

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



RIMshots de W4RIM

October Meeting Date Changed to 26th!

VK9NS to Present Slide Show

As previously announced, the NCDXC and the REDXA are co-sponsoring the Bay Area visit of Jim Smith, VK9NS, internationally known DXer and DXpeditioner.

Both NCDXC and REDXA have changed their regular October meeting dates to Thursday, October 26.

The joint meeting will be at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo. Dinner will be at 6 PM. At 8 PM, Jim will present "A History of Ham Radio Operation in Bhutan."

Don't miss Jim's presentation and the opportunity to have an eyeball QSO with one of the world's best-known DXers!



Vote in November: Bylaw Revisions

The Board has decided to postpone the mailing of ballots until November, to allow members additional time to consider the issue. The November *DXer* will furnish each full member with a ballot and SASE. We are trying to make it *easy* for you to vote, so *please vote!* It takes two-thirds of a quorum to pass a bylaw amendment, so *your* vote is essential!

Your leadership strongly urges you to vote "Yes" on the proposed bylaw amendments. There are two concepts for which your approval is sought: (1) two-tier membership and (2) *DXer* Editor to be an *ex-officio* member of the Board.

Two-tier Membership. The purpose is simple: to attract and retain new members. If we fail to do this, the NCDXC will become extinct. With a two-tier membership, Associate members will pay regular dues, but there will be no country requirement and no vote. Full membership will remain available only to those with 100 countries confirmed.

Two-tier membership mirrors having different classes of ham licenses: to encourage easy entry to DXing, facilitate obtaining experience (via *Elmering* by NCDXCers), and an upgrade path to Full Member.

DXer Editor. We all know how important *The DXer* is to the Club. *The DXer* Editor should attend Board meetings and be kept up-to-date on all matters affecting the Club. Making the *DXer* Editor an *ex-officio* (*i.e.* voteless) member of the Board requires a bylaw amendment.

Inside

Minutes —AA6T	2
The Editor's Keyboard —NI6T	3
Contest Corner —WA6CTA	3
Conway Diary —NI6T	4
Is Life too Short for QRO? —WA6KBL	7
The QRPer in Autumn —WA6AUD	7

Bad Dollars

Not long ago, subscribers to the Internet DX Reflector saw an E-mail message from Pacific gadfly Mats Persson, SM7PKK, a member of and CW/RTTY QSL manager for the recent Conway Reef DXpedition. Mats complained about all the "bad dollars" he had received—U.S. currency which was refused for deposit in Swedish banks.

It turns out that many European banks will accept only pristine Federal Reserve notes. Mats observed that the JA's seem always to have such bills, but that the rest of us—including Europeans—send whatever we have. In fact, Mats sent me a bunch of these "bad dollars"—some of which were indeed pretty ratty and ready for recycling—for deposit in our local account. (It must be also be said that many bills—while used—were in pretty good shape.)

Mats' message brought forth several tongue-in-cheek offers to purchase the "bad dollars" for \$.50, but I demurred, opining that, as souvenirs, the bills should be worth *more* than face value, not less. For laughs, and to raise a little cash for the DXpedition, I offered some of the bills, suitably mounted and certified as commemoratives, for a suitable donation.

The response was hardly a stampede, but some were sold to DXers who, for the contribution they were going to send anyway, received a unique memento of Conway Reef 1995.

KK6EK, eat your heart out!

—NI6T

more RIMshots on page 3

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: Rubin 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 monthly Board meeting was held on September 8 at the Dunfey Hotel prior to the General Meeting and was called to order by W4RIM at 6:24 PM. Present were W4RIM, W6OTC, AA6T, N6ULU, AB6ZV, and K6ITL. N6ULU presented a written proxy authorization from WA6HHQ.



