

TCDXA

TWIN CITY DX ASSOCIATION



Minnesota

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**KØAD
KØIEA
KØJUH
WØBV**

The GRAY LINE REPORT

DXing from Minnesota - Land of 10,000 Lakes

FT5ZM

The Amsterdam Island DXpedition

by Ralph Fedor, KØIR - Team Leader



The FT5ZM Team

Left to right: VA7DX, N2OO, VE7CT, UA3AB, K9CT, WB9Z, K4ZLE, N6HC, KØIR, K4UEE, FM5CD, LA6VM, EY8MM, HK1R

[The Amsterdam Island DXpedition](#) had its origin in 2012. I had my sights on a Heard Island DXpedition for 2014 with a core group of team members, a ship and a green light from the Australian Antarctic Division in place. I made no public announcement, since I had not finalized the finances. When another party announced their intent to activate Heard in 2014, I decided to re-focus on another project and selected Amsterdam Island. The cost of doing Amsterdam would be somewhat greater than the Heard project, and the logistics quite different, but the ship and

team would not need to change. In late May of 2012, I began working intently on the Amsterdam project.

Over the next 15 months, I spent over 2,000 hours on the project. There was a landing permit to secure, customs and shipping to coordinate, transportation to re-arrange, equipment to secure, a team roster to complete and contracts to negotiate. I worked with Stan, **SQ8X**, to create our website and I asked my good friend and fellow DXpeditioner, Bob, **K4UEE** to handle our finances. George, **N4GRN** helped with storage and shipping, while Gregg, **W6IZT** worked on our IT system. These four gentlemen made an enormous contribution to the project.

I found myself dealing with four currencies and governments: the United States, New Zealand, Australia and France. Fluctuations in the value of the U.S. dollar complicated our cost projections, and I struggled with translating correspondence into French to communicate with TAAF (Australes et Antarctiques Francaises), which administers Amsterdam Island, and ultimately issued me a landing permit and amateur radio license. The people at TAAF were very courteous and responsive, but I was always uncertain about us really understanding each other. Then, in September of 2013, a miracle happened.

New personnel rotate onto Amsterdam Island every September. I emailed the new Amsterdam base commander to brief him on our upcoming DXpedition, putting my email in English followed by Google Translate's French version. The base commander replied promptly saying that he had gone to school in Canada and had worked for two years in New Zealand, and that we could do this in English. He was interested in the DXpedition, and offered to help in any way that he could. The commander, Eric, was a godsend, and we worked through the final details of the DXpedition very smoothly. I briefed him on the weight and cubic meters of cargo we would bring with us, and he and I began organizing the logistics of getting it all ashore.

Meanwhile, a team of VK6 DXers offered to help us acquire hard to ship supplies, most notably, 30 light weight 10-ft. tower sections to support our 10 Yagi antennas. They also helped acquire medi-



The Braveheart loaded and ready to sail. Look closely to see the maritime mobile vertical on the starboard aft deck (see pg. 7).

cal supplies. The Braveheart sailed from New Zealand on December 26 loaded with the supplies we had shipped to them in October, and met our team in Fremantle, Australia on January 12th. We loaded the additional tower sections and medical supplies aboard the RV Braveheart in Fremantle, and our team of 14 began our sail to Amsterdam on January 15th. At first light, nine days later, we were looking at Amsterdam Island, and again, a little uncertainty crept into our minds. How would we be received by the 20 people there? Would we be viewed as intrusive and disruptive? Would they help us willingly or unwillingly? As the day brightened, those questions were answered in short order.



Arrival at Amsterdam Island with calm seas.



My jaw dropped a bit, as I saw a dozen or so people on the island making their way to the jetty which protruded into the open ocean. Following them were two four-wheel drive John Deere tractors, two flatbed trailers and a large Terex crane. When I climbed out of the zodiac and onto the jetty, I was met with smiles and handshakes, and the French team and our zodiac drivers began working together as a cohesive unit. It didn't take long to get our gear ashore and to feel welcome in this place.



Two four-wheel drive tractors, a Terex crane and two large trailers were used to offload the zodiac and move the DXpedition's gear to the op sites.



Tower sections being lifted ashore. These would support ten 3-element monoband Yagis.

Our equipment containers were all color coded, blue would go to the shelter near the Amsterdam base (the Mataf shelter) and red to the shelter 2.2 km southwest of the base (the Antonelli shelter).

We assembled in the Skua Café for a welcome luncheon and more handshakes and smiles. Afterwards, the two tractors, one with a fork lift and the two trailers made quick work of moving our generators, fuel and radio gear to the appropriate shelters, and we began assembling our stations and putting up antennas.



Team members coming ashore on Amsterdam.

We were able to deploy our equipment essentially as planned. We had to make some adjustments to deal with the size of the shelters and the rugged terrain for the antennas, but we were able to use everything that we had planned to use. The Braveheart crew helped us enormously, and the base personnel were always willing to lend a hand. But, we were in for a great deal of work. The walk to Antonelli was a winding uphill and downhill path rising 600 feet, and not a straight 2.2 km line between the two sites.

Grasses at Antonelli were chest high, making antenna placement, laying radials and running feed lines a real chore. It was common to see someone's head and shoulders suddenly disappear from view above the grass when he stepped into a hole or stumbled on a hidden rock. In a few moments, the man's head would poke out of the grass again, and he would resume his task. After the first day at Antonelli, Jerry, **WB9Z** summed it up by saying, "Nodir worked my rear end off!" That's not Jerry's exact quote. He described his anatomy somewhat more graphically.

Nodir was not shirking either; it took him five hours of trudging through the tall grass to pull 1000 feet of ladder line for a bidirectional Beverage. Despite the challenges, both the Antonelli and Mataf sites were operational within 36 hours, and the DXpe-



dition was on the air on all bands at 0914 UTC on January 26, with eight K3s, four KPA500s, four OM Power amps, ten monoband Yagis and seven verticals.



Main street of Base Martin de Vivies.

We knew we would not be able to travel between the Antonelli shelter and the base during the night. Operating shifts there were essentially 24 hours long. Walking there and back in the same day was not an efficient use of our time. The two bunks at Antonelli allowed us to catch some sleep during our 24-hour shift. What we did not know was that we would not be able to walk between our sleeping quarters at the base and the Mataf shelter at night. The walk was not long, but was hazardous at night because of the rough terrain and the fur seals that moved onto the path after nightfall. Therefore, shifts at Mataf ended up being 12 hours long. We were initially concerned about these 12- and 24-hour shifts, but we actually settled into this routine quite easily.



To welcome the FT5ZM team, the French displayed flags from all the team member's countries. During our stay on Amsterdam there were more nationalities on the island than ever before.

We went into this DXpedition expecting sunspot numbers in the mid-60s. We were treated with sunspot numbers in the mid-80s. This made 10 meters a fantastic band, yielding more QSOs than any other band. The long, phenomenal European openings produced over 84,000 QSOs. North Americans were rewarded with over 42,000 QSOs and Asia almost 38,000. I want to thank Stu, **K6TU** for his assistance with propagation predictions. He confirmed that our 3-element Yagis would have a 10 dB advantage over SVDA arrays. Thanks to Stu, we knew when openings should be occurring, and tried to be there. The Yagis really helped to select optimum paths. We heard well, and I think we were heard well. The Elecraft K3s and KPA500s worked great for us, and the OM Power amplifiers never blinked.



The Mataf shelter and operating site.



The Antonelli shelter and operating site, located 2.2 km from Mataf.



Our 160 meter operation is a story in itself, and whatever measure of success we may have enjoyed on 160 meters is largely due to two factors: Nodir, **EY8MM**, and DX Engineering. Nodir was tireless and relentless in his pursuit of excellence on 160. He was not satisfied with our initial 18-meter high transmitting antenna, and took it down the second day, converting it into a 28-meter high flame-thrower. Almost singlehandedly, he laid out the DX Engineering Beverages and DX Engineering Four-Square Receive Array. He knew and briefed everyone on propagation, and essentially set the table for the rest of us. We tried to be loud on 160, and benefited from multiple directional receive antennas and the band opening before sunset and remaining open until well after sunrise. We netted 3578 QSOs from our 160 site at Antonelli.



