

THE B-VARC BULLETIN

Volume 21, issue 11
November 1998

<p>Houston Ham Help Line 24-Hours 281-495-3495</p> <p>Get information about local clubs and testing sessions.</p>	<p>Membership renewal information:</p> <p>Members whose membership has expired or is near expiration will find their membership date highlighted on the mailing label.</p>	 <p>http://www.hal-pc.org/~bvarc</p>
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ARRL Membership - Members are urged to renew their ARRL membership through BVARC, allowing the club to take advantage of reduced insurance rates. Contact Larry, K5LJ, at 281-341-0436 for information

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BVARC Awards Banquet

The Awards Banquet will be held at
The Old San Francisco Steak House
on Friday, January 8.

Contact Larry, K5LJ, for reservations

See page 6 for
information on the various awards categories.

**A Special Thanks to the First Colony Church of Christ
for the use of their facilities which make this newsletter
possible.**

**Also, Thanks to Claude Sessions, K5HFY, for being in
charge of production.**

Board of Directors:

John Moore, President - KK5NU, jwm@hal-pc.org
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Doug Woodruff, Recording Secretary - KC5VYZ,
doug.woodruff@pidwights.com
Irv Smith, Corresponding Secretary - KK5QQ, kk5qq@aol.com
Gene Russell, Treasurer - N5XGT, hbrussell@aol.com
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Darrell Kirk, Two-Year-Director - KC5JAR, darrellk@swbell.net
Bruce Paige, Past President - KK5DO, kk5do@amsat.org
Claude Sessions, 1-Year-Director - K5HFY, claudes@juno.com

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PRESIDENT'S Article - Bruce, KK5DO

Elections and the *Annual Chili Super* are behind us. Boy, what a great evening November 20th was. We had lots of great chili and all the good things that go with it. Claude, K5HFY did a wonderful job in organizing the Chili Super and I would like to thank him for that hard work. After we feasted on that, we had our annual elections and the new officers and board was elected. I am able to pass the hat as President to John, KK5NU who will do a great job for the club next year.

Many club jackets, patches and hats were sold. If you did not have a chance to purchase one, you can do it at the December Monthly meeting on December 3.

At the December meeting, we will have our Annual Homebrew Contest. So if you have built something, modified something, or created something, bring it on and show it off. You might go home a winner of a fine prize.

I would like to take a brief moment to thank all the officers and board members for 1998 that helped make my presidency so pleasant. They all worked hard for you, our members, so that you could enjoy interesting meetings, fun events and a great newsletter. Ever wonder where all those things that I give away at the meetings come from? My XYL, Shirley.

We will have hot dogs and cold drinks for members before the December meeting. So stop by between 6:30pm and 7:30pm and enjoy one and make an eyeball QSO.

See you at the meeting.
73...Bruce, KK5DO

Schedule of BVARC Activities

December 1998

3 - General Meeting
Homebrew Night
nexus15@flash.net

8 - VE Test
14 - BOD

January 1999

8 - BVARC Banquet
k5lj@nstci.com
12 - VE Test
14 - BOD

February 1999

4 - General Meeting
Scanner Technology
Jack Roberts-KB5TMY

Other Dates:

Contests:

June 20 - 21, All Asia DX CW

June 27 - 28, ARRL Field Day

Public Service Events Needing Ham Volunteers:

- November 15, 1998 - 25K Warm-up run - contact Allen Mattis
- December 6, 1998 - 30K Warm-up run - Position open
- January 17, 1999 - The Houston Marathon - contact Carl Hacker

You can always contact me if you are unable to contact the event coordinator.

Please let me know if you are interested!!!!

Thanks,

Mike Hardwick
N5VCX

Review of Mirage RCI-2950 By Allen Mattis N5AFV

Because Solar Cycle 23 is beginning to kick in and ten meters has come alive, I recently decided to replace the Radio Shack HTX-100 that I have been using mobile for over six years. A look at QST and the various amateur radio catalogs that I had access to did not list any new ten meter mobile radios. I did not want to spend as much money as an Icom IC-706/MK-II or similar radio costs, and was looking for an inexpensive ten meter mobile similar to the HTX-100.