- The minutes of the August Board and General meetings were approved as presented in the September *DXer*.
 - Treasurer N6ULU gave a brief update on budget matters. A full report will be presented quarterly in *The DXer*. Expenditures are currently under budget.
 - Ré Bylaws Revision, the Board voted unanimously to approve the changes presented by the Revision Committee. These changes are to Art. IV, Sec. 3; Art. V, Sec. 3; and Art. VII, Sec. 1. The Board authorized an SASE ballot mailing for changes to Article II, which creates an Associate Membership.
 - The Board authorized a \$100 expenditure toward the VK9NS visit in October. Location and cost of the October dinner meeting was discussed, with W4RIM to finalize.
 - The Board voted unanimously to support changes to the annual North-South ARRL DX Club Competition as outlined in the March *DXer*. W4RIM will provide an official response to the other clubs.
 - Treasurer N6ULU received unanimous approval to move savings accounts to gain a higher interest rate.
 - The Board voted approval of joint meetings with the NCCC when appropriate.
 - No date was set for the next Board meeting.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary



General Meeting

The monthly General meeting was held on September 8 at the Dunfey Hotel and called to order at 8:12 PM by W4RIM. Guests included WB6OOL, NR7E, KD6NOS, AB6WD and WB6TMY.

- Members approved the August minutes as published in the September *DXer*.
 - The evening's program was a fine presentation by Rusty, W6OAT and Bruce, AA6KX on the upcoming 1996 WRTC, which will be hosted by the NCCC. The video of the 1990 event held in the Seattle area gave members a sense of the goodwill generated by the event. Top operators from around the world participated, making the event truly international in scope. Rusty and Bruce outlined their plans and requested input and assistance in securing host families and stations suitable for use during the WRTC. Forms were distributed to allow people to offer assistance in several areas.
- The meeting was adjourned at 9:51 PM.

—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary



The Editor's Keyboard de NI6T

The Evolution of the NCDXC

That's a pretty pretentious title for a short editorial, no?

I just wanted to call your attention again to the urgent matter—bylaw revisions—now before us. W4RIM's *RIMshots* column occupies the front page this month because what Al has to say is of crucial importance to the future of this organization—important enough for me to surrender that choice piece of real estate.

This is a hard-working and highly motivated Board of Directors. Please support their efforts to bring our club successfully into the next century.

Is This Really a *Club* Newsletter?

If you checked out *Inside*—the Contents box on the front page—you might have noticed that this issue's offerings, beyond the Club reports, are almost entirely from Cass, WA6AUD, and “your humble editor.”

Cass and my bylines are familiar to readers of these pages, but this month we have little company. Frankly, I think it is pretty sad that over 300 members—many of whom have expressed their delight at my return to the Editorship—can collectively contribute nothing whatsoever to their club's monthly newsletter—acknowledged as it is to be the club's lifeline.

Are you really all content to have so few people be the sole contributors to *The DXer*? Or, to put it another way, how long do you think I can keep all these objects in the air without help? I cannot remember the last month—it was in my first term—where I actually had a backlog of articles and features. One simply cannot keep on printing every word one has: both quantity and quality must inevitably suffer.

Once again, I beseech you to GOYA (once Mayor Alioto's favorite expression) and share with your fellow NCDXCers some of the anecdotes, remembrances and high/low points of your DXing career. The alternative is a shrinking *DXer*.

Contest Corner de WA6CTA

Is it Time to Change the Marathon?

By now, all who participated in the Marathon should have sent me their logs (the deadline was October 1st). Thanks for getting them in! I'll have the results next month.

This month brings the CQ World Wide DX Contest. It would be nice to have an NCDXC entry in the Club competition! Please indicate your NCDXC affiliation on your log summary sheet, and send me a copy, so that I can get the results in to CQ.

The SSB portion is this month, and the CW is in November. I'd love to see a big turnout from the membership. Even if you're not seriously competing, it's a great time to get on and fill in band countries! As the Nike ads say: “*Just do it!*”

After looking at the logs I received this year, and then going back and perusing past year(s) entries, I have concluded that there is a lack of interest in the Marathon. The same few people seem to enter this competition, and—at least to me—one of the primary requisites for doing well is to be retired!

I realize that many members do not have time to spend in front of the rig during the week. Is it time for a change in this venerable event?

