

N O R T H E R N  
 C A L I F O R N I A  
 D X C L U B



## The Editor's Keyboard

# The New Orleans DX Convention

For most California DXers, the expression "DX Convention" triggers an image of each April's trek to Visalia. A DX convention is, of course, not like a general gathering of the masses like Dayton, Pacificon, or Friedrichshafen. Thank goodness! We may be silly, but we don't wear rubber duckies on our hats!

We are not so much maniacal as monomaniacal, enamored as we are of DXing. Marconi knows, one can have more fun at a DX convention than...well, you fill in the metaphor (I've got mine).

Yes, Visalia is the grandfather (or grandmother) of DX conventions—but it is far from being the only one. DX conventions are held around the country, and around the world. This year—by virtue of having gone on a major DXpedition—I have been invited to several as a guest speaker. In light of the ongoing debate about the merits and demerits of Visalia as a venue for our annual pilgrimage, this has afforded an opportunity to see how others do it. In lieu of attending our next meeting, I will be in Chicago at the W9DXCC. But last week I was in *New Orleans!*

The New Orleans convention attracted about 150 attendees—fewer by far than the many hundreds more who attend venerable Visalia—but this was only its fourth year, and one could actually meet almost everyone there! What it lacks in size is more than compensated by quality in both program and setting. This year, the organizers—a half-dozen local DXers and their wives!—presented six DXpeditions and three tech sessions on towers, antennas and propagation. There were more foreign DXers in attendance than at Visalia.

And, of course, there was the setting: the famous French Quarter. The Royal Sonesta is a first-class hotel right on Bourbon Street. On both Friday and Saturday evenings, the Delta DX Association hosted an open-bar hospitality room with its balcony overhanging the street scene below.

And the food! New Orleans is, of course, one of the world's culinary capitals, whether you step off the street for fresh oysters and a cold 807 or opt for an exquisite Creole or Cajun feast. The great restaurants of New Orleans are almost without number, and worth the trip by themselves. Even the convention banquet was exceptional: compare *that* to Visalia!

From the little bottles of Louisiana hot sauce in the registration envelopes to the warmth and hospitality of the hosts, the NODXC was first-class. Did I miss the chlorine smell, lousy food and air-raid shelter ambiance of Visalia? Not for a minute!

The cost? \$50 for early registration, and \$99/night for an elegant room. Expensive to get there? This is a place for a family vacation: sell the junk in your garage and go!

continued on page 5

## Inside

Minutes	—AA6T	2
RIMshots	—W4RIM	3
Do We Need Syntax?	—WA6AUD	4
Letter to RIM	—KG6LF5	
Silence of the Hams	—NI6T	5
Conway Diary	—NI6T	6
9-band DXCC	—K6WC10	
U/G Progress	—NW6P11	
Contest Corner	—WA6CTA11	

## W6OAT on WRTC at Meet

September's NCDXC meeting will again be at the Dunfey Hotel, on Friday, September 8 at 8 PM.

Featured will be our own Rusty Epps, W6OAT, discussing the upcoming World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC), to be held in the Bay Area on July 13 and 14, 1996.

The WRTC, first held in Seattle in 1990, pits two-person teams comprised of some of the world's top operators in a head-to-head competition. To emphasize operator ability, each team runs the same power and uses stations with similar antennas in the same geographical area.

The Northern California Contest Club stepped in to sponsor the event when the prior sponsor—a once-famous east coast contest club—dropped out. NCCC hopes for cooperative assistance from NCDXC for the event, which will focus the attention of the DX contesting world on the Bay Area.

The judges for the event bear some of the most distinguished names and callsigns in DXing and contesting.

Come on out and learn all about this world-class event and what you and our club can do to support it.

The Dunfey is located on the northwest side of the junction of Freeways 92 and 101 in San Mateo. Take the Delaware St. exit from 92. Monitor W6TI/R for routing assistance.

—NI6T

N O R T H E R N  
C A L I F O R N I A  
D X C L U B

**Club Officers:**

President: Al Burnham, W4RIM  
 Vice President: Glenn Vinson, W6OTC  
 Secretary: Lloyd Cabral, AA6T  
 Treasurer: Stan Goldstein, N6ULU  
 Director: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ  
 Director: Rich Chatelain, AB6ZV  
 Director: Jim Knochenhauer, K6ITL

**The DXer:**

Editor: Garry Shapiro, NI6T  
 20941 Nez Perce Trail  
 Los Gatos, CA 95030  
 (408) 353-1118  
 (408)353-1119 (FAX)  
 ni6t@ix.netcom.com

Printing, Mailing: Ron Panton, W6VG

DX Ladder: Larry Bloom, KD6XY  
 Contest Manager: Ed Schuller, WA6CTA  
 9-Band Award: John Brand, K6WC  
 California Award: Ruben Hughes, WA6AHF  
 Historian/archivist: Ron Panton, W6VG

Records Manager: Ron Panton, W6VG  
 Publications Mgr: Ron Panton, W6VG

**Club Repeater, W6TI/R**

Frequency/offset: 147.36 MHz, +  
 Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG  
 Comm. Chairman: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ  
 Club simplex: 147.54 MHz (suggested)  
 Thurs. Net QTR: 8 pm local time.  
 Net Manager: Randy Wright, WB6CUA  
 DX News: Dave Pugatch, KI6WF  
 Propagation: Al Lotze, W6RQ  
 Westlink: Craig Smith, N6ITW  
 Swap Shop: Ben Deovlet, W6FDU  
 QSL Information: Mac McHenry, W6BSY

**W6TI DX Bulletins:**

W6TI Station Trustee Bob Vallio, W6RGG, transmits DX information at 0200 UT every Monday (Sunday evening local time) on both 7.016 and 14.002 MHz.