One day an advertisement in *Monitoring Times* caught my eye. Lentini Communications in Newington, CT was advertising a Ranger 2950. I called Lentini and asked about ten meter mobile radios. Lentini had the all-mode ten meter Ranger models 2950, 2970, and 2990, as well as a Northstar ten meter radio that had did not have the CW mode. Since I'm one of the crazy few that enjoy operating CW from my mobile, I quickly eliminated the Northstar, and selected the Ranger 2950. The cost was \$269.95 plus shipping. Because of flooding associated with Tropical Storm Frances in Houston, shipping and delivery by UPS was delayed, and I waited one week for the radio to be delivered.

After the UPS truck dropped off the radio, I opened the package with all the enthusiasm amateur radio operators have when they purchase a new radio. My enthusiasm did not last

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long, and my first impression was less than favorable. First of all, I noticed that the radio was not made by Ranger, but by a company named Mirage. This company is not the Mirage that is associated with MFJ and known for making VHF and UHF amplifiers. The owner's manual for the RCI-2950, which was printed in Taiwan, did not give an address or telephone number for Mirage. A more thorough look through the manual did not find any mention of a warranty.

As if enough red flags had not already been raised, I turned my attention to the radio. The first thing I noticed was that it came with a roger beeper. Then I noticed that the manual described an optional SRA-117 echo microphone. I saw immediately that I could make a great and lasting impression on my friends in Ten Ten International with this rig.

I settled down to take a serious and unbiased look at the RCI-2950. The case is made of black plastic, and the radio measures 7 3/4" wide x 10 3/4" long x 2 3/8" high. The radio is light, weighing only 4 pounds 3 ounces. The usual array of control knobs and buttons is present, and resembles those found on the HTX-100 and many UHF or VHF mobile radios. As is the case with most mobile radios today, the microphone has two buttons which are used to move up or down in frequency. It was about this time that I noticed the Houston SHOT net was about to begin, so I quickly connected the power chord and an antenna, and tuned to the net frequency. My first contact with the RCI-2950 was less than spectacular. I had problems adjusting the microphone gain. The net control station was Mike Davidson, N5MT, and he and the other net participants were very helpful as I got things properly adjusted. With the help of the net participants, I determined that the RCI-2950 was transmitting 200 Hz lower than the dial indicated. One usually expects a brand new radio right out of the box to be on frequency. My first evening with the RCI-2950 was over, and I certainly did not have a warm fuzzy feeling about the radio.

The following day, I placed a telephone call to Lentini Communications. The people at Lentini confirmed that the RCI-2950 did not come with a warranty. Lentini advised me that because of this lack of warranty, they did have reservations about handling Mirage RCI products. But, because Lentini has received so many requests for the RCI-2950, they made the decision to continue to carry the Mirage RCI line. I later learned that Amateur Electronic Supply refuses to carry the Mirage RCI line of products because of the lack of a warranty.

I then brought up the problem of the RCI-2950 transmitting 200 Hz lower than the dial frequency. Lentini advised that this was a common problem with the RCI-2950, and that they could put it back on frequency in their shop, but as the unit aged it would probably drift off frequency again. I asked

about service for the RCI-2950, and was told that Lentini uses Don's CB Service in Erie, PA (telephone 814-898-0814) to service any RCI-2950 units they receive that require repair.

After giving the matter some thought, I decided to keep the RCI-2950, and see how it performed on the air. I wanted to use the RCI-2950 on all modes, and give it a fair test. If many people had been asking Lentini Communications for an RCI-2950, maybe it was a good radio.

The RCI-2950 covers 28.0000 MHz to 29.6999 MHz, with AM, FM CW, USB and LSB modes. Power output on USB and LSB is adjustable from 10 watts to 25 watts, while power output on AM, FM and CW is adjustable from 1 watt to 8 watts. The radio draws 7 amps at 13.8 volts DC during transmit on maximum power. The audio output power is 2.5 watts, and a jack on the back of the radio allows use of an external speaker. When changing frequency, the radio can be tuned by 100 Hz, 1 KHz, 10 KHz, 100 KHz or 1 MHz steps. A meter on the RCI-2950 indicates received signal strength, relative RF output power, and SWR. The radio has ten programmable memories, and a scan function that will scan either the memories or a selected segment of the band. The RCI-2950 also has a split frequency feature that allows use of FM repeaters, or the working of DX stations that are listening and transmitting on different frequencies.

