



# Northern California DX Foundation

www.ncdxf.org

Spring 2013

## ZL9HR Campbell Island 2012

John Chalkiarakis, VK3YP, co-leader

**T**HE PLANNING FOR THE DXPEDITION to Campbell Island New Zealand (OC-037), scheduled for 28 Nov-9 Dec 2012, by the Hellenic Amateur Radio Association of Australia (HARAOA) began in early 2012. Last activated in January 1999 as ZL9CI led by Ken Holdom, ZL2HU, and Lee Jennings, ZL2AL, ZL9 is currently ranked number 13 on the most-wanted survey.

ZL9HR team leader, Tommy Horozakis, VK2IR (HARAOA President), and co-leader John Chalkiarakis, VK3YP (HARAOA Treasurer) began the long process of organizing the necessary call sign license, getting permits from the New Zealand Department of Conservation (NZ DoC) and New Zealand Bureau of Meteorology, chartering the sailing vessel *Evohe*, as well as procuring operating equipment and antennas, not to mention the logistics. This extremely time consuming process took hundreds of hours of hard work; in addition, HARAOA club members participated in fundraising events to purchase Kenwood TS 590S radios and SPE amplifiers, and built shipping containers to transport equipment to New Zealand. The long and careful planning and preparation paid off, however, with a smooth and trouble-free operation.

Because our aim was to put together an international team, a general invitation for operators was posted on the Internet and applicants were accepted on a first come basis. Although all the operators on ZL9

were well skilled, there were some wrinkles in our method of team selection. It was a lesson well learned.

We were delighted to have David Lianez Fernandez, EB7DX, as the QSL Manager and webmaster for ZL9HR, having most recently served as QSL Manager for the HARAOA VK9HR Lord Howe Island operation in 2011.

### Jumping through hoops

The first major milestone was the approval of our landing permit by the NZ DoC in July 2012, which enabled us to ship our equipment via ocean freight to New Zealand. We were pleased that it all arrived safely, well ahead of schedule in October.

The entire team flew into Invercargill, New Zealand, arriving by Friday, 23 November, and went through the NZ DoC quarantine and briefing process over the weekend. The DoC required an inspection and quarantine of all our equipment and personal gear to ensure that no foreign seeds, plant matter, insects or rodents would inadvertently be carried to the island and introduced into the recovering eco-system. The inspection required all our gear to be unpacked



from the shipping crates — including individual containers, boxes, radio cases and plastic tubs — then, once inspected, repackaged and resealed.

This painstaking quarantine process is necessary because, in 2001, an extensive team — consisting of DOC staff, contractors, the Royal New Zealand Navy, the Royal New Zealand Air Force, the Met Service, helicopter companies, shipping companies and  
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## From the President's desk

THIS PAST YEAR NCDXF'S DIRECTORS FANNED OUT across the country speaking at DX conventions and DX clubs, as well as writing articles for magazines and club bulletins — all for the purpose of delivering this message: activating many of the most-needed entities is going to be really expensive, particularly if a charter vessel is involved. Thus, when NCDXF received a credible application for funding a DXpedition to Amsterdam Island (No. 4 on *The DX Magazine's* most-needed list and requiring a boat charter), it was time to “put our money where our mouth is.” We swallowed hard and wrote a check for \$50,000 to the FT5ZM team. (This is the second largest grant NCDXF has ever made; the largest was \$60,000 to FT5XO in 2005). Yes, we had to dig into the Foundation's endowment fund to do this, but we believe without NCDXF's financial support, this DXpedition would not be possible; Amsterdam Island is just too rare to let this opportunity pass us by.



Tapping into the Foundation's endowment fund is always a scary thing. It means that we have to sell some investments that generate a sizeable portion of our annual income. I'm proud to say, though, that the DX community seems to have gotten and understood the message our Directors have been trying to deliver. Contributions to NCDXF this year have picked up noticeably compared to previous years. In fact, we had our most successful fundraising efforts ever at both IDXC in Visalia and the Hamvention in Dayton this year. Contributions via the website and mail continue to come in at a nice clip, and the stock market has been good to us so far. Yes, our income this year still is less than we have spent on DXpedition grants, but we appear on track to close the remaining gap by year's end. To all of you contributors reading this message, take a bow because we could not be doing this without your generosity.

I am often asked how the Foundation's income compares to its expenses at any moment in time. To help answer that question, our webmaster John, K6MM, has placed Income Received and Grants Awarded “thermometers” on the home page of our website ([www.ncdxf.org](http://www.ncdxf.org)). Go take a look and you will instantly see where we stand.

At its annual Board meeting in Visalia, NCDXF confirmed its commitment to help bring younger DXers and Contesters into our hobby by approving payment of full tuition scholarships for Amateurs aged 25 and younger at all DX University and Contest University sessions held in North America for the next year. Funding for this project comes from NCDXF's Scholarship Endowment Fund, which is separate from the General Fund used to support DXpeditions.

