

The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association



An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



July 2008

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Club Officers

President:	Glen Kesselring	KØJGH
Vice President:	Steve Miller	NØSM
Secretary Treasurer:	George Carsner	WØPPF

Packet Cluster

WB8ZRL

147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM

Repeater Committee:

Al Groff	KØVM
Joe Finkstein	WØMJN

Repeater:

NØDX/R

144.59 / 145.19 (tone 192.8)

Membership Committee:

Jim Spencer	WØSR
Tom Vavra	WB8ZRL
Nelson Moyer	KUØA

July EIDX Meeting

Friday, July 25th, at 7:30 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C. The program: a video of the 2007 BS7G Scarborough Reef DXpedition.

From the President's Pen - Glen Kesselring KØJGH



Wow! Summer is already half over. Sunspots are flat and not a lot of exciting DX happening. As I mulled over the possibilities of things to share in this column it seemed difficult to come up with anything news worthy in the area of radio. At our house, it seemed like this has been a summer of atmospheric irregularly, but in the form of water and wind. Now, not that many of you have seen my QTH, but we are on very high flat ground. For there to be water problems here is unusual. HOWEVER, as I humbly look at photos that have been posted on the web, it is no less than sobering to see the devastation of Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Waterloo and other communities from these past floods. I would say that most of our membership that lives in these communities have either been cleaning up or helping family or friends deal with this issue. Here's hoping that those lives are getting put back together.

We had a good local Field Day down here in Ottumwa. It was good to buff up those CW skills again. It has been awhile since there were any really big piles around. VK9X has been spotted this week but I haven't seen many, if any, stateside spots.

Don't forget the upcoming picnic. We'll set the date at the July meeting. Also, the WØDXCC convention in Rochester, MN August 9-10th. See you July 25th. Glen KØJGH

From the VP - Steve Miller NØSM

What an eventful spring/summer! Amateur radio has had the opportunity to be more than a hobby for a large number of our Iowa operators. Wade used to tell us that the League wanted us to refer to amateur radio as a “service” and it certainly has been during the storm and flood season. I hope everyone has survived the ordeal though I know it is far from over for many people. DXing and contesting may be the primary subjects of our club but it also has provided our “service” with a corps of trained operators and people who can meet the communication needs of our communities. Hats off to all who helped during the recent emergencies and thank you for your services.

As Dayton drew to a close, Tom Vinson NYØV told me that he had participated in “Contest University”, a day-long training institute in contesting techniques. Leading it were a number of the leading testers whose calls we will recognize. Tom provides an article you'll enjoy.

Another treasure is Jim Livengood's trip to Africa. He's written a fascinating travelogue entitled “Impressions of Africa - ZS & 5Z” mixing personal experiences with his opportunities to operate. You'll come away with new perspectives about life in Africa. My wife read it, smiled, and said, “I want to go.”

Last issue I mentioned that I had lost a lot of email and still don't know what happened. It left the heading but upon opening each, one got a blank stare!! The strange part is that it only happened to emails prior to a specific date, the rest were okay. Of the lost emails were the ones from members who had sent their CW scores for the 2008 ARRL DX CW Contest. I asked that they be resent and have received only one so far, for NØMA:

Contest : ARRLDX-US
 Callsign : NØMA
 Mode : CW
 Operator : SINGLE-OP
 Transmitter : ONE
 Assisted : NON-ASSISTED
 Power : LOW
 Sent Exchange : IA

Band	QSO	Qpts	Dupes	Mult1	Mult2
10	0	0	0	0	0
15	22	66	0	13	0
20	154	462	0	56	0
40	57	171	0	28	0
80	17	51	0	15	0
160	0	0	0	0	0
ALL	250	750	0	112	0

=====
 Total Score: 84.000

From the VP

20 Meters continues to be the bread and butter band with good activity on 40 and 80. 15 was decent at this time during the sunspot cycle and 10 meters was like riding in a wave pool with big QSB swings. Congrats on the fine low power score!!

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting next Friday.

Contest University - Tom Vinson NY0V

Dayton, Ohio: May 15, 2008 – Our annual “once-in-a-lifetime” trip to Dayton usually means taking the Wednesday before the Hamvention to hang out at the museum at Wright Patterson AFB or visiting Mendelson’s. This year was different for me.

