



DXers Notebook

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by: David Braun, dcbraun@comcast.net

Welcome back... a quick check of a possible specific summer DX "season" and then on to Memory Lane.

GRAVEYARD SEASON?

Les Rayburn <les@highnoonfilm.com>: I've only been DXing the AM band seriously for the past two seasons, but I notice that many within the clubs refer to this time of year as "GY Season". Forgive my ignorance, but is there a reason for this? Does propagation favor the reception of these stations during this time of year, or is it because loggings on these frequencies are fairly random so it simply makes more productive use of this noisy period?

Rick Kenneally <woodlandview@yahoo.com>: Speaking for myself, it is the latter case. Summer static is less of an issue on a frequency where 50 stations are piling up to produce a constant S9+40db signal. Though I check in with the GY frequencies throughout the year as conditions are always changing.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: A DX season of any kind is pure myth, especially nowadays, with modern receivers and antennas successful MW DXing can be anytime of year. The only difference between the warm and cold weather months will be that local thunderstorm activity can cause temporary shutdowns. (Examples: Thunderstorms in New Hampshire made DXing impossible during the recent WTAM downtime, yet one summer while visiting Tampa, Florida, I could DX between storms to log some interesting Cuban signals.) The best time to DX during the summer months will be at local sunset when atmospheric conditions are varying widely (although thunderstorms tend to be strongest before local sunset), and during the pre-dawn hours when thunderstorm activity cools off for the most quiet noise levels. It's also a good time to take advantage of the warm weather for DX activity on the road, as Mark Connelly does on the Massachusetts coast, and I will be doing from Maine.

Robert Foxworth <rfoxwor1@tampabay.rr.com>: I did quite a bit of GY DXing from Long Island in the 70's and early 80's. While thunderstorm activity was always a consideration, there were, however, many quiet nights storm-wise. I found generally that in the winter there would be enough signals skipping in at good levels that it was nearly impossible to separate them (by waiting for one to fade up well). In the summer, it seems the skip is much more selective geographically, allowing fewer signals to come in at one time, and there would be some good regional openings with clear signals. I recall several times back then, DXing from Long Island, when WYCB from Washington DC would come atop 1340, and I'd jump to 1450 and get readable WOL. Other nights might favor New England and I'd get WTSA-1450 or WFAD-1490 from VT clearly. This could be anytime after dark, "openings" sometimes were brief and other times lasted for minutes..

It was still a matter of hanging out, waiting for someone to suddenly swell up and dominate, but that never seemed to happen in the winter with many loud signals all in at once. And a clear ID on short skip is better than a buried long-skip ID you can't copy.

Now with all the satellite-fed junk, the signals become much harder to ID since there are no longer local jocks ID'ing after each record.

This of course refers to basically non-directional receiving antennas. If you have a BOG, all these comments probably don't apply at all.

That's what worked for me, generally speaking. While there are some theories about (1) this being Es related and (2) Es relating to thunderstorms, the presence of thunderstorm noise just meant that there would be no DX tried then. It did not affect the TYPE of DX as far as I could tell then. But the summer openings were often patterned similarly to Es.

John Callarman <JohnCallarman@msn.com>: One summer Monday morning in the early '60s in the Panhandle of Texas, I experienced the best up-popping-but-holding-steady signal from a graveyarder I've ever heard. 1450, of course, wasn't as crowded then as it is now, but still, there were plenty of signals for the frequency checks (remember frequency checks?) to battle through. A thunderstorm had just passed overhead, but I was stubborn that morning, and surprisingly quickly, the storm QRM abated and KLBM in LaGrande, Oregon, came booming in.

Barry McLarnon <bdm@bdmcomm.ca>: I haven't seen references to "GY Season" before... when I declared the season to be open, I thought I was making the term up.:-)

Bob Foxworth explained it nicely - during the summer, propagation tends to be more geographically selective, and the GY's therefore less jumbled. He also mentioned the possibility that Es is involved... I'm definitely one of the believers in that theory.

MEMORY LANE

The following responses were to a recent weekly question posted on the NRC e-mail listserv – What are some of the first radio stations you ever remember hearing? Share some of your memories with us!