Here's something history buffs can look forward to. We recently got our hands on a cache of old NCDXF newsletters dating back into the early 1980s from the collection of Jim Maxwell, W6CF. Jim, now an SK, was one of NCDXF's first directors and, as an avid collector of Amateur Radio magazines and periodicals, he compiled a world class library of these documents. Upon Jim's death several years ago, his XYL donated much of the library to the California Historical Radio Society in Berkeley, CA. CHRIS has kindly lent us the collection of NCDXF newsletters and we've begun the process of scanning them and placing them on our website. Click on the “Newsletter” tab on the home page. These newsletters contain a wealth of history about DXpeditions and NCDXF's activities from 20 to 30 years ago and make for some really fun reading. It will take us a while to complete the project, so check back often to see the issues as they get uploaded.

As always, let me close with a “Thank You” to our contributors. You are the backbone of NCDXF and we could not do what we do without you.

73,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Rusty".

numerous other people and agencies provided their time and expertise with an approximate cost of \$2 million dollars — worked to make Campbell Island rat free. In 2005, after several checks Campbell Island was declared free of rats, making it the largest successful rat eradication conducted worldwide.

## Rough sailing

On 26 November, the team left for Campbell Island from the port city of Bluff, a 35-minute drive from Invercargill. We had chartered the 25-meter-long expedition yacht *Evohe* for this trip. Prior to leaving the wharf, *Evohe's* captain, Steven Kafka, received weather and sea condition updates and it was determined that, with conditions of 80 kph-plus winds and 9- to 11-meter-high seas, we would travel no further than Stewart Island and weather the storm in the safety of Port Adventure. After approximately 2½ days, we were again sailing toward Campbell Island, with the Captain's warning that the seas were still very rough and that we could expect a very bumpy ride as we sailed through the remnants of the storm. The swells were quite severe, the worst being five to six meters. It was a rough trip and a reasonable amount of buckets were used.

On the morning of 30 November we dropped anchor at Perseverance Harbour on Campbell Island when the MET station buildings at Beeman Hill came into view. It was at this point that we had finally arrived — all that was left to do was set up and start operating.

Not wasting any time, we had a quick breakfast and the first team was dispatched on the Zodiac inflatable boat along with the first of many batches of equipment. *Evohe's* crew was an immense help, assisting us with setting up (and packing up) all the equipment and antennas, affording us more operating time.

## Becoming operational

The first couple of stations, along with their many antennas, were up and running by that afternoon and we set up the remaining stations and antennas



*The team (from left): Glenn, KE4KY; John, 9M6XRO; Don, VE7DS; Gene, K5GS; Pista, HA5AO; Tommy, VK2IR; Les, W2LK; Dave, K3EL; John, VK3YP, and Jacky, ZL3CW.*

the following day. Because we had lost three days with the weather delays, it was decided that we would not set up the 40M Moxon, relying only on the 40M Vertical, which worked very well. In addition, the 6M station was not set up.

Even so, we had a total of six stations comprising three SSB and three CW stations. There were four Kenwood TS 590S with four SPE 1K amplifiers and two Elecraft K3s with Elecraft KPA500 amplifiers. The Elecraft K3s and one Kenwood were used for the CW stations. The SSB and CW operations each had their designated location inside the MET main building, with the SSB stations located in the old recreation room of the MET building; the CW stations were located in the kitchen's dining area.

Although there was a pool table in the main recreation room, not a single game was played; we were all busy operating, eating or sleeping.

All of our equipment worked flawlessly and our antennas worked very well with strong performance all round. To counteract any potential problems we had brought spares of just about everything with us, including two generators. Fortunately none were required.

## Wrapping up

After our first day of operating

the logs were uploaded via Inmarsat satellite terminal to our QSL manager and placed on ZL9HR and Clublog websites.

Understandably, ZL9 is a very rare activation and with this the DX Code of Conduct seemed to be ignored by many. The behaviour in the pileups was not the best, especially from the EU and, surprisingly, the JA operators; NA operators were the best behaved overall.

The ZL9HR DXpedition team of Tommy Horozakis, VK2IR; John Chalkiarakis, VK3YP; Les Kalmus, W2LK; Dave Lloyd, K3EL; Don Studney, VE7DS; Glenn Petri, KE4KY; John Plenderleith, 9M6XRO; Gene Spinelli, K5GS; Pista Gaspar, HA5AO, and Jacky Calvo, ZL3CW realised 42,922 contacts during an 8-day operating period.

This DXpedition to ZL9 Campbell Island will most likely be the last, as the old MET buildings contain asbestos and are deteriorating; tent operation is not allowed due to the many sea lions on the island.

To all the ZL9HR team and most importantly to the NZ DoC, the Captain and crew of the *Evohe*, corporate, DX foundation sponsors and individual sponsors, we thank you for your support of the HARAOA team to deliver another successful DXpedition.



# Longing for Africa?

Silvano Borsa, I2YSB

**W**WE OPENED THE DESCRIPTION OF our last African adventure with this question in mind: Longing for Africa? It's a question we ask ourselves, after six years of traveling across that beautiful continent as members of the Italian DXpedition Team.

In earnest, we considered planning our activities for other destinations but, up to now, the gratification we received from our past experiences, including their humanitarian side, make us quite reluctant to pull out from Africa.

We had already considered Chad, or *Tchad*, in French, as a possible destination about two years ago, but hesitated due to costs; expenses were considerably higher than what we were used to in our DXpeditions to other countries in the region. In addition, we could not secure adequate local support and logistics (electric power, internet connectivity, convenient space for antennas, and so on).