Last January I heard about a course to be offered called Contest University. It was being organized by Tim Duffy, K3LR. It was Tim who was instrumental in organizing the first full-day contesting course just prior to the 2006 Dayton Hamvention. At that time it kicked off with around 75 in attendance. As I read through the syllabus for this year I saw that the course work was offered for both graduates from last year as Contesting 201 as well as Contesting 101 for guys like me, a contest freshman. Once I saw what was being offered, I decided that I would plop my \$75 down (breakfast and lunch included) and invest a day to learn a bit more about how to do a decent job at contesting. This year’s event attracted over 200 from all over the world.

The first year classes cover a range of topics each given by some of the ‘big guns’ of contesting. Tim noted that the eight instructors had over 300 years of combined contest experience. The syllabus for the 2007 Contest University freshman courses:

Radio Contesting Ethics	K5ZD
Station Hints and Kinks	NØAX
Antennas and Propagation	W3LPL

QSO Party/Mobile Contesting K8MR
OR

First Year RTTY Contesting WØYK

Extreme Shack Make Over	K1DG
Eyeball Sprint	K1DG
Station Design	K1DG
VHF + DXpedition Contest	K8MR
Contest Radio Performance	NCØB

Questions/Answers

As you can see, the courses are designed to cover a wide range of contesting. When I first saw the course on Ethics, I thought ho-hum. But actually it turned out to be very thought provoking.

Contest University

The rules are pretty black and white as they are published. But gray areas certainly do exist. For instance, if you are running in the single op, unassisted category what happens when your antenna breaks? Do you call someone over to help climb the tower and fix it? Are you now running “assisted?” Is a contest like NASCAR where you have a pit crew to help you to finish? Or, is it like the Olympic marathon where if you even touch a runner before the finish line they are disqualified because you assisted them. Or how about the guys that “warm up” a frequency for the 15 minutes before the contest? They are already spotted on the cluster and have the frequency. Is that fair to everyone else? Do we need a Le Mans type of start where at 0000z everyone starts by turning on the radios? Another area addressed is that of ‘cleaning up’ the log after the contest. Evidently some are going back through the log and fixing calls and time-bending their 10 minute off times! And now there is the whole discussion on the use of CW skimmers. It was interesting the instructor mentioned that in the UK and USA we have a culture of “competition with honor,” i.e. winning a contest while cheating is dishonorable. But, in some cultures winning is paramount no matter how you accomplish that goal.

Ward Silver, NØAX and “Ham of the Year” gave a great talk on how to crank up your “dB” in terms of score. I went into the class thinking along the lines of radio, antennas, and power. I came out thinking quite differently. While those do help of course, the biggest increase in scores will be found first in technique and station layout. The elimination of wasteful practices was on the top of the list, not antennas and power! What that means is keep every movement and every word to a minimum, be accurate, get into a cadence, and stay in the chair. Focusing efforts on those things will increase your score more than buying an antenna that gives you 3dB more gain or going from a KW to 1.5KW. I also realized that my station is designed more for DXing than for contesting. This makes sense as I consider myself a DXer as opposed to a serious contester. The classes on extreme shack make-over and station design were useful for me to see what makes a solid contest station layout if I really want to run them. I also found the scatter plots of frequency vs. time for various contest operators very useful. You get to see how different operators work the bands. As one might expect, the guys who were searching and pouncing (S&P) had scores much lower than systematically working up/down the bands and holding a frequency to run them in peak times.

The session on contest radio performance was also informative. Bob, NCØB makes it clear his views vs. the ARRL’s in measuring Rx performance! It was nice to see the Collins S-Line ranking up there with the best of them in Dynamic Range. The K-3 and Orion II won out in the DR category topping around 100dB with the K-3. Though at the end of his pitch he was saying that what makes him fatigued in a contest is whether or not the audio distortion is too high. He showed figures on audio distortion and one radio that had a problem with it. When asked which radio the test data was for, he said the K-3. As I understand it he is working with Elecraft and they are moving to a solution to cut down the higher order audio distortion.

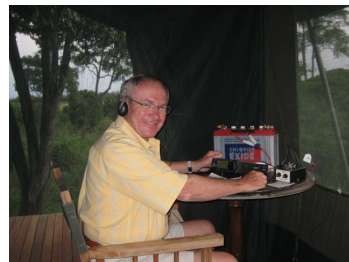
There were some sessions that I didn’t have a lot of interest in like mobile/county hunting. So like any college coursework, sometimes you take courses you wouldn’t particularly want to take. In summary, I found Contest University useful and informative,

Contest University

not to mention the good time being able to rub shoulders with other DXers and testers from around the world.

