

The Eastern Iowa DXer



The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association

An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



August 2000

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Club Officers

President	Dave Andersen, KØRX	PacketCluster	WB8ZRL
Vice President	Nelson Moyer, KUØA	147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM	
Secretary/Treasurer	Tom White, KØVZR		
Repeater Committee	Al Groff, KØVM	Repeater	NØDX/R
	Joe Finkstein, WØMJN		
Membership Committee	Jim Spencer, WØSR	144.59/145.19	
	Tom Vavra, WB8ZRL		

From the President

Dave Andersen, KØRX

It's August, and I hope that the summer months have been good to you DX-wise. Tromelin is active now with the biggest operation that island has seen in years. Also, the summer IARU and IOTA contests have recently completed. Hopefully, some of you have made better progress on your tower projects than I have. I've got all the parts now, but still haven't installed the base or put anything up. Plenty of time before the ground freezes this winter, I hope!

Those of you who have used the repeater in the last month and a half or so have probably noticed that the club's callsign has changed. A big thank you is due to KØDX and WØMJN for their tireless efforts on behalf of the club, fighting our government bureaucracy in order to effect the change. I think we have found an excellent way to honor Frank, and have obtained a super callsign for the club as well. Thanks guys!

The August 19th meeting of the EIDXA will be the usual picnic at NRØX's house. Please bring a side-dish or two to share. WØAWL has graciously volunteered to cook the brats and burgers for us. He's so good at that—thanks Terry!

The end of the year brings our annual club elections. As is our custom, I've appointed the current officers as a nominating committee to produce a slate for the next year. If you are interested in serving the club as an officer (there are three elected positions,

President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer), please let either Nelson, Tom, or myself know. Also, if you have recommendations for another club member that would make a fine officer, that would be valuable information for us as well. In addition, at the time of the election, nominations may also be made from the floor. The club is only as good as its officers and members make it. Please consider this opportunity to serve your club. Our club elections will take place during the October meeting, with new officers taking office in January 2001. 73 Dave, KØRX

EIDXA Spring Meeting—April 2000



Ken, KAØY, giving the faithful the story of his EME experiences.

Minutes— EIDX Spring Meeting

The meeting was called to order by president KØRX at 7:32 PM Friday, April 14 in Linn Hall at the Kirkwood Community College. Introductions were made all around.

Reports:

Joe, WØMJN, received a letter from the FCC dismissing the application for our club call. A new application will be submitted.

Al, KØVM, reported tracking a problem of the repeater output dropping mid transmitting. A scanner bird may be present intermittently.

Tom, WB8ZRL, reported signal levels of the east and west links are changing dynamically. Causes to be checked out.

KAØY, Kenny Kucera, was accepted by vote into membership.

Contest committee reported that there was nothing to report.

New Business

Funding for the A51 expedition was discussed. WØAWL moved that \$50.00 be donated from the treasury. Motion was seconded and passed. In addition the hat was passed and \$107.00 was collected. \$157.00 will be sent to support the A51 expedition.

DXAC consideration for country status of Chesterfield Is. Hinged on whether or not there was intervening land. Approval was announced April 14, 2000.

Wade, WØEJ, reported on the 20-20 TV coverage of the pirate attack on a family sailing in the Caribbean. The father was a ham and was assisted through the Maritime net in getting help for his son that had been shot in the attack. Arrangements were made for an air ambulance to take the boy to a hospital where though paralyzed is beginning his recovery.

Wade also reported on his first ARRL board meeting he attended as our new Midwest Director. The first order of business was the election of the new president. W5JBP, Jim D. Haynie, was the winner. Wade said he felt like he was being scrutinized as he sat at the front table as a first timer. Most directors first attend board meetings while they are vice-directors

before being elected to the director position. A new DXCC field-checking plan is being implemented. Wade said he would be looking for volunteers for the field checker appointment.

VKØMM's dupe policy was discussed.

The date of August 19, 2000 was set for the summer meeting- picnic at the QTH of NRØX.

Kudos was given to Nelson Moyer, KUØA, for his excellent newsletter.

The meeting was adjourned.

Program

Ken, KAØY, presented the program about his VHF and UHF activities with his gun turret-mounted dish antenna and moon bounce.

