

The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association



An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



April 2003

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Club Officers

President: Rick Heinrich, N0YY
Vice President: Jeff Davis, N0DY
Secretary Treasurer: George Carsner, W0PPF

Repeater Committee: Al Groff K0VM
Joe Finkstein W0MJN

Membership Committee: Jim Spencer W0SR
Tom Vavra WB8ZRL

PacketCluster

147.51, 144.91, WB8ZRL

223.40, CRNETROM

Repeater:

144.59/

145.19

N0DX/R

From the President

By Rick N0YY

Well here it is almost time for Dayton again. Time to plan all of those summer projects to get ready for the next DX or contest season. It looks like the sunspots are declining finally so those 6 meter opening will likely decrease and the high bands will be replaced with the late night and sunrise/sunset challenges of the low bands.

It looks like many of us were challenged during the last part of this past contest season. I didn't see may e-mails with results from the ARRL contests or the 160M CQ WW contests. Oh well...

I, too, was challenged again. I was in Europe for both ARRL weekends. I thought I was going to be able to operate from one of the PA local stations for the CW weekend but it was not to happen due to business travel. And then the Phone weekend, well...

I did have the opportunity to play for a while in the CQWW WPX Phone Contest. Only 150 or so contacts with just 100 watts but it was fun anyway. It was nice to hear comments like "wow what a signal" or "you just came over the top of everyone" on 15 Meters on Sunday morning. (I guess they were all listening to the QRP stations!) But it forced me to finish a few of the remaining loose ends of my station. Still not done, but getting closer. (Is it ever done?) And I'll create more projects when I return from Dayton with all of my planned goodies!

I have gotten some great ideas for the type of programs you would like. They include ideas like Hands-on programs, station set-ups, antenna modeling, antenna alternatives, product comparisons, and the typical DX-pedition exploits.

Speaking of DX-peditions, our own VP/Secretary was honored as the main article by Bernie in a recent QST's *How's DX* column. Jeff's travels to The Gambia

graced the pages. We have a celebrity in our own midst! Great Job Jeff!!

And a final note. Thanks to Ken KAØY I have no excuse for getting the club website put together. We have registered the URL (www.eidxa.org) and now it is up to me to get the pages loaded. I am working on the members section using the biographies and photos that Tom, KØDX collected a couple of years ago. Ultimately, I would like to get pictures of shacks and maybe even antenna systems for those pages. So we might have to find some of those digital cameras and make the rounds to get every shack archived. (I guess that means we will have to clean the shack before the pictures or be forever graced with the image of the stacks of paper, etc.

That's it for this quarter. I look forward to seeing everyone on April 25 at Linn Hall on Kirkwood's campus.

73's

Rick NØYY

The Editor's Corner

By Jeff NØDY

I hate to have to start a column with an apology, but here it is. Your newsletter is late and it's my fault. Sorry about that. I'll try to do better in the future.

In my own defense, I'll offer that I've been on temporary assignment for business in the Los Angeles area since around January. I haven't been able to do much (any) hamming here.

This quarter I'm starting what I hope will be a regular feature, "Member's Spotlight". This was suggested at the last EIDXA meeting by WØWP, so guess who is the first victim. Tom has done a nice job writing up his long history in ham radio. At first, I was tempted to edit it

down for size, but couldn't find any parts I wanted to discard. So I hope the download time from your email isn't terribly bad... Thanks, Tom, for stepping forward.

One thing I did manage to do was to purchase WØYG's monster 4-square array for 80 meters. He really put out a great signal with it, so I'm hoping it'll do the same for me. Of course, I have to be home to put it up. In the meantime, my antennas have done what they do naturally – fall down and break. Deer have run through all five of my beverages and they're on the ground. A big storm kicked the yagis on the tower hard enough to shear the drive shaft on the rotator (again). So when I do get home for any length of time, there's lots of maintenance in front of me.

Unfortunately, due to my travel assignment, I won't be able to join you all at the next EIDXA meeting. Have one at Godfather's for me.