Impressions of Africa – ZS & 5Z - Jim Livengood W0NB

It is January 31, 2008. My XYL and I are seated behind the pilot in a single engine Cessna flying low over the Rift Valley on the way to a vacation destination we had dreamed and planned of for the previous year. In the luggage hold are our two small suitcases and my backpack stuffed with a light-weight CW station and 16-page Kenya ham license, the ink of authorization signatures still damp. Our destination is the Maasai Mara, the land of the Masai people in remote Western Kenya. We fly over a burned out village and see smoke rising from others. Ten minutes later our pilot throttles back, but no airport is in site. Then I see the dirt strip. As we touch down I notice two men, distinctive in their Shukas, the traditional red robe worn by the Masai warriors. The pilot hands each a corrugated box. Supplies from Nairobi. Behind them stands a green-uniformed guide. He waves; our host from the nearby Kichwa Tembo camp in the land of the Masai.



As I write this in Washington, DC, it is Sunday evening of Mothers Day weekend, my birthday. I have just read the Washington Post's latest dispatch from Kenya. In summary it says displaced Kenyans are returning to their farms in the Rift valley under Army Escort. It is a forced return. Members of the Kisii tribe have the clothes on their backs, a few hand tools, pots and pans. The government has given them a small bag of corn meal to eat and an allotment of seed which they are ordered to plant. Their neighbors, members, of the Kalenjin tribe, watch sullenly as the truck lumbers past. Not one of them greets the new arrivals, or responds to a wave. The Kalenjin people do not wish them success. Peace does not come because the militia has come. Reconciliation is a process that will take more time. The hate has been there almost as long as the soil, says one. The truck stops at each small farm, or what had been a farm. A family climbs off the truck. There are no homes or outbuildings. They have all been looted and burned by their neighbors. They are three months late for planting. They have no fertilizer, no shelter. The government predicts food shortages. Kisii farmers wonder what they will eat if they put the government seed in the ground. They worry that their neighbors will return wielding machetes. This is the breadbasket of Kenya!

This odyssey began a year ago, when our youngest daughter and her husband surprised us with a combo "Mothers Day-Dad's birthday" gift, a Big Game Photo Safari to Africa! First we would visit South Africa, then Kenya. We would travel during January and February of 2008.

Ham radio was not part of the original plans. Mary is a big supporter of the hobby and has endured a lot of radio operating interruptions on trips through the years. I told her we should just relax on this trip, see the sites and take lots of pictures of animals. In early

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December she was packing some books for reading during the promised leisure time. What was I taking? What if I brought along just a small radio and operated when she was reading or otherwise relaxing?

In response I received a big understanding smile and a reminder that each of us had a 33-pound luggage limit due to the in-country bush planes we would be flying. Hers was maxed out, she said. I found the ancient baby scale and was startled to learn that my trusty IC-706 weighed just over 6 pounds and the switching supply weighed 9!

The DXpedition was saved with the purchase of a new Gamma Research HPS-1A hybrid power supply not much larger than a pack of cigarettes. The literature promised 20 amps at 12 volts to small rigs on a normal CW duty cycle from 100 to 240 volts input, 50-60 cycles thanks to computer capacitors that recharge rapidly between the dots and dashes! Weight is 1.25 pounds. See: www.gammaresearch.net.



◀ **At Cape Town, the little 1.25 pound Gamma Research Power Supply delivered 20 Amps**

Two 100-foot rolls of #18 black insulated Radio Shack wire, MFJ's tiny random wire tuner, a light headset, and one of those miniature wooden iambic keys made with heavy spring-loaded paper clips sold yearly at Dayton. It fits in a standard plastic prescription pill container. A pair of tiny jumpers with alligator clips and two banana plugs completed the station. One plug is for the coax socket on the tuner, and a jumper connecting to the antenna of choice. The other banana plug was for tapping into the ground of the electrical system, if there was one, to augment the counterpoise. Socks and underwear padded the radio and power supply in my backpack. Carry-on suitcase and backpack weighed 33 pounds total.

Licensing inquiries were made through the radio societies of both countries. South Africa is listed as a CEPT country on the ARRL link, but a permission form and fees were mentioned on the South African Radio League (SARL) site. Vee Antal, ZS6ZEN, in Johannesburg is the SARL Administrator. She explained that regulations were in flux. I filled out the form listing my general itinerary so that I could be contacted if needed, and e-mailed it back with a scan of my passport picture page and copy of my license. Vee's responding e-mail said I was set to operate anywhere in South Africa signing ZS/WØNB. She offered the SARL headquarters station for my use, as well as that of her friend, Peter Hoyle.