Should we do away with the Marathon entirely, and start something new? Should we create a “sprint” of some limited duration within another contest—*e.g.*: the 10 best hours of a CQWW? How about an event wherein we all use the same type of QRP radio (there are deals to be had on these) and see how many countries we can work in a limited time with 5 watts? —just an idea, but you get the picture.

What do *you* think? I'd like to hear from you!

—Ed Schuller, WA6CTA

from front page

RIMshots

Meeting Attendance:

Come Back, Folks!

Considering the size of the NCDXC, our attendance at meetings is pathetic—averaging less than 50 attendees. Knowing this, we have made good programming a high priority, and Glenn, W6OTC has put together some truly outstanding programs...And there will be a program at *every* meeting. Looking ahead, October brings no less a DX luminary than Jim Smith, VK9NS. In November, *Force 12* antenna guru Tom Schiller, N6BT, will speak on the subject of antennas. Also in November, there will be a demo by Kenwood of its newest radio, the TS-870S. At our Christmas meeting, NI6T will give his Conway Reef presentation. (They loved Garry's show in Visalia, New Orleans, Chicago and L.A.).

Have you ever considered how lucky we are to be able to attract such highly regarded DXers? (Clue: many of the top DXers happen to be NCDXC members!) How fortunate we are to be able to attend such programs and to come to a meeting and *schmooze* with the movers and shakers of the DX community!

If you are unable to drive at night, how about carpooling with another member? And if you regularly attend meetings, offer to bring along nearby non-driving member(s). Are you willing to drive local hams to NCDXC meetings? If so, please contact Garry, NI6T—he will publicize your call in the *DXer*. You can also alert others by making an announcement on W6TI or on packet. Please consider doing so—we have *many* members who would attend meetings but for their inability to drive at night.

By the way, guests are always welcome at our meetings.

Would you do me a personal favor? Put aside your reasons for not having come, and come try out the *New NCDXC*. I think you'll see some positive changes, and you might even have a good time. Better yet, bring a friend!

Conway Diary

The first full account of the 1995 Conway Reef DXpedition. Part 3: Of QSO's and Men

Garry Shapiro, N16T

No one had expressed any enthusiasm for it, and it was not brought along.

Pekka and Taina did more fishing than I did, and caught more fish, smallish reef fish that nonetheless perked up several meals. They had a little closed-face spinning outfit and some lures. One day, Taina—fishing alone—trudged across the island with a small fish dangling from the rod: no way was she going to touch it!

I had released the few parrotfish I had caught on my single sojourn with my flyrod, hoping to find bonefish (for sport) or trevally (for food). Toward the end of the week, I went out along the rocky part of the beach with bonefish flies at high tide. Nothing was forthcoming until I reached the northwest point, where there was a substantial tidal rip. Retrieving a cast to the slight drop-off of the beach, I was startled when the squalid fish was unwilling to let the net pass, we dried off our equipment and collapsed into (wet) chairs.

Mats had said at the outset that no one would be interested in food, beyond its obvious role as sustainer of life. I had opined that variety would sustain morale, and planned/hoped to augment our basic diet of noodles and canned fruit with dried and canned foods and fresh fish. I had selected the cook stove, a Chinese chopping knife, chopping board, wok, bamboo steamer, Chinese condiments. I made sure we had lots of onions, garlic, ginger.

As it turned out, the cooking—such as it was—rotated among us randomly: whoever was so inclined at the moment would cook, and someone else would clean up. I recall no bickering over who would cook or who would clean. On board a rolling sailboat in a closed galley, the tasks were not particularly pleasant, but, ashore, they were not onerous. Cooking instant noodles and opening cans are not particularly challenging tasks, and cleanup ashore was simplicity itself: one merely scoured the pot and/or wok with the ubiquitous coral sand. God's own cleanser, as it were.

In retrospect, Pekka did more cooking than anyone else. We did eat some rice. I cooked some once—barely adequately—and Jun, who had received instructions from his wife, cooked some, with better results. But the simplicity of the noodles won out on all other occasions, and most of the rice was not utilized. In addition to the fish we caught, our protein sources included canned ham. I think there may have been a few tins of canned mackerel—a Fiji staple. We did not avail ourselves of another Fiji staple: bully beef.