Russ Johnson <k3pi@radiointel.com>: As a very young boy, I grew up in a house that was directly across the street from time standard station WWV in Greenbelt, Maryland. The signal from WWV interfered with our telephone and radios. It even interfered with our television which picked up a grand total of 4 stations. Interestingly enough, this combination of WWV and the interference into a Zenith radio enabled me to learn how to tell time at a very early age. I would look at a clock on the wall and listen to WWV announce the time every minute (they did it back in Eastern time back then). True story.

In terms of MW stations, the earliest ones I recall were the Washington-Baltimore biggies, WTOP-1500, WRC-980, WCAO-600, WBAL-1090 (they called themselves Radio 11), WFBR-1300, WWDC-1260, WCBM-680.

David Gleason <david@davidgleason.com>: When I was about 12, I bought a few shares of Storer Broadcasting, and soon after got their annual report that included a list of all the stations. I guess I felt an obligation to listen to the facilities. WJW in my home of Cleveland was easy, and I quickly discovered that at night I could get WWVA in Wheeling. As I searched for the more elusive WSPD, WJBK, WIBG and others, I found I could hear pretty interesting things on AM at night. Still, for some

reason, I had acquired a taste for country and would listen to the WWVA live show (the Barn Dance or something similar) regularly, although the thrill was probably more in the distance than in the music.

Once I heard was the initial pre-sign on Proof of Performance test of WBKN in Newton, MS. I wrote to them (they were asking for letters) and they replied at length, mentioning other DXers who had reported. I realized this was a hobby, and went on to listen to many other stations. Soon, I heard a DX test from CKBW (I hope those are the calls) in Bridgewater, NS, and got a packet for the DXers Radio Club back from them. About a year later, I heard the Class V from Alcoa, TN, on for the NRC. I got information, and joined.

My favorite early listening experience was XEB-1220 in Mexico City; I had enough Spanish at the time to call and make requests, and the DJ put me on the air when I would call because he thought it was fun to have a gringo requesting Sonora Santanera records!

Later, my favorite was Una Voz en el Camino on HJED in Cali; I would tape each night after DFW went off the air and play it while I did my homework.

Finally, on several Monday mornings in '61 or '62, I heard 500 watt WITA-1140 in San Juan, PR, and it was my first confirmed Puerto Rican station; about 13 years later, I would be the GM of that station! Another favorite was Radio Swan / Radio Americas, and for years I had a reel-to-reel tape of the broadcast done at the time the Bay of Pigs invasion was taking place. It was a fascinating way to pick up the fast Spanish of the Caribbean, too.

Frederick R. Vobbe <fredv@nrcdxas.org>: The first station I can remember listening to was WSPD-1370. Everyone's parents listened to WSPD for news, weather, and information in Toledo OH. Later, I became aware of WTOD-1560, as my brother (13 years my senior) was involved in radio at then McKinley HS station and worked a few nights at WTRT-FM in Toledo.

After I got my first radio (age 7) I discovered WTOL/WCWA-1230, WTTO-1520, and WOHO-1470. It was a year later that I got a crystal set when I was home with the measles for a couple of weeks. Later, I got a Panasonic and an Arvin radios that sounded better and received more stations. I also learned how to operate grandma's 1930 Silvertone, I found out about WJR-760, and then the rockers of the time in Detroit (WKNR-1310, WXYZ-1270, CKLW-800) and others. (see side note).

I also discovered FM when I was 9, although it was a mystery. It was always tuned to WTOL-FM 104.7 or my brother had it on the high school station. However, this was a Brunswick console, and the band was in Channel Numbers (200-300), so I had no clue what the frequency was all about. Wish I still had that radio!

It was not until after I started working P.T. at a local FM station that I discovered DXing and what kind of radios and antennas do what. I believe it was Gary "Seagull" Siegel that turned me onto the NRC, and the bevy of radios that we all talk about today. In fact, I can't recall a shift at the radio station where Gary didn't bring in his TRF.

Side note: My grandmother, and aunt never used the old radio (which now sits on my back porch. I always wondered why, and found out one day. It seemed that they spoke and understood German, (although it was never passed down to the kids). Both of them listened to SW out of Germany pre-

WWII, and they *knew* that Hitler was up to no good. When war broke out they listened, but after they found out about all the things that Hitler and the SS did, they never turned on the old radio again.

