



The quarterly newsletter of the  
Magnolia DX Association, Inc.

Edited by N5YY  
With an absolute minimum of text changes

SEPTEMBER 2009

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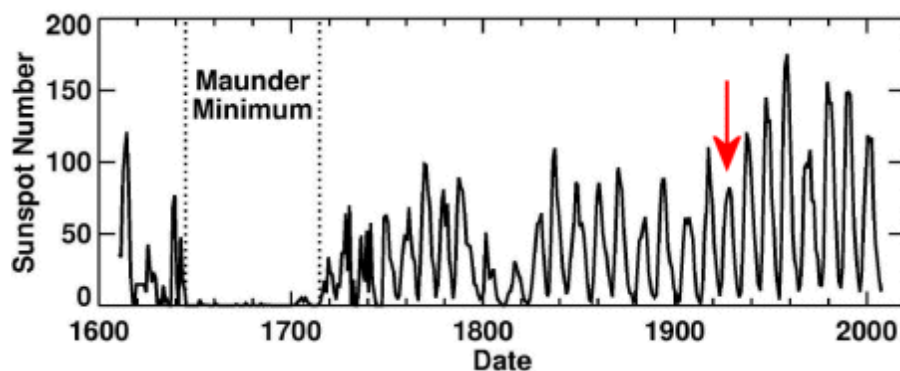
## *Upcoming Events*

- **SEPTEMBER 12:** Breakfast at Barnhill's (Gulfport) then "Lightning Protection" presentation courtesy of Cecil, K5DL
- **SEPTEMBER 26:** ARRL Day In The Park at Camp Shelby, hosted by Hattiesburg ARC...regional picnic with multiple clubs
- **OCTOBER 10:** Breakfast at Barnhill's (Gulfport) then "DX Clusters" presentation courtesy of George, K5JZ
- **OCTOBER 17:** MDXA Fall Picnic at Success Community Center near Saucier...POC is Dan – AE5JG
- **OCTOBER 16, 17, 18:** MS Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge Amateur Radio Weekend Event...more to come from W5UE
- **NOVEMBER 14:** Breakfast at Barnhill's (Gulfport), then either "D-Star" presentation courtesy of Ed, KA5VFU.....OR "K5N EL-58" presentation courtesy of Bill, K5YG....TBD
- **NOVEMBER 28/29:** K5MDX activation in the CQWW DX Contest, hosted by Darryl, K5CQT at his QTH in Ocean Springs
- **DECEMBER 12:** Annual DX Dinner (K5D DXpedition by K4UEE)

# President's Corner

Greetings fellow MDXA members. I hope everyone is managing to stay cool during the dog days of summer. While Mother Nature (with a little help from one of her servants El Nino) has been giving those of us who live in potential hurricane impact areas a quiet season thus far, I don't think I need to remind anyone that can change rapidly, especially during the months of August and September. So, let's be sure to remain vigilant in our preparedness. Both from a personal standpoint in protecting our families and property and from a community service standpoint should our services become necessary following a storm.

On the DX front, we remain in the very early stages of Solar Cycle 24. Recent predictions sponsored by NASA and led by experts from NOAA now call for a relatively quiet Cycle 24. Current best predictions call for a peak in May of 2013 with sunspot numbers around 90. If this pans out it would be the lowest of any solar cycle since Cycle 16 peaked at 78 sunspots in 1928. Also, the valley we are currently in has been the weakest period of solar activity in the past century. The sun has gone for more than 2 years without a significant solar flare. The graph below charts solar cycles back to 1610. Cycle 16 is noted by the red arrow. If the experts are right, this may be similar to what we experience in Cycle 24. While any sunspots are good sunspots for DXers, let's hope the predictions end up being a little low. Extra credit for anyone who researches the "Maunder Minimum" and writes an article for our next newsletter.



