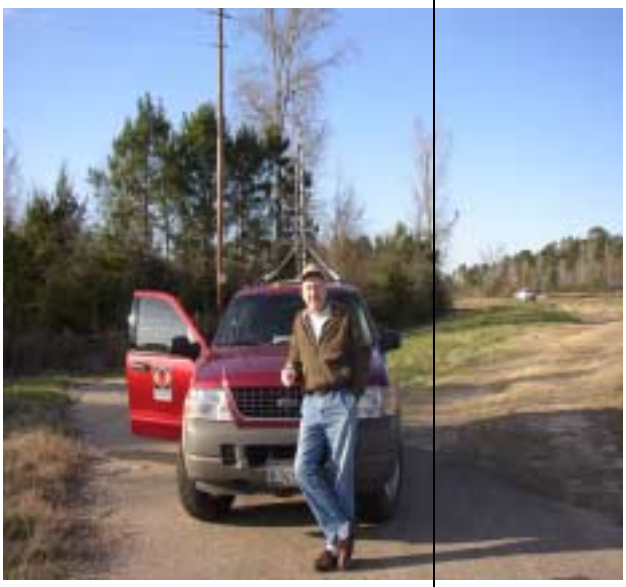
We did have a great time however, saw some interesting country, and for both Tom and I, worked at least three bands for the first time ever. Neither Tom nor I had ever operated on 222, 902, or 1296 before. Those are some great bands, and they work very well, even at some extreme distances.

We are already looking forward to future VHF contests, and hope to take the K5QE roamer out again. More improvements are in the works, and maybe even some more bands? I am in the process of rebuilding all of the transverters we used to provide for a better mounting and switching setup. Maybe next time it can be 15 grids, or maybe….?

73 de AE5P

The W5TV Roamer!

AE5P at the same location



W5TV in EM-22