



Northern California DX Foundation

www.ncdxf.org

Spring/Summer 2006

3YØX — Peter I Island

Donald J. DuBon, N6JRL

A note from Bob Allphin, K4UEE, 3YØX DXpedition co-leader:

The 2006 3YØX DXpedition is now in the history books; it will go down not only as the most expensive DXpedition in history, but as one of the most successful with almost 87,000 QSOs from the bottom of the world at the bottom of the sunspot cycle! An amazing accomplishment under very difficult circumstances.

The bottom line is that persistence, planning, practice and execution work in DXpeditioning just as they do in business. I have asked team member Don DuBon, N6JRL, to share his personal Peter I story with you. Don was a latecomer to the team, but quickly became a valued team member. His work ethic, operating skill and sense of humor made him a standout! Here's his story.

M My trip to Peter I was an adventure just getting to the island. Leaving Dayton, OH, on 29 January 2006, I flew to Atlanta where I met up with team members Bob Allphin, K4UEE; George Nicholson, N4GRN; James "Russ" Russell, KI4NFF, and Gary Stouder, K9SG. After dinner we boarded our 9½-hour overnight flight to Santiago, Chile.

We landed in Santiago at 9:30 a.m. EST and, after paying a punitive \$100 entrance tax, we cleared Immigration and Customs, before rechecking our bags for the next leg of our journey to Punta Arenas, Chile, a 3½-hour flight.



The group poses on Peter I with the NCDXF banner. Photos by J. Robert Russell

Due to seating problems George, N4GRN, and I did not have seats on the flight with the rest of the group, so we were put on the next flight leaving an hour later. When we finally boarded, we found Andy Chesnokov, UA3AB, was on our flight. Upon landing, we met up with Bob Grim-mick, N6OX; Dave Anderson, K4SV; Gerard Jacot, F2JD, and "Wild Bill" Beyer, N2WB, who were just returning from Juan Fernandez Island (CEØZ) where they had spent the previous week.

King George Island

After claiming our luggage, we drove to the hotel — our home for the next two days until our flight to King George Island (KGI). After settling in we all met in the lounge for a few beers and got further acquainted with the team members over a late dinner.

After breakfast the next morning, we met to discuss safety, duty assignments, food and general camp building, as well as operating on the ship and the island. At the end of the day, we returned to the hotel to pack, condensing our luggage to 26 kilograms

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Our transportation to Peter I – the DAP Mares.

(about 56 pounds) in preparation for our early morning departure.

Early on 1 February, we boarded the bus to the airport for our 3½-hour charter flight to King George Island, where we would meet our ship, the *DAP Mares*. Landing on a dirt runway, we taxied to an area where we helped unload the luggage and equipment. Afterwards, the DAP Charter company representative, Alejo, took us on a sightseeing tour where we had an opportunity to photograph elephant seals, birds and penguins. Back at the base area, the gift shop and post office were conveniently opened for us so we could buy and mail post cards and have our passports stamped. Then we were escorted to the Russian side of the base to meet with Oleg, the Russian base commander and given a tour of the buildings and the radio station, R1ANF.



Equipment and supplies were transported from the ship to the island via helicopter.

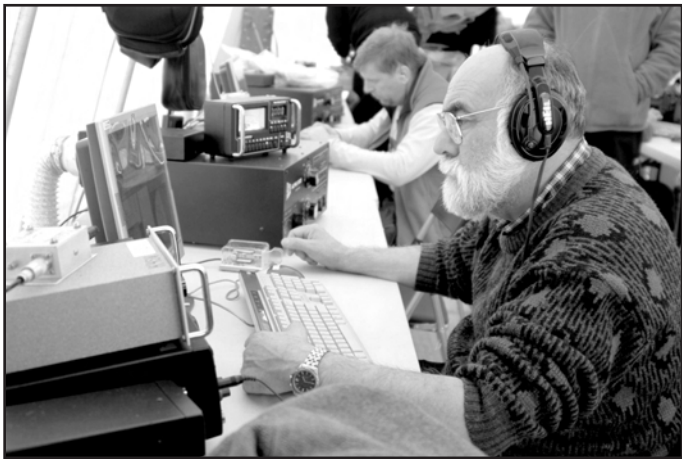
Oleg was a great host and invited us to stay and operate the station upon our return from Peter I; he also stamped our passports.