Our first 160 meter antenna was a top-loaded 18-meter tall push-up mast.



Our second 160 meter antenna was 28 meters tall and top loaded, and used every day, except the first.

Our team of DXpeditioners functioned as a unit. I could not have asked for a better fit of complementary skills, emotional stability, physical endurance and tolerance. A number of us had special duties, and all of us rotated through what the base personnel called “Petite Marie.” This involved assisting with the daily cleaning chores in the dining hall and recreation area – washing down the tables, vacuuming, dusting and assisting with serving. We were truly a part of the base team.

The base team, in turn, became a part of our team. We presented them with T-shirts celebrating their 65th mission on Amsterdam, gave them a 30-minute slide presentation about amateur radio and

held an “open house,” so they could get a close look at what we were doing. When we made our 100,000th QSO, they hung a large celebratory banner to mark the event, and repeated this for our 150,000th QSO. As a result, I think we have one new ham in the making, as a result.



The base personnel put up a banner celebrating our 100,000th QSO.

DXers and DXpeditioners perceive things differently. DXers hear what’s happening on the DXpedition’s transmit frequency. DXpeditioners hear what’s happening on their receive frequency. My perspective is this: Callers were generally courteous and orderly. If I struggled with a call, others generally stood by until I completed the QSO. I experienced no jamming on my receive frequency. If I called for a specific continent, I generally experienced cooperation. Of course there was an exception from time to time; perhaps just a simple mistake. So, in my personal experience, pileups were a pleasure to work ---- worldwide.



Operators at Antonelli.
Left to right: **HK1R**, **K9CT**, **VA7DX**, **UA3AB**.



Time passed quickly for us, and soon it was time to leave. We began dismantling Antonelli on Feb. 11 and Metaf on Feb. 12, with deteriorating weather conditions. We essentially “made a run for it” on Feb. 13th with waves breaking over the jetty as we moved our equipment and the team from the island to the Braveheart. Nine days later, we were back in Australia with over 170,000 QSOs in our log.



The weather turned foul at our departure time with waves crashing over the jetty. Thanks to the skill of the Braveheart's zodiac operators and the French crane operators we all made it off the island safely.

There are so many to thank for our success. The Northern California DX Foundation tops the list with its \$50,000 of support. Then, there is IN-DEXA, the Colvin Grant and the hundreds of club and individual sponsors. The **Twin Cities DX Association** gave an extra measure of support, including a “pallet” of Coke products from **KØJUH**, and for that we thank them. Please visit our website and click on the [SPONSORS](#) tab to see a complete list of those who helped us. Also, note our commercial sponsors, and consider them for your next purchase.

Most of all, I need to thank the 13 men who joined me on this DXpedition – the team. Each of them invested a large amount of money, time and trust to produce those 170,000 QSOs. When you hear them on the air, tell them “Thank you.” They are the ones who made FT5ZM happen.

73! Ralph, KØIR



Editor's note: All of the photos in the FT5ZM story were taken by Ralph, KØIR. The following Amsterdam DXpedition photos are courtesy of Nodir, EY8MM. Many more photos may be seen on Nodir's website: <http://www.ey8mm.com/pictures/view-album/61>



Ready for departure from Freemantle.

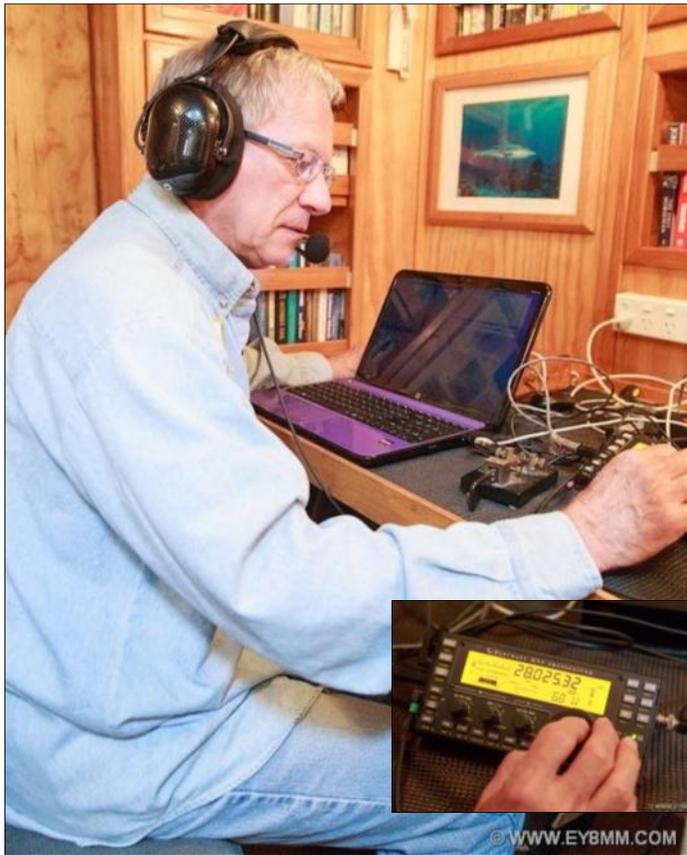


Full speed ahead to Amsterdam.



The Braveheart's engine room.





VK6FZM/MM operator KØIR - using Elecraft KX3



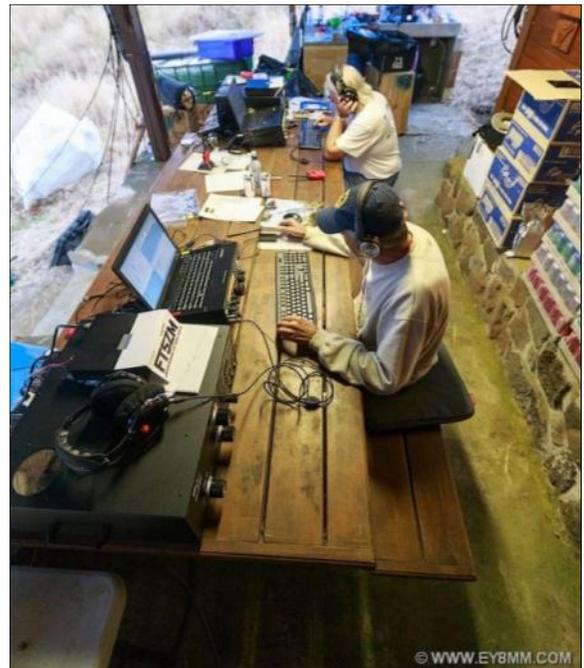
Over 50 zodiac trips bring the gear to shore.



Setup at the Mataf site.



Maritime mobile vertical.



Operating position outside of the Mataf shelter. Note the Coke products behind the operators. (supplied by KØJUH!)





Generators run in special housings to prevent any oil or gas spills.



Antennas at the Antonelli site.



The Antonelli site.



Bob, K4UEE



Craig, K9CT (left) runs 160 meters.
Andy, UA3AB (right) runs 80 meters.



The Braveheart waiting to take us back home.



Member News

KØMD Receives WPX Award of Excellence

“This award from CQ arrived at my house during my trip to VP5 (see page 14). I am especially proud and grateful for it. It reflects a significant work with the CQ WPX program - qualifying for 14 separate awards.

The WPX program is outlined here:
http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com/cq_awards/cq_wpx_awards/042208_cq_wpx_new_rules.pdf.

The basic award is the Mixed one for QSOs with 400 different WPX prefixes. I have qualified for the Mixed, CW and SSB; and for 80/40/20/15/10 individual awards and for individual awards with NA, SA, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania, as outlined on the website. Once you qualify for all of those, you get the WPX Award of Excellence

It was all done using LOTW, thanks to the collaboration between ARRL and CQ magazine. No QSL cards were sent in!! It has been the hardest wallpaper that I have earned, so far.

I encourage you to evaluate your WPX status on LOTW. It has never been easier to review and apply. Those who are Diamond Club or Maxim Society members pay very little in fees to CQ for the processing.