Treasurer's Report

Funds directed by the club to go to A52A were sent along with the "pass the hat" offering. Glen, WØGJ, received the donation, and thanked us for the help before he left for A5.

I have one (1) EIDX cap for sale at \$5.00. See me at the summer meeting.

June 30, 2000 BankIowa shows a current ballance of \$457.99 which includes second quarter interest of \$2.14 (2.01% APY).

All bills are paid. Anticipated bills are for the summer newsletter and summer picnic expenses. Neither will break the bank.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom White, KØVZR

Notice

2001 dues are payable at the summer meeting and thereafter. Please pay by personal check, since this provides the Secretary/Treasurer with your current address to use for the mailing label on the newsletter. Dues are \$5.00 per year. Where else can you find such a bargain? Bring your check to the picnic!

FT-100 Users Report

Nelson Moyer, KUØA

Note: Just four months after I purchased my FT100, Yaesu released the upgraded FT-100D. You can buy the FT-100 at a close-out price of \$999.95. That's \$199.00 less than I paid. To further outrage recent buyers, Yaesu is offering the FT-100D with the 500 Hz CW filter, TCXO-8 high stability oscillator, FTS-27 CTCS decoder, and speaker upgrade for \$1,299.95. I paid \$149.95 for my 500 Hz CW filter and passed on the oscillator and decoder options, since they would have run the price up to \$1,495.85. The FT-100D street price is \$48.00 less than I paid for my FT100 with the CW filter, and I don't have the oscillator, decoder or improved speaker. Emptor caveat.

The FT-100 is one of the new full-featured micro-rigs, and it has to be operated to be appreciated. This is definitely a case where less is more. The convenience of placement in the shack or in the car can't be beat. I've had mine for about five months, and here are my initial observations.

The Operating Manual

The operating manual is 108 pages long, concisely written, with lots of tables. That's good, considering the huge number of functions and memory settings on the radio. It's possible to power up and make QSOs without reading the manual, but you'll have to spend some serious time with the book if you want to master this radio. While I was checking out the features prior to purchase, I managed to become hopelessly lost in the menu settings so that I could transmit, but couldn't hear anything. Fortunately, there is a way to reset all menus to their default setting. While the manual is very good overall, there are some major errors which need to be corrected before somebody smokes their shiny new radio.

Polarity of the DC Cable

Both diagrams on p. 9 show the ground wire (black) going to the connection closest to the plug lock. The DC cable supplied had the polarity reversed, i.e. the hot wire (red) was closest to the plug lock. Users who make up their own cables are advised to check the polarity with a VOM before applying DC to the radio, lest you utterly destroy it!

Automatic Antenna Tuner Connections

The diagrams on p. 14 and 15 are reversed from the information in the text on p. 62 and p. 94. The diagram shows a menu setting of ATAS-1 when the duplexer is used, while the instruction on pages 62 and 94 tell you to select ATAS-2 to enable the automatic antenna tuner on both HF/50 and VHF with the duplexer.

Icons

There are lots of icons to indicate various functions and

conditions, like high SWR, split VFOs, antenna tuning in progress, etc., however most of them are not illustrated in the manual, and some of them appear for such a short time that it's difficult to figure them out. It would have been a nice improvement to the manual to have illustrations and explanations of all of the icons.

Features

Strike Up the Band

The FT-100 packs 160 through 10 meters, 6 meters, 2 meters, and 70 centimeters into a box the size of your old 2 meter mobile radio. I have never had 160 or six meters, so I was looking forward to the challenges of learning new bands. So far, my only 160 meter activity has been listening. I heard FOØAAA, but couldn't load anything, including my tower, anything close to resonance for transmitting. Maybe I'll have a wire up by this fall, but my lot is posing a serious challenge in terms of a 160 transmitting antenna. Six meters is another story. I bought a Cushcraft A50-5S beam and side mounted it on the tower at about 35 feet pointing SW toward Clipperton Island. Unfortunately, the band didn't open to the states while there were active. I managed to work a few grid squares in CO, AZ and NM, though. I decided to try the Caribbean and moved the beam around to SW. Since then, I've added grid squares in ME, NY and IL. The beam hears a lot better than it transmits, probably because of tower interaction. More about 6 meters after I get some experience with that band. I have Cushcraft 13B for 2 meters but it's also side mounted on the tower with vertical polarization and fixed at WB8ZRL. I don't have any trouble staying connected, anymore. Someday, I'll mount the 2 meter and 6 meter antennas on top of the tower and get serious about VHF DXing. There's a 70 centimeter repeater in Iowa City but it isn't used much. I accessed it once and talked to NØRXD to be sure the FT100 worked on the band, but that's all I've done there. I probably won't use the band except when I'm mobile out of state.