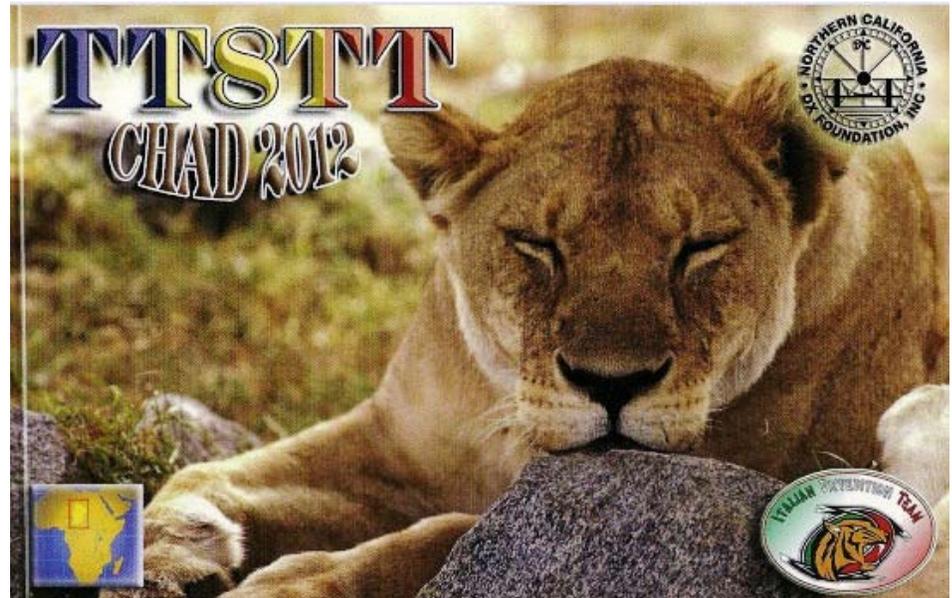
All this until last spring, when, following the activity of Elvira Simoncini, IV3FSG, as TT8ES in March 2012, we realized that the time had come to reconsider a DXpedition to Chad.

## It all comes together

When Elvira returned to Italy we got in touch with her and she confirmed our original beliefs. Even a limited appearance of TT8ES on the bands, with sporadic activity mostly on the digital modes (she was in Chad for humanitarian reasons), had produced a sweeping demand for a new one (be it all-time, or mode and band), in particular from USA and Japan.

Detailed inquiries showed Chad to rank in a highly interesting position for the U.S. West Coast and Japan, although not as much for Europe. Our final QSO statistics clearly denies this limited assumption.

Having made our decision, and being aware of the typical African pace, we began the usual course of



action: license, location, transportation and logistics. As everybody knows, the most difficult step is obtaining the license. Luckily, Elvira put us in touch with Karmel, a nice, young man who studied in Italy, but was born in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, and currently living there. He gladly agreed to negotiate on our behalf with the appropriate local Ministry.

We were surprised to get all paperwork, license and call signs, within a few weeks, just the time needed to exchange emails with our personal data, send copies of our licenses and transfer the money required for the authorizations. We all obtained a Chad call sign, however, for the convenience of a unique log, we decided to use only one, TT8TT, which had an attractive "sound" on both SSB and CW.

With a license valid for a full year, the remaining organizational chores looked like child's play... but we did not take into account Africa!

We started searching, with Karmel's help, for an appropriate location. The only suitable venue turned out to be the N'Djamena Novotel, located in a quiet city district with electric power, Internet access, 24-hour security, a wide garden and a nice swimming

pool. With temperatures averaging 40°C (104°F), we enjoyed that a lot!

We hoped we could strike a bargain with hotel rates — quite expensive on the standards of an African country — but we met an uncompromising attitude. In spite of explanations and reduced requirements on our side, we got a minimal discount, just sufficient for a few bottles of mineral water used during our antenna installation. (Because Novotel belongs to the Accord chain, rates are predefined and the manager had little room to negotiate.)

## Timing is everything

There was some discussion about giving up the DXpedition, but during a brief meeting we decided to proceed. Unfortunately, Gino Zambaiti, IK2RZP, could not join us because of working commitments, and Alfeo Caputo, I1HJT, had to shorten his stay by a couple of days for similar reasons. In the end we reached a reasonable compromise and planned for the beginning of October 2012.

Since it was mid-April, just before our DXpedition to Somalia, we believed that we had sufficient time for our subsequent planning. But, as I said, we overlooked Africa.

No point here to list the hundreds of emails between us, Karmel and the Novotel staff, detailing all aspects and motivations of our activities, but suffice it to say, we managed to get the final reservations only two weeks before our departure date — six months after our initial steps!

That done, the only thing left was to confirm our previously booked Air France tickets. Here we got another surprise: for a 24-hour delay, the fare increased by €200 each. We were left no choice, but had a new understanding why so many others gave up on Chad. At this point, it was probably cheaper to set up a DXpedition to St. Barth in the Caribbean but we had that homesickness for Africa.

### On our way

So, with a lighter wallet, but very high spirits, it was our day of departure. We flew from Milano Linate airport to Paris, then to N'Djamena. We were familiar with all of it, but the wide-eyed lady at the check-in counter stared at our 300 kg (660 pounds) of electronic equipment!