My contact in Kenya was E.H.N. "Ted" Alleyne, ZS6NU, Secretary of the Kenya society. There was a notation that Kenya had applied to become a CEPT country, but Ted replied that despite his best efforts it was not the case. I would have to make a formal application including forms, documentation of passport, visa, and a filing fee to their government communications office. Then he floored me! He offered to walk my

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application through all the respective desks just as soon as my materials arrived in his Nairobi post office box. Ted explained that this would increase my odds for success and speed up the process. I got the application from the Internet and snail-mailed everything that day from Burlington, Iowa.

A month later, my materials had not arrived. Ted reported that there were “troubles” and that the post office had not received overseas mail for “some time”. We were just two weeks before departure to South Africa and arrangements were made to stay in touch. I began paying more attention to Kenya news and subscribed to the state department websites in the US and Kenya for updates and travel information.

On January 12 we flew from O’Hare to London’s Heathrow, then to Johannesburg, capital city of South Africa. Vee, ZS6ZEN and her friend Peter, ZS6TAO, hosted us for



three days. They have a fine home and ham radio station. Peter handed me a Cedar Rapids-manufactured Vibroplex clone to use with his IC-746 Pro. He has quite a key collection including a McElroy I have never seen elsewhere. Peter also has a lot of military gear.



A gold stampede had helped establish the city and mines still operate within the city limits. Peter is in the mining business. We visited the important sites from the Apartheid struggle including the homes of Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and the Soweto Township and related museums. We took in a musical, dinner on the town, and celebrated the birthday of one of Vee’s daughters.

The Gamma Research power supply had arrived the day before our departure so I was anxious to power up the little station at our hotel. A random wire went out the window and a banana plug into the hotel electrical ground. I fired up about 2100Z on 30, then 40, running 100 watts. Six QSOs were in the January 14 log in about 15 minutes representing all continents except Asia. VK and PY were 539 reports, the others 579. The power supply was quiet and cool on the 50 cycle 240 volt system. I bagged up the station and we went to dinner at a “very local” restaurant. I had pigs knee with peas and rice. Mary had Kingclip, a popular “fish and chips” dinner. The local beer is very good. In the morning we flew to Cape Town.

In Cape Town, our hotel room was on the third floor to the rear. A small bush terminates the sloper oriented between Europe and the Middle East. I work lots of both. The biggest local landmark is Table Mountain, around the base of which lies the city of Cape Town. The mountain is in the path to North America. The few stateside contacts include Jerry Rosalius-WB9Z and Steve Bolia-N8BJQ with whom I contest at PJ2T. They have big stations and good ears.

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From January 16 to 26 we toured the south of South Africa. We rented a car and visited and hiked the Cape of Good Hope, national parks with wild game ranging from springbok to penguins, and small towns inhabited by very prosperous people who enjoy summer-like weather year-round. The wine country in the Western Cape is spectacular; our favorite town being Franschhoek, or French Hook. The grape harvest had begun this week. We discover that a favorite \$24 Stellenbosch wine in the US sells for about \$7 at the wonderful restaurant on their estate. We dine on the patio. This is truly the Province, or the Napa Valley, of Africa and deserved two more visits.

Across the street from our hotel lies the Victoria and Alfred Harbor, a bustling enterprise ranging from ship fitters, dry-docks, harbor tour boats, passenger liners, condominiums for the well-to-do, shopping centers, and the Nelson Mandela Apartheid Museum from which our tour boat leaves to the desolate Robbens Island, where many of the leaders of the uprising were imprisoned. How Mandela and others survived nearly two brutal decades there is a miracle.

Returning, we notice the fire-engine red Antarctic research vessel “Shackleton” in port. She is the same vessel which has transported several DXpeditions to the southern oceans. If you follow these adventures you have probably worked someone aboard this vessel.

The RRS Ernest Shackleton at moorings in Cape Town ►



Cape Town’s residents are busy, happy, courteous, and friendly. The races appear to get along. Most of the acquaintances we made in the towns were of Zulu ancestry (the majority) or European. However, we heard many other languages spoken including the distinctive Click tongue of the Khosa people. We saw uniformed school children with their friends, black and white, walking and talking together on the way to classes. Adults who grew up with Apartheid, seem to have come together, or left the country. The only strain I heard about while in South Africa was the growing presence of refugees from neighboring countries and their competition for jobs among the poorest South Africans.

To reach our first safari experience we fly from Cape Town to Nelspruit where we spot our name on a signboard along the taxi queue. The driver stows our bags in his Land Rover and we are soon in the country and the freeway turns to gravel, then to a pair of ruts in a mud road for two hours as we go deeper into the bush. The “Big Five” game animals can be seen in the Bongani Mountain Reserve where we will stay in a thatched hut. The “Big Five” are Lion, Elephant, Rhino, Leopard, and Water Buffalo. Adjacent is the much larger Kruger National Park.