At sea

From the beach at KGI, we took Zodiacs to the *DAP Mares*, anchored about a half-mile off shore in the harbor. Once on board

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. Use the envelope supplied with the newsletter to send your contribution. If the envelope is missing, send your contribution to: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DX FOUNDATION, P.O. Box 1328, Los Altos, CA 94023-1328, USA. You may also contribute and order supplies online via our secure server, visit www.ncdxf.org.



Carlos, NP4IW (left) and George, N4GRN (below), working the radio.



we were shown to our upstairs cabins, which housed four people and included a small bathroom with shower. Downstairs, at mid-ship, was a very nice dining facility where all 22 of us could sit down for a meal.

Next to the dining area was a lounge area with chairs, tables and a TV set to watch DVDs. Across the hall was an area perfect for the radio room while en route to and from Peter I. Although we had rough seas the first night, we managed to unload some of the equipment from our shipping container and begin to stage it for transport to the island upon arrival. Equipment was also unloaded to build the radio room for the maritime mobile station, XR9A/mm.

Underway at an average of 10 knots, it would take us about four days to get to Peter I. With two stations on the air from the ship, we made contacts using two Icom 756PROIII's, a 4-BTV antenna and an all-band Windom antenna.

Meals were served at 8 a.m., noon and 8 p.m. daily; the food was good and portions plenty. After our first dinner we watched the DVD about the DXpedition to FT5XO (Kerguelen), of which Robert, one of our teammates, was a member.

On 4 February, the ship's captain held a small ceremony to commemorate our crossing of the Antarctic

Circle. We toasted with pisco sours, a traditional Chilean drink.

We finished unloading equipment and supplies from the container below deck on 5 February and then went up to the bridge and watched whales and seals as we approached Peter I. At 9:15 p.m. we saw Peter I for the first time — although it was

foggy, the sight of the island was magnificent.

The weather the next morning was not cooperating — we had 35-knot winds, low visibility and low ceilings so the helicopter could not fly. In the afternoon the weather improved and the helicopter took Bob, K4UEE; Ralph Fedor, KØIR; Bob, N6OX, and Erling Wiig, LA6VM, for a recon flight to the island but they were unable to land due to low ceilings.

Arrival at Peter I

Finally, at about 1:30 in the afternoon on 7 February, we began flying people and equipment to Peter I. It was very exciting to step out of the helicopter and greet the few people who had arrived before me. Everyone was very happy and ready to build our city — our home for the next 12 days.

We constructed four shelters: the MEG tent, two sleeping tents and operating tent "B," which was located about 750 feet north of the main camp. Antennas were also assembled and soon 3YØX was on the air with two stations.

The weather changed again and the helicopter trips were suspended, leaving us with plenty of food and water but without all of our equipment and people.

The following day the second operating tent was constructed in a 60-knot



Putting up the moon bounce antenna.

PETER I ISLAND DXPEDITION 2006 - MORE PEOPLE HAVE FLOWN



wind. We also erected antennas in the same conditions. It was three days before the weather cleared enough to fly in the rest of our gear and equipment and the last three team members. On 11 February, all the equipment, food and supplies were on-site and we were making Qs on most all bands with eight stations QRV.

It wasn't until the fifth day that we all finally sat down to a complete meal in the MEG tent. Prior to that it was catch as catch can. In celebration, Robert, SP5XVY, presented a gift to the team — a half-gallon bottle of Chivas Regal Scotch Whisky.

The porta-potty was also on site and functional — life was good!

By the sixth day things started to settle down and we all got into a routine; Ralph kept the operations going by his schedules which kept everyone on the air during good propagation and band conditions. Between shifts everyone helped with the extra duties like washing dishes, making meals, gassing up generators and moving and setting up new antennas. Occasionally we had a chance to get some sleep. The nights and days blended together, since the sun really never set for long, so Zulu time was a must to make your scheduled shift.