Bruce Conti <BACONTI@aol.com>: I grew up listening to "136 KGB" in San Diego during the late '60s into the '70s, when some of my all time favorite songs were "No Matter What" by Badfinger, "Hitching a Ride" by Vanity Fair, "Proud Mary" by Creedence Clearwater Revival, and "I Think I Love You" by the Partridge Family. My first DX catch was XERB where Wolfman Jack played gospel records daily. XERB was the only radio station my crystal receiver and 50-ft wire could receive. Later upon moving to Rhode Island in 1971, I listened to 55 WGNG, 63 WPRO, and 66 WNBC on AM, plus FM DX of the only stations playing pop music; 105.7 WVBF, 106.3 WBZ-FM, and The Rock Garden 93.7 WCGY. Some of my favorite hits of the time included "Maggie May" by Rod Stewart, "What Would You Say" by Hurricane Smith, and anything by Bachman Turner Overdrive. (Sample hit lists from WGNG, WNBC, and WBZ-FM are posted on BAMLog.) Everything else on FM was either elevator music, classical, or progressive / album rock. WBZ-FM was automated most of the time, and known for making errors on a regular basis including dead air, cutting songs short, and playing the same song two or more times in a row. It was a very amateur-ish operation for a Westinghouse broadcasting station. However I rarely missed the countdown every Saturday. 63 WPRO was the consistent number one rated station in Rhode Island, usually competing with Beautiful Music station WLKW AM and FM. Salty Brine was a legend in Rhode Island radio with his morning show on WPRO, and Big Ange was popular in the evening. When Big Ange was fired from WPRO, he reappeared on 1520 WKBW attracting a following of DX listeners. Later pop music graduated to FM with WPJB "JB 105 has big hits" and 92 PRO FM. As disco was becoming popular, Disco 93 WBOS and WXKS "Kiss 108" went all-disco in Boston. JB 105 responded by dropping disco from their playlist, focusing more on guitar rock hits with Rush being among the more popular bands. While working as a roller disco DJ, I did some guest appearances on 92 PRO FM and JB 105 during live broadcasts from the United Skates of America rink. In addition I was on the air with The Rock Block during morning drive on 91.7 WRBB The Revolution in Boston Broadcasting, and as a news anchor for the six o'clock Newsdesk 91 evening news. Radio was so much fun back then! While I enjoy reminiscing, I'm also saddened by the state of radio today. Radio just isn't fun anymore.

Eric Conchie <econchie@reach.net>: The first stations I remember listening to (this was in Toronto, ON), were 1050 CHUM, CFRB 1010, CHFI 680 (now CFTR) and CKEY 590. I remember that we usually had CHUM on the radio when we were having breakfast (much to my mother's distaste, if I recall, but at 8:00 sharp, the dial would be changed to CFRB for the news (read by the late Jack Dennett for those in the southern Ontario area).

As far as DX was concerned, the first ones I can remember listening to (this would have been the early 1970's) would have been KDKA 1020 Pittsburgh, WCAU 1210 Philadelphia, and (I think) WWWE 1100 Cleveland, all primarily for baseball games, although I tried more for those stations carrying National League games, as I was an Expo fan at the time.

A bit later (approx. 1974), I remember listening to some of the great top 40 stations of the era (WABC, WCFL, WLS, & WOWO, etc) after dark on nights when I couldn't get CHUM (I was always and still am hooked to that station. From then, I gradually got into full fledged DX'ing. Ahh, the memories!!

Mike Brooker <aum108@idirect.com>: I started listening to CHUM-1050 circa 1966-67. As a second and third-grader I would come home after school and switch on CHUM, to listen to the afternoon/PM drive DJ, Bob McAdorey. I also remember some of the other CHUM jocks from that time: Brian

Skinner in the evenings, Jungle Jay Nelson in the mornings, and Duff Roman, who later became CHUM's music director.

As many of you know, I got into DXing a few years later (1973) by listening to out-of-town baseball and hockey games. One of the first broadcasts I picked up was the St. Louis Blues on KMOX, with Dan Kelly and Gus Kyle. The Blues were one of the most successful teams in the early years of the NHL's expansion beyond the "Original Six" (Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, NY Rangers, Boston Chicago), and thanks to KMOX the Blues became my second-favourite team - after the Leafs of course!