MCW 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 he 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 viewed as minorities requiring disproportionate time per QSO. I saw these groups as valid DX constituencies deserving attention despite lower achievable rates—an unpopular view that antagonized some team members.

Lowband and RTTY operation were eventually accommodated. I was excited at the prospect of working North America on 160 with Pekka's big inverted-L and the Alpha. But I did not expect it to happen soon, good conditions notwithstanding. So I was surprised to hear on Tuesday afternoon (the 28th) that Pekka was promising 160m skeds to some midwesterners, apparently on his own initiative. My inquiries/protests garnered the 160 opportunity on CW, with Pekka to work Europe later on 75m SSB, well after west coast sunrise. At 1200Z, I found a good opening to the western 2/3 of North America in progress and worked until the opening died *before* west coast sunrise. NCDXCers who stayed up—WA6HHQ, KG6I, K6VX and W6OSP—scored the early victory. Pekka subsequently did very well to Europe on 3.8 MHz.

RTTY operation commenced the following

bringing up the hardware and software, with accompanying frayed nerves and heated exchanges. Ultimately, Jun operated that session, logging over 100 stations (mostly JA). We would return to RTTY several times and finish with 535 QSO's, although many would be just added bands for omnivorous JA operators.

We also revisited Top Band on subsequent evenings, with results alternating between dismal and amazing. High QRN levels made even excellent signals difficult to copy. An interesting observation was that propagation died before west coast sunrise! The stronger the signals were to the east coast and midwest, the earlier the band closed. After the first evening, the only successful west coast stations were those who came up long before their sunrise and battled the eastern pileup. Overall, the first and tenth call areas were the most successful, with five-land almost shut out.

A factor in the equation was the deteriorating Alpha. At first, it delivered a fraction of its rated power, which we ascribed to the generator dynamics. Later, there developed a delay of a fraction of a second before RF power would come up—which truncated calls and caused consternation among the Deserving in the pileups. This problem was temporarily circumvented by using the footswitch to “kick” the amp on before sending CW. But then the amp died altogether; months later, a factory engineer would attribute the death to failed cathode degeneration resistors, since changed. 150W on 160 is not a commanding signal in high QRN environments, but we were barefoot halfway through the 160 sessions, and everywhere

“RTTY operation commenced the following afternoon. There was some difficulty in bringing up the hardware and software, with accompanying frayed nerves and heated exchanges.”

else on CW also. April 2 was worse for North America on top band, but Jun started working JA after west coast sunrise, and logged 54 of his countrymen.

We had big pileups on all bands, from beginning to end. The stated primary operating objective was to work Europe. The reasonable solar flux—and the equinox gray-line right over the north pole—allowed that to happen. Europeans were worked from 80 through 15 meters. Amazingly, Pekka logged over 200 Europeans on 75m SSB!

No Euros were logged on 12 or 10m, but plenty of North Americans and JA's were, with very good signals. I had one run of Europeans on 20m RTTY, after a friend of Nils set up a sked. Some very specialized paths were exploited along the way; for example, Mats was able to run French and Spanish stations—and no others—one afternoon before our sunset, on 40m SSB. I generally was not operating Euro pileups, but, since we had three European operators, that was understandable.

I primarily worked Japanese and North American stations, mostly on CW. The JA's were ubiquitous, reappearing on every band and mode. A secondary emphasis was on the WARC bands. The Force 12 WARC duobander did a fine job for us, and many large pileups were engaged and logged.

Captain Arnold—generally alone on *Te Ni* with his dog—came ashore several times to share a meal and some camaraderie. One day, he and Mats donned masks and flippers and dove for our sunken treasures outside the reef. The ill-fated outboard, Pekka's solid-state amplifier and power supply and a bottle of *Absolut* vodka—all dense enough to have sunk immediately—were recovered. The rest had been carried away by the strong current. The outboard and electronics were soaked and cleaned, but to no avail. The vodka, thankfully, was none the worse from submersion, and was enjoyed by all.