A beautiful day

Day 10 on the island was our most

magnificent clear day and it was difficult to pull everyone off the radio so we could get team photos. We spent an hour with Russ, KI4NFF, our photographer, as we posed with flags of the eight nations represented on our team and the many logo banners of our supporters and sponsors.

On day 11 (17 Feb), we began taking down the second operating tent B, and staging equipment for helicopter pick up for the return to the ship. Empty fuel drums, water cans and equipment that was no longer required could be sent back.

George, N4GRN;
Russ, KI4NFF;
Mike Dirksen,

PA5M, and I took a walk to the base of the mountain for some photos of the mountain and some crevasses along the way. It looked very close but the trip took us 1½ hours each way.

A German research vessel, the *Polar Stern*, arrived in the area to install a temporary weather station. They flew in on helicopters and visited with us; one visitor was Felix



(Above) George, N4GRN, in the MEG tent. (Left) Team members ate their meals in shifts.



Riess, DL5XL, and he ran 30 minutes of a CW pileup on 17 Meters. Gordon Hardman, WØRUN, sold him an Alpha amplifier, as they are difficult to get in Germany. Felix was all smiles!

We were scheduled to depart from Peter I on 21 February, but approaching bad weather forced us off the island on the 19th. All team members and 90% of the equipment was removed but still we had 10% of our gear to get off the island. The storm arrived on schedule and we waited patiently for five days before we could retrieve the remaining stuff and head for home. It was a long five days!

Celebrations

Finally, on 24 February we had all personnel and equipment aboard and were on our way back to King George Island and eventually Punta Arenas and home. With everyone safely back aboard, celebratory cigars and beverages were shared. We all took advantage of the warm showers and good cooked meals in the dining facility. After a good night's sleep we began to repack the container below deck and put the antennas back up for our XR9A/mm stations.

Early on the morning of 28 February, we went ashore on Deception Island to visit an abandoned whaling station. We walked around for about two hours and took photos of

seals, penguins, old buildings and equipment. Back on board, we were underway for the 8-hour voyage back to King George Island where we dropped anchor that evening. The next morning, eight team members left the ship to visit and operate in the Russian base radio building.

On 1 March some of us were sitting in the lounge when Gordon, WØRUN, came running in and said, "Get out, quick." As we ran out, a big white cloud of smoke was coming up from below deck.

Russ shouted, "It's toxic!"

We all ran to the top deck and the bow of the ship. What had happened was that a crewmember moved a bucket of ammonia not knowing the bucket was cracked. Ammonia spilled out and ran to a nearby bucket of dry bleach powder — what followed was a chemical reaction. Donning respirator masks and breathing tanks, the crew had the chemicals separated and the fumes were ventilated from the ship. It was exciting!

That evening we had a barbeque on deck — complete with guests: the captain of the Russian sailing ship *Apostle Andre*, as well as the Russian and Chilean base commanders. We barbequed steak and had coleslaw, baked beans and potato salad, and to drink, wine, beer and even Russian vodka.

Bad weather always seemed to be at hand and we spent another three days on the ship watching DVDs, packing and signing maps and cards until finally, on Saturday, 4 March, the plane was able to fly in from Punta Arenas and take us back.

Almost home

Our journey was almost complete. The captain of the *DAP Mares* came below deck and individually bid us a personal farewell as we boarded our Zodiac for the shore and KGI International Airport.

At 3:40 p.m. we lifted off to a collective applause from the entire team for the 4-hour flight to Punta Arenas. Everyone seemed just as happy on the return flight as they were on the trip down a month before. Robert surprised us again with a gift of a flag from the Polish Amateur Radio Union and a fresh box of chocolates that his wife brought when she met our ship at KGI.

We settled in to our Punta Arenas hotel that evening and spent the next day touring the area and confirming our flights home — in reverse from Punta Arenas to Santiago, Chile, to Atlanta and, for me, back to Dayton, OH.

This may not have been my longest journey, but it will always be the most memorable.

From Dayton to Peter I Island

Donald DuBon, N6JRL

Since 1963, when I first became a licensed Ham, my dream was to go on a major DXpedition to a far away exotic place. I used to read stories about people and places where DXpeditions took place; I watched videos and followed websites of such adventures.