**Club address:** Box 608  
 Menlo Park, CA  
 94026-0608

*The DXer* is published monthly by the Northern California DX Club and sent to all club members. Unless otherwise noted, NCDXC permits re-use of any article in this publica-

## *Board of Directors Meeting*

The new Board of Directors held its second meeting on August 1 at the Harbor Village Restaurant in San Francisco. Present were W4RIM, W6OTC, AA6T, N6ULU, WA6HHQ, NI6T and W6VG. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM by AI, W4RIM.

- The minutes of the July 25 Board meeting were approved.
- Treasurer Stan, N6ULU presented a detailed budget. After discussion and adjustments, the budget received unanimous approval. The budget will be printed in the August *DXer*.
- W4RIM has appointed Eric, WA6HHQ as Repeater Committee Chairman.
- Glenn, W6OTC led a lengthy discussion of proposed Bylaws/Procedures revision. Updating the Bylaws and Procedures both to meet current needs and to ensure the survivability of this club is considered essential. The Committee intends to rewrite these documents in easily-understood language.
- Glenn, W6OTC announced the program for the August meeting would be *The PacketCluster™ System, Past, Present and Future*.
- The Board agreed to plan out-of-town meetings. Suggested locations included Sacramento and Marin County. The Board would also like to hold a club picnic next summer.
- The Board desires to make the club logo artwork available for member use on QSL's and stationery.

No date was set for the next Board meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 P.M.  
 —Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary

## *General Meeting*

The August General Meeting was held on the 11th at the Dunfey Hotel and brought to order by AI, W4RIM at 8:03 PM. Guests included the family of Glenn, W6OTC and well-known DXer Randy, NØTG.

- President W4RIM presented K6ITL with a plaque for his recent service to the club as President.
- W4RIM announced that Rusty W6OAT has accepted a position on the Bylaws Revision Committee.
- Jack, W6ISQ spoke briefly on his trip to Russia. He tried to attract Russian hams with his callsign cap, but had no takers.
- Jim, W6CF announced that both he and Brad, K6WR are up for re-election for Division office. Jim also reminded those present of the upcoming Pacific Division Convention in October, again to be held at the Concord Hilton.
- A second reading was held for Don Berticvich, KO6GI. Approved and welcomed. Note: this is a correction to the minutes of the July general meeting.
- Lee, WA6IME announced an operating event commemorating the Japanese surrender in World War II. KM6PN/NJVT will operate from the submarine *Pampanito* at Pier 45. Dates and times given.
- W6OTC announced that the 1996 WRTC will be hosted by the NCCC. W6OAT and others will present the September program, detailing the plans.
- The program for the evening was *PacketCluster™, Past, Present and Future*, presented by W6OTC. Glenn's presentation outlined the history, present usage, flaws and proposed direction of the PacketCluster system. His comparison of packet and Internet was of particular interest. A great many radio clubs and individual amateurs world-wide are already using the Internet. Glenn provided an

continued on page 11

## ***RIMshots de W4RIM***



W6VG  
Thanks, folks! We appreciate your willingness to serve!

### **Important Ballot in October: Bylaw Revisions**

In my first *RIMshots*, I mentioned that bylaw revisions would probably be necessary to accomplish the primary goal of your new leadership—a revitalized NCDXC—and the Bylaw Revision Committee, headed by W6OTC, has been diligently at work. The full text of the proposed changes will appear in the October *DXer* and a written ballot will be furnished to all voting members with that issue.

I believe that passage of these revisions is critical to the long-term viability of the NCDXC. This is the most important contribution I hope to make to the Club, and I earnestly solicit your favorable vote. But let me be very specific about what your Board is proposing and why.

### **Two-tier Membership**

Your Board fervently believes that long-term survival and viability of the NCDXC require that we attract and retain new members. To do this, we must lower the barriers to membership. At the same time, we feel that it is important to retain the 100 country requirement for full membership.

Therefore, we propose to create an Associate membership. An associate member would be required to pay regular dues, but there would be no country requirement and no vote.

The idea is to retain our historic requirement of 100 countries for full membership, but to attract new members interested in DX by facilitating membership. Associate members will be Elmered and encouraged to become full members—the ultimate

goal. The objective is to inject new life-blood and vibrancy into the NCDXC... and to ensure that someone will be here to celebrate our centennial.

Some may feel that this proposal somehow “cheapens” membership in the NCDXC—after all, we are supposed to be an “exclusive” group. But if our exclusivity means that we fail to recruit younger members, we shall become extinct. Your Board does not think that is acceptable.

### **DXer Editor to be Ex-Officio Member of Board of Directors**

The Board strongly feels that the *DXer* Editorship is one of the most important jobs in the Club and that the *DXer* Editor should attend Board meetings and be apprised of important matters affecting the Club. Making the *DXer* Editor an *ex-officio* member of the Board requires a Bylaws amendment.

### **Vote in October!!!**

That’s my pitch, folks! I think these changes are essential, and I hope you agree. Unless you vote, it will be difficult to implement these changes—because two thirds of a quorum is required for passage. So—please cast your vote for the future of the NCDXC!

### **RIM Ramblings**

The Thursday Night Net. Some of you have noticed that I have not been checking into the net on Thursday evenings. Unfortunately, I have a conflict: I am an officer of the Tiburon Sunset Rotary, which meets weekly until 8:30 or 9:00. If I have important information that needs to be placed on the net, I will ask one of the other officers to do so. Thanks for your understanding!

—Al Burham, W4RIM

Speaking of Thursday nights: are you happy with our use of the net? Do you

### **NCDXC Co-Sponsors VK9NS Bay Area Visit in October!**

I am delighted to announce that in late October the NCDXC will co-sponsor a Bay Area visit by internationally-known DXer and DXpeditioner Jim Smith, VK9NS.