Thank you ARRL!! Yet, another benefit for joining the SCC ([ARRL's Second Century Campaign](#)) and the Maxim society. Please consider signing up this year.

Also, my 6-band WAS just arrived (i. e. - the 160 meter endorsement for 5BWAS). I am taking full advantage of LOTW and the League awards program this winter!”

Scott, KØMD

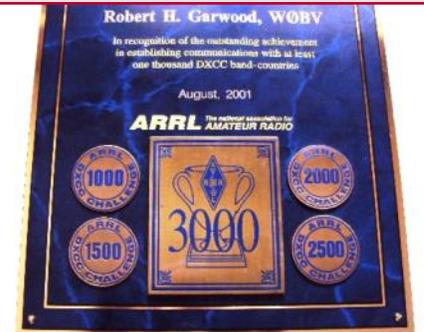
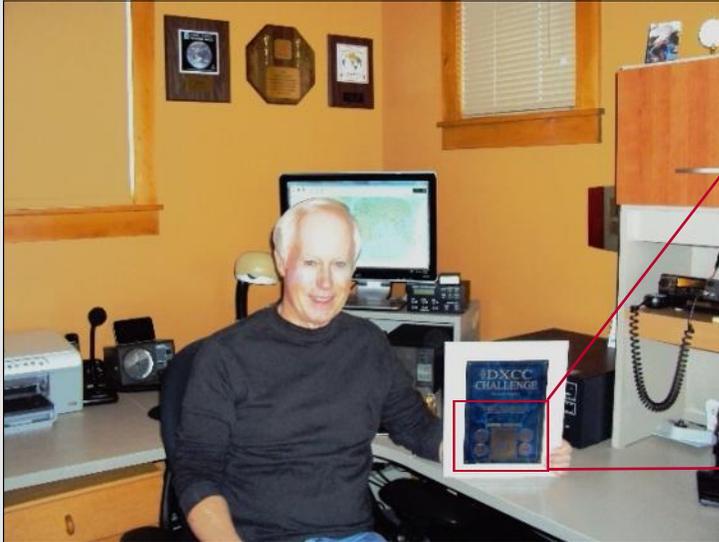


As stated on the CQ website: “The WPX Award of Excellence is the ultimate award for the prefix DXer. The requirements are 1000 prefixes in Mixed mode, 600 prefixes in SSB, 600 prefixes in CW, all 6 continental endorsements, and the five non-WARC band endorsements 80-10 meters.



Member News

WØBV Collects 3,000 Points in the DXCC Challenge



"It all started for me in 1993, when I noticed that a few of my fellow TCDXA DXers were collecting 'band countries.' Up until this point, I was focused only on chasing ATNOs - happy to work an ATNO on any band. I had recently installed a 10-element LPDA as my main (20m to 10m) HF antenna, which gave me opportunity to collect DXCC entities on the 17m and 12m WARC bands.

At the time, there was no DXCC Challenge award program. The DXCC Challenge was established as a result of the work and recommendations of the DXCC 2000 Committee. The revised rules went into effect in 1998. They included single-band DXCC awards, which have proven to be very popular. The DXCC Challenge grew out of that initiative, as an overall competitive award for DXCC.

In May, 2000, Wayne Mills, N7NG joined the ARRL staff as the Membership Services Manager. Wayne also served as ARRL DXAC Chair for six years, beginning in 1997. He oversaw implementation of the DXCC Challenge award. Wayne was also heavily involved with the development of Logbook of the World. LOTW has been a huge asset to anyone collecting points for the Challenge award.

The DXCC Challenge awards one point for each current entity (deleted entities are excluded) confirmed on each of ten bands: 160 through 6 meters. 30m was initially not included in the program, but was added in 2002. Entry into the Challenge award begins at the 1,000 point level. Endorsements to the award are available at the 1,500, 2,000, 2,500 and 3,000 point levels.

In order to reach the 3,000 point level, it's necessary to be serious about both 160 and 6 meters. I've been extremely fortunate to have had great Elmers for each band. Chuck Munce, KØSQ, who currently has 125 entities confirmed on 6m, has taught me the 6m band plan and how to watch for band openings. On 160m, my Elmer is Tim Blank, NØTB. Tim has had huge success on 160m, with 275 entities confirmed (FT5ZM will make 276). Tim has shared his 160m knowledge with me, and has been my biggest cheerleader on Topband. He has launched me from my La-Z-Boy recliner on countless occasions with 160m DX alerts. (Unfortunately, I have not always been able to hear what Tim hears from his quiet hilltop location, west of Rochester.)

It has taken over five years to move from 2,950 to 3,000 points. Sometimes it has felt like swimming upstream. For example, I lost seven points with the deletion of MV Island. And, as we've found, the current sunspot cycle peak has been less than good for 6 meter F2 propagation. DXCC Challenge 3,000 has been exactly that - a fun challenge. And, it's another item that I can cross off of my bucket list.

73 de Bob, WØBV"



Member News

TCDXA & MWA Members Pack Meals for the Feed My Starving Children Event



This group of TCDXA and MWA members helped pack over 6200 meals during a two-hour period on January 30th at a Feed My Starving Children event in Golden Valley. The meals will be shipped to Haiti to feed children and families in need.

Front Row: Jean (XYL of KCØRET), Diana (XYL of KØMPH), **KØANA**, Brooke (friend of KØANA).

Back Row: KCØRET, KØMPH, NØAT, Faith (XYL of NØAT), ACØX, KØYAK, NØKK, Marianne (XYL of KØAD), KØAD.





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Pub 42 is the New Home for TCDXA Meetings

www.pub42.com

When our old meeting spot, the Sunshine Factory, closed in November, PUB 42 opened a few days later at the same location. The first order of business for the new owner was to remodel the dining area, including expansion of the private meeting room.

On February 17th, we held our first meeting in the larger meeting room. We were greeted by the new management, who thanked us for our business.

Our members can order from the menu that offers a nice variety of appetizers and entrees. Best of all, we were given individual checks. PUB 42 will be our meeting venue for the foreseeable future.



Our new, much larger, meeting room.



Our servers: Ashley and Emma.



Introducing the TCDXA Operations Manual

From its early years in the 70s, when life was much simpler and the club was much smaller, TCDXA has evolved into a much busier non-profit organization, with a membership numbering 156 and an important mission - funding qualified DXpeditions.

After the club was granted non-profit status in 2009, we were advised to get organized. "Flying by the seat of our pants" was no longer acceptable. At the time, we talked about creating a document that would provide club officers a clear definition of the numerous activities that make up the day-to-day operation of the club.

Due to some serious procrastinating, nothing happened until early 2013, when we finally "got around to it," and designed our club's first operations manual. It was a "hard copy" document that later was converted to a PDF. You can download it here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/4ofib1yqi4qcr2t/TCDXA%20Operations%20Manual.pdf>.



Collins RX51S-1 rcvr, Johnson Viking Ranger TX, Astron RS-20M, Icom BC-123A, Viking 6N2 VFO, Hewlett Packard 6216A pwr supply, James Millen grid-dip meter Type 90651 w/coils & a Johnson 6/2m converter.

ZS6WB MAKES GENEROUS DONATION TO TCDXA "DOLLARS FOR DX"

Member Hal Lund, **ZS6WB** recently donated his vintage radio station to our club. The equipment was in storage at his sister's home in Minneapolis, and netted the club \$1,000 after being purchased by one of our members.

Hal, on behalf of future DXpeditions, thank you very much for your thoughtful generosity!



No Qs, but plenty of Ps (Perch) in “The Last Soviet Republic”

by Sean Warner, KØXQ

As the US delegate to the 34th Congress of Angling Confederations in Lisbon, Portugal last April, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that the XI World Ice Fishing Championship was confirmed to be in Minsk, the Republic of Belarus. Belarus is a small country at the crossroads of Europe, with a historically important presence. Belarus was once part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which in the 16th century was the largest geopolitical power in Europe; modern day Belarusian was considered the court language of that era.