Retiring from my military career in 1996, I soon would get a taste of traveling to distant places in the name of Amateur Radio. My first trip was to St. Lucia (J6DX) in 1998 — I was hooked. After that, I went on to Anguilla, Sint Maarten and Costa Rica.

Following 3YØX

In the summer of 2004, I started to follow the progress of the DXpedition 3YØX to Peter I Island in Antarctica. The 3YØX team had a great website (www.peterone.com) and I recognized the leaders, Ralph Fedor, KØIR and co-leader Bob Allphin, K4UEE, from previous videos about Clipperton Island and the 1994 DXpedition to Peter I, 3YØPI.

Through the website, I downloaded a contribution form and wrote out a check in support of the DXpedition and I included a small note to Bob, K4UEE, wishing him and the team the best of luck. I also mentioned that I appreciated their effort, as I had trained extensively in the Arctic and cold-weather environments in radio communications all over the world while in the military — and that someday I wanted to participate in a DXpedition of this caliber.

I monitored the team's progress as their January 2005 departure came closer. My excitement grew as the team departed the U.S. and headed for South America to begin their journey to Peter I and I had planned on working the team through the pileups. Unfortunately, in late January, the trip

was canceled due to logistical problems involving their transport ship.

In March '05, Bob, K4UEE, contacted me to ask if I wanted my contribution returned or applied to the 2006 attempt to complete the trip. He also asked a very BIG question: would I be interested in joining the team for the 2006 trip? I enthusiastically replied with a big affirmative!

Through email Bob explained that the team leaders would interview me via telephone and if they were satisfied with my qualifications, the only other thing required would be a team member's financial commitment of \$16,000. My wife suggested I could do some fundraising through clubs and organizations to reach that goal.

It's official

After the telephone interviews, I was officially invited to join the team, so I began preparing for the DXpedition by finding all the information I could about Peter I and the trip in 1994. Through ARRL, I found a great video "Journey to Peter I Island — Close to the Edge" about the 1994 DXpedition.

I started getting support from friends, family members and co-workers as well as clubs and organizations. I traveled to clubs in Ohio, Michigan, Colorado and Arizona to drum up support. My good friend Jim Ebner, N8JE, was instrumental in putting together photos and videos in a PowerPoint presentation and even helped with presentations at local clubs.

A training session was planned in Atlanta in September for the team members to meet and learn about the equipment and safety procedures, as well as practice erecting antennas and Arctic shelters. We worked very hard for four days in the Atlanta heat and humidity, but came away much more

knowledgeable and better acquainted as friends.

Returning home, I had new photos and videos — and an idea to sell t-shirts to raise more money for my journey of a lifetime. I continued making presentations at clubs and selling t-shirts. The donations kept rolling in and by September, I had raised about \$10,000. My wife assured me whatever shortfall I had, I could take from savings.

Final preparations

With the financial pressure off, I concentrated on getting ready for the trip. I gathered my cold weather gear that I had accumulated over the years and bought some things I knew I would need.


Jim, N8JE, and I drove to Atlanta in October and helped pack the team's 40-foot container for shipment to South America. My DXpedition of a lifetime was now within reach.

There was always the question of how I would get the 5-plus weeks off from work. The answer came in the form of a layoff. The contract I was working on at Wright Patterson AFB ended and my position had been eliminated, so I was laid off in November. That gave me plenty of time to concentrate on the mission ahead.

In November, I paid the remainder of my team member contribution, which assured me that I was going to Peter I. The holidays came and went and soon it was January 2006. With reservations for travel to South America in hand, I only had to wait until 29 January.

Finally the big day came. My wife drove me to the Dayton Airport for my flight to Atlanta, where we flew to Santiago, Chile, and finally Punta Arenas. From there a charter flight



would take us to King George Island and at about 2:30 in the afternoon on 7 February, I stepped foot on Peter I Island — my dream had been fulfilled. 

NCDXF scholarships now administered by ARRL

Al Burnham, K6RIM, V.P.



In addition to making grants for DXpeditions to rare counters and operating a worldwide network of high frequency radio beacons, since 1998 NCDXF has proudly funded annual college scholarships to qualified applicants who evidence interest and activity in DXing. Each year, NCDXF provides one \$1,000 scholarship; when sufficient funds are available, NCDXF provides two such annual scholarships.