This event will constitute our October meeting; NCDXC will *not* meet on October 13th.

Jim left Norfolk Island in late August for a “World Tour,” and will be in California during the week of October 23rd. His speaking date will likely be October 24, 25 or 26, so keep your calendar open and don’t miss this opportunity!

Jim will present a slide show—perhaps about his operation from Bhutan as A51MOC. The presentation will be at a dinner in the Bay Area; watch *The DXer* for details.

NCDXC will sponsor this event with the Redwood Empire DX Association (REDXA) and individual sponsors. The total sponsorship cost is \$500, with NCDXC funding up to \$200.

### **Additional Appointments**

As announced at the August Meeting, I have made the following additional appointments:

- Net Manager—Randy, WB6CUA
- Repeater Committee Chairman—Eric, WA6HHQ
- California Award Manager—Rubin, WA6AHF
- W6TI Trustee and W6TI Bulletin—Bob, W6RGG
- Publications Manager, Historian, Archivist, and Records Manager—Ron,

like “An applicant for NCDXC membership must submit proof of contacts with amateurs in 100 countries...”

Lloyd pointed out that there was no stipulation that the contacts had to be by *amateur radio*, only that proof of contact with amateurs must be submitted and this speaker definitely had a stack of well over 100 QSL cards, endorsed by the DXers he had visited in over 100 DXCC countries. Thus, he appeared to have met the requirements.

At this point, someone may heatedly note that this was not what the Bylaws intended. A good point—but it is not necessarily what the Bylaws’ author intended that always prevails. Rather, it is what is put down in black and white and approved by the membership—and that point should be kept in mind.

It is evident that—while the word “quorum” might be presumed to be clearly understood by everyone—the use of the term could generate a bit of confusion. In the Bylaws, it was clearly stated that any motion before a club meeting would require a majority of a quorum to pass. What constituted a quorum was not stated. The standard—as laid down by General Robert—is that, unless specifically stated, 50% plus 1 of those present at a meeting and qualified to vote is a quorum.

In this case, after outlining membership procedure, the Bylaws stoutly stated that to be accepted, the applicant would need a quorum of the quorum to be accepted. That probably was perfectly clear in the mind of him who wrote the rule, but 50% of 50% should indicate that

There is always a joy in recalling the days long gone, especially where there is something delightful to remember.

One meeting—some twenty-five or so years ago—featured a delightful world traveler who was acquainted with numerous DXers in those lands beyond the sunset. The speaker was active and entertaining: you name a big-gun DXer and he most likely would have a QSL card right there in his stack. Sometimes there would be a photo of himself and the DXer together. It was good to hear someone who had seen the elephant and knew DX and DXers.

In the good times of socializing that always followed those meetings, Lloyd Colvin drew me aside and said that he was thinking of proposing the guest speaker for club membership. It was a good idea—except for one thing. During the flow of DX reminiscences, it had become increasingly clear that the speaker was not exactly an amateur, but a traveler, and that the stack of QSL cards represented mementos of his personal visits to DXer shacks. There had been no mention at all of contacts made on the air!

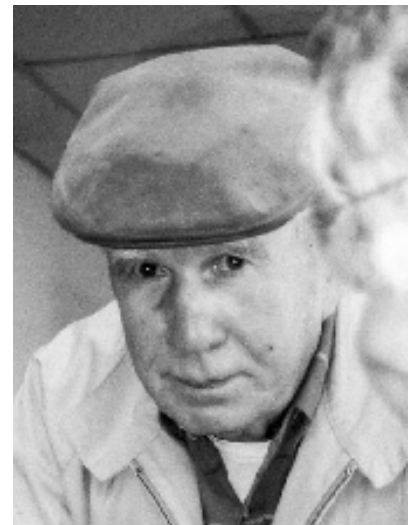
No one had put the question to him—possibly because of the natural courtesy that always permeated the club meetings—but it was rather clear that he did not hold an amateur license. This was mentioned, cautiously, as a possible problem in considering the nomination to the honor of NCDXC membership. But Lloyd had the answer and quoted, verbatim, from the then-existing Bylaws. It went something

25% of those present at the meeting would be the number of “aye” votes needed for acceptance.

What happened to the traveler with all the QSL cards from over 100 DXCC countries? Nothing! Although Lloyd was quite interested in the point, he never pursued it further. But the question still remains: what would have been the decision of the membership if he had? The speaker did meet the requirements, as written.

Regarding the quorum of a quorum: this also has apparently never been the core of a question raised on procedure. One has to wonder if it was because few—if any—ever took the time to read the words and understand just what the syntax indicated—not what was intended but what was said.

Sooner or later, there will be another revision of the Bylaws to be considered. Possibly there should be a *caution* about words, their meanings and about sentence construction. Surely, many will say that this is a minor point and that most of the club’s workings are guided by the Procedures Manual. Let us again look at the opening preamble of the NCDXC Bylaws. Does it not state that the club will be guided by the rules embedded in the “Bylaws?” Can anyone remember when that provision was stricken?



## Do We Need Syntax in the NCDXC?

Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD

*As we prepare to vote on a major revision to the Bylaws, Professor Cass reflects upon meaning versus intent in that venerable document.*



## One Member's Opinion

# A Letter to the President

Dear Al,

In your first *RIMshot* you raised some valid concerns about the future of the NCDXC and I agree fully with some of the solutions you suggested. Your comments apply not just to the Club but to amateur radio as we know it.

I fully support the “no-code tech” as an entry class and am glad to see the ranks of amateur radio growing in this country. However, if a concerted effort is not made to help these new hams to upgrade and become involved in DXing and contesting, the days of those wonderful aspects of our hobby may be numbered. The FCC is not going to address the problem and neither is the ARRL. I am a Life Member of the League, but I realize that Headquarters’ concerns are about “numbers”—not about how these “numbers” are distributed within the hobby.