Deane McIntyre VE6BPO <dmcintyr@ucalgary.ca>: The first station I ever remember hearing, from our home in Bowmanville ON (east of Toronto) would be CFRB-1010. This would be in the very early '60s, on our GE All-American Five radio in the kitchen when I was 3-4 years old. I still have this radio, and have restored it. It is in the guest room and my father, who is in his 80's and who remembers listening to radio on a crystal set in the 1920's will be able to listen to it again when he visits in a few weeks.:)

In January 1964 my sister, who is several years older than me, got a pocket transistor radio for her 12th birthday and she listened to CHUM-1050 for hours on end - the second station I remember. I think that most of her allowance went to buy 9V batteries for this radio.

A couple of years later she got a Admiral AA5 radio and I remember her listening to the famous rock stations of the day - WABC, WLS, WCFL and so forth at night, when I was supposed to be sleeping:). Thus I found out that it was possible to listen to distant stations and in 1970 started to DX in earnest. Will never forget the thrill of getting KSL, KFI and CBK for the first time. Now that I live in Calgary AB these stations are now my pests:).

As I wrote this I listened to the end of the Blue Jays-Red Sox BB game on CFAC-960 using my crystal set. Wonderful to hear that those hated Red Sox got what they deserved (a 13-2 licking:). But sad to hear that the Argos won't be on radio this season. They were a staple on CFRB for many years.

Robert Foxworth <rfoxwor1@tampabay.rr.com>: I began DXing BCB at about age 14 when my older brother was taking up aviation and brought home sectional charts which then listed many AM stations which could be used as navigation aids. One I particularly remember (?) was KFBC 710 Cheyenne Wyoming which seemed like a real interesting target, as my local WOR was on the same frequency but I think would occasionally go silent, and I thought I could hear KFBC (I never did). However I used the sectionals as a log source and compiled lists of such stations to try for. Soon I discovered the Whites Radio Log, and then the NNRC through the local Newark Evening News, which sponsored them, and printed the CPC list in the Sunday paper every week in the winter. In 1957 NNRC led me to the NRC and I joined NRC then. I had been a ham since age 10 (general at 11) and the hams thought I was a retrograde for taking up BCB DX (then as now).

My dad had bought me a Hammarlund SP-200-SX Superpro, an oddly tuned rx which began at 1250 kc and went to 50 Mc, so my really good DXing was at the high end of the band. It cost \$50, a decent piece of money then. The Newark Evening News did a weekly feature "With The Hams" and in 1954 they did a piece on me called "Summit Lad is Ham at 12" or somesuch, with a picture of me in front of the Sp200 and a converted BC-something Command Set I used as a transmitter. I still have this clipping. On the rest of the page are all the local radio schedules for Sunday for the NYC stations then.

The caption of the photo said I was "...operating (his) ham set with the company of Tuffy (his) pet cat" but what was unspoken was that, when the picture of me was taken, my dad was crouched behind me holding the cat's tail so it wouldn't run off. Yes, a real staged photo-op.

The first DX test I tried for was WSTN 1420 St. Augustine FL which may have been a NNRC test. I sent them a SASE and they replied by typing a verie message on a tourist postcard, my first verification. Later I learned about using stamps and not SASE's, and started getting letter veries. Fred V mentioned a test from CKBW 1000 in NS, and a packet from the DXers Radio Club. I had forgotten about this club for decades, but I recall it was an effort of Jim Ernst, a native of Bridgewater, NS, who was living in Scotch Plains NJ then (1957-1959) with his family. His dad was a minister working here. Jim had formed DXRC, and apparently got CKBW - a very DX-friendly station - to send out these packets to DXers requesting QSLs. I don't think DXRC lasted very long.

John Callarman <JohnCallarman@msn.com>: I'll start with the first radio program I ever remember hearing. I was 6 years old in the summer of 1941 when our family moved from Oklahoma to Oregon, when my father took a teaching job at Oregon State. On a weekend early in December, my dad decided to bundle us into the car and take our first trip to the Oregon Coast 54 miles away. I know we had the radio on in the car, but I do not know to what radio station it was tuned. The station must have been playing recorded pop music of the day, because the only thing I can actually, positively remember hearing was Freddy Martin's "Tonight We Love," adopted from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B-Flat Minor. I know from my parents' stories that we learned from the radio that weekend of the Dec. 7 attack on Pearl Harbor, and that we cut short our trip to the coast, but all I can remember is the song. I hear the words "Pearl Harbor" and immediately, my mind plays "Tonight We Love."