The first real test I put the RCI-2950 through was on USB. I decided to use the power supply and antenna at my house to evaluate the radio. As I tuned across the band, I heard many stations. I worked a half dozen states with ease, getting all but one of the stations on first call. I then came upon a moderate pile up trying to work a DX station in Africa. After a half hour I gave up trying to get through with 25 watts and turned on my Icom IC-735. I wanted more power so that I could work the African. I tuned the Icom IC-735 to the African's frequency and waited anxiously for him to take another call. When he finally transmitted, the signal was very weak and tough to copy on the Icom. I was surprised to learn that the receiver in the RCI-2950 is better than the receiver in my Icom IC-735. Of course the Icom can handle a congested band better with its band pass and notch filters, but the sensitivity of the RCI-2950 is far superior.

My efforts at evaluating the CW mode with the RCI-2950 were conducted both mobile and at home. The 8 watt power limit did make it a little tough to work CW mobile because my mobile antenna is tuned for 28.400 MHz, and has a high SWR in the lower portion of the band. When you start with only 8 watts, you do not get much power out when you have a high SWR. Nonetheless, I did work a fair number of stations while mobile. The RCI-2950 performed much better on CW in my shack at home because the antenna there does not have a high SWR. I found the CW performance of the radio to be

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satisfactory.

I have made only 3 contacts in AM with the RCI-2950. These contacts were all with West Coast stations, and all were done while I was mobile. My mobile antenna also has a high SWR up at 29.000 MHz where most AM activity takes place on the ten meter band. Despite the low power output, the stations all gave me acceptable reports on signal strength, and good reports on audio quality.

Because FM activity on ten meters takes place around 29.600 MHz, I also had some difficulty using FM while mobile because of the high SWR of my antenna. I have made over 2 dozen contacts with the RCI-2950 on FM, using both simplex and repeaters. The reports I received all described good audio quality. Because the ten meter band plan only has 4 repeater pairs, it is sometimes a little difficult to use the repeaters. Usually, when the band is open, you will key up more than one repeater. The repeaters interfere with one another, and sometimes make it difficult to hear the station you are working. For that reason, I have made more contacts on FM simplex than through repeaters. Reception of weak FM signals with the RCI-2950 does leave something to be desired. The weaker signals are often distorted and have a low audio level. This problem was noted on both local and distant signals. I did enjoy working a station in Friendswood while I was mobile near the Galleria. We could not hear each other on direct, but talked for ten minutes through a repeater located near Boston, MA. Despite the FM reception problem I experienced with my RCI-2950, I have enjoyed operating ten meter FM.

I have owned my RCI-2950 for approximately one month. During that time, I have made over 100 contacts with the radio. I have worked 12 states and 10 countries while mobile, including contacts with North America, South America, Europe and Africa. I have already had a great deal of fun operating with the RCI-2950, and recommend the radio to others. The RCI-2950 costs less than most new two meter radios, and allows you to work the world now that ten meters is open. Because of the lack of a warranty, there is risk, but if the radio performs well for only a few years, I feel that I will have received a fair return for my money.

HOUSTON SHOT NEWS for November 1998 **by Al Mattis - N5AFV**

Ten Ten International has announced the winners of its scholarship program for 1998. Ten Ten International funded four \$1000 scholarships for college students. This year's scholarship winners were KB8ILX (OH), KC5DCP (AR), KC4FBE (AL) and N3PUU (PA). Congratulations to these

young men and women, and we wish them success in their studies.

Ten Ten International has announced that the 1999 Ten Ten International Convention will be held June 10-13, 1999 at the Garden Plaza Hotel in Oak Ridge, TN. The convention is being hosted by the Springbok Chapter (ZS), and James Whittlesey, KC4RHW, is the convention chairman.