If the “new breed” amateurs are to join our ranks as DXers and ultimately keep our club alive, it is up to each of us to make that happen. There are *lots* of classes to help the unlicensed to become no-code technicians. But there are few to help

them to upgrade.

Think of the possible results if each NCDXC member taught just one upgrade class per year! And all the better if the club itself sponsored such classes!

I also believe we all need to become DX Elmers. Since most new hams start at VHF/UHF, they receive zero exposure to DXing—or any other aspect of HF operation. Most do not own an HF rig. As we mingle in those other radio clubs to which we belong, we need to seek out the “newbees,” recruit them and train them. If we do not show them how, *who will?*

We should establish a “new DXer of the year” award. In addition, I suggest that our club also give an award to the “DX Elmer of the Year.”

I support your recommendation that we need to bring in new DXers well before they confirm 100 countries. Associate membership ought to be granted to any amateur with HF privileges who has 10 countries confirmed. Each new member would receive a certificate and an endorsement sticker for each 10 countries up to

100. Once 100 are confirmed, regular membership would follow. I concur with you that the membership process should be simplified. If retained at all, the first and second readings, vote of the membership, secret handshake, *etc.* ought not to be utilized until full membership is sought. Associate membership should be automatic when endorsed by three full members and dues are paid. NCDXC should actively recruit potential members—not wait for them to come to us.

I suggest that Club meetings include a time slot for new DXers to ask questions and seek advice from the assembled group. Neophytes should be encouraged to do this, and should not feel intimidated because they are in the company of the sages who long ago climbed the sacred mountain, were blessed by “The Old Man,” and made it to the Honor Roll.

The future of the NCDXC and DXing lies in recognizing DX accomplishments—no matter how small—and not just in recognizing accomplished DXers.

—Jerry Boyd, KG6LF

from page 1

## The Editor's Keyboard

# The Silence of the Hams

The Board has noted and is concerned with the deafening silence found on 147.36 MHz most of the time. Is this really the repeater of the World's Most Famous DX Club?

Club lore has it that W6TI/R used to be the site of lively conversation on DX and DXing, as well as a primary source of juicy DX spots. Listening now, it is hard to believe. The repeater seems more like a DX ghost town with “Charlie”—the only loyal and regular user—as its sole inhabitant.

Some say that pressure from some long-time members to cut the chatter to reduce QRM to spotting announcements eventually drove out the friendly banter between kindred souls. Others ascribe the demise of the repeater to competition from PacketCluster™, and now Internet.

urgent and relevant, and otherwise hold our tongues? I say not!

Let's get back on W6TI! We are a “club”, i.e. “a select group of persons, in the habit of meeting for the promotion of some common object,” and our repeater is a fine place for such meetings!

—N16T

Still others blame the sorry state of the Solar Flux Index. For whatever reason, our repeater is—how shall we say it—underutilized.

Whoever said we had to talk only about DX? Are we not friends and cohorts? Do we not have an interest in each other's lives and travails? Certainly, DX spots and DX information take precedence over the more mundane, but does that mean we must speak only of the immediately



# Conway Diary

The first full account of the 1995 Conway Reef DXpedition. *Part 2: The Twin Faces of Dame Fortune*

Garry Shapiro, NI6T

power supply for his IC735. Without the power supply, one transceiver was now just a spare. We were, in an instant, down to two stations. Just as shocking, we had lost the outboard motor, which had not been tethered to the boat. The motor—still running—had flown past Mats’ head as the boat turned over, almost maiming him. That left us with only the little 2.5 hp with which to challenge the reef. In turn, the larger 12-foot high-gunwale skiff we had brought as a “trailer” for the “heavy” ferrying was now useless: no way could the little motor haul both boats. In one moment of euphoric carelessness, we had come to the brink of wind, swell, sail, and inertia. At times, *Te Ni* would lurch as the forces at work combined in phase to hurl boxes and cans against bulkheads with the sound of an artillery shell piercing the hull. At other times, the lapping of water against her hull sounded like conversations among the spirits of those who had sailed in her before, mocking the newest passengers, calling to them.

The first miles were exciting for all. After a week of almost continuous rain, the weather had broken, and we were treated to a beautiful tropical sunset. *Te Ni* cruised on her diesels at a leisurely 5 knots. The day faded, the lights of Suva receded and the team quietly contemplated finally reaching this stage of the Great Adventure. Arnold set sails to catch the light wind, and we felt the first of the sea swell.

*I am not a great traveler. It has nothing to do with traveling, itself, but rather with the inner ear, or whatever it is that causes seasickness. I love to go to faraway places, but I dread those first signs of incipient mal de mer: the twinge of nausea, the moment of disorientation, the sweats, the awful recognition and grudging acknowledgment that—once again—the preventive drugs are failing, the carefully chosen foods have no effect, the positive mental attitude has not influenced the result and one is sinking, inevitably, inexorably into that profoundly unpleasant malaise that has afflicted travelers since the dawn of time. At such times, I try to take comfort in the humanity of C. S. Forester’s literary hero, Horatio Hornblower, who, throughout his long and glorious—albeit fictional—naval career, invariably became seasick when first leaving port. I take comfort—and I take to my bunk.*

The movements and sounds of a boat under power and a boat under sail are quite different. To the six adventurers proceeding southwest in the Fijian night, lying on their bunks or on deck in various degrees of discomfort, these sounds were less than soothing. I listened to *Te Ni* groan, roar, whisper. The rolling and pitching had no discernible periodicity: a complex mixture

of wind, swell, sail, and inertia. At times, *Te Ni* would lurch as the forces at work combined in phase to hurl boxes and cans against bulkheads with the sound of an artillery shell piercing the hull. At other times, the lapping of water against her hull sounded like conversations among the spirits of those who had sailed in her before, mocking the newest passengers, calling to them.