While that news about "Ole Sol" may not be too exciting, that hasn't stopped some juicy DX from hitting the airwaves and filling the logs of MDXA members the past few months with more to come during the rest of the year. Of course the big one was K5D to Desecheo in Feb of 2009. Others of note: Lesotho (7P8R), Lord Howe Is (VK9LA), Mellish Reef (VK9GMV), Minami Torishima (JD1BMM/JD1BND) and many others. The year will be rounded out with several more in the Top 50 such as Glorioso (FT5GA), Midway Island (K4M) and Conway Reef (3D2C) as well as Chesterfield Is (TX3A) later in the year. The MDXA has or will sponsor several of these DXpeditions, another example of your membership dues in action.

On the social front the fall is shaping up to offer MDXA members several opportunities to get together and socialize with fellow MDXA members and members of some of the other clubs in the state. In September, I hope to see many of you at the ARRL Day in the Park event being hosted by the Hattiesburg Amateur Radio Club. This year's event is being held Sept 26 at Camp Shelby just north of Wiggins, MS. Our own MDXA fall picnic is planned for Oct 17 and will be held at the Success Community Center, near Saucier, MS. Thanks to Dan, AE5JG for taking the lead in organizing this for us. Keep watching the MDXA mailing list and web site for details as the events draw closer. Also look for some individual special event operations being planned by some of our members in the next few months.

What has your humble servant been up to? Well, apart from keeping very busy with the day job I've recently taken on the QSL Manager duties from Joe, N5ID for 9V1YC and James Brooks' other personal DX activities (9V9HQ, N1YC/VK9X and some older ones). I was very happy to help Joe out, allowing him to focus more of his energy on a full recovery from his recent illness. James has been great to work with thus far and was very interested in keeping his QSL duties with someone from the MDXA, and that's a direct reflection on the job that Joe did for several years. I've also upgraded my very modest "antenna farm" when I replaced my battle weary TH5DX recently with an A3S+40M extender kit at about 45' and a rotatable dipole for 12/17/30M at about 55'. I'd had the TH5DX up for about 10 years. It survived Georges, Katrina and a host of other "weather challenges". And it was a hand-me-down from N5FG when I put it up... It was starting to show its age and wear and tear with higher SWRs than I was comfortable with so I decided it was time for a change. I've had the A3S+40M on the air in several contests since putting it up in May and I've been delighted with its performance so far. The addition of an 80M Inverted V recently gives me resonant antennas on 10-80M for the first time in my ham career!!! Below is a picture of me putting the finishing touches on the project as I position the A3S and attach it to the mast.



Until next time, 73 es GUD DX!!!

Randy – W5UE

*Note: Solar Cycle information summarized from an article in the Science@NASA newsletter dated May 29, 2009: [http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2009/29may\\_noaaprediction.htm](http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2009/29may_noaaprediction.htm)*

The following tongue 'n cheek poem, written by Bob Dunn (K5IQ), is submitted for publication in the news letter. Bob gave authority to publish his work. He only requests credit be given as appropriate.

QUOTE:

THE DXer's CREED

by  
Bob Dunn, K5IQ

In the Light of Day, and Dark of Night,  
I'll crank my power full to the right,  
To show my RF strength and clout,  
And repeatedly my callsign shout!

Because I must, I must divine,  
If in Lord Howe I'm 5 and 9!  
And in Tonga, Gabon, Mayotte,  
I need to know my signal's hot!

3B9 and VU7,  
Send me straight to DX heaven!  
Calls from lands oh so exotic,  
If I miss them, I'll go neurotic!

To snag the rare ones, I'll use each trick:  
I'll skip work, I'll call in sick!  
I'll miss birthdays and traditions,  
Just to work DXpeditions!

And when my family members whine,  
I'll say, "Hang on, there's VQ9!"  
But should I incur some wifely wrath,  
I'll just cry, "Not now! Ten's hot long path!"

To keep my rep as pile-up buster,  
I stay logged on the DX Cluster,  
And I read each bulletin,  
QRZ and Ohio Penn.

And though my money gets swiped by tramps,  
I'll keep mailing crisp "green stamps",  
In the hopes my work so hard,

Nets for me a third-world card.