The Houston SHOT chapter is pleased to welcome George Elam, W5EPR, and Doug Woodruff, KC5VYZ, as its two newest local members. The chapter also welcomes DL1ECG, DK4QO and AD4RX as its newest out-of-town members. The chapter currently has 384 local members, and 1329 non-local members, for a total membership of 1713.

Visit the Houston SHOT chapter home page at <http://www.clarc.org/shot/> when you get on the Internet. The site contains information about the chapter, past editions of the Houston SHOT News, and the Ten Ten DX column written Mike Davidson - N5MT, the SHOT chapter head. The chapter thanks Bruce Paige - KK5DO, for constructing and maintaining the page, and the Clear Lake Amateur Radio Club (CLARC) for providing space on their server for the page.

Many of the chapters of Ten Ten International have home pages on the Internet. Links to these pages may be found on the Ten Ten International page. The Houston SHOT page contains a link to the Ten Ten International page.

Paper chasers continue to be active on 28.345 MHz, 28.375 MHz, 28.425 MHz and 28.825 MHz. The Oceans of the World (FL), Branding Iron (TX), Flying Tigers (RI), Springbok (DX), and Peach State (TX) chapters are conducting specials for paper chasers to promote activity on the band. The Chesapeake Bay (MD) chapter has announced a QSO party to be held November 7-8, 1998. Further information regarding the Chesapeake Bay QSO Party may be obtained from Phil Harich, W3CBC, by E-mail at w3cbc@toad.net. The Crazy Eight (PA) chapter is also sponsoring its 19th Annual QSO Party the same weekend. Information about the Crazy Eight QSO Party is in the last 10-10 International News.

Propagation on ten meters has been very good during the past month as Cycle 23 kicks in. DX openings occur almost every day, resulting in contacts with Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia and the South Pacific. Domestic openings to both the East and West Coasts are almost a daily event. The upcoming winter season looks to be very promising for ten meter propagation.

Remember, the Houston SHOT (Space Houston On Ten) net meets every Tuesday evening at 8 PM local time on 28.488

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MHz. All amateurs are welcome to check in, even if they do not have a Ten Ten number. If you are not a member of Ten Ten International and wish to join the organization, please check in to the net. There are many exciting activities in Ten Ten, and many friendly people can be found on the ten meter band.

B-VARC RAG CHEW Net Check-Ins for October by Sam Wilson, N5CPA

3.960MHz +/-3KHz Wednesdays at 8:00PM

Just WHAT IS the Rag-Chew Net? Well it's a chance for you to get on the low bands and hang out with other B-VARC members, as well as hams from around the south central US! What?? Don't have voice privileges? Got a short-wave receiver? Dial in and listen, then check in using the telephone number announced at the beginning of each net.

10/07/98---N5CPA, K5CEK, KB5PGY, KE4YS,
W5GHK, N5OAC, N5WU. (7)
10/14/98---N5CPA, W5RIY, K5CEK, W5EFB, W5GHK,
KB5PGY, KC5SQD, K5HFY, KD5FDN, KM5DG, K5LJ.
(11)
10/21/98---N5CPA, KB5DNT, W5GHK, W5RIY, KA8SAK,
W5TEM, K5CEK. (7)
10/28/98---N5CPA, KM5DG, K5CEK, W5EFB, K5VRJ,
AB5BA, N5VXU, W5TEM, KA8SAK, WD8CDY,
KG8MG. (11)

RESULTS OF THE NOVEMBER 10TH AMATEUR EXAMS

by: Harold Parker, ND5F

B-VARC again sponsored and administered the ARRL Amateur Radio Examinations that were held on Tuesday evening, November 10, 1998 at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory in Houston.

V. E. TEAM:
Cass Germany, KG5IT
John Moore, KK5NU
Harold Parker, ND5F

A total of two exams were administered during the evening to two applicants. One (1) unlicensed applicant received the Technician license and one (1) upgraded with two elements passed. The overall "pass rate" for the evening was 100%

Congratulations to the following:

Nick Sadza - Technician
Shawn Whitmore, KD5DDV - Technician Plus

Many thanks to all the Team Members and Assistants who volunteer their valuable time and effort each month.

All of us at B-VARC again thank Vincent, WA5ETS, and everyone at Strake Jesuit College Preparatory for making these excellent classroom facilities available to us for our exams each month.