◀ San People images 900 years old painted with egg white and ochre at Kruger Park, South Africa

The daily drill is a safari from an hour before sunrise to midmorning. Another runs from an hour before sunset until dinner, around 9pm. So much for gray line strategies. I operated

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here three days, January 27 to 29. It was the usual set-up with a random wire into a tree at the edge of an escarpment. The counterpoise was an alligator clip to the chicken wire blanket which kept the thatch roof from blowing away in high winds. All signals seem to be 599 from Europe, Africa and the Middle east. No ham radio heroics here. This was prime vacation time.

Bongani is in northeast South Africa. We are in hilly, very rugged country. We see lots of big game, but no Lion, although we did track one for two days. Our guide drives the Land Rover. A tracker rides a steel chair bolted to the front left fender. When we step out of the vehicle for “tea time” the guide inserts five large caliber bullets into the magazine of his Remington bolt action rifle which is equipped with iron sites. Rhinos kill more humans here than any other animal. Only a bullet to the brain at close range will stop one, he says. No need for a finicky telescopic site for these guys!



At times we ran 3 and 4 QSOs a minute from Bongani on CW and the little power supply ran cool ►

On our last day, our guide takes us into Kruger National Park and through his childhood village where everyone waves and calls his name. He drives us to his secret spot over and around boulders the size of houses where he shares with us the rock paintings by the San People. We view the most often-photographed and published of them all, now protected by our Zulu guide and his people whose ancestors drove the San from this valley 900 years ago. The red-orange paint is made of ochre and egg-white!

For the past several days I had been in communication with 5Z4NU regarding the situation in Kenya. Ted reported that it had been unsafe for him to leave his home in Nairobi on some days. Travel at night was still not a good idea. Government militia was now prevailing in the city. British Airways and other carriers had suspended all flights into Kenya a few days before, but our local carrier was still operating. The smaller Wilson Airport, from which we would fly our charter into the Rift Valley had been surrounded by “rebels” but should be operational in time for our departure, he said. Khofi Annan and a United Nations negotiating team were on the way. However, the troubles in Nairobi had sparked inter-tribal skirmishes in the Rift Valley and entire villages had been wiped out. In one case, villagers fled to a mission church to escape their machete wielding neighbors, only to be burned alive inside! And by the way, your license application has not turned up, nor has any international mail from the post, but not to worry, keep on coming and I’ll tell you if you need to change plans!



◄ **W0NB and Ted, 5Z4NU discussing the troubles**

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Having served with the Colonial Kenya Defense Forces during the Mau Mau uprisings, and a successful career as an East African Airlines pilot, it seems nothing bothers Ted. Always optimistic, we began taking our Malaria pills.

On January 30 it was safe to fly into Nairobi International. Ted reported that my documentation had arrived that morning. He said he would rendezvous with us the following morning at an elephant orphanage that was on the way to Wilson Airport. He would not risk driving later that day. The flight was uneventful, but heavy security at customs, immigration, and all around the airport bore testimony to the situation. Two representatives of CC Africa, the safari outfit, transported us to what had been a grand old colonial hotel, now a rather grand Holiday Inn franchise, except for the signs over each tap reading DON'T DRINK THE WATER. We were advised not to take photographs of the armed forces at every intersection. We cleared three army roadblocks. The militia carried automatic weapons and side arms. There were home-made signs and banners saying "stop the killing" in a nearby park where massive anti-government rallies had been held. There were no anti-government signs in sight. There were few pedestrians and little traffic. We took our host's advice and stayed in the hotel. The dining was very nice.

After breakfast we drive through more roadblocks to the elephant orphanage. This privately funded operation has rescued 83 babies which have been re-introduced to the wild. Poaching and ivory hunting are the most common causes, though some babies wander into irrigation cisterns and the like. The keepers even sleep with some of the baby elephants. The companionship has proven to reduce their traumatic memories. One can "adopt" an elephant and now our modest sponsors fee helps support our grandson's adopted new pet elephant, Dida.

As we enjoyed watching the keepers feed the babies I noticed a tall distinguished looking gentleman stopping now and then to greet orphanage volunteers and staff. It was my new friend, Ted, 5Z4NU. He and his wife are major patrons and were involved in early efforts to establish the orphanage. His big smile and the wave of an envelope communicated success. Ted had applied for my license the day before, and this morning, picked up the 16-page document in spite of the troubled situation, and then hand delivered it to me after driving through more armed military roadblocks. Now that is friendship! Ham radio friendship; and part of what makes me so passionate about our hobby!