After an uneventful flight we landed in N'Djamena on 2 Oct 12; our friend Karmel was waiting for us, but he could not enter the Customs area to help us with formalities. We didn't worry, since we had all the necessary paperwork, but Africa is an unlimited source of surprises! A diligent official explained that we were authorized to transmit, but we could not import our radios!

After a long discussion with several Customs officials, Alfeo, I1HJT, the only one of us who spoke an acceptable French, met serious difficulties. Not for the language barrier, but because of the inflexible attitude of our counterpart. Thanks to Stefano Casari, IK2HKJ, who discussed

matters privately with the officer in charge, we finally got the green light, "Vous pouvez aller avec la radio." ("You can go with the radio.") Stefano never revealed the content of his discussion and we are still puzzled by what might have been said, since he does not speak French!

We met Karmel and, after exchanging greetings, got on the bus for the 5-minute ride to our destination. It looked as though we were back in Europe: a hotel with more than 100 rooms and mostly occupied by European businessmen. We felt a little embarrassed, with everybody donning formal dresses and ties; we sported T-shirts and shorts. In the end we didn't feel the need to refurbish our attire, in spite of the hotel atmosphere.

had to be suspended.

A new discussion with Alfeo, I1HJT, ensued but, in spite of calmly keeping our ground, serious worries developed. Two hours later the situation was at a standstill. One of us got nervous, the tone began to rise and someone even proposed we quit altogether. The security official stiffened and in spite of the clear statement about our operation on the formal agreement with the hotel, he refused us permission to install our antennas.

Five hours later, we thought it better to cool down the discussion somewhat and look for an agreement. We asked for the chief manager, who was unfortunately absent. Time goes by and we got Karmel into the discussion, all while trying to remain calm.

In the end, almost by magic, the manager showed up with a copy of our licenses and gave us permission to proceed. We started immediately, in an effort to recover the half-day lost in discussions.

### Finally on the air

We first set up the SSB station and at 14:14 UTC on 3 October, the first TT8TT CQ was on the air. We proceeded with the RTTY and 6M stations; the CW station was postponed to the following morning, together with the low-band receiving antennas.

Within 36 hours everything was operational and we could concentrate on our main job. The pileup was fierce from the very beginning, in spite of the propagation and solar index forecasts. A great surprise came from the activity on 6M. After our poor experience in Somalia we were somewhat hesitant, but after the first calls we realized that the TEP was helping. In the end we logged more than 2,600 contacts on this band.



*Angelo Selva,  
IK2CKR and  
Marcello  
Cassinelli,  
IK2DIA,  
operating.*

### Another setback

The first night was spent planning our setups but, once more, we had not taken into full account the power of Africa. At first light we begin to install the first antennas; however, around 7 a.m., the chief of security showed up, questioning us. We began to suspect that something was wrong. He was responsible for the exterior area and, not having received any proper clearance or information, all our activity

We had excellent openings on the higher bands (10M to 20M), with signals persistently above S9 from Europe, USA and Japan; the latter regularly via long-path in the morning (we know very well by now the propagation in Africa and the path choice has become straightforward). We paid special attention to VKs and ZLs, with more than 120 single calls in the log, most of them on at least three different bands.

The lower bands were a different issue, particularly on SSB. On 40M we believed that we could contact almost all the deserving on both CW and SSB, but we could not restrict the operation to just that band. During the night we also had openings on the higher bands, and we had to concentrate on 80M and 160M, which were new ones for most OMs in the world. We are rather satisfied of the CW 80M operation, whereas on SSB we suffered from heavy difficulties. The signal levels from all over the world were very low, even from Europe, and buried in the local QRM (we were in the middle of the city). In spite of different receiving antennas (Diamond Loop, DHDL) we worked the few stations we could hear. (A short audio file, illustrating our 80M receiving conditions, is posted on our official DXpedition site, [www.i2ysb.com/idx](http://www.i2ysb.com/idx).)

We had some gratifications on top band (160M), with more than 600 difficult QSOs in the log.

## Setting records

Every day we tried to make improvements to our transmitting and receiving antennas, but having an efficient antenna system in such an environment was understandably difficult. We had hoped for a Beverage, but the limited space available made it impossible.

Time goes by quickly during a DXpedition, and soon it was our last weekend in Chad. We do not compete for records, being well aware of the innumerable problems that can plague a DXpedition and its rosy expectations, but we were also well aware that the larger the number of QSOs logged, the higher our satisfaction would be from this adventure. When,



*The team, from left, Alfeo, I1HJT; Angelo, IK2CKR; Marcello, IK2DIA; Silvano, I2YSB; Stefano, IK2HKT, and Vinicio, IK2CIO.*

on Saturday morning, we realized that 63,000 QSOs were in the log and we had less than three days left, we aimed at reaching the 70,000 mark before the end of our activity.

Stefano, IK2HKT, and I, I2YSB, gave up lunch on Saturday and Sunday; Vinicio Ravizza, IK2CIO, made an extra effort on SSB; Angelo Selva, IK2CKR, did similarly on CW, challenging his own endurance; Alfeo, I1HJT, attacked his first experience in RTTY after only a two-minute training, and Marcello Cassinelli, IK2DIA, well, Marcello enjoyed the pool!