DSP

Since I've never used any radio with DSP, I didn't know what to expect and I don't have a point of reference. About all I can say is that the noise reduction circuit reduces the noise threshold, the notch filter knocks out offending heterodynes on SSB, the noise blanker is wonderful for pulse noise when operating mobile, and the bandpass filter is helpful at reducing QRM on CW. How good any of these features are compared to the FT-1000MP, I can't say. There are a relatively few variable settings for these features, so while they are better than not having them at all, they are compromises of the design of the FT-100, not state of the art circuits available in top of the line radios.

Filters

The FT-100 has slots for two optional filters. I chose a 500

Hz CW filter and left the other slot open. A 300 Hz CW filter is available, but I thought that was overkill for a radio which I plan to operate mobile most of the time. So far, I haven't needed the narrow filter, although I must confess that I haven't operated in a CW contest environment with the FT-100 yet.

Other Bells and Whistles

There is a fixed 12 dB attenuator, variable IF shift, clarifier (RIT) with ± 10 KHz range, CW reverse, memory keyer with 50 character buffer, mic equalizer (3 position), speech proceser, etc. on the radio, but I haven't used these features yet, and I'm not sure if and when I ever would. If I can work A52A transmitting at 120 watts on three bands without any of these features, I probably don't need them.

Thanks for the Memories

The FT-100 remembers the configuration for the band you're on so you can change bands and come back later to where you were without having to reconfigure any of the operational settings. After using knobs for years, it's nice to set up each band for your favorite frequency, mode, and settings and have them automatically pop up when you change bands. The same applies to VFOs A and B within the band. Technology has come a long way since Yaesu built my FT-707!

The memories on the FT-100 were the last frontier I visited in my efforts to become acquainted with this radio. Notice I didn't say master this radio. That will take me longer than the three months between EIDXa newsletters. There are several levels of memories, and loading them alone would take me more time than I care to invest at this point. Maybe that's a job for a cold winter weekend when the bands are dead.

Anyway, here is the list of memories:

- 300 standard memories in 6 groups of 50
- 5 quick memory channels for storing hot frequencies on a first in last out basis
- 20 split frequency channels for 40 meter phone DXing, etc.
- 4 home channels, one for each band, for storing your favorite frequency or repeater
- 20 programable channels to store frequency ranges such as band edges during scanning

That's 349 memories. The radio's got more memory than I do. You will need to refer to the manual to program all these memories, since there's a lot of button pushing and it's not always intuitive.

General Coverage Receiver

I haven't had access to a general coverage receiver since I was a kid in Alaska, listening to AM broadcast and short wave radio in the 1950s. That was long before I got my ticket, but I experienced the peak of cycle 19 as a SWL, and I

remember the whole world rolling in on a 70 foot "long" wire antenna. The other thing I remember about 1959 was the spectacular aurora that winter, as cycle 19 peaked. I've tuned outside the ham bands a bit, but I haven't really gotten into SWL DXing. The tuning features on the FT-100 make it easy and convenient to tune the broadcast bands, but I'd rather chase band countries on HF, work toward RTTY DXCC, and chase grid squares on 6 meters.

Spectrum Scope

I can't really find a practical reason for including this feature. When the "scope" is activated, receive audio is disabled. You can get an idea where the activity is, but you can't hear it. You can derive more information by tuning with the receiver active!

