

400 aided in quake crisis

MSC Radio helping Aggies

By JUNE PANG
Staff Writer

"C.Q. C.Q. this is W5AC, this is W5AC, go ahead..."
That's how MSC Radio Committee members begin conversations with people all over the world. The committee uses Ham radio to communicate with people around the globe.

Ham radio, a nickname for amateur radio, played a key role in communicating with Mexico City after an earthquake shook that city last Thursday, damaging telephone lines between Mexico and the rest of the world.

The radio committee handled 400 messages during the week after the earthquake, said Bob Plested, committee chairman.

"One member heard on the (Ham) radio Thursday (Sept. 19) night that there was an emergency in Mexico," Plested said. "Some Mexican students knew we had the facility. They wanted to find out about their families."

By Friday morning, the first day after the disaster, most Mexican students who had families in Mexico City knew the phone number of the committee either through friends or through International Students Services, Plested said. They called the committee to ask for help.

"Thursday night, we worked until three o'clock in the morning," he said. "The first two days after the earthquake, our phones just rang constantly."

According to John Meigs, a member of the committee, normally it takes about 30 minutes to contact a Ham radio operator in Mexico City. But right after the earthquake, almost all the Ham radio operators in Mexico City were prepared to be on the air, so it only took a few minutes, he said.

Once an operator in the United States has gotten in touch with an operator in Mexico, he gives a list of peoples' names and phone numbers to contact to find out their situations. Then, the American operator waits

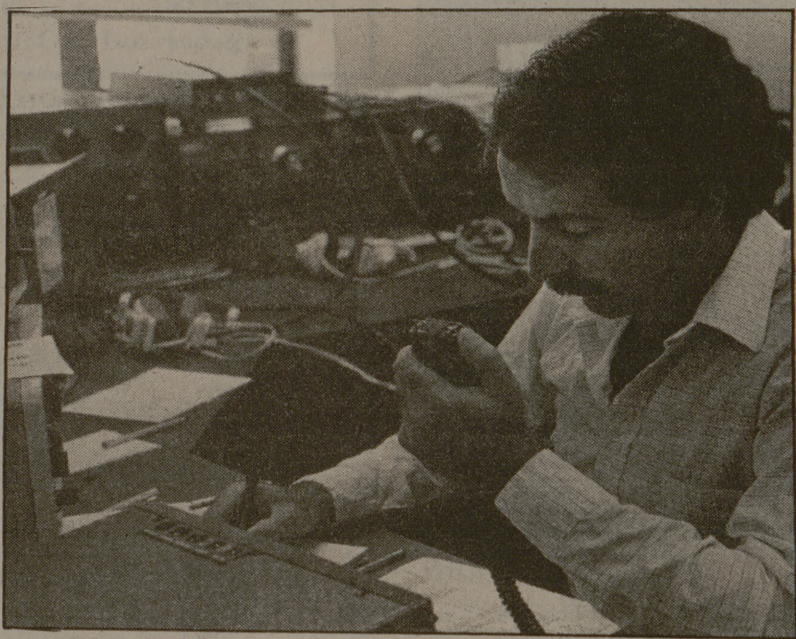


Photo by JAIME LOPEZ

Eduard Bessoudo, a genetic engineering graduate student from Mexico City, is helping keep in touch with Mexico City. Volunteers mans the radio till around 3 a.m. every morning.

for an answer while the other operator makes phone calls. This process can take from five minutes to one hour depending on how many phone calls he has to make, Meigs said.

When there is not an emergency, the operators in the MSC Radio Committee also perform other services such as sending birthday messages to relatives and friends all over the country, Plested said. The MSC Radio Committee usually has from 40 to 50 members, over half are licensed, he said.

Because of the capability of two-way communication, Ham radio attracts many people, Meigs said.

"Ham radio operators are like an international fraternity," he said.

"There are certain people I've talked to several times."

He said he talked about "what happens in life" with them and their "ups and downs."

Dr. Dave Brooks, a licensed Ham radio operator who helped the committee during the earthquake crisis, said that owning a Ham radio is not as expensive as people might think.

Brooks, an associate professor in oceanography at Texas A&M, estimated that a Ham radio can cost from two to three hundred dollars to tens of thousands.

Meigs said with the right weather, sun conditions and a little patience even a simple Ham radio is capable of world-wide communications.

Meeting focuses on immigration

Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI — After converging on this coastal city for the International Immigration Symposium 1985, factions left with renewed zeal to work on policy reforms, a symposium official said.

Immigrant aid groups voiced grievances with U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service officials while cultural groups debated with Washington lobbyists over employer sanctions and pending legislation.

The symposium attracted diverse political, cultural and academic activists.

And after it was over, participants went home ready to re-work immigration policies, NIFCF President Rick Swartz said.

"Although the symposium was not a decision-making body, both sponsors seemed enthusiastic about its ac-

complishments," he said.

"The symposium showed that while there is some disagreement in tactics and specifics of immigration policy reform, there is a lot of strength in the community that could facilitate change."

Among the participants were the National Council of La Raza, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the American GI Forum, as well as leaders from Lutheran, Jewish and Catholic organizations.

Although the majority of the more than 100 participants seemed dissatisfied with pending immigration legislation, Swartz said few doubt that immigration reforms are needed.

But symposium participants did more than just discuss immigration problems and policy. Workshop panels worked on specific courses of

action, most designed to disseminate information on immigration legislation.

Participants agreed to create a Texas-Mexican Immigration Task Force and gather in Laredo on Wednesday. The task force will mobilize a lobbying effort to educate South Texas congressional representatives on immigration.

Ray Leal, a symposium participant, said the group will invite several Mexican governors and mayors as well.

The task force also will focus on U.S. immigration policy and discuss ideas on how it can benefit both countries, Leal said.

Another workshop panel urged participants to start a media campaign to educate politicians as well as the general public on problems with pending immigration legislation.

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