The result of this “tour de force” was exhilarating! At 0734 on 16 October we got above the 70,000 level and we kept going, reaching the 72,000 mark.

By Tuesday afternoon the last QSO was logged, to our surprise on 6M SSB. The expedition ended on a remarkable opening on the Magic Band, which forced us to QRT sadly, having workable signals still present on the band.

The plane would not wait for us, and we hastily dismantled our equip-

ment. Three hours later everything was ready for loading and after a quick dinner, we dashed out to the airport. We said “Good-bye” to our friend Karmel, got through Customs and passport formalities — this time without hiccups — and took off.

## Thank yous

Our thanks go to Arturo Lorenzo, IK7JWY, our precious pilot station; to Giacomo Patané, IH9GPI, for his famous software for online real-time log, and to Sergio Roca, IKØFTA, our mentor for the Magic Band. We thank our new friend, Karmel, for his precious help in the license formalities, and Elvira, IV3FSG, for her helpful suggestions.

We also thank our sponsors and the many foundations. NCDXF, who trusted us, and to GDXF, UKSMG, LA-DX-Group, Clipperton DX Club, Nippon DX, MDXC, CDXC, TCDXA and Funk Amateur, to the Sezioni ARI and all the Amateurs who, by voluntary individual contributions, helped in meeting the relevant expenses implied by a DXpedition. 

# The Swains Story

Joe Pater, W8GEX (aka Joe8)

THIS TRIP STARTED WHEN MARKUS Dornach, DL9RCF, and I began brainstorming about where in the Pacific we could go on a DXpedition. We had been gathering information and corresponding with Peter Ford, C21TA, on Nauru when two HAs popped up and started operating; so much for that idea.

We then considered American Samoa (AS) and Ofu Island, as Markus had been there and really liked it; however, for a variety reasons, we quickly determined that Ofu Island would not work.

I next emailed Larry Gandy, AH8LG, on AS about setting up there. We wanted a good take off to Europe and thought the north side of American Samoa would work. Larry informed me that we would need permission from the village chief on the north side whom he did not know, but then asked if I was interested in going to Swains Island, owned by the Jennings family.

Located 200 miles north of AS, and 10° south of the equator, Swains had been a coconut plantation since the 1800s but had been uninhabited for about a year. Larry was a good friend of Alex Jennings, the family representative, and he thought the possibility was good that they would grant us permission to go there.

Of course I was interested!



*Lady Naomi transported us from American Samoa to Swains Island.*

I emailed Alex Jennings and he responded quickly, stating he would like to help us put our DXpedition together. Since Alex had already allowed two other groups to conduct DXpeditions there in recent years, he had a good idea of what we wanted to do. He recommended we set our date for September 2012, to take advantage of the nice weather and calmer seas — both of which turned out to be a surprise.

## Planning the expedition

Going to Swains turned this into a major DXpedition rather than the smaller group than Marcus and I originally planned, so I next contacted Craig Thompson, K9CT, who was my co-leader of the PJ7E DXpedition. Because Swains is ranked No. 31 worldwide, and very high in Europe on the Most Wanted List in DX Magazine, Craig was excited about the idea of organizing this trip with me.

This would be the third trip for Craig and I, together, our second as co-leaders. This one was special because of its ranking, and its location would make it more difficult than our previous trips, as it would be our first tent/generator operation. We would need good operators and a good support team — we ended up with outstanding help.

My job was

the crew, and a big one. We wanted an international team with some very experienced DXpedition operators, plus a few new guys who had never been on a major trip. Because this was going to be an expensive venture, we needed 20 members to help defray costs.

At times I struggled with getting enough participants because, along with the cost, the time commitment was also an issue. Some members dropped off due to illness; others were committed to other trips. Markus was unable to get leave from work and had to drop out. As with all trips, members are responsible for their flights, lodging and meals while traveling to and from the destination.

When Arnie Shatz, N6HC, signed



on as an op, he also agreed to serve as our team doctor. Because there was no landing strip or boat dock on Swains for evacuation, each member needed to be in good physical condition.

While I worked on the team, Craig worked on a budget, and we were both gathering a lengthy equipment list. After we determined the number of ops needed to run 24/7 for two weeks, we calculated the number of stations, equipment requirements, the amount of coax needed, number of generators and amount of power they must supply, amount of fuel needed, tents, tables, food, etc. Craig also took care of the business end by setting up PayPal and bank accounts to accept team payments and pay expenses.

Joe Blackwell, AA4NN (aka Joe4), agreed to be our QSL manager; his wife, Margaret, agreed to maintain



*The antenna field for SSB.*

the financial records. Craig asked my wife, Janet, W8CAA, to work on fundraising like she did for K4M and PJ7E. Even though Markus, DL9RCF, was unable to make the trip, he assisted by relaying donations from Europe.

Max Mucci, I8NHJ, was unable to join the crew, but he provided computer interfaces, and Don Greenbaum, N1DG, assisted us in shipping logistics.

## Equipment

Next our attention turned to radios. Ray Novak from Icom was happy to support our trip by furnishing seven IC-7600s and four PW1 1kw amps. Tom Harrell, N4XP, and Paul Hanson, W6XA, helped with testing the radios, amps, laptops and interfaces before they were shipped.