The QSL, the Holy Grail!  
The DXer's joy that comes by mail.  
And though we prize these souvenirs,  
It sure takes long--it seems like years!

With each contact I near my goal,  
Of DXCC Honor Roll.  
And with ev'ry packet spot I'm seein',  
I keep hopin' for a North Korean!

And so I'll say, "5-9, 7-3,"  
"By the Buro's fine by me!"  
By Boulder K and Grey-line edge,  
I promise here, I make this pledge:

In the Light of Day, and Dark of Night,  
I'll crank my power full to the right,  
To show my RF strength and clout,  
And repeatedly my callsign shout!

©1999 K5IQ All rights reserved  
END QUOTE

73 & Best DX

Charlie  
WD5BJT

## A cheap and easy I-com computer interface

by Chuck Chandler, WS1L

Like most of you, I use a computer in the shack to manage lots of different tasks. One task I have automated for years... since about 2001 or so... has been rig control. This means that my logging software always knows the frequency and mode of my rig, so my log never gets it wrong. As logging programs got more capable, it became common for the program to be able to notify me of a needed DX Cluster spot, QSY the rig, set the mode, turn the beam, and pre-fill the QSO information. All I have to do is work 'em... the paperwork is done by the computer!

Of course, all this starts with a rig interface. There are lots of choices out there. My Ten-Tec Orion provides a real RS-232 port on the back so all that is needed is a plain old serial cable. So does my Yaesu FT-1000MP, so did my Yaesu FT-920. My trusty old Kenwood TS-680 needed a Piexx add-on to provide the serial port, but again it worked well.

However, the 6-meter rig in the shack is an I-com IC-706 Mk IIG. It supports rig control, but through the I-com C-IV interface via a mini phone plug. Since that rig is also my portable and Field Day rig, it was time to get it and the computer on speaking terms.

There are a few choices out there for I-Com interfaces. The easiest, and most expensive, is to purchase the I-Com CT-17. It has a list price of \$186, though a street price of around \$140. If you are like me, that is just too much for too little. All this does is rig control... no CW generation.

Interestingly, Radio Shack has a neat little item, Model # 20-047, their USB Scanner Programming Cable, for \$34.99. It has an install CD that creates a virtual comm port via USB. It is easy to install and provides a reliable way for your I-com to talk to your computer. However, it also doesn't provide for CW generation... a must for me! There are other interfaces available on e-Bay that are rather similar, some of which handle audio input and output for digital modes.

Some Google research will turn up other interfaces you can build. One of these caught my eye and was the basis for this project. The G3VGR interface may be seen in detail at [www.qsl.net/g3vgr/civ.html](http://www.qsl.net/g3vgr/civ.html). It is a simple charge-pump circuit that bumps up the 5 volt TTL signals to levels that will satisfy RS-232 well enough to work. He credits the idea to OK2WY, so I will too.

To make this interface work for rig control only takes two transistors, two diodes, one capacitor and four resistors. To add CW control on the same com port only requires the addition of one transistor, two resistors and one diode.

Rather than try to copy the schematic off the Internet, go take a look and see how simple it is. We will be making one change, though.

The neat part about this type of interface is the ability to run rig control AND generate CW from the SAME com port. This is very useful if com ports are in short supply, as they often are. The single caveat for this is that your software must specifically allow this to be done. I have used this interface with both DX Labs and N1MM Logger and it works just fine. I did have to make one small change to keep N1MM Logger happy.

The G3VGR design uses the DTR line for power and the RTS line to key CW. That is just fine for DX Labs software, which allows for that selection. However, N1MM Logger only allows CW generation on the DTR line. It was an easy circuit modification to use the RTS line for power to the interface and DTR for CW. Just make sure that in your software setup you indicate that RTS must be "Always On" and DTR must be "CW."



Figure 1. The portable rig, ready for Field Day

Figure 2. The rig control circuit is on the small perf board. The CW circuit is the "dead bug" style to the right.