Pekka and Taina forsook the spaciousness of the forward cabin and its roller-coaster pitching for the deck, retreating only during occasional squalls. Mats—well over six feet—opted for the cushions around the dining table bench amidships, where he could stretch out, albeit with his legs braced to prevent his rolling off onto the floor. Nils, convinced from the first that he would be ill, had succumbed immediately; he shared the double bed across from the pantry with expedition gear, comforted only by his easy access to the toilet.

Jun and I shared the tiny cabin amidships. For me, each night was interminable: one of Scopalamine’s apparent side effects was an irritated bladder, necessitating frequent rising with little result before returning to the rolling bunk and *Te Ni*’s incessant internal groaning. Pekka seemed affected the least, Nils the most. Jun was quiet. I gave ground grudgingly, finally surrendering to the nausea on the second night. Overall, we were low-key, enduring, looking forward, quietly struggling for equilibrium.

The wind was now brisk, and we made good progress toward Conway, but there was no reward for haste. Arriving early meant heaving to off the island, awaiting morning for the approach, which we did. We did no radio on the way to Conway.

*Te Ni*’s 12V system was broken, and no one felt like wrestling a generator forward, away from the fuel containers lashed aft, to provide power. The DX world, eager to monitor our progress, would hear nothing. We ate meals of instant noodles and canned fruit, staggered about the boat on rubbery legs like newly-hatched birds, and talked in quiet tones.

We approached Conway Reef early on Friday, March 24, to the low throb of the diesels, sails furled. The first sight was of the mist from breakers crashing on the reef. Eventually the island itself became visible, with its small complement of bushes. Arnold watched the depth sounder and the waves, edging forward. The prevailing southeasterly wind meant an approach to the northern side; already we were in the lee of the island, and the swell had subsided. Arnold cut the engines and dropped anchor in about 60 feet of water, comfortably outside the reef and 500 or so meters from the island.

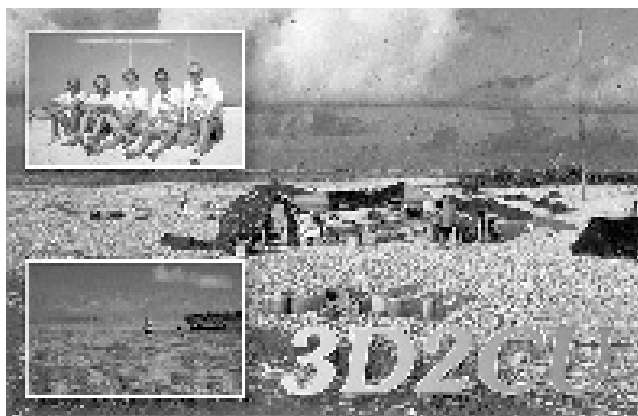
Everyone was excited, but there is a big difference between sitting on a boatful of equipment outside a reef and setting up on the beach inside. We studied the reef before us. The northwest side was clearly impassable, with spectacular breakers thundering over the coral heads. A wreck marked the northeast side. Mats and Pekka maintained that the 1990 DXpedition had landed on the other side of the wreck, but Arnold demurred. “Dis is the only place you can be,” he said in his thick Dutch accent. “You got to be out of the vind.”

Mats and Pekka, the veterans of 1990, opted for immediate exploration of the reef for an entryway. Arnold suggested calmness and patience—the counsel of the lifelong sailor who has survived big

*“In one moment of euphoric carelessness, we had come to the brink of disaster.”*

of disaster.

We decided to continue: we *had* to continue. The *Te Ni* tender’s 2.5 horse motor was bolted to the 10-foot skiff and operations resumed. Taina, Mats and Jun were soon on the beach with tents and water, but still with neither food nor the means to cook it. Pekka returned to *Te Ni* for one more run before dark. We loaded the propane tank and cook stove, and some food. There seemed to be more room—room for a passenger. Suddenly, I was that passenger, hastily grabbing my hand luggage and tent and climbing aboard. The lure of the island—so tantalizingly close across the reef— was too strong.



Pekka headed for the break in the reef, while I scanned the shallow water for coral heads. As *Te Ni* receded, I became acutely aware of the waves, and how insignificant we were in comparison. Pekka waited for the last and biggest wave of a set to pass and went full throttle to follow it in. It was not to be. The next set brought a monster wave, which we could not outrun. It crashed down upon us like a giant hammer. The dinghy rolled to the right and capsized, spilling us into the boiling surf. I was under the boat, with large objects going by. I headed for the light, and ran into Pekka. For a long second, I wondered

if I could find a way to the surface; then, I saw the daylight and broke free to the air.

The water was filled with our floating but sodden cargo. The boat was inverted. Determined not to lose more than what was already gone, I swam after several objects and brought them back to the boat, which Pekka and I then righted. Soon, Arnold was rowing toward us, collecting floating objects. His little boat could not pull both the swamped 10-footer and its former occupants, so we swam back to *Te Ni*. My efforts against the current had sapped my strength. We were hauled aboard like drowned rats.

For me, the price of this event was high. I had lost all of my clothes save those I was wearing, my money, credit cards, passport, travelers cheques—items I had had no time to separate. My small camera was ruined; my Nikon binoculars were gone, as were all the DXpedition flags. I sat dripping on the deck of *Te Ni* and looked across the reef at the small island that had so far cost so much, and upon which I had yet to step. I looked over at Pekka, who had lost even more, shook

my head, and laughed. DXpeditioning was proving to be more fun than any one person could stand, I thought.