First, here’s a brief history refresher. Of all the former Soviet republics in World War II, Belarus suffered the most of any country, with one of every three citizens perishing during the multiple campaigns of the Eastern Front 1941-44. Operation Bagration (1944) freed Belarus from the yoke of Nazi oppression, but once again brought the country under Soviet control. In 1991, the leaders of Belarus (Stanislau Shushkevich), Ukraine (Leonid Kuchma), and Russia’s (Boris Yeltsin) signed the Belazheva Accords, which declared the three republics independent of the Soviet Union; this effectively was the death knell of the Soviet Union, and forced Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to dissolve the Soviet Union on Christmas Day, 1991. Unfortunately for Belarusians, old habits die hard, and the democratic process could not be mastered overnight.

In 1994, Aliaksandr Lukashenko, a seasoned Communist Party “apparatchik,” managed to take control of the Belarusian Parliament through both disingenuous means (he was the only parliamentarian to vote against seceding from the Soviet Union in 1991) and support from hard-liners in the Belarusian military. Lukashenko was “elected” as President in the first of a long line of “elections,” which have been universally condemned by the European Union, the United States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for being completely rigged and fraudulent in all aspects. He has maintained power ever since, by any means. In the last election of 2010, opposition politicians were denied media presence (in Russia, all TV channels, radio stations and print media were controlled by the government, and the Belarusian government contracts their web filtering software from the Chinese) and were arrested for peaceful public assembly. After the results of the 2010 elections were announced, Lukashenko promptly jailed each one of the opposition candidates. Three of them (including the main opposition candidate) remain imprisoned to this day.

Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, in remarking on President George W. Bush’s State of the Union speech in 2002 naming the “Axis of Evil” (North Korea, Iran, and Iraq), expanded upon this theme naming Belarus as one of the “Outposts of Tyranny” (along with Burma [Myanmar], Cuba, and Zimbabwe.) In 2008, the United States withdrew their ambassador and staff from Belarus, leaving only a skeleton staff at the US Embassy.

As a result, Belarus is often referred to in the West as “the last Soviet Republic,” and Luka-



shenko is referred to as “the last dictator in Europe.” While the latter is an accurate description of Lukashenko, the former is an unfortunate and erroneous moniker. While there are numerous Soviet era hold-over institutions in today’s Belarus (centrally planned economy, omnipresent police, government controlled media and Internet, etc.), Lukashenko knows he cannot totally isolate Belarus from the neighboring EU countries (most notably Poland, Lithuania and Latvia), and generally tolerates the Internet as a free flowing media, except for times of crisis (more on that later.)

Minsk was leveled to the ground during WWII, and was completely rebuilt. As a result, today Minsk is a rather cosmopolitan city and is one of the cleanest major cities in the world (major, meaning population over five million residents), which is again a rather Soviet trait harkening back to the days of the Cold War.

This was to be my third trip to Belarus; the first two trips were in 2004 and 2005. In 2004, I was lucky enough to survive the rather laborious process to obtain a temporary operating permit as **EW/KØXQ**. In January of 2004, I met **EU1SA** (Vladimir Sidorov, ex-**UC1WAS**, currently residing in Canada, and operating as **VE3IAE**). I was able to operate from his home station, which consisted of the venerable IC-775, a small tri-band beam and a 40m rotatable dipole.

Conditions on the nights that I was able to operate from his QTH to try to capture the 40m and 20m windows to W/VE were dicey. Calling for USA on 40m CW was completely drowned out by Euro stations, and 20 meters wasn’t much better for either CW or SSB. One evening, at about 10pm local time in Minsk, I was able to hold a frequency on 20m SSB, and had a good couple of hours to make some Qs with folks back in the USA.

EU is not a very rare prefix, but EW and EV are a bit rarer, and I was able to hand out about 110 Qs stateside in less than two hours that night - not a great rate. One of my favorite memories of that trip was hearing **KØSR** blast in over all the QRM and lid traffic like he was right next door! Steve is a good friend to me and to many others in TCDXA and MWA, and we ragchewed for a good 20 minutes (he filled me in on the Vikes upsetting the evil Green and Gold at Lambeau, the Randy Moss “moon” game, as well as the latest results for the Gopher hockey team. When I arrived home, Steve’s QSL card was in the first batch of mail, and I was happy to send him the first con-

firmed QSO with EW/KØXQ.

Since I had previously operated with this callsign, I was hoping to fast-track another application to re-activate it. Sadly, this was not to happen, as the government retains strict control over the ham radio community in Belarus, due mostly to what was happening in neighboring Ukraine. While we were there, my application was denied. Lukashenko has always been deathly afraid of democratic movements in Poland, Lithuania, and (especially) Ukraine bleeding over into Belarus. During the last four days of our trip, internet access was completely shut off in Belarus, as the situation in Ukraine deteriorated further. So sadly, there would not be any Qs this year.

However, my main purpose in Belarus was to compete with the USA Ice Team (<http://www.usaiceteam.com/>, on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/USA-Ice-Team/318429564835351>).



U.S. team in Belarus. KØXQ is on the far right.

As big as ice fishing is in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, the Dakotas and northern Iowa, the interest in the sport is huge in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Scandinavian countries, where it eclipses the level of participation in Minnesota. For example, in Russia, there are over 100,000 people that try out annually for one of the nine spots on their national team. For comparison’s sake, at our annual tryouts in Rhinelander, on a good year we might have 50-75 individuals trying out for our nine spots, and these are usually hard core ice anglers from the domestic pro





ice fishing circuit, <http://naifc.com>, that are willing to leave behind their electronic flashers, UW cameras and their gas/propane/electric augers.

International rules dictate that all competitors operate on the same level playing field; no electronics, cameras or power augers. This is not your grandfather's "sit on a bucket all day and drink beer" ice fishing. International rules dictate that within each zone (five of them, A through E, usually 200m by 200m) every team has one representative, who is allowed to protect two holes at a time (marked by small stands which display country flags; competitors must not fish within five meters of protected holes.)

Competitors find the fish simply by drilling holes – a LOT of them, usually around 100 holes per three hour session, to determine where the fish are by bite, current, position in the water column and type without the aid of electronics, cameras or power equipment.

Our team members have to be physically fit to be able to run in ice cleats (to protect holes) and to be able to drill that many holes with a 4.5 inch or 6 inch hand auger. In Belarus, this was not as difficult as usual, as the ice there was between 5-6 inches deep. However, during the last two championships (IX WIFC, in Kapchagai, Republic of Kazakhstan, and X WIFC, in Wausau, Wisconsin) ice depth was between 2.5 to 3 feet. Those of you that have ever used a hand auger know that drilling even five holes in such ice is not a lot of fun. Now imagine trying to drill 20 times that number within three hours.

The fishing in Eastern Europe tends to be for smaller versions of species we would not target. In Kazakhstan, the biggest fish seen all week was a 7 inch crucian carp. This was not the case in Belarus. The championship venue was on an old rowing canal attached to the large body of water in the northern suburbs of Minsk known as the "Minsk Sea." The majority of fish caught were small tench, perch and roaches. However, there were good-sized red-fin perch in the 11- and 12-inch range that were being caught, and a couple of zones were won by the fisherman who managed to land some of the bigger bream (1 to 2 pounds) on 0.5 pound test line.

Historically, the US team has not done well in

European waters, with our highest finish in Europe being 8th place out of 14 in Kazakhstan. We had high expectations in Belarus, but two bad days put us in 12th place and a step back. Typically, the field is anywhere from 12 to 16 countries. This year, it included Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Mongolia, in addition to our team. Teams that occasionally make it but were missing this year were the Norwegian, Icelandic, Moldovan, and Canadian teams.

The two times the event was held in the USA were 2010 (Rhineland, WI) and 2013 (Wausau, WI), where we finished 1st and 3rd, respectively. Home field is a huge advantage in these tournaments. This year was no different, with the 2012 champions and host team from Belarus battling the strong Ukrainian team (2011 and 2009 champions) and the Russians, a perennial powerhouse and last year's winner in Wausau. The Ukrainians put in an unbelievable performance on day one, winning four of five zones, and although both the Belarusian and Russian teams battled back, the huge lead earned on day one proved to be insurmountable. Thus, the gold medal went to Ukraine, silver to Belarus and Russia just edged out Poland for the bronze medal.