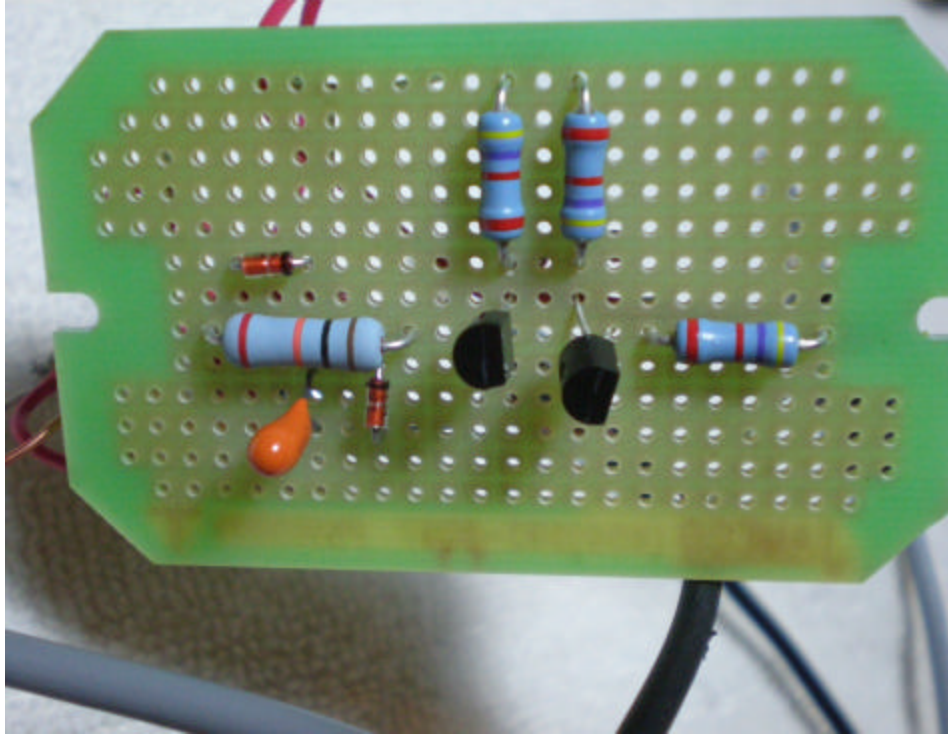


Figure 3. Rig control circuit. Couldn't be much simpler!



Figure 4. CW circuit. Nothing to it!, either

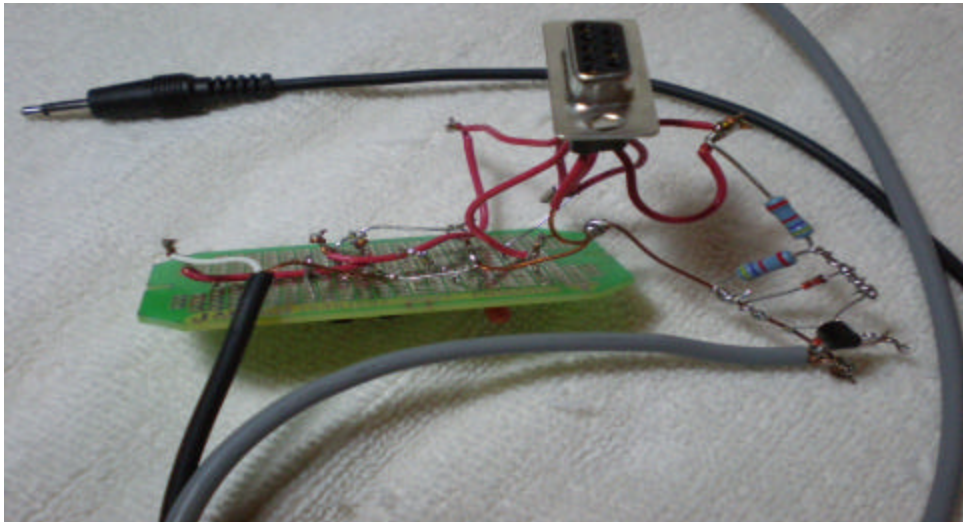


Figure 5. The completed interface. Rig control and CW generation in one box, from one serial port, for little money!