Ted kidnapped us, promising CC Africa that he would get us to the airport on time. He explained that he knew the charter operator and had personally flown out of Wilson as a commercial aviator for many years. We drove to his farm. As a younger man he had raised cattle and other livestock. He now kept a milk cow. It was not only a mixed farm of chickens and garden crops, but a tropical garden. We recognized many beautiful plants and were introduced to others. His tower supports a Moseley Classic 33 and some vhf antennas. Ted's XYL prepared a nice lunch. After dining, touring their lovely home, farm and station-office, we were off to the airport.

Security at Wilson airport was heavy. Ted knew everyone and we were soon boarding a Cessna loadmaster, a freight and passenger hauling brute. The pilot distributed mints and water bottles. The single 750 horsepower turbine engine was impressive at take-off, firmly

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setting us back into our seats. As we crossed over into the Rift Valley, he would not discuss the troubles and ignored questions about the occasional smoke and destruction beneath us. Landing at the grass strip was uneventful.

Our hosts at the private Kichwa Tembo airstrip had set up a camp table with stainless thermos bottles containing hot tea and coffee. There were cookies and biscuits while introductions were made and arrangements discussed. Timothy, our guide, noted that we were traveling light and asked where our tent and other camping materials were. His tracker seemed irritated that we had come all this way without our camping gear. Then the smiles broke out. A big joke by a couple of very nice Masai guys who had opted out of the usual tribal life and were working for CC Africa; but still tribal members who would return to their villages annually to wear the Shuka and immerse themselves in their traditions. It is a period of transition for these people, some of whom must participate at some degree in the modern world in order to preserve the old. We were to meet others living the experimental dual role.

Timothy asked if we had seen The Big Five. We had not yet seen a lion in the wild. He found a pride of five for us on the way to the campsite. They were magnificent!

We checked in at a rustic thatch-roofed timbered lodge housing the business office, a souvenir and book shop, dining room, lounge and bar, and kitchen facilities. The compound also included everything needed for a self-sufficient community in the middle of nowhere.

There is also refrigerated and dry food storage, a fuel depot, medical dispensary, basic camp store, vehicle maintenance depot, and employee housing! Commuting to work for miles on foot is not practical for the Masai people. A dentist from Belgium visits once a year towing a mobile clinic behind his Land Rover. He provides the service free to the Masai. For serious medical attention, the resort provides transportation to the hard road for onward travel.

A main and stand-by Caterpillar Diesel generators provide power for refrigeration and all other needs. The electrical system is shut down whenever possible because of the troubles. Fuel was being conserved because it was unsafe to run tankers through the remote unsecured areas of the Rift Valley to the Maasai Mara. The cost must have been another factor as only a dozen guests occupied the camp which usually boasted at least 100 guests. One night there was only one other couple. Nearby camps were closed altogether because of guest and international air-service cancellations!

Formalities completed, we were escorted about a quarter mile along wooden walkways and bridges to our tent. I would call it a "Hemingway" tent. A wooden staircase led to a deck supporting our front porch and tent. The roof was vented and another fly above shaded the living quarters and provided rain-proofing. A hardwood floor supported a full-size bed. There were his and her closets. A shower, flush toilet, and vanity were at the back. A combination of fluorescent electric lighting and kerosene lamps provided illumination. Behind the tent a charcoal-fired water heater simmered away 24-7. A farm-type windmill pumps well water to a cistern above the campground elevation.

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The armed overnight security force would bring a light breakfast to our deck along with a wake-up call an hour before the pre-sunrise safari. Full meals were served at the lodge, in the yard, or poolside depending on the weather. Despite being at 1 degree South Latitude, the 5300 foot elevation made for comfortable sleeping and some cool mornings. Attentive staff even brought us hot water bottles at bedtime.

Before turning in, I sought out Stanley, the assistant camp manager and explained that I would be operating my radio from time to time and asked if it would be possible to borrow a hefty battery. I returned from the morning safari every day to discover that his mechanic had provided a re-charged truck battery with shiny new terminals. I recall only once operating when AC was available, and that was for a short time.

A fairly large tree is conveniently located behind the tent to support wires of a vertical nature, inverted L when too long; all launched and insulated using a stone and the fishing line. Four were constructed from one 100-foot wire roll for 40 through 17 meters, the most productive bands so far. The remainder and other roll provided counterpoises and a piece of scrap for the banana plug to the seldom-activated electrical system ground which spider-webbed just below the surface throughout the expansive campground. The four copper leads protruded through the mosquito netting and the alligator clip jumpers were clipped to the favored antenna. They all played well.