As for the USA team, we have to put this performance past us and look towards 2015, when the championship will be held in the Finnish resort town of Kuopio. The Scandinavian style of ice fishing is more similar to ours, and we're hoping to earn that elusive 1st medal in Europe next year.

The USA ice team is holding open tryouts this year, as always, in Rhineland, WI. For more details, please visit the website at:

<http://www.usaiceteam.com>.

Although getting an **OH** call sign would be a relatively easy process, I doubt that I'll try to obtain it. One of my goals in life is to do the MN QSO Party from the comfort of my ice shanty, usually parked off of Rocky Reef on the western side of Lake Mille Lacs. I think I'll save my first "ice mobile" experience for home!

73 de KØXQ
Sean Warner

ex-KCØBTD, R1/KØXQ, EW/KØXQ





The MWA Contest Corner

Contesting Why Do We Do This??

by Al Dewey, KØAD



Goals and Motivation

As I thought about what to write this month, I got to wondering what it is that really motivates me to spend so many hours each year contesting. In fact, what motivates *anyone* to dedicate so much time to this aspect of Amateur Radio?

For some, contesting is a casual activity, during which you just get on the air for a few hours to hand out QSOs and have some fun. Or, you might just have the desire to try out a new radio or antenna to get “some points for the club.” There’s nothing wrong with that. In fact, radiosport depends on a large number of such contesters to populate the bands during a contest weekend. For me, however, there is a very direct correlation between the goals I set and how motivated I feel during any particular contest, and ultimately how well I do. If I don’t have a goal, I lose interest very quickly in most contests. So, this month’s column will talk about what type of goals I set for various contests, and how they motivate me.

Making the Top Ten Box

For many years, I labored in contest after contest, with relatively low wire antennas and a vertical. Making the Top Ten box was usually out of the question for me. To make matters worse, I was using a SB220 amplifier, which put me in the high power category, making the possibility of a Top Ten finish even more remote in that category. Sometimes, I was able to take Minnesota in SS, or do well in a QSO party, but being listed among the top scorers was out of reach.

With the addition of my 50-foot tower and Force 12 Yagi in 2007, all of a sudden I found the Top Ten box in many events like ARRL Sweepstakes, IARU and the ARRL RTTY Roundup within reach – especially in the low power category. Since many contest write-ups (especially for ARRL sponsored contests) now only include the Top Ten boxes, I was thrilled to be included in the list of Top Ten scores in the contest write up. As a low power contester from Minnesota with an average station, setting a goal to make Top Ten in ARRL SS, IARU and RTTY Roundup is a motivator that will keep me in the chair all weekend.

Setting a Personnel Best

Even with my best effort, there are times when I know making the top ten nationally is just not going to happen. In DX contests, for instance, making the top ten with low power from Minnesota is very difficult. Even in domestic contests like NAQP, the competition is so fierce that it is very hard to have your call listed among the top scorers. In cases like that, I will often set a goal of making a personnel best score for that contest.

I’m not very good at keeping track of my scores from past contests. Until recently, I was never quite sure whether I had set a personal best or not. Earlier this year, WA7BNM made a GREAT enhancement to the 3830 Scores Web Site. Assuming you’ve been fairly faithful about listing your preliminary score at <http://www.3830scores.com/>, you can quickly see all of your past results by simply entering your call at the top of the page and hitting Search. Figure 1 on the next page shows an excerpt from my 2013 listings. Every contest result back to 2002 is shown, so it’s easy to see how you’ve done in past contests. Another way I can stay



2013 Contest	Call Used	Class	Power	Score
ARRL 10 Dec 14	K0AD	SO Mixed	LP	262,128
ARRL 160 Dec 6	K0AD	Single Op	LP	95,238
ARRLDX CW Feb 16	K0AD	SO Unlimited	LP	1,142,430
CaQP Oct 5	K0AD	SOFixed	LP	68,432
CQ160 CW Jan 25	K0AD	Single Op	LP	32,032
CQWW CW Nov 23	K0AD	SOAB(A)	LP	1,003,110
CQWW SSB Oct 26	W0GJ(K0AD)	M/2	HP	10,811,371
CWOpen 0000Z-0359Z	K0AD	Single Op	LP	44,240
CWOpen 1200Z-1559Z	K0AD	Single Op	LP	35,525
CWOpen 2000Z-2359Z	K0AD	Single Op	LP	38,325
CWopsT 0300Z Jul 11	K0AD	Single Op	LP	3,185
CWopsT 0300Z Jul 25	K0AD	Single Op	LP	5,192
IARU Jul 13	K0AD	SO Mixed	LP	265,320
NA Sprint CW September	K0AD	Single Op	LP	12,465
NA Sprint SSB March	K0AD	Single Op	LP	6,560

Figure 1: Excerpt from K0AD 2013 Results Data on 3830Scores.COM

focused on beating my personal best is to use the “Goals” feature in N1MM (see Figure 2). Before the contest, I can browse to the file for a past contest (typically my past best effort). During the contest, the numbers of Qs I need to make that hour are displayed in the “Goal” box. The four colored rate boxes display my current rate for the last 10 QSOs, for the last 100 QSOs, since the beginning of the hour and since the beginning of this contest. As long as I can keep all of those boxes green, I know that I am operating at a pace to beat my personal best!



Figure 2: Typical Goals Window in N1MM Contest Logging Program.

Camaraderie

Having fun is not always about competing one-on-one with other contesters. Being part of a team of like-minded contesters can also be a major motivator. Although I have not had the opportunity yet to go on a contest DXpedition, I've done a number of multi-op efforts at stations like **W0AIH**,

W0GJ, and **K0IR**. Although it's a blast to operate these super contest stations in DX contests, it's equally fun to just ragchew with other contesters during your off-time. I have many fond memories of operating Sweepstakes Phone at **KTØR (SK)** on Sunday afternoons. Even though the rates were low at that time, we often had the headphone on one ear and used the other to shoot the breeze with **KTØR**, **K0OB**, **KEØL**, **KØMPH** and others. Often times, the Vikings game was on in the background.

Another event where camaraderie comes into play is Field Day.

For many years, I enjoyed working with the Twin City FM Club Team for Field Day. More recently, I've operated with a smaller group consisting of **NØAT**, **NØKK**, **NØSTL**, **W0GJ** and others up north. Although I really enjoy operating Field Day, I'm just as motivated by all the planning and setup, again, working together as a team. Recently, we have had our spouses and families join us for the Field Day weekend which also added to the fun.

Friendly Challenges

Another major motivator for me in contesting is the “friendly challenges”. Recently, for example, I found myself competing against stations like **NØKK**, **NAØN**, **NØAT**, **K0OB**, **KØTI** and others in low power domestic contests like ARRL Sweepstakes, ARRL RTTY RU, the North American QSO Parties and the North America Sprints. I don't often beat these guys, but, when I do, it is a major thrill.

On a broader level, it's fun to compete against other “teams” or clubs of contesters. Many contests allow teams of 5 to 10 members to be formed to compete against each other. For me, one of the biggest motivators of all is the friendly “playing for the pizza” competition that takes place during the contest season within MWA. Team North, Team South and Team Hennepin battle it out. The winning team has their dinner paid for at the annual MWA meeting by the other two teams. Half the fun of this competition is the friendly trash talking that goes on among the teams, as well as the constant



cheerleading and enthusiasm by Rich, NØHJZ, who compiles all of the scores. Perhaps more than anything, this is what keeps me in the chair during contest weekends.

Wood and Paper

Some testers that I know literally have a whole wall of wooden plaques. Mine is more like a half wall.



Plaques and Awards can be a great contest motivator.

As many of us active testers get older, receiving another wooden plaque means finding a place for it. Still, I must admit I still get excited when it arrives in the mail. Opening up the box, admiring it, and thinking back on how I won the plaque is fun.