73,

Jeff

Member's Spotlight

By Tom, WØWP

I was first licensed in 1968 as WNØWCR, QTH Proctor, Minnesota. Thanks to an Electronics class in high school, a friendly neighbor, Les, WAØQIT, and my parents who bought me an EICO Space Ranger model 711 kit for Christmas 1967, all fueled my passing a novice exam. I found CW to my liking. I joined the Duluth, Minnesota radio club and found a group of novices with a passion for radio as myself. Among the local hams I hung out with were WNØWXL, Bud, WAØLMT, Don, WAØWOV, Gary, and of course Les, WAØQIT. We met almost nightly on the Eighty meter novice band to brag about our most recent QSOs and our station improvements. I was beginning to feel more comfortable with my CW and was quickly looking forward to the day I could operate with the big guys on SSB and have all that band spectrum to look for DX. My station as a novice was a

Hallicrafters SX111 receiver and a EF Johnson Challenger transmitter with a Heathkit VFO. I was working at the time saving my few dollars to buy a better antenna and radios. Looking up to the Dxers in the Duluth radio club, I gravitated to their company at meetings picking up propagation tips and antenna idea. I took it upon myself to try building a wire beam called a ZL special from the ARRL Handbook. It was build using varnished hardwood and stranded copper wire with lots of glass insulators. It was easy to assemble on the ground but another thing to install it in the air between trees in my family's cow pasture. With a coordinated effort from my brothers, the job was completed. The height was not great, about 30 feet up, but compared to my previous wire antennas it was a great improvement. The fifteen meter antenna favored the NE, Europe, and splendidly loaded. I worked the OKs, SPs, European stations easily. I really had bragging rights on 80 meters those days.

Working that Summer, upgrading to General class, and purchasing an NC200 transceiver found life good for WA0WCR. I was given a spider quad from a local radio club member and talked my father into letting me put it up next to the barn. It was not very high but as I was told, it would work just fine because it had a 'low take-off' angle. I used the arm strong rotator method to turn the antenna but found that to be a handy cap.

Career decisions and the Vietnam war raging, I found myself at a crossroads. I enrolled at the University of Minnesota, Duluth in the Winter of 1969, as pre-med student. My interests in radio and electronics grew stronger by the day and my interests in bio-chemistry waned. My career pursuit was made easy with a Spring draft notice. The draft board in St Louis County Minnesota needed to make Federal quotas and to fill them required picking freshmen from universities as needed. I took the initiative to test for the USAF that day and by passing the Electronic Qualification Tests, I assured myself a chance at Air Force electronic technician training class. Within several weeks, I found Lackland Airbase San Antonio Texas my home for the next year. Taking basic training and 50 weeks of electronic school as a Cryptographic equipment system repairman filled my duties in Texas.

Ham radio operators find a way to gather and the Air Force was no exception. I met several hams in tech school and with them managed to erect an antenna on the barracks roof and operate from a closet ham shack. It was 'on the air' during weekends. I regularly scheduled my brother Ray, WA0YMU back in Proctor, Minnesota. Ray was 4

years younger than me. He was a quick start enthusiastic ham with an ear for CW. He had mimed my interests in radio and now was passing it along to another younger brother Tim.

Several months into tech school found me married and moved off base and operating WA0WCR/W5 from San Antonio. The experimenting and radio operating continued but was time limited by a busy work and home schedule. I finished electronic school on schedule and with flying colors. I received orders to report to Grand Forks AFB North Dakota the 804th Communication squad a first choice I had chosen. I was ecstatic! I was within weekend driving distance of my folks' place in Minnesota.

Operating in North Dakota was fun for me.. I maintained schedules weekly with my brother and would check into the Minnesota section phone net occasionally. I passed on the radio bug to a couple of young airmen in our communications squadron. They are active yet today, WB0FSQ, Steve, and WB0DTJ, Bob. We enjoyed the socializing and the building elements of ham radio. I was a member of the Grand Forks radio club attending monthly meetings and gatherings when possible. The North Dakota years found my father losing his steel mill job in Duluth required him to transfer to Indiana to finish his career with the mill. Ham radio kept us in touch on a regular basis with WA0YMU. Ray's health was failing him now as his Cystic Fibrosis was worsening. My brother Tim now was studying for his novice exam and soon would be joining the ranks of radio operators in the Lindgren family.



Ray WA0YMU 1970

One of the goals I had in Grand Forks was to be prepared for a good paying job in electronics when the Air Force hitch was up. I found it most convenient in my shift work job schedule to take correspondence classes. I was studying to pass my Second and First class FCC licenses. The Cleveland Institute of Electronics was my choice.