The generators had been placed 30m

from the tents— 60m apart with the tents between. The different liquid fuels in use were stored in similar 20 liter plastic jugs—unmarked and indistinguishable except by color. Toward the end of our time on the island, jugs were consolidated. A container with premix for the outboard was inadvertently included with the diesel fuel and late one night the diesel generator was fueled with it. The generator stopped running. Out went four of us to fix it in the dark, draining the fuel and float tanks, refilling with diesel. The machine ran hesitantly at first, as if uncertain what it should do. Then the premix was flushed by the diesel fuel and it settled in and ran.

Mats had a brainstorm, which was to partially alleviate the band/mode conflicts. The 3.3 kVA diesel generator had a 10 Amp battery charging output—unfiltered and not enough to run a radio. But it also had a battery for self-starting, and the battery was itself charged from the generator. Reasoning that transmit duty cycle was fairly low, Mats spliced together two 12V radio power cables and connected his IC-735 to the battery. Now we had a third station! Initially, Mats sat out in the sun, scrunched over, trying to read the display on his radio while working CW. I scrounged some wood, rope and a tarp, and fashioned a shelter for him as he operated. Eventually, we moved the generator adjacent to the CW tent and set up Mats' third station in the eating area—about as far as his kludged power cable would reach. The generator noise, added to the roar of the wind-ruffled tents and tarps, and the heat of the sun, did not make life in the CW tent any easier, but we now had three stations, and that was important! It meant more opportunities to operate and—most important to me—the chance to operate RTTY or 160 with (somewhat) less grouching from those who did not see any value in it.

We had set the operating tents up with a separation of about ten feet with a shel-

tered breezeway between, where we could gather in shade and cook and eat food. A very large tarp provided not only the cover for this area, but additional coverage of the operating tents—which turned out not to be waterproof. The cover also made the interior of the CW tent darker, so that one could *almost* see the FT990 display or the laptop screen when the sun was high. The tarp was supported in the breezeway by a lash-up of round poles, providing a roof that required stooping to get under, but which sagged in places, making it vulnerable to sudden inputs of rain, as in squalls.

Such a squall hit in the middle of the night toward the end of the week: a sudden, ferocious burst of wind and water. Nils, Mats and I were QRV at the time. The suddenness of the squall had caught us unprepared. Tent doors and windows were unzipped, the big tarp was not fully deployed and rain started pelting our equipment. Quickly, we were out to deploy—and hold onto—the tarp, while the full force of the torrent drenched us and threatened to collapse the whole, flimsy encampment. One generator, its covering tarp blown over its air intake, sputtered and died. The semidarkness added an element of surreality to the scene.

For a while, holding down a tarp corner to protect the CW tent, I tried to minimize my exposure to the rain. But I realized that this downpour had presented the first opportunity in almost two weeks for a freshwater shower and a chance briefly to wash the salt out of my clothes and hair. I was still in the same shorts and teeshirt I had been wearing when the dinghy had capsized a week earlier! I positioned the tarp end to funnel the water over my body. Ironically, we were too busy struggling for our installation's survival to fully avail ourselves of the opportunity to improve our personal hygiene. I crooned several choruses of “Singing in the Rain,” while the squall blew through. to next page

from page 5

Conway Diary

The cost of the shipment had just trebled! This shock was followed by another—no travelers cheques would be accepted! This news was imparted *after* the cheques had been signed. Our departure was imminent and we had little cash—we would have to run all over Suva again.

I snapped. My voice went up a third-octave and 10 dB; heads turned at desks throughout the room. I could visualize my hands at the shipping-agent's throat. Finally, he relented, muttering all the while about being screwed by changing exchange rates. We certainly hoped he would be!

There was also considerable additional red tape for Pekka and me, who had lost our passports, credit cards and a lot more. For me, these hassles lasted right until the moment of departure. Mats and I argued about the 35mm slides. He was understandably reluctant to part with the precious film and worried about compatible processing, but we were committed to a Visalia presentation immediately upon my return to California—and my own camera had been ruined in the capsizing. Ultimately, he gave the film to the hams who met him and Nils in Los Angeles, who in turn returned the processed slides to me, who sent them to Sweden after Visalia.