Scales and Non-linearity of Controls

The variable settings within some functions are displayed as a percentage of the total output. For instance, power output and keyer speeds are expressed as percent. A numerical display of 50 means 50 watts out on HF and 6 meters, but only 25 watts output on 2 meters and 10 watts output on 70 cm. It's not too tough to figure out your approximate output power, as long as you remember the maximum power output for each band, but you will have to use an external wattmeter to operate QRP. I couldn't measure the HF output with the RF gain set at the lowest level because I don't have a meter with sufficient sensitivity.

The biggest problem I have with a percentage readout on CW is that the scale is completely non-linear. A setting of 48 is about 22 WPM, while a setting of 58 is 30 WPM. A setting of 1 is about 7 WPM and a setting of 65 is about 35 WPM, which is the maximum speed I can send my call accurately.

Keying

You have three options for keying, iambic with or without automatic character spacing, and bug. I use iambic without automatic character spacing, but it's mode B, and I'm used to mode A, so I have to be very careful to release the dash paddle quickly or IA comes out IR. I'm trying to get used to mode B, but I may go back to my old external Ham Keyer with its Curtis chip for the ARRL contests, which include state abbreviation in the exchange.

Signal reports have been good and nobody has complained about key clicks, so the output must be clean. I don't have a way to listen to my own signal, so I can't tell you what it sounds like. I'd appreciate some feedback if you hear me in the pileups.

Headphones

The FT-100 doesn't have a headphone jack, per se. It has a low impedance speaker output on the rear panel, which can be

used for phones if you build an attenuator circuit as described in the manual. I built mine in a small plastic box from Radio Shack, and it works just fine with my Heil headset. I don't plan to use one mobile operation because it's illegal to drive while wearing headphones in most states, and my mobile operations are a bit more casual than chasing rare DX in the shack. While the lack of a headphone plug is moderately inconvenient, it's not a fatal flaw in an otherwise fine radio.

Button Pushing

As a veteran knob twirler, it took me a while to get used to pushing buttons for most of the functions on the FT100. There are only three knob on the entire radio, although two of those are concentric knobs. Everything else is controlled by buttons. Because of the nested menus, and the band/mode/function cycles, there's a lot of button pushing. The toughest thing for me was getting used to the difference between a momentary push (up to 0.5 sec) and a push-and-hold (longer than 0.5 sec). With four function buttons, each with up to nine nested settings, and sixty-six variable menu numbers, each with variable settings, it's all too much to remember, and I found myself referring to the manual frequently. I'm sure I'll eventually memorize the most common settings, but I'll always have to look up the infrequently used settings. An extra copy of the manual would be handy for mobile operation.

Learning Curve

Since this is the first radio I've had with so many features, I thought the learning curve would be rather steep. It is, and it isn't, depending upon which features you want to use. I found I could operate it on a basic level equivalent to the feature set on the FT-707 without much time in the manual. However, since I'm not accustomed to 300 memories, nested menus, dual watch, etc., it took a lot of practice before I was comfortable with the more seldom used features. Fortunately, the VFO and DSP controls are easily accessed using the function button and the DSP button, respectively. I found it very easy to work split, reduce the noise level with the DSP controls, insert the notch filter, change the RF output and adjust the keyer speed. I must confess, I found myself on the wrong VFO a few times, when I'd forget to set both VFOs to the same frequency before pressing the split button. The only other problem I had working split was that occasionally, I would accidentally tune off the DX frequency on VFO A when I thought I was on VFO B. That made for some interesting exchanges, and I almost missed a QSO on 15 meters with 4W/W3UR because I had tuned down a bit from his calling frequency in the heat of battle and the QRM of the lids. Fortunately, he called me again when I didn't come right back to him, and I got the errant VFO back on his frequency in time to give a report, and hear him call me by name, which surprised at least one local on frequency. Bernie and I have exchanged a few emails, but I must confess that I was surprised that he would remember names in the high stress

environment of a DX pileup. When he got back home, I ask him if he was using software, and he said no, he just remembered some names. I guess there aren't too many Nelsons in ham radio, or maybe KUØA is a memorable call. Anyway, the bottom line is to practice working split with any new radio until you're comfortable with it before you try to chase an all time new one under difficult working conditions. I wish there was a way to lock the DX transmit frequency saved in VFO A, so you couldn't inadvertently tune away from it, but I haven't found an easy way to do that, yet.