That night, the DXpedition team, separately and collectively, considered the events of the day. Jun, Mats (with wet clothes and no bedding) and Taina huddled together in a tent on the island, with water but no food, surrounded by partially assembled antennas. Pekka, Nils and I, on the boat with Captain Arnold, had food and shelter. We were bloodied but were we defeated? We conversed periodically on 2 meters. There were suggestions to do the unthinkable and abort the DXpedition!

storms and heavy seas. The two set out in the 10-foot dinghy with our largest outboard—a crushing 15 hp Johnson—and made it easily to the beach with water jugs. Thus emboldened, they commenced to transport people and supplies from *Te Ni* to Conway. Unfortunately, with the prize in sight, insufficient thought was given to the order of precedence.

From the comfort of one’s shack, it is easy to second-guess those on the scene. Nonetheless, a prudent observer might conclude that one should put life-support items on the beach before radios and antennas. Water was in fact brought in on the first trip, but food, bedding and cooking equipment largely gave way to antennas and radios. The small dinghy was loaded several times and—low in the water—sent off to the beach with Mats in command. Pekka and Jun were ashore; Nils and I were aboard *Te Ni*. We were settling into the routine of loading, ferrying and unloading.

Reality intruded suddenly and dramatically. On the way to the beach with Mats, equipment and Pekka’s girlfriend Taina, the dinghy capsized. Mats would later describe a “freak wave.” With hardly any freeboard, the small boat could not withstand the huge wave that enveloped it, and pitched its occupants and cargo into the turbulent water. Neither those of us on the *Te Ni* nor those on the beach saw the event itself; fortunately, it had occurred to Nils to look out and check on the dinghy’s progress. “They are in the water,” he shouted. Arnold quickly launched the smaller tender and motor and set off to fetch what was still afloat. Shocked and drenched, Taina and Mats swam several hundred yards back to *Te Ni* and were hauled from the water.

The loss was staggering: Pekka’s solid state kW amplifier and switching power supply, his transceiver and computer—an entire kW station—and Mats’ switching

**continued next page**

## Conway Diary

with A=4 and K=0—excellent conditions for that part of the solar cycle. Tuning around, we noted Europeans on both 20 and 15, and broke in to advise Pekka of our discoveries. Soon, he was working Finns and other Euros on 15 meters. Mats had his first shot on CW later on, also running Europeans. Nils and I were yet to cross the reef—although I had gotten part of the way. It was a strange feeling to hear the pileups, knowing I was part of what was happening, but still off-island.

Wednesday, March 29

Monday finds Mats running the Swedish Shuttle to the island. No longer are we haphazardly loading equipment. Each boatload now includes some item of precious cargo, suitably wrapped, often tethered to empty jugs as floats, in case of disaster. Food is secondary to equipment; emphasis is on ready access and ease of use. Cooking equipment is not yet functional: the stove is inoperative after its twin dunkings. The island contingent is living on canned fruit; on board, we are eating noodles.

Finally, I go to the beach. This time, it is an uneventful trip, with no big waves, although the outgoing tide means very shallow water. Antennas are everywhere, in various stages of completion. I help Jun finish a 40m vertical and then set up our tent. Two rigs are now QRV. With Pekka and Jun operating, and Nils still aboard Te Ni, I play longshoreman for Mats, meeting the boat and helping unload cargo. It is hot, sweaty work in the bright tropical sun, and my muscles soon ache from transporting 20-liter jugs of gasoline, water and diesel, as well as amplifiers, the diesel generator, food and other items.

I have little time to take in the island. Its most obvious features are its total lack of vegetation, except for a few low bushes staked out by the birds, and of course the birds themselves. In addition to the red-footed boobies, there are small, forked-tail sea swallows. The boobies nest both in the bushes and on the ground, where all the smaller birds also nest. Bird noise is

*continuous, rising to a crescendo every so often when the avian population grows excited over some stimulus not obvious to us. The bird noise virtually drowns out generator noise, but does not quite overcome the sound of the ocean breaking over the reef. Surprisingly, the smell is not*



*bad—barely noticeable at first, and not at all after a while. There is no soil—only coral and shells, broken, smoothed and worn by waves.*

The original plan had been to erect widely separated SSB and CW tents, with the third station and the cooking/common area at the CW location. The loss of the third station changed the plan, and the CW and SSB tents now flanked a covered cooking/common area. The SSB rig was Nils' TS450S and TL922, which put out about 400W. The CW/RTTY station used the FT990; the second TL922—Jun's—would not load. The RTTY gear was on the table but shunted aside. We used flimsy plywood tables on sawhorses, fabricated to order at high cost in Suva, and folding chairs.

Nils finally came ashore, and he

and Pekka settled into alternating 3-hour shifts on SSB, occasionally spelled by one of the CW ops. The solar flux remained in the 90's with very low A and K indices, and many Europeans were logged—the primary objective of the DXpedition. I finally got to operate late Monday night and did a 3-hour shift on 40m CW. I was shocked at my almost-illegible scrawl on the log sheets, worsened by several years of computer logging, which I now looked forward to with increased anticipation.

On Tuesday we discovered that neither the computer screen nor the FT990 display could be read in the bright daylight, necessitating throwing a towel over one's head and the equipment, like the hood on a primitive radarscope, just to read the operating frequency. Computer logging was summarily abandoned. Mats had brought backup paper logs for about 10,000 QSO's. We were subsequently to log contacts on virtually every piece of paper in the camp.

Mats—who had become our de-facto dinghy man—finally brought the Alpha 91. The Alpha was not happy either, but appeared willing at first to provide 500W without switching itself off. Pekka's big 160/80m vertical went up, along with the WARC beam, joining the two C3's, and Jun put up the 30m vertical. The Force 12 verticals on 80, 40 and 30 each got a pair of tuned radials, lying on the coral. Pekka's vertical had four radials. Because the coral could not hold guy anchors well, the beams were erected at only 16 feet, but appeared to suffer not at all from the low height.