In about a year's time I graduated from the course and scheduled a trip to Minneapolis to take and pass the FCC exams. That same period of time I passed the Advanced and Extra class examination elements of ham radio. One more thing to mention before moving onto civilian life. I was an active MARS member on the base and spent hours with Sgt Ed Deaton. Although I could never win him over to hamming, he taught me a lot of military protocol on radio and most importantly, introduced me to the Collins S line.

Making the next jump in life, finding a good job and QTH, was made easy by the invitation Collins Radio company made me in the Summer of 1973. With a good starting offer and relocating bonus plus a chance as a laboratory technician in the engineering department, wow! The move was easy and smooth. I rented a small house on 5th Ave in Marion which just happened to have a huge 150 ft back yard. The one problem was that it backed up next to the railroad yards. The car and track switching occurred at all hours of the night. I found that wearing headphones pinched tightly to my head dampened the banging rail noises and made the sweet sounds of CW and SSB more soothing to my ears. The back yard had a huge Willow tree which functioned well as a radio skyhook. I had dipoles and long wires hanging from it.

The job at Collins was super. The work was challenging and rewarding. The co-workers in the department were knowledgeable, helpful and friendly. It seemed after six months on the job that home owning was the right thing to do. After a few weeks of looking we found a small two bedroom home on 13th Ave in Marion. The house had potential. An unfinished upstairs and plenty of room in the basement for the shack with a backyard overlooking dropping terrain to the north were the highlights. Certainly potential for a tower and beam or quad! Well it didn't take long to fulfill that dream. We signed the deed and kept an eye in the weekly 'penny saver' for antenna sales. It happened soon. I found a retiring Collins employee, Merle Smith, selling his Rohn tower with stacked HyGain 204ba and duo band 10-15m antennas for an affordable price. With a little neighborly help taking down the newly purchased prize, it was reinstalled that Summer at WA0WCR's QTH.

DXing was brought to a new level for me the year the 'good' antennas were installed. The beams brought in signals like gamgbusters. There seemed no end to pile-up breaking and long chats with DX land. The DXCC diploma, the new Heathkit SB220, the taste of competing in DX

contests and actually getting respectable results fueled the fire. If the bands were dead the QSL cards were being filled out. A tremendous amount of time was spent answering QSLs and chasing DX. It was not just an evening or early morning passion. The bands were open in the middle of the night for those needed South Pacific stations to be worked too. It takes a dedicated fool to stay up late for a chance at those elusive ones. WA0WCR was not to be out fooled!

In those early days the postage costs were high too. I found that WORAP, Bob, had a solution for me. He bought 50 pound bags of canceled postage stamps, a stamp collectors dream, from a fund raising church group. There were many 'misses' in the letter stamping. With careful soaking, the stamps could be recovered and reused. Just the ticket for QSLing. The need for IRCs was another problem to be addressed. ZK1DR, Alan, was a very active operator with whom friendship had been established. I asked him if he would like a QSL manager to do those dreary duties. He most gladly agreed to it. With weekly schedules the QSL information was exchanged and cards were sent out quickly, IRCs were plentiful and Alan had more hours to operate. He operated many many contests and worked many JAs. These duties followed onto his next island assignment on Western Samoa, 5W1EJ.



Alan, ZK1DR and 5W1EJ.

Going back a bit to the first couple year at Collins, the lab was always a bustle with ham radio talk. It hardly seemed a day would pass when we didn't have a mini ham fest at break or lunch discussing band conditions or another home project being fabricated. Some of the hams I recall were W0HUP, W0HOG, W0FHE (W0SR), W0RAP, N0BB, W0MMT, K0FLY, W0MJN, W0VX, K0AT, W0NSN and many more. We were all proud of our affiliation with Collins and truly enjoyed the radio hobby.

Jim, W0SR, stopped by our work bench in the Summer of 1975 talking about starting a contest club with a goal of sending in combined contest scores for the DX contests. Here was an opportunity to sharpen my contesting skills with the likes of Lynn, W0PCO, the best contester in the area. Dave, W0VX was our very enthusiastic club president. Recalling now, our first meeting was at Joe's (W0MJN) QTH. Without going into great detail, the club thrived. With the likes of K0LUZ, N4RR, with proven contest abilities, everyone in the club saw benefits in their operating skills. We regularly gathered for antenna parties and met nightly chasing DX on 2 meters. It seemed like their always was an ear on the two meter DX spotting frequency so as not to miss the latest hot chase.