Problems

Strange Vibrations

My FT-100 has a pulsating vibration which is barely perceptible until you sit it down on the operating desk, at which point, the resonance of the desk amplifies it and makes it annoying and potentially destructive. Two cooling fans are mounted on the rear of the chassis and the vibration may be from an unbalanced fan motor or blade. I didn't notice this on the two FT-100 I looked at Ham Radio Outlet or Texas Towers, but those radios were sitting on a carpeted display table where the vibration wouldn't have been noticeable.

Mic Gain And Other Problems

I decided to turn up the mic gain from the default 50% setting to 60%. On the first call after this indiscretion, the DX told me I had a mic problem, but we completed the QSO. I changed bands from 15 meters to 17 meters and tried another call, but this time the DX told me I had a serious mic problem and not to try to call again. I reduced the mic gain to 40% and that eliminated the problem. It seems that the relative % scale of the menu settings isn't linear, and a small change can have a very large affect. I would advise users to have a friend listen to you transmit while you're adjusting the mic gain, compression, equalizer, etc. until you find the optimal settings for your mic, your voice and your amplifier. Apparently, the FT-100 isn't very tolerant of the Heil HC-4 cartridge, or vice versa. I ran some microphone tests into a dummy load and found that the best mic gain setting for the Heil ProSet with the HC-4 element was 30, which lit 3 to 4 bars on the ALC display, just like it tells you to do in the manual. In this case the default mic gain setting which worked fine with the Yaesu mic supplied with the radio, was much too high for Heil elements placed up close to your mouth on a boom. So far, I haven't had any reports of poor audio since dropping the mic gain to 30.

I've been using a Heil footswitch on phone, since my home environment is subject to background noise from kids or the XYL. One day, the transmitter wouldn't key, and I found a wire that had come unsoldered in my ProSet's 1/4 inch footswitch plug. I checked the pin connections on the plugs of the ProSet and the addapter, and found a loose strand of wire from a poor soldering job which could have shorted between

mic pins on the adapter.

The FT-100 uses the new modular phone-style mic plugs, so you need an adapter to connect your 8-pin DIN plugs to the radio. Heil sells one, and I'm using it for the Heil ProSet in the shack. The Yaesu adapter won't work with the FT-100 because the plug is recessed and the addapter has a molded hood, which won't fit into the recess. I learned this the hard way. Apparently, Yaesu made the adapters for their line of VHF/UHF rigs before the FT-100 was released.

The first Heil adapter I bought was shorted and had to be returned for replacement. The moral of the story, check your Heil plugs for proper polarity and integrity of the solder joints. They aren't reliable right off the shelf.

Mobile Installation

I mounted the ATAS-100 automatically tuning antenna system on a Diamond K400C mount located on the left side of the trunk lid of my Honda Accord, about even with the trunk hinge. The DC power cable was fished through a firewall cable grommet on the driver side after the plugs were removed, and then it was routed to the trunk under the trim panels and through an existing cable hole behind the back seat. The detachable front panel was mounted under the dash below the CD player using a custom fabricated aluminum plate painted with gloss black enamel, and the Yaesu YSK-100 separation kit, which was attached using the two screws holding the fake wood trim panel. The mic and control cable were routed to the trunk under the trim panels so they wouldn't show. An ICOM mobile speaker was installed on the driver side visor, and the cable was also hidden under the trim panels. No new holes were required for the front panel mount. The radio was mounted on a Yaesu MMB-67 quick disconnect mount which was bolted vertically to a plastic utility tray in the trunk on the left side. The antenna was connected via the Diamond MX-62M duplexer, providing automatic band changing and antenna tuning from 40 meters to 70 cm. The only new holes I had to drill for the entire installation were the four small holes to secure the mobile mounting bracket to the plastic utility tray in the trunk. All four cable runs (DC, speaker, mic and front panel control) are completely hidden by trim panels. Installation and removal of the radio involves removing the front panel and attaching it to the remote mount, sliding radio into the quick disconnect bracket, attaching the front panel control cable to the radio with two screws, plugging in the mic and speaker cables, and connecting the leads of the duplexer to the HF and VHF/UHF coax outputs. A menu setting tells the FT-100 that the ATAS-100 is attached for automatic control. I checked all connections for continuity with a VOM, including the path running through the trunk hinge, and verified that the entire system is well grounded to the frame.