One of my favorite plaques is the one for ARRL RTTY Roundup 2010 Dakota Division champ. Normally, that plaque is won by NØAT or KØTI. In 2010, however, Ron was out of town and Dan decided to do part time that year, so I won. The plaque sponsor, Don, AA5AU, sent me a personnel note of congratulation. The plaque also memorializes Jules, W2GJR – a well known TCDXAer and silent key.

To some extent, I get the same thrill when I receive a certificate in the mail. I admire the certificate, show it to my XYL and then file it away. Every once in a while, I take out my file of contest certificates and look through them – taking a trip down memory lane. See you in the next contest!

73, AI, KØAD



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The Daily DX - is a text DX bulletin that can be sent via email to your home or office Monday through Friday, and includes DX news, IOTA news, QSN reports, QSL information, a DX Calendar, propagation forecast and much, much more. With a subscription to The Daily DX, you will also receive DX news flashes and other interesting DX tidbits. *Subscriptions are \$49.00 for one year or \$28.00 for 6 mos.*

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TCDXA Treasury Report

March 15, 2014

For FY 2014: September, 2013 to August, 2014

Income:

Carryover from FY 2013	\$3,730.29
2014 dues and donations	4,164.94
Door prize ticket sales	274.00
Donations (estates, wills, etc.)	800.00
Total YTD income	\$8,969.23

Expenses YTD:

Bank service fees	(\$0.00)
Website	(0.00)
Office supplies, guest dinners and misc.	(101.53)
Flowers (SK and hospital)	(76.76)
Holiday Party 2013	(345.04)
ARRL Spectrum Defense Fund	(100.00)
NCDXF Donation	(250.00)
MWA Plaque	(75.00)
DXpedition Donation, XRØZR	(250.00)
DXpedition Donation, 3W2DK	(200.00)
DXpedition Donation, FT5ZM	(1000.00)
DXpedition Donation, FT4TA	(500.00)
DXpedition Donation, VK9MT	(250.00)
DXpedition Donation, #6	(0.00)
DXpedition Donation, #7	(0.00)
DXpedition donation, #8	(0.00)
Total YTD expenses	(\$3,148.33)

Current Checking Balance	\$5,820.90
PayPal balance	0.00
Cash on hand	0.00
Total current funds	\$5,820.90



Scott Neader KA9FOX

*"Ah, Breaker-One-Nine,
this here's the Rubber Duck.
You got a copy on me Big Ben,
come on?"*

These are the opening lyrics to the #1 hit Song "Convoy" by C.W. McCall that helped fuel the Citizen Band (CB) Radio craze underway in 1975. Little did Mr. McCall know, but his song also inspired a 10-year old Scott Neader in the small town of Mitchell, South Dakota to spend his hard-earned paper route money on a shiny new 23-channel entry-level Sears CB Radio, and to be a part of that craze.



I spent everything I had on that radio (over \$100 – that was a lot for a 10-year old in the 70s), so I had nothing left to buy the required 12-volt power supply, let alone an antenna. My parents were so proud of how I had worked and saved for that radio, that they surprised me with a power supply from Radio Shack, and they hired the local TV shop to install a vertical antenna on our roof! I've never forgotten that amazing show of support of my radio hobby by my parents.

We moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1977. My mom was working at a local radio station, WLCX/WLXR, and she helped get me a part-time job at the station – lawn mowing at first; then, eventually doing on-air DJ shifts. I used some of my new-found money to purchase and install a two-element Avanti PDL-II quad antenna for 11 meters on our house, plus a 23-channel SSB radio. My parents were, again, very supportive of this monstrosity on the roof, although my dad (WWII vet) used to joke that our house looked like Gestapo Headquarters.

In early 1979, that fancy quad became a crumpled mess in an ice storm. A local ham knocked on our door and offered to buy my rotor. I asked why he wanted it, and he explained that he was a ham radio operator and was in need of a rotor for his ham antenna. I asked a lot of questions about ham radio, and he eventually invited me to his place to see his shack. It was a simple station, but I was in awe! I knew I wanted my ham radio license right then and there. He didn't have time to Elmer me, but he connected me with another local ham. The rest, as they say, is history. I passed my Novice exam later that year, at age 15, purchased my Elmer's radio (a Drake TR-3, which I still own) and waited for the ticket to arrive in the mail. Imagine my surprise, at 15 years of age, opening the mailbox and seeing the callsign **KA9FOX**.

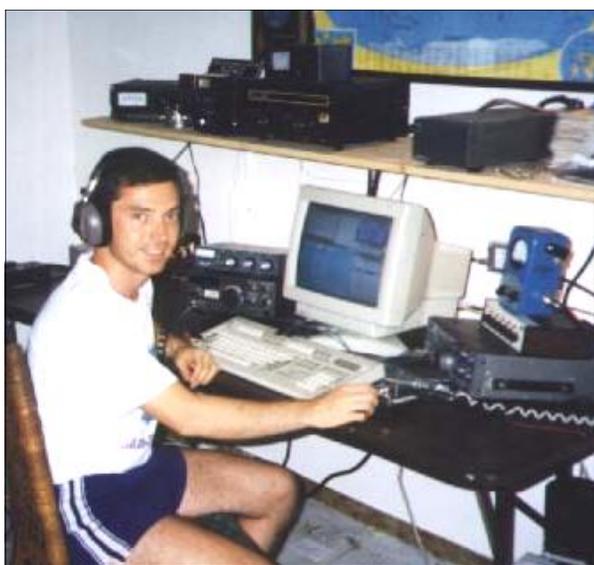
I had a fascination with contesting and DXing right off the bat. I had the high score in



Wisconsin in the Novice Roundup during my first year, and my logs reveal a lot of interesting DX QSOs, as well as contacts made during various contests. It didn't hurt that we were in a very nice solar peak around that time frame.

After high school, I moved out of the house and life took me away from ham radio, other than an occasional Field Day effort, local club meeting, etc. It wasn't until the late 80s that the spark was ignited again, when my friend Mike **NØBSH** (now **K9NW**) invited me to come with him to Paul, **WØAIH**'s station near Eau Claire, to operate a DX contest. I had a blast operating Paul's amazing station, and became a fixture there for years to come. Mike was also the one that introduced me to the Dayton Hamvention, in 1991, and I have not missed attending since then.

In 1994, I went on my first DXpedition. Mike and I met up with fellow contester, **KI4HN** (now **K4MA**) and operated the CQWW SSB contest as **PJ8Z**, from a small hotel in Dutch St. Maarten. After the contest, Mike and I flew to KP4 and did individual entries in the CW Sweepstakes. I operated at **NP4Z**'s house in the QRP category and took 1st place. I was honored to have the National Contest Journal publish my story about the **KP4/KA9FOX** Sweepstakes effort (see http://www.qth.com/ka9fox/kp4_ncj_story.txt).



1994: KP4/KA9FOX CW SS from NP4Z's station.

A couple months later, I received an invitation from Juan, **TG9AJR**, whom I had met at Dayton the previous year, to come to Guatemala to operate the '95 ARRL DX SSB contest, which I gladly accepted. Originally, the plan was to do an all-band high power

effort, but the station I was to operate from became unavailable, so I wound up using Juan's small station at home (**MA5B** butterfly beam at 25ft + 400w amp), and decided on a 15-meter single-band entry, as **TGØAA**. This proved to be a good idea, as I wound up logging nearly 3,900 contacts, which was not only good enough for 1st place, it also broke the all-time World 15m Single Band record (that score still stands as the NA record). I returned to Guatemala the following year for the '96 ARRL DX SSB contest and operated **TG9GI**'s station as **TD9IGI**, as my first ever Single-Op All Band High Power effort, and managed 6,700 QSOs and a 2nd place finish (edged out by **HC8N**).



In the years since, I have operated from a few other DX locations, including contests from **PJ2T** and **KH7R** and a brief evening of operating from Norway as **LA/KA9FOX**, while on vacation. I have also operated at several of the large multi-op US contest stations, including **K3LR**, **W3LPL**, **K4JA**, **KS9K** and, of course, **WØAIH**.