With a combination of five KPA-500 amps loaned from Elecraft, four PW 1s from Icom, and three AL-80s that we purchased, we had a total of 12 amps for seven stations. We wanted to be sure we had enough amps in case some were damaged during transportation. The amps all worked flawlessly so five were never put in service.

We had a good combination of antennas that provided excellent signals. Jerry Rosalius, WB9Z, was the contact person with DX Engineering

who supplied the 80M antenna, radial plates, etc. Jerry was also the contact person with Primus, who donated a mile of LMR-400.

Joe4 and Dietmar Kasper, DL3DXX, worked on the four squares for 30 and 40 Meters, designing the layout through emails. We were ready for setup as soon as we landed on Swains.

Kimo Chun, KH7U, loaned us his

Titanex V160e vertical, which takes about 10 guys to erect because of its height. During the setup, we got it halfway up before the wind became an issue. At that point all we could do was just stand there and hold the guy ropes until the wind calmed enough for us to get it up to full height.

The Battle Creek Special for 40M, 80M and 160M has been on all major trips; it also made it to Swains. The guys in Michigan keep this antenna in great condition for DXpeditions like ours and it works like a charm.

John Kennon, N7CQQ, and Paul Playford, W8AEF, loaned us their SVDAs, which work so well along salt water.

All antennas were beamed north over the pole in order to work Europe, and they worked perfectly. We were hoping we would have propagation to Europe and luckily we did; 29% of our QSOs were from there.

## QSLs

QSLing is an important and tedious job. Joe4, AA4NN, volunteered to respond to the paper QSLs, but we wanted to use technology as much as possible to simplify the whole process. We examined several systems and Clublog was chosen for its robust features — simple uploading, embed-



*Just hanging out between shifts.*

ding in our website for searching and, most important, OQRS for direct and bureau cards. We would send the ADIF file for OQRS. Paper QSLs went to Joe with a SASE to issue a paper card. This process has been a great way for the DXpedition to receive funds and defray our expenses.

We decided that we would send bureau cards using the GlobalQSL website. We uploaded a file from Joe for bureau cards and from the Clublog website. Those Hams choosing this process would receive the same QSL card, but later than the direct card. The Clublog output helped because the file already matched our log and Joe would not have to check every qso. We also eliminated the need to handle so many cards by hand. We got an LOTW certificate and major donors received uploads promptly, with all other QSOs confirmed on LOTW within six months.

### Team members

Our webmaster choice was easy. Our PJ7E teammate, John Miller, K6MM, is an outstanding webmaster and he agreed to handle the job. During the DXpedition, John added a banner that scrolled across the front page giving up-to-date island news as it was happening and we received a lot of positive comments. The DXpedition rented a BGAN to upload logs daily in addition to giving the entire team email access. We were able to



*Our island support team — we could not have done it without them!*

relay information to John on a routine basis.

Mark Stennett, NA6M, was our youngest member at 46, and his first DXpedition. Early on, Mark offered to be our IT specialist and handle all the audio and video work. When he wasn't on the radio, he was busy with that job, in addition to the BGAN satellite phone and computers. He did an excellent job.

Craig, K9CT, setup all of the rig interfaces and made sure that the radios worked properly with N1MM. The MMTTY for RTTY was set up with N1MM for RTTY. He gathered all of the logs on a daily basis and gave them to Mark for uploading and he tested every radio with the microphones and

paddles for proper operation.

We had two pilot stations. Valerie Hotzfeld, NV9L, handled traffic for North America and Col, MMØNDX, handled the European traffic. Both pilots answered what emails they could and sent the rest to the webmaster. John condensed and forwarded them to the island for Craig and me. Emails took some time as the BGAN phone was set to poll the satellite every four hours for our messages and then poll again in four hours for the return messages, so it took up to eight hours to send and receive messages.

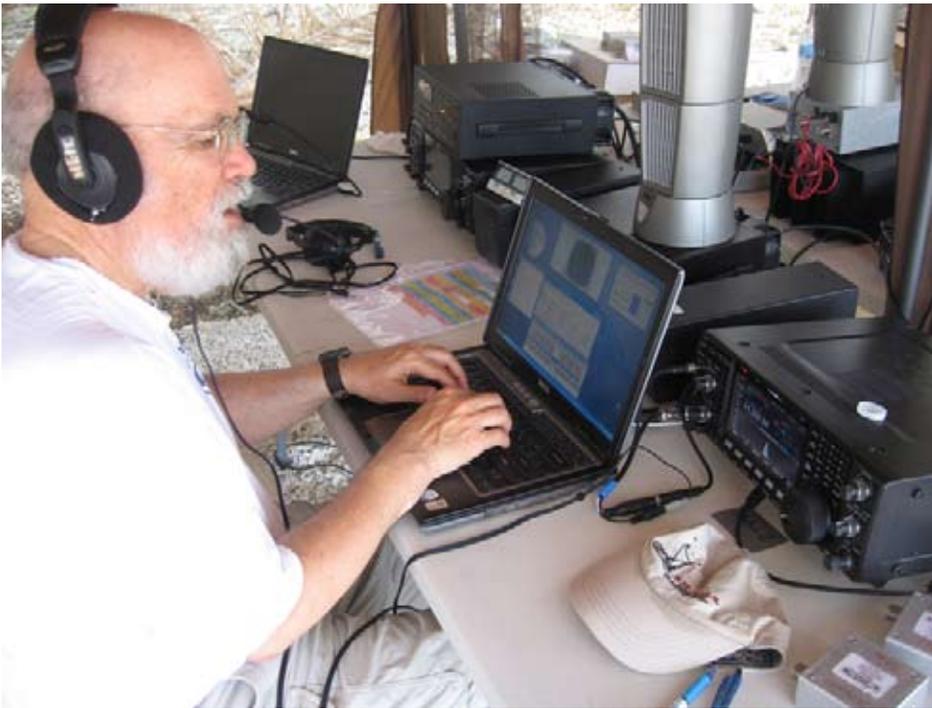
Valerie, NV9L, suggested we subscribe to a tsunami warning system, which was a great idea as, needless to say, a tsunami would have been catastrophic to us. There were four cell phones set up to be notified in the event of a tsunami, plus the BGAN satellite phone. Luckily this was not an issue.