The final appearance of the installation is very neat and unobtrusive (it meets the XYL's criteria for radio installation

in a new car). The capability to change bands from 40 meters to 6 meters without stopping to change Hustler resonators is a real luxury, and the additional capability to transmit 2 meters and 70 cm on the same antenna used for HF/VHF/UHF is nervana. I'll have the radio in the car at the picnic, in case anyone wants to check it out.

A short test drive suggested that the weight of the antenna was marginal for the mount, because the trunk lid flexed constantly with car movement. It seems that car manufacturers don't use a reasonable gauge of sheet metal in car bodies anymore, so mounting mobile antennas has gotten trickier with the demise of chrome plated steel bumpers. I may have to move the antenna back a few inches on the trunk lid to a location with better support. Fortunately, the K400C is grounded through the hex nuts on the bottom side of the trunk lid, so I would only have to spot paint four tiny places on the bottom of the trunk lid if I have to move the mount.

Since I didn't want to drive around with the ATAS-100 on the trunk all of the time, I bought a Diamond NR-770HB 2 meter/70 cm antenna for everyday use. It lets me hit the local repeater from locations where I couldn't break the squelch before. Of course, the capability to transmit 50 watts on 2 meters extends the range considerably.

The Bottom Line

Am I happy with this radio? Yes. Does it do everything I ever dreamed of in a radio? No. Would I buy it if I knew what I know about it now? Yes. The FT-100 meets most of my criteria for a new radio at this particular time in my life. Its capabilities and flexibility of use are unsurpassed in its class. It is the perfect radio to take me into retirement in a few years, at which time I plan to get my dream rig to last me the rest of my life. At that point, the FT-100 will be used exclusively for mobile and portable operation.



Jim, WØSR, gives the DXAC report as Dave, KØRX, stands by.

Packet Cluster Report

Tom Vavra, WB8ZRL

The topology of the PacketCluster network has evolved quite a bit since we first joined it some 10+ years ago. When I started hosting the local node about 9 years ago, we would digipeat through NUØP to a node near Mt. Carroll, IL and then go to N4RR near Sterling, IL. He would in turn go through some intermediate node and almost get to Chicago. The link was down more than it was up. The path to the East evolved over the years and now we use radio links to get to Mt. Carroll (a different site than the above one) by going through Walcott, Bettendorf, and Albany, IL. Mt. Carroll then links East over the internet. While this path has provided long periods of very reliable service, we have also had too many instances of down-time. Two of these intermediate points are essentially unmanned (actually there is someone there, but they do nothing to solve any problem that might arise.) This usually translates into either Rich, KØXG, or me making a trip to the site to figure out what is wrong.

As I write this on 21 July, we have had no link East for 12 days. While this particular problem is not one we have experienced before, it is just one more that has kept the link down for an extended period. This is expected to change soon.

Dave, KØRX, has had a 2M packet node running for some time from his office building at U of I. Unfortunately, the 2M frequency is pretty busy and my antenna points away to link to Des Moines nodes, so Dave gets routinely stomped on. Dave has arranged to move the node up to the top floor where the coax run will be real short, and to change the 2M antenna to a 220 yagi. Once this is in place, I will start to connect East by going through Dave and then connecting to 9land through the internet. We fully expect this to be a reliable path. When we successfully test through Dave, then our dependency on the nodes between here and Mt. Carroll will evaporate.

Instead of pointing my 220 yagi East to Walcott it will be pointing South to Dave. By pointing just a bit toward the West I expect to be able to have a solid link to Dave and to NØPG in Washington. Tony has said that he would host a PacketCluster node which should provide excellent coverage for those often frustrated users way to the South. These are the users that now struggle to stay connected to WBURG (which has lots of local noise) or to NØRXD in IC. This should also remove traffic from the West link frequency enhancing that link. Our goal is to have this all in place by the contest season (which starts with the CQWW SSB in late October).