73
ND5F

SCANNER JACK'S Corner by Jack Roberts, KB5TMY

Jack Roberts, KB5TMY
14208 Laterna Ln
Houston 77083-5730

Here are the NOAA WX freqs for the upper TX coast:

1. 162.550 Galveston KHB40
2. 162.400 Houston KKG68
3. 162.475 Beaumont WYK28
4. 162.425 Bay City WWG40
5. 162.450
6. 162.500 LaGrange WWG55
7. 162.525
8. 161.650
9. 161.775
10. 163.275

Here are the Airshow freqs for Blue Angels:

126.05	Ellington Tower	
253.500	Ellington Tower	AM Mode
121.600	Ellington Ground	
275.800	Ellington Ground	AM Mode
135.575	ATIS	
269.90	ATIS	
125.30	Pilots over the P. A. system	
173.5875	Fire Dept.	
163.4875	M. P. Medical	
462.5875	Confederate Air Force Tora Team	
263.35	Fat Albert	
251.6		
263.50	Air to Air	
275.35	Pilot to Air Boss	

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238.15 Show line
119.100 New Air Boss

Monday night PSN check-ins

Here are the check-ins for the Monday night Brazos Valley Amateur Radio Club Public Service Information Net.

10/19/98 - 21
10/26/98 - 25
11/2/98 - 24
11/9/98 - 21
11/16/98 - 13

1998 20K Warm Up Run Stephen Dunkelberger, N5JBLA

Thanks to all the volunteers who participated in the 1998 20K Warm Up Run held Sunday, October 18, 1998. The race officials were very grateful for our assistance. There were 2031 finishers in this year's race.

There were a total of 13 ham volunteers with some people performing more than one assignment. No runners were transported to the hospital this year but an ambulance was called for one runner, just in case.

The rain helped dampen the spirits of some of the runners. My personal thanks to the volunteers because of your determination and commitment under these unpleasant conditions.

If you are interested in working the remaining two warm up runs in November and December this year or the Marathon in January, please contact the coordinator of those events, listed elsewhere in the newsletter.

Stephen Dunkelberger,
N5JBLA

Special Awards Banquet (reprint from October) by Bruce Paige, KK5DO

As the year is winding down, it is time to think about the three awards those BVARC awards at the January 8, 1999 banquet. This year, the banquet will be at Old San Francisco Steak House on Westheimer Road. RF-Release hour will be from 7pm to 8pm with a cash bar. Dinner will be served at 8pm.

This year's menu will be
Steak House Salad with house dressing, Sourdough bread and Swiss Cheese Block
Your choice of 12oz Sirloin Strip or Mixed Grill Chicken and Shrimp
Twice Baked Potato
Green Beans Almondine
Strawberry Crunch Cake
Tea, Coffee, Sodas

The price for the dinner is \$20 per person and needs to be paid for at either the November or December meetings. Please make your selection when you pay for your meal.

Nominations for the following awards need to be made as soon as possible so that the board may consider each.

The Order of the Key

The Order of the Key is the highest honor that can be conferred by BVARC. With this award, we recognize the BVARC member who has made outstanding contributions to the progress of the club. These contributions might take the form of a long-term, consistent commitment to service, or might represent an extremely high level of service for a shorter time. In any case, the award represents exceptional service and commitment to the goals of BVARC.

Any BVARC member may make nominations for the Order of the Key. The nominations must be made in writing, and should include a description of the nominee's contributions to the club. Nominations must be submitted to any BVARC officer or Board member not later than the December regular membership meeting. The President will then poll the Board of Directors secretly to allow them to vote on the nominations. Although any member may enter a nomination, only the Board of Directors does voting. If in any year, no candidate receives unanimous approval of the Board, then no award shall be made that year. The vote by the Board of Directors must be unanimous for the award to be conferred.

The Dr. Bill Award

In 1988 BVARC initiated the presentation of the Dr. Bill Award, which was originated by Keith and Eva Hugel (KA5F and KA5CYZ) in honor of Dr. Bill Ossenfort, NG5C, now a silent key, which was very active in the Volunteer Examiner Program in the Houston area.