The first actual radio station, call letter-wise I remember hearing was KOAC-550, the only station licensed to Corvallis until 1947, when KRUL-1340 came on the air. I became an Oregon State basketball fan in 1943, and I used to listen to Jimmy Morris' play-by-play accounts over Beaver basketball. I may have mentioned hearing for the first time the description of a player "dribbling down the floor" and I thought of the poor guy drooling.

I remember the network radio programs of the '40s, at night, and the problems we had tuning them because, while Portland was only 85 miles from Corvallis, the highest powered Portland stations were no more than 5 kW. (Until later when KEX-1190 went 50 kW.) For NBC at night, we had either KPO-680 San Francisco or KFI-640 Los Angeles (how well I recall the winter weather reports and the warnings to the owners of orange groves to start the smudge pots burning.) For CBS, we could sometimes hear KOIN-970 Portland QRM free, but most of our nighttime CBS programs came from KNX-1070. I don't recall us listening to much from ABC until later when I had my own table model radio and was able to do a little more exploring. ABC was not easy at night with KEX at 5 kW, KGO-810 at 7.5 kW and the Los Angeles ABC station, now KABC but the call letters then slip my mind (KEAC?), was useless. Our only local station was KWIL-1240, Albany, and it provided 6-to-midnight Mutual Broadcasting System programs over the Pacific Coast version of MBS, Mutual Don Lee.

My father drove alone to Oklahoma to bring back my grandma, who was to stay a few months with us, and, to keep up with the network programs while on the road, he bought a White's Radio Log. I remember somewhat vaguely that he referred to what he called "fishing" for stations rather than just listening for programs, and, armed with that White's Radio Log, I started a list of stations that I could hear. I remember the specific date I started that list, October 27, 1947, and the first station I wrote down was KTRB-860, Modesto.

I've never been the same since.

David Gleason: KECA for Earle C. Anthony, the Cadillac dealer who first had KFI and then had the permitted duopoly with KECA.

Benjamin Dangerfield <ben-dangerfield@worldnet.att.net>: The first stations I heard in my youth were the 5 Pittsburgh locals: KDKA, WCAE, WJAS, KQV and WWSW. Then I discovered nearby WWVA. My first out-of-town stations were CKOK [Windsor-540], WCAU and WRVA. My first TA was London-877 and my first continental TA was Radio Monte Carlo-1466. My first TP was 2BL Sydney-740. These from my present location.

Rick Robinson <kf4ar@arrl.net>: The first station I remember listening to was WSOC in Charlotte when it was on 1240. My mother listened to WSOC who carried Breakfast Club hosted by Don McNeill on a white metal Arvin 444 "midget" radio. Mother also listened to "Search for Tomorrow" on the radio, the trials and tribulations of Joanne Barron Tate and her family. We didn't have a TV until 1953 so I must've been about 4 or 5 when I remember my first radio shows.

My first radio was a Miniman red and white crystal rocket radio that I got for Christmas in 1959. I used to lay in bed and listen to "WSOC Party Line", an early local call-in talk show, I guess that's why I still listen to talk radio at night. They would discuss anything but "race, religion and private complaints." I also remember my father listening to Grady Cole on WBT in the mornings before he left for work and my mother changed the station. Grady was a morning institution on WBT and the Carolinas from the early 1930s until he retired in the late 50s. We also had a big 12 tube Silvertone console radio in the living room. One program I remember my dad listening to on the Silvertone was the Renfro Valley Barn Dance on Saturday nights. I'm not sure if it was on WBT or another local station. My dad was a DXer although he didn't know it. He loved to pull in distant stations on the Silvertone.

Thanks Mom and Dad for passing the love of radio along to me.

Feel free to join in either one of these topics...or another of your choosing. With the summer bringing monthly deadlines, you won't be skipping three issues before you see your contribution in print (if you get it to me by July 4!)