Stanley, manager of Kichwa Tembo Camp offered us every consideration to make the 5Z4/WØNB operation a success. Stanley is a proud Masai and Kenyan. ►



Every day was an adventure, but I will highlight several events, which we will never forget.

On the first day we saw all of the Big Five. We saw great large herds of elephant with many babies. We saw lions stalking, resting, sleeping, and devouring their prey. Large groups of rhinoceros sunning themselves in the Mara River. We spotted a leopard dozing high on a tree branch, only his dangling tail to give him away, and another hidden in some bush while devouring its prey. I wondered why the African buffalo was among the Big Five until I saw them. They are ominous, and the herd functions like a military unit with the big bulls circling on the outside, protecting the females and calves in the middle. The lead bull looks you in the eye and is not welcoming. Only one other time in his life had our guide ever spotted all five during a single outing.

Not in the “Big Five” is the Giraffe, including the two males we observed “necking”, delivering a series of furious blows to each other using their upper necks. Appearing to us to be unimpressed was the nearby female for whom they were competing.

The next day featured a morning balloon ride over the valley. I have ballooned before in Iowa in 4 passenger models. The basket on this rig held 14 passengers plus the pilot, a rangy middle-aged Belgian whose commercial entire aviation career had been in lighter

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than air vehicles. Dirigibles, blimps, balloons! The view was spectacular. At 100 to 300 feet over the ground, most animals are not spooked. We saw nesting storks with chicks, and monkeys in the treetops. Crocodiles lazing on the banks of the Mara; and gazelle, elephant, rhinoceros, various bok, zebra, hippo, hyena, warthogs, and more baboons than one could count. The trees dotted the plains, black on gold during sunrise. Massai Mara, “the dotted land”.

The land is also populated with outhouse-sized termite mounds which are best avoided when landing a balloon. In still air we touched down softly and did not tip. Afterwards a champagne breakfast feast was celebrated under the watchful gaze of two giraffe grazing nearby. This is where “Out of Africa” was filmed. It is as beautiful as scenes in the movie. While we dined, the balloon pilot unloaded a two crates which unfolded into a field studio for editing and duplicating DVD’s.

A remote camera had filmed the flight and the pilot mixed in some file pictures. A deep cycle battery powered the inverter, computer and duplicating deck capable of burning 12 programs at a time. He is a good pilot and savvy businessman. We parted with another wad of Kenya Schillings for our very own copy.

We decided not to do a safari our last night and morning of our departure. Both of us were tired, and I wanted at least one sunset and sunrise experience. It was not to be. Timothy insisted that we accompany him on both. “I’ve saved the best for last,” he said. “You must come”.

Upon our return we showered and changed for dinner. On the way to the lodge we encountered a worried looking Stephan, the manager. “You must see Joseph, your waiter, right away,” he said. “He has a message for you”. With a pregnant daughter and two other families in Shanghai and the Ozarks we immediately felt worried, too. We found Joseph. He said we must move our quarters because of rain in the hills the previous night which would flood our campsite. He asked us to follow him right away. What a relief. We live on the Mississippi River. Floods we understand.

We followed Joseph through the unusually dark trail to our site. As we approached our tent I noticed a soft glow of lights. Our deck was illuminated by 26 Dietz kerosene lamps. A formal dining service was set on our little camp table. Linens, silver, crystal, the works. From out of the shadows stepped the camp manager, the chef, the night security guards, as Joseph climbed onto our deck, linen towel over his arm. He welcomed us to “a very romantic and special dining experience” in our honor. We are still not sure why we were so honored, but we enjoyed every minute. We played “gourmands” through many courses, enjoyed a fine African wine, and elaborate dessert. Now we understood why Timothy insisted on our evening safari. The team had needed time to get set up.

Three hours later after many thanks and handshakes we bid good night to our smiling hosts. I unzipped the tent fly for Mary to enter and we discovered that our entire little one room home was covered with fresh rose petals, floor, bed covers, vanity, shower stall, even rose petals floating in the commode. After uncovering the Icom which was also buried in

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rose petals, I gave 30 meters my best shot for a couple of hours until I rather unromantically crashed into bed, dreading the morning safari wake up call.

It came five hours later and we were soon back in the Land Rover as the sun rose, silhouetting three male lions walking along the roadway beside us. After a short drive, we approached a wooded area near the Mara River. A Masai warrior in full red regalia silently nodded as we stopped in a clearing. We noticed a dining table and a safari kitchen set up. Our smiling chef appeared with his staff and announced that this treat was the rest of our surprise. Breakfast in the bush! We invited our waiter and guide to join us. It was a heartfelt departure for Mary and me. We promised to stay in touch and to come back, if life's road ever turns toward Africa again.