Life started to take a different direction for me around the time of the **PJ8Z** and **TG** operations, as I got married to the love of my life, Laurie, in August of 1995, and had the first of our three children in early 1997. We purchased a house on a small lot in La Crosse, and I started the plan of putting up my first tower. A nosy neighbor started a petition to stop my tower from going up, once she learned about my plans... and she was almost successful! Fortunately, with the help of Fred **K1VR**, author of *Antenna Zoning for the Radio Amateur*, I was able to get approval from the City to put up a 72-ft TRYLON self-supporter, which I eventually topped with a Force 12 C4XL (10-40), plus a vee for 80m. Being down in



the Mississippi Valley, this was not a dream ham radio location, but it sure beat anything else I had ever had before!

During this time, I was working for the local telephone company, Century Telephone (now Century Link), in a variety of positions involving Internet services. In my spare time, I was making a few extra dollars creating and hosting websites for various businesses and organizations, many of which were ham related, and started to teach a course at the local tech college in web design/HTML.

In 1996, I registered the domain name QTH.COM, and a few years later created the QTH.com Ham Radio Classified Ads (which is still the most popular free ham classified ad site on the Internet today). Needless to say, between a demanding day job, a growing side business and a wife and young kids that needed my attention... there wasn't a lot of time for ham radio (or sleep).

With the birth of our third child in 2003, our small house was bursting at the seams, and we decided to start looking for a new home. My wife wanted something in town and close to schools... and I wanted to live on 100 acres, up on a hill, in the boonies. We eventually compromised and, after not finding the right home, found five acres of land about six miles out of town, up on a ridge (not in the valley) on a State highway with easy, fast access to La Crosse.

Unfortunately, the land came with CC&Rs, but with K1VR's help again, I was able to get an agreement from the HOA to allow me to put up a tower, as long as the tower was no higher than 100ft and was placed at the back of the lot (300 feet from the house). This would mean extra expense for low-loss feed line, but it was a compromise I was willing to make.

We bought the land and started the building process. It was nice to be able to incorporate ham radio into the plans. For example, I was able to put a coax entry and equipment closet behind the shack for easy coax management, the shack was embellished with many AC outlets, and the company doing the cement for our driveway was able to also pour the tower base and guy anchors at the same time.

A Rohn 55 tower, guyed with Polygon fiberglass rod, went up during the summer of 2004, but I wasn't ready for antennas until the fall of 2005.

I was fortunate to have Paul, WØAIH put up the tower and lead the antenna installation, which included my old Force 12 C4XL, plus a Force 12 EF-180C rotatable dipole for 75/80m, a 6-element 6m beam, and a 13-element 2m beam. All the antennas are the same today, except I replaced the 2m beam with a much larger M2 2M5WL Yagi. There is also an inverted vee for 160 meters hanging off the tower at the 90-foot level.



In the shack sits my trusty old Yaesu FT-1000MP and Ameritron AL-1200 amp for HF work, and on the VHF side, I run a Kenwood TS-2000, a 1 kw amp for 6m (converted SB-221 amp) and a 375w brick for 2m.

I can't seem to get rid of any radios (don't tell my wife), so I still have most of the rigs I've used over the years, including a Kenwood TS-930S, Icom IC-706MKIIG, Icom IC-746 and my old Drake TR-3. I also have an AL-1500 as a backup HF amp. I prefer the AL-1200, since it is instant on.

In 2008, I was given the opportunity to take over QSL.net. This is a service that Al Waller, **K3TKJ** created in the late 90s that provided hams with basic web hosting, email forwarding and/or Mailman mailing lists; all at absolutely no cost (donations accepted). In order to add this responsibility to my already full plate, something had to give. At this point, I decided to leave my job at phone company after 17 years of service, to pursue the QTH.com and QSL.net services as my full time job. This proved to be a great decision, as the QTH.com web hosting business flourished, and I get to be around my wife and kids (and my radios) a lot more. The effort to take over and enhance the QSL.net services was recognized in



2012 with my being presented with a YASME Foundation's *Excellence Award*.

Speaking of kids... I have three children: Macy is 11 and in 5th grade, Ashlyn is 14 and in 8th grade and Cameron is 17 and in 11th grade. Cameron is in the middle of a year-long stay in Denmark, through the Rotary Club's wonderful student exchange program, and is having the time of his life. None of the kids have any interest in radio (yet).

My home office and my radio shack are in the same room. This has helped me to fill-in my band/mode totals considerably, not to mention being able to pursue the TCDXA DX Hog awards on occasion. I am not much of a QSLer, so I am fortunate that between *Logbook of The World*, plus assistance from my good friend John, **W9RPM** in tackling my QSL backlog, I am up to 331 countries confirmed of the 335 that I have worked. My list of never worked countries is 3Y/B, BV9P, KH1, P5, and VK0/H. Worked but not yet confirmed include EZ, FT/T, SV/A, and VKØ/M.

Confucius said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." There isn't a day that goes by where I don't think about how lucky I am to be able to combine my love of ham radio with my love of the Internet, to earn a living. I am so grateful that my parents supported my radio interests at a young age. Ham radio has been such a huge part of my life – truly life changing.

Scott, KA9FOX



TCDXA Welcomes Our New Members



Greg Fields, KØOB
Golden Valley, MN



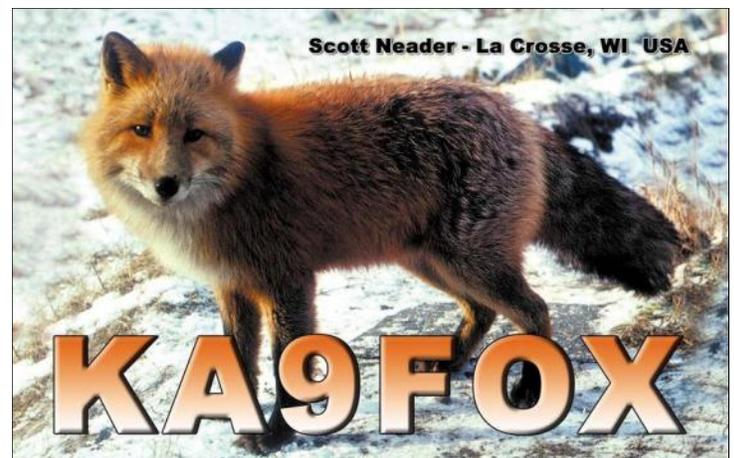
Larry Arneson, NØQM/DU3
Angeles City, Philippines



Mike Songstad, KBØVXN
Emmons, MN

Jim Hagen, AJØCM
Robbinsdale, MN

Vern Goble, KØVG
New Hope, MN



Editors's note: Scott and QTH.com donated web hosting for the [FT5ZM website](http://FT5ZM.com).



2014 ARRL DX CW FROM VP5S

by Pat Cain, KØPC k0pc@arrl.net

One Sunday morning last September, I got up to find an email from Scott, **KØMD** in my in-box. I was still a little sleepy, but woke quickly when I read Scott's invitation to join him and two others (Fred, **K4IU** and Bill, **ACØW**) in VP5 for the ARRL DX CW contest. I didn't waste any time sending my reply accepting the invitation and thanking Scott for thinking of me.

Even though I have traveled to over twenty countries in Europe and Asia, I have never operated from any of them. Most were business trips, without a lot of free time, and I never even mentioned bringing radios along on trips to Europe with my wife. She puts up with enough radio foolishness at home.



The Hamlet

Our destination in the Turks & Caicos was Providenciales Island, where Jody, **VP5JM**, lives. For years, Jody has hosted hams who are visiting the Turks & Caicos at her scenic hideaway called The Hamlet. This little cottage has all the comforts of home, with two remarkable added features: no snow and a wonderful array of antennas. After this long winter in Minnesota, the first feature would have been enough to make the trip worthwhile. But, the great antennas at this QTH really put it over the top.

A 40-foot tower provides most of the firepower for the Hamlet. It holds a Force12 model XR-5 for 20-10m and a Force12 Delta 240 for 40m. There are also dipoles for 160 and 80m. The site is very near the shore, and about 100 feet above sea level on a hill. The vista opens to the north, providing excellent paths to both North America and Europe.