There was sad times too. Brother Ray, WA0YMU became a silent key in 1976. He had been an inspiration to the family. Ray did pass along the key to younger brother Tim KA0CXK (KK0G now).



KA0CXK Tim 1976

Those days of contesting started paying off with recognized finishes in Zero land. Sporting an upgraded callsign of W0WP, being active on the band and knowing propagation paths, loving the CW mode, it seemed a natural the the CQWW CW and ARRL DX CW were to be the contests to participate in. This had held true through the late 70s and 80s. Several wins in these and other contests were documented. The honest answer to 'how did you do it with modest stations?' was simple - I worked very hard at it and slept very little. Back in those days dupe checking was an art in itself. Many different sheets were tried and tweaked upon.



W0WP 1986

DXing has been a lifetime contest of sorts. This was not overlooked in the shack of W0WP. It seems that the one person I competed with the most would be Dale, W0IZ. Dale was a driving force in achieving 5Band DXCC, RTTY DXCC, 5BWAS and low numbers in CW and Mixed DXCC certificates.

In 1975 the ARRL started a separate CW only DXCC award. A mad race pursued by CW DXers to up their total and the men that brought the more rare ones were actively trying to do so. By the year 1979 rolled around, no one had activated the North Cooks. Alan Cresswell, ZK1DR stationed on Rarotonga with the New Zealand Seismographic department, was our key to the North Cook group. With the licensing and logistics taken care by Alan, an opportunity to embark was realized. Steve, K0SVW (EIDXA alumni), Jim K0EVE, W0WP, ZK1DR and the crew of the Dolly Varden arrived on the island Penrhyn Atoll August 17th, 1979. ZL1ADI and ZL1AMO were operating from the island of Manihiki during the same week of activation making the North Cook easily worked around the world. A successful operation and adventure was had by all. QSL manager duties were handled by W0WP and all the cards sponsored by Rockwell-Collins.



Penrhyn Atoll

Dxers love to brag and meet other braggers. They converge every Spring in Dayton, Ohio. We made the trip a must in the 70s and 80s. The partying started Friday nights in the hospitality suites, the one party that seemed the most fun to us was the Kansas City group. They had spoofs on Dxpeditions, 'how to' homemade videos such as Antenna erection (how not to do it), a thousand uses for JA Qsl cards, and of course always the ways to improve your contest scores (not)! A roaring good time for sure. Hunting through the flea market, in the rain usually, attending many antenna, contest, and DX forums every year was the routine. What a great time we had.

For someone who never had done any antenna tower climbing, I certainly learned. There seemed to always be a need for some one to shimmy up a tower and repair or install that better antenna. It was a good time and done safely. Never was there a serious accident witnessed on a tower in all those years I did it. Some of the interesting installations we participated in were N4RR's in town 150 ft tower with 40 meter 3 element beam, two element 80 meter phase array, side mounted tribander. Keith, N0GW, huge titanium vertical system and two towers housing monobanders. Small by the antenna farms sported by NR0X and N0NI, but to me at the time it was big stuff.



Field day 1987 at NC00's QTH. Left to Right W0EJ, W0WP, KC0Q, NU0P, WE0M, NC00, and W0IZ

With the old QTH in Marion paid for, I began dreaming of relocating out of town. More fresh air, bigger antennas, less noise and neighbors. A ham's dream QTH. Well in 1989 I found and bought a piece of ground to match that scenario. A QTH only a fifteen minute drive from work but minus the house. Two years later the house was completed enough to occupy. I spent most of those years planning and building the house and garage. I missed the radio and one country that

would haunt me for several years, Burma XZ (caught it in the mid nineties).

I enjoy radio today as much as ever. The competing spirit is not so keen but not dead either. The pile-ups and the personal challenge of digging out the weak ones in a contest and seeing how many countries and multipliers we can find are still thrilling. W0PCO told me years ago, to him every contest gives that thrill of 'working a new one' again. I thought about that and so true it is!

Meeting Notice

The next meeting of the Eastern Iowa DX Association will be on Friday, April 24, 2003 at 7:30 in Room 219C Linn Hall on the Kirkwood Community College campus. Doors open at 6:30 pm for eyeball QSOs. Monitor 145.19 for directions if needed. See you there



Jeff Davis NØDY
1700 Fox Hollw
Road