Larry, AH8LG (SK), had given us permission to use NH8S, the Swains Island DX Club call, but, unfortunately, Larry passed away during our planning. We contacted his widow, Uti, and, with the club's authorization, appointed Craig to become the trustee of NH8S.

Craig and I feel that communication is a must on major DXpeditions, so we agreed early on to be very transparent about everything. We sent out team newsletters to keep everyone posted as plans developed and we encouraged input from team members.



*Our "living room" for two weeks!*



*Tom Berson, ND2T, operating.*

We were also in constant contact with the Jennings family; they knew what we were doing, and we knew what they were doing. Our major donors, including NCDXF, also had some early information to keep them up-to-date on our progress.

### **Getting ready**

So that our equipment would arrive on time, we had to ship it aboard a container ship to American Samoa in July. To make that happen, all our radio equipment and personal items were sent to Arnie, N6HC, who stacked everything on pallets and then shrink-wrapped the pallets. He arranged for the pallets to be picked up and transported to the dock and then placed on a ship. Once the container left California, it was a three-week journey to AS.

Dietmar, DL3DXX, and I met in Honolulu, and then went on to Pago Pago, American Samoa, four days ahead of the team so we could go over last minute details. Alex Jennings met us when we arrived in AS; his brother David and his crew were already on Swains, so we spoke with David by phone to discuss the setup he and his crew were building on our behalf. Alex gave us a tour of AS, and with our extra time, we visited with Uti, Larry Gandy,

AH8LG's, widow, who graciously invited us to run some Qs from his station. It was fun to be able to put another call sign, KH8, in our resumes.

Once the rest of the team arrived, we anxiously boarded the MV Lady Naomi, for the 24-hour voyage to Swains. Lady Naomi was not a luxury ship by any means; she was an old vessel with plenty of critters and roaches to accompany her unpleasant odor. We expected the seas to be calm; instead they were pretty rough and even though we were all wearing Scopalamine patches, some team members were seasick.

### **Arrival on Swains**

Our contract called for the food, drinks, tents, generators and fuel to be provided by the Jennings family. Under the leadership of Captain Wally and his sailing mate, Tim Thompson, the family had purchased and refurbished an old landing craft, using it to transport 30 drums of fuel, a refrigerator, two chest freezers, water, tents, an ATV and a small wagon prior to our arrival.

By the time we arrived, the advance team had everything unloaded with tents erected, the "kitchen" and the toilet and shower in place, plus the generator/electric system set up. This was no small feat and their work

saved us an enormous amount of time. They took care of maintenance of the generators, and got up periodically during the night to refuel them. The support crew consisted of 10 men who built and maintained the camp and all of the facilities.

There were also three cooks who kept us well fed, taking advantage of the fresh fish and coconuts, in addition to the food shipped from AS — all plentiful and very tasty. If we came in hot and tired, they were always there with smiling faces and even in the middle of the night, there was a pot of coffee going or cold drinks available. There is no way could we have executed this trip without that hard-working team.

The ATV turned out to be an invaluable asset. It was 1,500 feet from the base camp to the SSB camp, and 3,000 feet from base camp to the CW site and the sand was deep and soft, which made walking difficult, especially in such hot temperatures. They used the ATV to bring water to the operating tents several times a day, in addition to moving fuel and oil to the generators.

When we arrived on Swains we transferred the team and personal items to shore by dingy. After placing our stuff in the sleeping tents, we moved equipment to the operating sites. We were anxious to get everything set up and on the air, and worked two full days non-stop. It was very hot, with temperatures as high as 125°F (52°C) during the day. We quickly realized that because of the heat we had to stop working by 11 a.m., resuming after 5 p.m., which explains why not all stations were running 24/7 immediately.

### **Bumps and bruises**

We unfortunately had our share of injuries. It started on the boat when Jurgern Borsdorf, DJ2VO, became disoriented in the middle of the night, fell and cut his leg, requiring multiple stitches. We now think he had a rare reaction to the Scopalamine patch, causing him to become disoriented and confused. Because of the extent of his leg injury, he returned with the boat to Pago Pago for further evaluation and



treatment, where he was hospitalized for a few days. Fortunately he recuperated fully and was able to join us when we returned from Swains.