All of this ham radio nirvana comes with a wonderful hostess. Jody made us feel very welcome, and went out of her way to assist us with licensing, transportation and supplies. Jody even hosted a dinner in her home for us and representatives from the Turks & Caicos Ministry of Communications. We enjoyed a wonderful meal, and even a bit of Jody's signature rum punch. After dinner, we demonstrated Amateur Radio operation in the Hamlet, using both phone and CW modes.

Travel

Getting to and from the Turks & Caicos Islands is very easy. The island of Providenciales is served by several major airlines, and they are in the process of rebuilding their airport terminal. When we made our travel plans in October, we had no idea of the intensity of winter storms that would haunt the east coast this winter. Scott and Fred booked on American Airlines, with a connection in Miami. Bill and I booked on US Airways, with a connection in Charlotte, NC. Neither one of these connections would typically be a problem in February. But, this was not a normal year. In the days leading up to our trip, another big snow storm took aim at the southeast. Bill and I started to worry that our flight through Charlotte was in peril, because the storm was due to hit about the



time we would arrive. One thing in our favor was that our plane from Minneapolis was the same one that would continue on to VP5, so we couldn't miss the connection. US Air offered free changes for those traveling during the storm, but everything went through Charlotte. We decided to take our chances, and stuck with our original itinerary.

Bill and I met at the airport on Wednesday morning, and were relieved to see our flight listed as on time. Fred and Scott were on American, and had it made, because there is never a snow storm in Miami. Both itineraries arrived in Turks & Caicos at about 2:30pm, so we planned to meet up there. We all got out on time, and everything looked good. Bill and I made it to Charlotte just as the snow began to fall, and were lucky enough to get out again on time and just as the storm intensified. We actually arrived in VP5 a few minutes early. Success!

We didn't see an American jet at the terminal, so we began to wonder if we had landed on the right island. As it turns out, the boys in Miami were delayed when a latch on the plane's life raft storage door broke during an inspection. So, while Bill and I got changed into our island attire, Scott & Fred were cooling their heels in Miami. They made it to the Hamlet a couple of hours late, but in good spirits.

Equipment & Pre-contest Operation

With great antennas already in place, all we had to do was provide the radio, and Scott took care of that in fine form. He packed his Icom IC-7600 and Acom 1010 amplifier into two large Pelican cases, along with various cables and accessories. They didn't exactly fit in the overhead bin, so Scott had a lot of checked baggage.



Pre-contest station checkout.

The station went together very quickly, and we were all able to operate prior to the contest using our VP5/<home call> licenses. The Turks & Caicos does not have any reciprocal operating agreements, despite the fact they are a British Overseas Territory. Licensing is simple, and we took care of that a couple of months before we arrived, with Jody's assistance.

This pre-contest operation allowed us to get our feet wet in the pile-ups. My only previous experience with the far end of a pile-up has been operating mobile in the Minnesota QSO Party. That experience really helped when the rate climbed up. And, I much prefer operating in shorts and a T-shirt vs. bouncing down a snowy Minnesota road in winter.

Contest

The ARRL DX CW contest ran for 48 hours on the weekend of February 15th and 16th. During the contest, we used the special call **VP5S**. We operated as a Multi-Single (multiple operators, single transmitter) entry, running high power. This contest is designed to have the W/VE stations work stations in the rest of the world. Unlike the CQ World Wide contests, where everyone works everyone, we could concentrate on the US and Canada. This gave the antenna rotor a weekend off.



That's me running on a day shift.

During the contest, we used N1MM Logger. This seems to be the default contest logging program now in much the way that CT was a couple of decades ago. It handles the task well, and we all learned something new about the program by sharing our tips.





Left to right: Fred, K4IU, Jody, VP5JM; Bill, ACØW; Scott, KØMD and me, KØPC.

Scott prepared an operating schedule in the weeks before the contest, so we knew when we would be on the air. The schedule called for one-hour operating shifts during the day on the higher bands and two-hour shifts overnight on the low bands. Operator changes went smoothly, with very little lost momentum.

The sun was very kind to us, with great propagation on the high bands. Our claimed score was a 5% improvement over last year, while our biggest competitors reported scores that were 5 to 10% lower than last year. We will have to wait for the official results to be published later this year, but we were very happy with the effort.

All of the equipment performed well, with the exception of a balky keyboard we found in a cabinet at the Hamlet. The Enter key was a little sticky when we started, but we thought it would loosen up. We were wrong. Each of us had a few choice words for that Enter key at various times through the contest. In the end, we felt fortunate that Murphy didn't join our little DXpedition.

After the contest ended on Sunday evening, we went out for a celebratory dinner at the Tiki Hut Restaurant. It was a beautiful evening sitting outdoors, enjoying a great meal with good friends. That's the way to top off a 48 hour contest.

The Hamlet was quiet for a few days, until the crew for **VP5H** in the ARRL DX Phone contest showed up. That was another group of hearty Minnesotans and Iowans doing their duty by traveling to warmer climes to pass out QSOs to the deserving.

Acknowledgements

We have to thank our families, especially our wives, for their support of our adventure. We each called our wife on Valentine's Day, but that only served to accent the fact that we were in the sunny tropics and they were in snowy Minnesota. We also owe our appreciation to Jody for her wonderful hospitality. I also want to personally thank Scott, Fred, and Bill for asking me to join them on this trip. They made me feel very welcome.

Good DX de Pat, KØPC

VP5S Box Score 2014 ARRL DX CW Contest

Band	QSOs	Points	Mults
160	230	690	50
80	576	1725	55
40	905	2715	59
20	1192	3576	58
15	1291	3873	58
10	1184	3549	57
Totals	5378	16,128	337

Score: **5,435,136**

Operators: **ACØW, KØMD, KØPC, K4IU**

TCDXA Members Worked by VP5S on 5 and 6 Bands

KØAD	5	NØIM	6
KØKX	5	WØAIH	6
KØMPH	5	WØBM	6
KØRC	6	WØBV	6
KØTT	5	WØDJC	5
K3WT	5	WØGJ	6
KEØL	5	WØSHL	5
NØAT	6	WAØMHJ	6
NØIJ	5		



VKØIR
ZL9CI
A52A
T33C
3B9C
TX9
CP6CW
3YØX
K7C
5A7A
VU4AN
VU7RG
VK9DWX

K5D
VK9DWX
FT5GA
3D2ØCR
E4X
CYØ/NØTG
VP8ORK
VU4PB
STØR
3D2C
3CØE
TT8TT
9M4SLL



AHØ/NØAT
5X8C
K9W
XRØZR

3W2DK
FT4TA
VK9MT

K4M
TX3A
KMØO/9M6
YS4U
YI9PSE
ZL8X
4W6A
T32C
HKØNA
706T
NH8S
PTØS
FT5ZM

XU7MWA
S21EA
J2ØRR
J2ØMM
BS7H
N8S
3B7SP
3B7C
5JØA
VP6DX
TX5C
9XØR
9U4U

TCDXA DX DONATION POLICY

The mission of TCDXA is to support DXing and major DXpeditions by providing funding. Annual contributions (dues) from members are the major source of funding.

A funding request from the organizers of a planned DXpedition should be directed to the DX Donation Manager, Ron, NØAT, TCDXA@n0at.net. He and the TCDXA Board of Directors will judge how well the DXpedition plans meet key considerations (see below).

If the Board of Directors deems the DXpedition to be worthy of support, a recommended funding amount is presented to the membership for their vote. If approved, the TCDXA Treasurer will process the funding..

Key Considerations for a DXpedition Funding Request

DXpedition destination
Ranking on *Most Wanted Survey*
Most wanted ranking by TCDXA Members
Logistics and transportation costs
Number of operators and their credentials
Number of stations on the air
Bands, modes and duration of operation
Equipment: antennas, radios, amps, etc.
Stateside and/or foreign QSL manager

Website with logos of club sponsors
QSLs with logos of club sponsors
Online logs and pilot stations
Up front cost to each operator
Support by NCDXF & other clubs
LoTW log submissions
Previous operations by same group
Valid license and DXCC approval
Donation address: USA and/or foreign

To join TCDXA, go to <http://tcdxa.org/>.