Soon, it was time to say our farewells and depart. The months of preparation and the weeks of adventure were over. I took a long way home via Brisbane and Auckland, visiting friends, drinking beer, flyfishing for New Zealand trout.

The Conway Reef effort logged 30,000 QSO's, with 15% Europeans. We provided a New One for a great many, one of the last few DXCC counters for some—and the very Last One for a few. The Grand Adventure had been much more than expected, in ways both positive and not-so-positive: intense, demanding, exhilarating, frightening, exhausting, frustrating and—ultimately—gloriously rewarding.

to see a large, dark, deep-bodied fish charge off the reef right at the fly. Much to my disappointment, it decided, after a lengthy inspection, not to inhale the bogus treat. I estimated this fish—most likely a trevally—at almost 20 pounds. I subsequently hooked two smaller trevally on larger flies, losing one and landing one. The latter was killed and eaten, and was superb. We all wished I had nailed the large one! I made one last attempt at the same spot on the day

we departed, risking the ire of my fellows, but I only fished for 15 minutes, quitting when there were no takers. For these experiences, I hauled the rod case all over the Pacific.

Monday, April 3

The night before departure, we have an impromptu meeting to discuss our strategy for breaking camp. Pekka announces that he will take charge of the antennas. With Mats in his now-accustomed role as dinghy man, the rest of us are to be support personnel. One rig is to be QRV until the end. At sunrise on Monday, April 3, the lowband antennas become redundant, and are taken down, followed by one C3, leaving the other C3 and the N1217. There is a definite sadness at such moments. The gasoline generator has failed, but is also redundant. Nils' TS450S, the diesel generator and the two beams now represent our dwindling DXpedition. There are tarps and tents to fold, equipment to pack. I take down the CW station. The now-useless Alpha, in its box, provides a table for the one remaining radio. Jun and Nils pack their amplifiers. Coax is rolled up. Our little encampment is fast disappearing.

The last station and its operator sat in the open, in the sun, while the last pile-ups were worked. I was given a chance to operate the remaining station on SSB, with good openings into the USA and some JA's. There were still requests for CW—the keyers had been packed—and even for 80 meters. Many of the deserving were apparently unaware that this was our swan song. “When are you leaving?” some asked. “In an hour or two,” was the answer. I went to 20, 17, 15, 12 and 10 meters and back as the piles worked down. Finally, Mats came up and told me I was closing down. I thought he meant the station, and pronounced our final thanks and good-byes to those of the Deserving still listening. I climbed into the dinghy for the trip to *Te Ni*.

The tide was out, the water calm and shallow. I looked back at the island, then ahead at *Te Ni*, not savoring the three days it would take to reach Suva. “Well,” I thought, “that's it.” Not quite, as it turned out: Mats had shut *me* down, but not the station. Nils operated and logged one final column of QSO's. And then it was over.

Once again, *Te Ni* was bursting with equipment and DXpeditioners, as the anchor was weighed and the bow pointed toward Fiji. We poured the last of the vodka and toasted the island and ourselves. The vodka bottle, sealed and containing a note signed by all, was cast into the current.

It was a slow trip into the wind, with a roundabout passage to Suva via Nadi, on the other end of the big island of Viti Levu. For most of us, the *mal de mer* of the outward leg was replaced by a listless torpor. We did no radio, and did not know that the A and K indices had soared, and that the bands had died. Ironically, once past our initial difficulties, Dame Fortune had turned and shown us her smiling face.

After the purity and isolation of Conway Reef, Suva's bustle and smells were a shock. Ashore, we opted for hot showers, pizza and beer. The men—excepting me, bearded for almost thirty years—happily

to next page

shaved. The next days were spent unloading the boat and packing/shipping gear, shopping, celebrating with the local 3D2's and loafing in the hotel pool. Band conditions remained lousy, and few QSO's were made from the hotel.