The network to the West has changed too. The link to NØNI (serving Des Moines) went through WBURG and later was direct. When Toni moved to Rippey, that distance was too much for any reliable link. A new intermediate node was placed at MINGO. A new PacketCluster node was put in Sheldahl at WAØROI's QTH. This node reaches the Des Moines users better than NØNI can. So now I link to WAØROI through MINGO, and the spots are then passed to NØNI's node. Toni can better serve the North users this way too.

So the network keeps evolving. There are probably further changes that will be necessary—we just don't know it yet.

DX IS!

Being At The Right Place, At The Right Time

Nelson Moyer, KUØA

Tom, WB8ZRL, sent me the following message to me via the packet cluster:

From The DX Magazine, July/August 2000, TXØDX by OH2BH, the last paragraph: First people in the books of TXØDX: USA: KO3Q, W8EQA/7, WA7GQC, KUØA, W7GN, W9KQD, WB4W.

DX is frequently serendipitous. You happen to be at the right place at the right time and fortune smiles on you. But you can do quite a bit to position yourself to be in a spot where fortune is likely to smile on you before she smiles on others. Such was the case with the TXØDX operation. This operation was the first activity from an all time new DXCC entity. The team was large and well organized. They announced in the bulletins that they would come up on several bands and modes at the same time, and gave the starting time. I decided to be available at the appointed hour, to at least hear a major operation come up for the first time in my ham career. For one reason or another, I had never been available to hear that first QSO, much less be in the pileup.

Some major operations come up on 14.195 or 21.295 MHz with a QSO with a pilot station or a buddy. Some operations just call CQ. I decided that virtually everybody would be listening to one of those frequencies, so I decided to sit on 21.024 MHz with the VFO split up 2 KHz and wait for the pandemonium to start. As 2359 UTC ticked down on March 22, the amp was on, the beam was pointed in the right direction, and I was ready. I could hear a few other restless operators, testing and standing by. Then, 0000 UTC turned over on my station clock and I didn't hear a thing. I quickly checked 21.295 MHz and the operation had begun. Back to 21.024 MHz, and I heard nothing. Seconds later, it seemed like eternity, the musical sound of CQ DE TXØDX UP 2 filled my headset and I dropped my call in twice. One of the listed calls, I think it was WA7GQC, beat me out, so I tuned up 1MHz from his frequency and called as he signed. Bingo! I logged TXØDX at 0001 UTC, the second call in the log on 15 meter CW. Afterwards, I felt empty. Logging the first operation to TXØDX for a new entity seemed anticlimactic. Never in my experience had such a big QSO happened so fast, with such modest effort. There was no adrenalin rush, no ecstacy, not even mild excitement. It was a feeling of, "well, that's over before it got started".

Actually, it wasn't over quite yet. I came back to the shack about 2 hours later and noticed a 10 meter CW spot around 0200 UTC that evening and worked them at 0204 UTC. Shortly afterwards, there was a SSB spot on 17 meters, and I worked them at 0235 UTC. Then came a SSB spot on 12 meters, and I worked them at 0244 UTC. The operation was nearly over for me. I had them in the log on four bands and two modes within the first 2 hr. and 44 min. of the operation, with a total operating time of around 45 min. I credit that to the super operators on TXØDX, and the fact that they flooded the bands that first night of the operation to an unprecedented extent. If you didn't work them that first day, you didn't try very hard. I worked them on 20 meters two days later, but I didn't manage to catch them on 30, 40 or 80 meters. The low bands weren't a priority for them at the beginning of the operation, and the threat of storms lead to their early departure, so I didn't have an opportunity to work them again after March 27, 2000. That's probably a good thing. I'll have to lose some sleep to work TXØ on 30, 40 and 80 meters. DX shouldn't come too easy, so you will appreciate it more.

Ham Humor

Recently in a CW pileup, I heard a cop saying, "thank you R D".

It took me a while to understand. If you don't understand, ask a CW op.



Wade, WØEJ, ARRL Midwest Director, reporting on ARRL activities.

MEETING NOTICE

The next meeting of the Eastern Iowa DX Association will be Saturday, August 19, 2000 at 4:00 p.m. at the antenna farm of NRØX. Monitor 145.19 for directions if needed. See you there.

2001 Dues are due!



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