**An Editorial**  
**By Vic West, N5YY**

*This editorial is my personal opinion, not necessarily that of the board of directors of the MDXA.*

*I have recently received e-mails on the club reflector from club members discussing code practice nets and in general, making efforts to help beginners learn code. This is to be highly commended.*

*What I find very upsetting is some people are signing their e-mails with "I know code" type signatures to indicate their interest and the fact they are learning code. There are even T-shirts becoming available stating "I KNOW CODE". I do not believe these individuals intend this as a slam against the "no-coders" amongst us. BUT a slam it is!*

*The MDXA has made it a point to welcome new hams regardless of their background. Let's not change that. Adding code to your skills is commendable. You can still get bragging rights by getting a "code proficiency certificate" from ARRL, starting at low speeds and going as high as you could dream of.*

*On the other hand, If the phrase is intended as a slam against the no-coders, I want nothing further to do with you and I do not think MDXA should allow such members either (personal opinion).*

*Let's stop this nonsense before it goes any further!*

# AMATEUR RADIO and CB RADIO AS I REMEMBER

## PART ONE.

By Joe Butler, K5JB

The year was 1945 and I am 16 years old. My daily selling of sandwiches and roasted peanuts on board all L&N trains that stopped in Biloxi allowed much in between time to explore and get acquainted with the Station Master who not only sold the tickets but was the Telegraph Operator. Just watching him operate the Telegraph was a fascination for me.

This particular operator was Walter Clement who just also happened to be an amateur radio operator licensed as W5HAV.

He was gracious enough to invite me to his home where he introduced me to what we call Ham Radio. I was immediately hooked.

After acquiring an Ameco 78 RPM record and the instruction book I found an old record player and went to work learning the Morse code.

I was tenacious about it and within two plus months I could copy at the required 13 words per minute plus a bit more.

I had already in my possession a copy of the ARRL License Manual and hardly ever put it down until I was pretty sure

I could pass the exam..

In 1946 I finished my training at Fort Belvoir, VA as a Combat Engineer. Shortly after I was shipped to the Panama Canal Zone and ended up in Fort Sherman which was all jungle.

Within 4 months I was transferred to Fort Gulick and a couple of months later hitched a ride to Fort Clayton on the Pacific side of the Isthmus and took the amateur radio exam and passed.

After WW2 was over the FCC decided to again allow radio operation by civilians to restart so in 1945 the first type of radio service approved was something new. Citizens Band Radio. There were Class A and Class B licenses.

The Class A was for General Mobile Service or GMS which is still in use today. The Class B license was for a low power short range personal and business communications system.

Unfortunately the FCC designated 460 to 470 Mhz for these new services. Class B was allocated 23 channels mostly around 465 Mhz.

Channel 23 was reserved for hobbyists like model airplane and model boat escapement control.

Only one company was interested in manufacturing such a radio. The technology available was very rudimentary, the price was very high and most radios were sold to only businesses. The equipment was undependable and one had to find a licensed technician to repair the radio.

Technicians did not want to work on these radios as they were frequently in need of repair. Needless to say that service never caught on with the general public and Class B was a failure.

A note here: After WW2 Amateur radio operation was not allowed until 1946.

Now let's skip a few years. It's now 1958 and we were in a Cold War situation with Russia. The U.S. Government decided to set up a Civil Defense organization similar to that which was in operation during WW2.

This time the Government wanted as many Citizens as possible involved in Civil Defense. As part of this new Civil Defense system the FCC decided to once again try Citizens Band radio. The FCC took away the 27Mhz band from the Amateur Radio Service and put 22 channels of the newly created Class "D" Citizens Band radio Service in it's place.