*Incredibly, we had visitors! A Fiji Navy patrol boat appeared offshore next to Te Ni in the afternoon, while I was assembling the Force 12 80/160 vertical. Happily, our initial concerns—recalling the French Navy “dropping in” on the Clipperton DXpedition—were unfounded. After talking at length to Arnold, a boat came ashore and a friendly conversation ensued, with many pictures taken. The*





of the trip. It had been an uncomfortable night on the island.

*From the boat, the reef and tide are watched carefully. On the island, Pekka works on antennas. Aboard Te Ni, we haul the 3 kW gasoline generator forward and fire it up. The FT990 is connected to Mats' trap vertical, lashed to the port rail, with a ground wire into the sea. We are QRV—as 3D2KK/MM. To our great surprise, we are called almost immediately by Bill, VK4CRR. Planning his own September trip to Conway, Bill had been*

Were mere QSO's worth the further risk of death or injury? We knew they were not, but we were *here*, by God! Only 500 meters from our goal. Would the sea stay rough and treacherous, or would it calm? Who knew for sure?

Out in the DX world, hordes of the Deserving were seated in front of radios and packet screens, awaiting a signal from Conway Reef. And not one of them had a clue what was happening.

*Saturday, March 25*

*We awaken early, worried and determined not to miss an opportunity to cross the reef, but must wait for the tide. It is clear that, if the small skiff is to be used with lessened risk of serious loss or injury, more trips will have to be made with lighter loading. Now, belatedly, more attention is given to the size, composition and sealing of the boatloads going to the island. Arnold cleans the carburetor of the recently-drenched small outboard, but it does not run until we spray the magneto with a water-dispersing spray. Pekka takes a light load of food to the island and rejoins Taina. Mats returns with a sunburned Jun; both hungrily devour the instant noodles that are to be our staple diet for the rest*

*surprised and greatly annoyed by our DXpedition announcement. Nonetheless, Bill is concerned about our progress and travails, and is most helpful. Bill calls Paul, KK6H to relay the news of our status to US DXers in general and to my wife in particular. He also arranges a Saturday evening sked for Arnold to speak with his wife, Jytte, visiting Tommy, OZ5KG. The 20 meter sked demonstrates good propagation to Europe—an encouraging sign. Several other stations are contacted, to spread the important news—among other things—that NI6T is down to his last pair of shorts.*

The CQ WPX SSB Contest began at local noon. We had planned to have one station in the contest—Pekka had been #1 World on 20 the year before—but all was now up for grabs. A few loads were transferred to the island. Pe-

kka and Taina spent Saturday night alone on Conway, prompting the observation that Pekka—for one night at least—had his very own DXCC country, of which he and Taina were King and Queen, as well as the entire population. How many DXers, we thought, can make *that* statement?

Sunday again found us looking longingly across the reef. 500 meters from glory! We had arrived two days before and were not yet QRV. It was time to move some important gear. Mats brought the 3 kW gas generator to the island by itself, then an IC735 and Nils' Kenwood power supply. The latter had survived the first capsizing; we had soaked it in fresh water, then had disassembled, examined and cleaned it, then held our breath and turned it on. To our relief, it had survived.

Enough equipment was now ashore to put one barefoot station on the air. Jun went to help Pekka erect antennas, followed by Mats. Up went one Force 12 C3XP tribander on part of a Force 12 mast. 3D2CT fired up on 14195 with Pekka at the microphone. The Conway Reef DXpedition was finally—albeit modestly—on the air. Let the pileups commence!

Aboard *Te Ni*, we moved the 3.3 kW Robin Diesel generator forward and listened to Pekka's first pileup—JA's in droves. The Solar Flux Index was 95,

**continued next page**



## It's 9-Band DXCC Submission Time Again!

The 9-Band DXCC is an ongoing personal achievement award program for NCDXC members—you must be a member to play!

Have you worked 100 countries on *any* or all of the eight HF bands or 160 meters? Would you like a *super* plaque and endorsements for your wall, proudly displaying your DX achievements? Many of your fellow members are already participants in this interesting—and no-hassle—program.

The seventh year of the program is almost complete; we hope you have been crossing off countries on your list.

Here is a brief review of the program.

- *Purpose:* to promote continued interest in DXing by all club members on all HF bands and 160 meters and to recognize DXing achievements by individual club members.
- *Eligibility:* you must have worked at least 100 countries on *one* band since October 10, 1987 or since you joined NCDXC, if after October 10, 1987.
- *Bands and modes:* 160 through 10 meters, including the WARC bands; any combination of modes.
- *Countries:* use the *current* ARRL Countries List (subtract your deleted countries) to track countries worked.
- *Endorsements:* numbered tags for the plaque are issued in the following increments: 100, 150, 200, 250, 260, 270, 280, 290 and 300.
- *Confirmation:* this award employs the honor system; no QSLs are required!

This is an ongoing, *personal* award—you are not competing against anyone! It was envisioned as a long-term effort.

The Club anniversary, October 10, is the cutoff date for counting countries each year, and the deadline for submission to me, K6WC, is December 1. To submit, merely state how many countries over 100 you have worked on each band (*don't* send a list of countries worked—we believe you!). Include a check to cover the one-time cost of the plaque (includes one tag), and the cost of additional engraved country tag. Include the cost of mailing if you don't intend to come to the January, 1996 meeting, where the 9BDXCC awards will be presented.