This award may be presented each year to the BVARC member recognized as the outstanding participant in the BVARC Volunteer Examiner Program. There shall be no more than one award presented each year, unless in any given year the Board of Directors elects unanimously to award more than one award. It is not mandatory that an award be made

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each year, if in the board's majority opinion, no nominee is selected. Under normal circumstances, other than the condition stated in the first sentence of this paragraph, the yearly recipient of the award, should there be one, must receive majority approval of the BVARC Board of Directors.

The Loop and Zepp Award

In 1989, the Loop and Zepp Award was originated to recognize BVARC members for their efforts to promote operation on the high frequency (HF) bands. These efforts may take the form of dedicated participation in any form or forms of HF activities, the promotion of HF activities or the assistance in furthering HF activities.

There shall be no more than one award presented each year, unless in any one given year the Board of Directors elects unanimously to award more than one award. It is not mandatory that the award be made each year, if in the board's majority opinion, no nominee is selected. Under normal circumstances, other than the condition stated in the first sentence of this paragraph, the yearly recipient of the award, should there be one, must receive majority approval of the BVARC Board of Directors.

Any member of the club may make nominations for all Awards. Nominations must be made in writing, and must be submitted to any BVARC officer or Board member not later than the December regular membership meeting.

Second annual B-VARC Homebrew Contest

December 3rd meeting

Contest Categories

Homebrew equipment

Any equipment built from scratch; ie. rigs, tuners, amplifiers, keys, keyers, software (must be demonstrated).

Antennas

Homebrew antennas, designs, descriptions and/or modeling examples of actual antennas (instead of displaying large HF antennas).

No commercially made antennas.

Kits and Modified Equipment

Any piece of gear assembled from a commercial kit; significantly modified or rebuilt older radios; or packaging of total systems.

Before/after pictures are required for rebuilds.

Prizes

Homebrew

- 1--98 Handbook
- 2--Solid State Design Bk
- 3--MFJ 24 Hr clock

Antennas

- 1--ARRL Antenna Handbook
- 2--Antenna Compendium
- 2--Vertical Antenna Classics

Kits, etc.

- 1--73 or CQ--1 year
- 2--ARRL RFI Hdbk
- 3--MFJ 24 Hr clock

Last years winning entries not allowed to enter this year.

Questions to W5RH at rhiller@sysdev.com or via the B-VARC reflector.

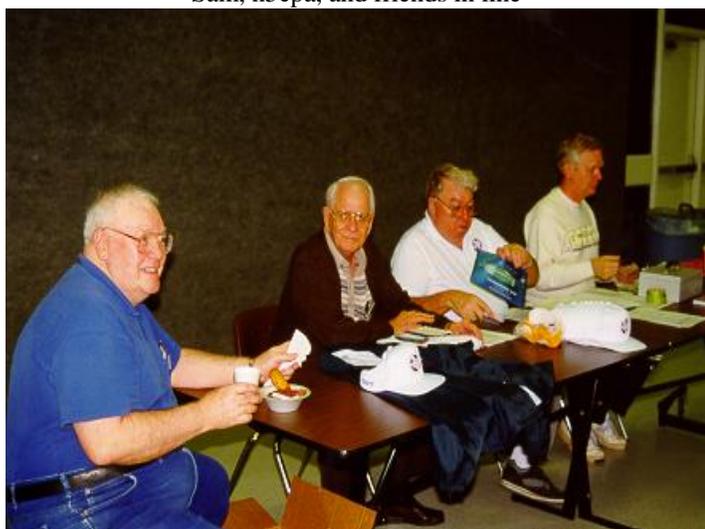
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Sam, n5cpa, and friends in line



Line starts to the right



Harold, nd5f; Bud, k5cek; Claude, k5hfy; Larry, k5lj



New BVARCers



Harold, ND5F; Louis, KD5GM; John KK5NU; Robert, KK5UO; Darrell, KC5JAR; Gene, N5XGT; Larry, K5LJ; Doug, KC5VYZ



Mike, n5vcx; John, kk5nu; Darrell, kc5jar

(Better viewed on the web page.)

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 Bruce Paige, KK5DO

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