Most of the staff of CC Africa in Ketchwa Tembu are Masai. From Stephan the manager to the most humble worker, he said they all return at least once a year to their villages to reconnect with family, friends, and the rituals of tribal life.

I had been on the radio every day as time permitted, February 1 to 6, departure day. The demand for Kenya on CW was steady with rates around two QSOs per minute with occasional contest speed bursts. It was a nice rate with time for the other guy to pass on his information or ask a question without upsetting the pile-up and for me to keep a readable paper log. A highlight on February 3 was a big thank you from A45XR for a new one on 30 meters. The allocation became official for him that morning.

The little station made nearly 1,600 QSOs from ZS and 5Z. The distribution was about 140 to North America. Europe, 1,009. Asia, 345. South America, 19. Africa, 36. Oceania, 17. I felt that was a respectable total for a vacation operation with about 12 hours on the air. Thanks to everyone who dug a little deeper to work us. This made the vacation even more special.

While we were in Africa, more than 1,000 Kenyans died in Nairobi, and in the Rift Valley in the post-election conflicts.

The Masai were not involved. They live their own lives on their own land. While visiting a nearby village the son of the chief told us that tribal life has been pretty much the same for centuries. Life for the Masai revolves around their cattle. Cattle provide meat, blood, and milk for sustenance. Hides provide leather. Bones of the cattle are used to make tools. The Masai live in huts made of mud and sticks waterproofed with cattle dung. One hut is constructed for each bride and her children. The huts are arranged within a stockade and usually surround the cattle corral. The first marriage is arranged, and the price for a bride is fixed at 10 cows, paid to the father of the bride. A Masai male may have as many wives as he can afford. The brides are usually of other Masai tribes. A major change in this village is that most of the young people are receiving good educations from missionary teachers. Some are taking jobs in the outside world. Some of the brightest win college scholarships to schools in Nairobi, or abroad. Funds are becoming more available for quality of life improvements from rents paid by companies like CC Africa, and purchases of native crafts by visiting tourists. The village school building was paid for with these monies. These are new ways for a people who are not accustomed to change.

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But even with the winds of change upon them, most we spoke with agreed that they will always be Masai!

Going to the Dogs - Jim Spencer W0SR

During a recent Saturday afternoon drive around Greene County I happened down a back road near the 'Coon River. I saw a sign in front of a broken down aging farmhouse that read, "Talking Dog for Sale." Well, that made me curious so I stopped to see what the deal was. In the yard there is a nice looking Labrador retriever sitting.

"You talk?" I asked

"Yep," the Lab replies.

Well after I got over the shock of hearing a dog talk, I asked,

"So, what's your story?"

"Ah shucks there ain't much to tell. Is that a screwdriver antenna on your truck out there?"

"How did you know that," I asked?

The Lab looks up and says,

"Well, I'm a ham radio operator. I got my ticket when I was a young pup. In no time at all I had my 5-band DXCC in Phone and CW. The CIA heard about me and asked me to do spy work for them. I would hang around the communications centers and with my keen hearing could copy the transmissions. Because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping, I was one of their most valuable spies for eight years. Copying high speed CW all day really tired me and I knew I wasn't getting any younger. So, I decided to settle down."

Then the dog said,

"I retired from the CIA (8 dog years is 56 CIA years) and joined a ham radio club. In fact I won first place in the Iowa QSO Party two years in a row. Then I had a mess of puppies and got away from Ham Radio for a while. I sure miss my radio. Why don't you buy me and I'll be your CW operator in the next DX contest?"

I said "Let me see what I can do." I went back in and asked the owner what he wanted for the dog.

"Ten dollars," the old farmer says.

Going to the Dogs

“Ten dollars? This dog is amazing! Why on earth are you selling him so cheap?”

“Because he's a liar. He never did any of that stuff. He's just a No Code Extra.”

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***See you Friday July 25th
7:30 PM in Room 219C Kirkwood Comm. College
Pizza afterward!***

2008 EIDXA Meeting Schedule

Look for this information on the club web-page ***www.eidxa.org***. Meeting information on the web site is up to date to ensure everyone has timely access to the information between newsletters.

Next Meeting

July 25 – 7:30 p.m., Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C. Program: Video of the 2007 BS7H Scarborough Reef DXpedition.

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Recognize any of the gear in this shack?