One team member had a very bad swollen leg, another a stomach virus, and others had issues ranging from heat rash, sunburn, blisters and more. The sun and heat were just brutal. One member was bitten by something, as his lower leg was red, very swollen and uncomfortable.

### Sucess

We had so many good comments during and after the DXpedition. One was from AB7ZU who said “we were the best in his 52 years of Hamming.” That was nice to hear! Those comments and so many like that kept us going in that heat.

We were extremely happy to have worked a total of 105,500 on all bands, all modes. For a breakdown, go to our website at [www.nh8s.org](http://www.nh8s.org).

We stopped operating a day early for a couple of reasons. First, the crew was just exhausted. Even though our shifts were three hours on and six off, we were sleep deprived because we weren’t able to sleep well with the heat and it took a toll on us. The other reason was because a storm was heading our way and we didn’t want to take a chance on it passing through while we were packing. That gave us an extra day to rest and be sure everything was packed properly for shipment.

On our last night, after all of the

equipment was dismantled and ready for departure, our hosts surprised us with some entertainment. It was an unforgettable farewell, as they played instruments and serenaded us. When we arrived back in Pago Pago, the Jennings family had a going away party for us, giving each team member a coffee mug with our home callsign and a picture of the island imprinted on it, plus an island t-shirt and a Certificate of Achievement for making this DXpedition happen.

### Final words

In closing, all I can say is that this was an amazing trip with outstanding operators. I had one of the best co-leaders to help me plan and execute a successful trip. Our goals were to make a lot of Qs, have fun, be safe and come home friends. Because we had such great support on and off the islands, with a total of 45 people, we met our goals.

We received tremendous support from foundations, including NCDXF,

clubs and individuals. There are not enough words to express our appreciation, as this could not have happened without this help. Thank you!

A huge thank you to our great support team: Markus, DL9RCF; Max, I8NHJ; John, K6MM; Col, MMØNDX; Don, N1DG; Tom, N4XP; John, N7CQQ; Valerie, NV9L; Paul, W6XA; Paul, W8AEF; Janet, W8CAA, and Margarett, XYL of AA4NN.

Everyone got along so well and worked so hard. We have wonderful memories and made lasting friendships. My hat goes off to an amazing team: Barry Fletcher, 9V1FJ; Joe Blackwell, A4NN; Dietmar Kasper, DL3DXX; Alan Brown, K5AB; Carl Schroeder, K9CS; Craig Thompson, K9CT; Mike Tessmer, K9NW; Lou Dietrich, N2TU; Arnie Shatz, N6HC; David Greenhut, N6HD; Mark Stennett, NA6M; Tom Berson, ND2T; Hawk Eriksson, SM5AQD; Charlie Spetnagel, W6KK; Joe Pater, W8GEX; Hal Turley, W8HC; Clark Stewart, W8TN, and Jerry Rosalius. WB9Z 

**CONTRIBUTIONS** The **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX FOUNDATION** relies heavily upon the generosity of its members to fund various projects. We urge each member to consider making an annual contribution of US\$50 or its equivalent in foreign currency. However, we do not wish to exclude anyone from the **FOUNDATION** for financial reasons. If \$50 is not within your budget, then please give what other amount you can. Naturally, we welcome contributions in excess of \$50! The **NCDXF** is an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and all contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law for U.S. taxpayers. Send your contribution to: **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX FOUNDATION**, P.O. Box 2012, Cupertino, CA 95015-2012, USA. You may also contribute and order supplies online via our secure server, visit [www.ncdxf.org/donate](http://www.ncdxf.org/donate).

# In the spotlight

IT HAS BEEN MY PRIVILEGE TO HAVE been the editor for NCDXF's newsletter since 2005 and it's been often asked, "Who is Debi Shank and where did she come from?" Well I will end the mystery and share a bit about who I am and how I became involved with NCDXF.

My beginning with NCDXF was based on the old adage, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." In my case, I knew the late Armond Noble, N6WR, who, in turn, knew Bruce Butler, W6OSP. After one of the Visalia DX conventions, Armond mentioned to Bruce that he knew someone who could possibly add some pizzazz to NCDXF's newsletter. And, well, the rest is history.

My history with Armond began in 1993 as an employee under WorldRadio's umbrella, a relationship that continues with his other publishing endeavors: *International Travel News* and *Military*. In that role, I have myriad duties, all of which pertain to producing each magazine for their monthly publication.

Personally, I have been married to my husband, John, for 14 years, and together we share custody of four felines. I am an avid photographer, cyclist, scuba diver and traveler, sometimes combining all of the above, but not necessarily simultaneously. I have an extreme passion for life and living it to its fullest, so I rarely shy away from adventure. I would probably draw the line, however, on one of those crazy DXpeditions to a rare entity.



*Debi & John Shank bundled up in Antarctica — Feb. '07*

## DXPEDITION LENDING LIBRARY

The **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX FOUNDATION** has a number of VHS/DVD videos and Microsoft® PowerPoint presentations on CD-ROM

available for loan to organizations wishing to show them at their meetings.

There is no charge to use the programs in the **FOUNDATION'S** library, but clubs borrowing materials are responsible for postage in both directions. To view the complete listing of programs available for your club's use, visit our website, [www.ncdxf.org](http://www.ncdxf.org), and click on "Videos."



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