This was to be a low power short range radio service for business and personal use. The FCC specifications for these new CB transceivers were very specific. Input to the Final amplifier was not to exceed 5 watts. The efficiency could not exceed 2.5 watts output power.

All operators had to have a license with call sign. The manufacturers were issued experimental licenses. A license was also required for anyone who repaired these transceivers.

Activity in this new CB Service was growing very slowly until some guy came out with that "Breaker Breaker song". Suddenly, everyone had to have one!!

We are going to get into more of Amateur Radio and its operation but I wanted to first set the background for myself, Amateur Radio and the CB radio service due to the great interest by former and present CB operators in switching to Ham Radio.

I welcome all the new folks that have seen the value of Amateur Radio over CB and chose to join the ranks of Ham Radio and enjoy it along with those of us who have started there and are still excited with it. I would respectfully suggest that you do not continue to operate both CB and Ham Radio. Like oil and water, they do not mix. It will only serve to confuse you.

**One important and friendly note to those with equipment manufactured for CB.** That equipment is NOT FCC type accepted for use in the Amateur Radio Service. Do not use CB amplifiers on the Amateur Radio bands. They are not type accepted by the FCC. If caught using non type accepted equipment by an FCC Inspector, ALL of your equipment will be confiscated and you may pay a stiff fine, go to jail, and almost certainly will lose the Amateur Radio License you worked so hard to get.

We will help you learn all the differences in operating procedures between the two services. If there is anything you don't understand, just ask.  
No question is unimportant.

I cannot close this edition without praise and thanks to all those amateurs in all the clubs and especially MDXA that have chosen to take their personal time to set up classes and teach the fundamentals required by the FCC in order to pass the exams that are required to attain the Technician, General and Extra class licenses to those folks interested in the wonders of amateur radio operation.

73,  
Joe-K5JB

Please note: 73 "NOT 73's"

## George County EOC Activation

By N5UCF & K5XXV



I was contacted by Ray Luke K5XXV, to see if I would assist in the May 12<sup>th</sup> Hurricane Wendi simulated exercise. He needed assistance with checking out his generator on his mobile communication trailer, and set up of his HF multi band vertical that he will be attaching to the air mast. The plan was for us to be on standby and man the radios if we were needed. Ray has been continually working on improvement and modifications to his 20 ft enclosed trailer that he purchased in 2006. He decided in 2007 when he acquired an air mast to install it in his trailer. The Magnolia DX Association club has used it on past field day activities. It serves dual purposes. Ray hauls his antique car to car shows and can still have use of his radios at the same time. It has also been used as a mobile command post with

radio equipment cross band to allow different departments radio communication systems to work together. It is equipped with a 40 foot air mast, pan / tilt head and numerous radios. Ray also works with the volunteer fire department and is the Operations Manager Chief Engineer for Channel 25 local TV station.

Ray dropped off the trailer several weeks before the exercise. We agreed to start testing equipment early so lead time on parts would not be an issue. Generator was our primary concern. The carburetor was the culprit. I cleaned and replaced it, and it was running ok. He installed the vertical antenna on the mast and called a couple of days later to have an HF rig hooked up to it and checked out. I called on a few of the MDXA club members to help test the new antenna system out on the air, K5OAZ Terry Lemon, and KE5RRT Chris Dubuisson. Terry and Chris are always around, and more than willing to help. Terry has remotely assisted me on installing new wire dipole antennas at my home by way of 2 meter in the past. We worked with a new Comet CHA-250B multiband with the air mast at different heights to see how it affected the antenna reception on Terry's end. Terry is located in Lamar County and we were located in Harrison. Another contact was made with a Ham in Smith County also. Chris was a little too close but helped where he could. Convinced we had something to work with, Ray was ready to move on to other task that would be needed to complete his current goal.

Ray and I talked with K5GVR who happened to be in the area and heard us testing and dropped by. Harold gave us some ideas of what he thought we would need to be prepared for on the day of activation. We made a few notes on frequency locations and things we might need. Had some hands on training on a radio Ray had acquired from Harold. Then said our goodbye's and went our separate ways. This was around the later part of the week before the test.