Endless phone calls finally indicated that sea cargo would be the best way to ship most of the gear back to California—at a seemingly reasonable price per cubic meter. Only when all had been packed into a fraction of a cubic meter (a fairly large unit) and presented at the shipping agent's warehouse did the other shoe drop—we would be charged for one cubic meter *minimum*. I protested that I had not been so informed by the gent imparting the information. The agent smiled benignly. “He is the *import* manager,” he said with perfect third-world logic. “I am the *export* manager.”



Is Life Too Short for QRO?

Taken from the VE7TCP DX Reflector:

On September 15, at 1756Z I worked the Easter Island DXpedition on 17 m SSB QRP, 2.0 watts PEP. The report I received was 54.

Quick calculations indicated that I could work them with even lower power, especially on CW. I carefully set my transmitter to 100 ± 3 mW. I worked them on CW at this power at 1830Z, receiving 519. This is certainly the lowest-power contact they had of the 45,000 contacts they made.

The following was the reply by E-mail from Bob, KK6EK:

From: “Easter Is. DXpedition”
easter@ve7tcp.ampr.org

To: jpawlan@pawlan.com

Jeffrey- Congratulations for working XRØY with only 100 mW. Considering the intrinsic difficulties and the big pile-ups, this was an accomplishment to be proud of.

The QRPer in Autumn

Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD

The days grow short—the September-to-November syndrome—but the winter is not yet here, and one can even find enjoyment and some small solace in the sunny days we still have. This even with the sunspots on a skid and the seers and oracles studying the available spots weekly so as to forecast the dismal future.

Last week, on one of those bitter-sweet, hazy autumn days, one of the local QRPers came trotting up the hill, this one newly on the DXCC rolls and firm in his belief that DXing—like summer love—will endure forever. And who would dare say nay? This one has traveled the route up the hill before. He wants to know everything and to know it now. At this stage, one must admit that these are the pure DXers—they neither know nor live for anything else. They want to know more—always more. So we talked awhile and later the Old Timer came strolling down the hill with his dog.

And we talked as DXers always do, of DX, of DXpeditions and the Great Days of DXing which surely will come by the end of the present week. In retrospect, it always has. But the QRPer wanted knowledge more than talk and we talked of things which add to the knowledge of any DXer. Such as how Marconi was a scion of the Jameson Family in County Wexford, the family which produces Jameson's Irish Whiskey. The QRPer was not aware of this. Then the Old Timer said: “Are you aware that Marconi studied with James Maxwell? And that his work and study with Maxwell were certainly responsible for the furtherance of Marconi's work. Did you know that?” The QRPer was hardly dumb—only momentarily speechless. “You mean...,” he managed to ask and all he got were smiles of encouragement. After all, “Knowledge is Power” and he wanted knowledge and we were ready to help with the empowerment.

Again he spoke. “You did say James Maxwell?” he asked, and we both nodded. For sure, he did have the name right. And what else could we do to add to or embellish that sunny afternoon? We had talked of DXing, the QRPer had again learned a bit of DX History, and his thirst for knowledge was again a bit assuaged. And now he even knew that Marconi had an Irish grandfather and that Marconi also had studied with James Maxwell. What wonders await the enterprising newly-minted DXer? The whole wide world of DXing and DX history is out there waiting. Out where the evening meets the sky.

It was not long before the QRPer was gone—the young are always restless. It was nice to relax under the big oak tree, but finally we asked: “do you think we did the right thing?” The Old Timer thought awhile and did finally nod his head. “It was to stir not only his curiosity,” he said to start, “but also possibly to open his mind to some seldom-remembered DX lore. Often these new ones tend to believe that DXing started when they themselves started DXing, but there is much to remember of DXers and DXing in past years. That QRPer is smart—he soon will understand. He also will have a few new aspects of DXing to consider. Among his contemporaries he will gain another degree of honor for his perspicacity. And sometimes I have to wonder what they are talking about. But knowledge will come. It always does. For DXers, naiveté is a phase quickly passed.”

With that out of the way, the Old Timer took off on his appointed rounds and we drowsed in the sunny afternoon, thinking that maybe next time we might work on the acceleration of the new sunspot cycle. You know, something like “DX squared.” If you do not yet understand that possibility, hold the questions.

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