If you already have the plaque, just apply for any additional tags you have earned. Here is a summary of costs:

9BDXCC Plaque (one time)	\$35.00
Band-Country-Total Tag, each	.75
Surface Mail-U.S	5.00
Surface Mail-Foreign	7.00
Airmail-Foreign	20.00

To determine the number of tags, first see *Endorsements* above for the increments in which they are issued. For example, if you worked 110 countries on 40m, 190 on 20m and 125 on 15m, you would need to include \$3.00 for tags. That covers a 100-tag for 40m, 100- and 150-tags for 20m and a 100-tag for 15m.

Need a tally sheet? The ARRL Countries List provides an ideal record.

Send your band-country totals and your check—payable to the NCDXC (in U.S. Funds)—to: John Brand, K6WC, 9655 Tanglewood Circle, Orangevale, CA 95662.

—John Brand, K6WC

from page 9

## Conway Diary

Luck runs in cycles. Having initially brought ourselves to the brink of disaster, we now had two stations on the air, pretty much around the clock, with good conditions. "Pretty much," because the mornings were slow to everywhere but VK/ZL, allowing us to share breakfast together. The luck part was that we arrived with the solar flux index (SFI) climbing

into the 90's, and it stayed there for the duration. That is a low value—but quite a fortunate one at the solar bottom that we were rapidly approaching. In addition, the A and K indices were very low. We had a stable ionosphere with low absorption and MUF's higher than we might have hoped for, and we took maximum advantage of our good fortune.

Mats was unwilling to let the CW station go to 80, 160 or RTTY. The loss of the

third station—earmarked for RTTY and lowband work—meant heavy pressure for high QSO rate. He felt that many would judge the DXpedition only by total QSO's, and wanted big numbers. He reasoned that quickly logging the big stations who would be seeking every band and mode would facilitate logging the little guys who needed Conway for an alltimer. Lowband and digital enthusiasts were characterized

to page 11

## DXPSN Users Group—Progress Report

*Listed below are some of the recent activities that have been supported by the DXPSN User Group.*

- The 9600 link from W6GO near Sacramento to K6LLK in Mountain View has been completed, and the antenna on Mt. Diablo has been successfully moved. This has improved system throughput for all users of DXPSN.
  - The 9600 bps North Valley backbone has been installed, enabling stations in the Redding area to connect reliably into DXPSN.
  - Limited protocol connections and home node procedures have been established on the Northern California-Southern California link.
  - Six meter backbone interference from a channel 2 television translator north of San Francisco has been cleared.
- This was causing problems to DXPSN users in Marin and Sonoma counties.
  - A cavity has been installed at Breckenridge, which has improved performance in the Southern area served by DXPSN.
  - Mt. Bullion improvements have been made, including the purchase of a new antenna and coax, improving coverage in the South Central Valley.
  - 219.95 MHz has been coordinated with the ARRL for future DXPSN use.
  - DXPSN's Technical Committee is looking into the feasibility of further deployment of 9600 bps operation. There are links affecting N6ST's users in the Santa Cruz mountains and South Bay, between W6GO and
- KN6EL in the Sacramento Valley, and between KI3V in Reno and W6GO that can be moved to 9600 bps operation if sufficient funding can be provided.
  - VE3CDX DXCluster software will be beta-tested at the W6GO node. If the software meets expectations and funds are available, it will be purchased by DXPSN-UG and installed by all other user-node sysops.

The User Group is working closely with the Sysops to develop a budget for these projects. It expects to have budget details ready for presentation within the next 60 days.

—Tom McShane, NW6P

## Contest Corner

I hope that all of you have had a good summer. And, as you all know, summer means the NCDXC Marathon—a good way to beat the summer (and sunspot) doldrums! I'm sure that all of you have worked lots of DX, and have *big* scores to report this year for the Marathon. Please get your score sheets to me by October 1. If you don't have an official sheet, and would like one, please let me know and I will get one to you.

We are approaching the start of the "official" contest season. I'm sure that you all have your stations tweaked and ready to go! If you are going to enter the Club Competition for any of the ARRL Contests, remember that there are a few requirements, as stated in the ARRL rules. First, you *must* attend at least two club meetings in the 12 months prior to the contest and, second, you must live within 175 miles of the Club address in Menlo Park.

I'm looking forward to a very successful contest season for all of us. Remember, this is *fun*!

—Ed Schuller, WA6CTA

## DXCC Yearbook

The deadline for submissions to appear in the next DXCC Yearbook is September 30. Your timely submission will ensure you're on the list to receive the DXCC Yearbook in early 1996. Submissions must be made using 1995 forms only—MSD-505 (1995).  
—QST

from page 2

## General Meeting

overview of the interaction between the 'Net and Amateur Radio.

- There was a brief open discussion about the Thursday night net.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.  
—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary

from page 10

## Conway Diary

*sailors were as surprised to see us as we them, and were very interested in our operation. Conway Reef—Ceva-I-Ra—defines the limits of Fiji's southern economic zone, affirmed by the Navy's periodic appearance. They were around for the next few days—a tough-looking but friendly group of men—out on the close-in reefs at low tide to gather shellfish for on-board feasts, or trolling out beyond the reef. It looked like patrolling, but it was trolling for tuna and shark!*

They re-erected their flagpole—knocked over by a storm—and posed for pictures behind the metal plate reminding the world at large that *Cevi-I-Ra* was Fijian. They informed us that the President of Fiji himself had helicoptered out to celebrate his 70th birthday on the island, to emphasize the Fijian presence.

In the evening, the big vertical was fired up on 75m SSB. I was invited to work the USA Deserving, which I did for several hours. A 75m quarter-wave vertical over salt water really plays! I needed that session, for I had not done much operating to that point.  
*To be concluded next month.*

---

P. O. B O X 6 0 8

M E N L O P A R K, C A

9 4 0 2 6 - 0 6 0 8 U S A

---

FIRST CLASS