Neither Ray nor I had ever participated in an event like this before. We were both a little concerned that we had everything, training including, to complete what might be asked of us. I viewed it as we would know what we needed to work on next time. I was tied up with work and Mothers day activities to spend very much time running the activity through my head. I knew I needed

information on traffic handling and began my search for ARRL formal messaging forms. I found most of the information on the ARRL web site or links from it to other places. I read and reviewed the information I had found late into the night of the proposed storm land fall. My wife Gene, AE5FB and I worked at getting familiar with formal messaging layout. I felt that I had the information I needed to complete the task if we were asked to pass or receive traffic.

The alarm clock went off the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, with me staring at the ceiling trying to run through the items I had laid out the night before. I jumped up, got dressed, slammed some coffee down, loaded my Icom Pro II and associated equipment we might need and off I went. I contacted Ray by phone and agreed to meet him in Wiggins over breakfast. I have an Icom 2720H in my car and thought we might need to cross band function for an extra added measure. 6:00 am we were at the restaurant and met a few other hams; N5FG Floyd Gerald, KC5VCB Duron Hatton, N5UDT Tim Purvis, and a few others. Some had traveled a good distance to help with the days training activities in other locations. After breakfast, with assignment in hand, off we went to our assigned location, George County Court House in Lucedale. We were tasked to stand up the Ham side of the EOC. When we arrived we meet with Loraine Howell, the George County EMA Director. She guided us into our reserved parking area and was very receptive of us being there. We started the onboard generator, and began assembling things needed. Things went together well and we were on the air and checked in with W5XX a little after 8:00 am on the 3862 net. With 80 meter fading, we then focused our attention to the 2 meter link to Jackson. We had a bad interference exactly on 3862 but managed to adjust filters in the Pro II to allow the 80 meter equipment to be usable. Either side of the band by 2 kc's was quiet. We worked at several angles to make sure we had nothing generating the noise from our own equipment. Other radios on board included an Icom dual band 2820 with GPS and D Star capability, Icom 1-AD 1.2 Ghz D Star, Raytheon HF and Ma Com 800 Mhz County Fire radio. My Pro II, Yaesu FT60 hand held rounded the list of onboard equipment. Oh, by the way, the most enjoyed equipment was the roof top AC unit. We were totally self-contained.



We had several visitors through the morning. Denny Evens, MEMA District 3 Area Coordinator toured the communication trailer along with several local Sheriff Department and Fire Department personal. Lots of questions were asked and Ray had answers to most of them. Good job Ray.

No requests were made by MEMA. We were asked by Tom Hammack W4WLF to pass information to KM5EMA in Jackson by whatever means necessary to let MEMA in Jackson know we had activated George County EOC. The following message is what we were asked to send.

#1 R N5UCF 11 KM5EMA

George Count EOC operational X

Manned by K5XXV and N5UCF X

Break Singed N5UCF

If you are not sure of each and every character, take time to do research on message handling. I learned quite a bit though the whole experience.

Ray and I were both very proud that things went as well as they did. All equipment functioned as planned. We operated on generator power until we were notified at noon by Lorraine Howell that they were shutting down the Wendi Hurricane drill operation. Ray notified MEMA by 2 meter link to Jackson that we were standing down the George County EOC at 11:58am



We traveled back to Wiggins EOC where we found Tim N5UDK working with WIN LINK. He gave us a tour of the EOC. Then I departed for home. I enjoyed my involvement and thanked Ray Luke K5XXV for asking me. It was a pleasure. I would encourage anyone to stand up and help when asked and understand why we should and should not do certain things when Ham bands are called into emergency service.

73 N5UCF

Jerry Byrd



***MDXA at the Huntsville Hamfest 2009***

***We may need a bus next year***

***Very large flea market, excellent dealer area, and very  
tired legs and feet***

***That's all for this quarter. Keep those articles coming.***