Don Doughty, W6EEN, a longtime

friend and supporter of the NCDXF, contributed \$20,000 to the NCDXF in 1997 to create the NCDXF scholarship fund. Interest and growth in principal is used for the funding, keeping the corpus at its original \$20,000. Since 1998 NCDXF has provided \$20,000 in scholarships.

Until last year, the selection and administration of the NCDXF scholarships were done by the Foundation for Amateur Radio (FAR), however, beginning in 2006, the ARRL as-

sumed the responsibilities previously handled by FAR.

Applicants are not required to be U.S. citizens, but must attend a college or university, including junior college or trade school in the U.S. There is no discrimination for gender, race, national origin or handicap status. Applicants must hold a valid FCC-issued Technician or higher Amateur Radio license. Applicants who evidence interest and activity in DXing are given preference for this scholarship. The ARRL Foundation must determine the recipients of the award to be academically superior and the best among the scholarship applicants.

For more information about ARRL Foundation scholarship programs, including the NCDXF scholarship, visit www.arrl.org/arrlffscholgen.html. 

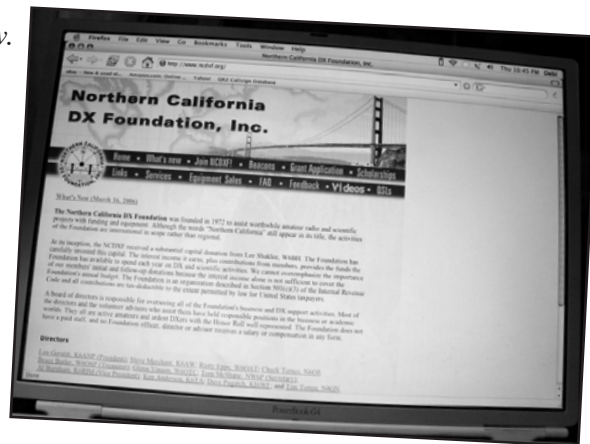
NCDXF.ORG – your web resource

*Doug Bender, WW6D
(webmaster)*




The NCDXF website (www.ncdxf.org) is your connection to the Foundation's news and information. Browsing through the pages, visitors have the ability to:

- Join NCDXF or renew their NCDXF membership directly through our secure page.
- Order supplies such as pins, labels or rubber stamps, through our secure page.
- Use the online form to apply for a grant.
- Communicate their ideas and suggestions to board members by email.
- Find information about how to apply for a scholarship, with links to scholarship forms.
- Get the latest on the NCDXF Beacons program.



- See the QSLs for many of the NCDXF-sponsored DXpeditions.
- Explore the current offerings of the video library, great for that next club meeting.
- Receive by email the latest equipment sales listing.

We attempt to keep the web pages current and rely on your use and comments to make it better. Stop by and take a look! 

DXpedition to Desolation Island

Located halfway between Africa and Australia, and just about as far away from North America as possible, this icy, windswept island has



always held a top spot on the DX world's most wanted lists. But just what kind of DXer does it take to leave home for six weeks and travel to such a faraway place?

Sailing with the famous R/V *Braveheart* to new extremes in the South Indian Ocean, and again using the "low power-vertical antenna" approach, join the Microlite Penguins DXpedition team as they battle through the seas and the pileups from yet another remote Antarctic destination!

Digitally filmed and edited, and mastered to Digital Betacam in Stereo. (54 minutes/DVD).

Now available on loan from the NCDXF video library (*see page 16*). Or, to purchase your own personal copy, visit www.dxvideos.com/ft5xovideo.htm

Low bands on the Arctic Circle – The story of OJØB

Martti Laine, OH2BH



During low sunspot years DXers tend to compensate for the lack of high bands by spending the long and dark nights searching for counters to push up their LF totals. One of those low-band hotspots is the frozen Market Reef located at 60° North, close to the Arctic Circle. Access to the reef is easy during the summer months but, at that time of year, the sun never sets along the northern latitudes — a complicated equation that leaves many DX aficionados wondering why they keep having an empty slot in their records for OJØ in spite of its close proximity to highly populated DX wonderlands, such as OH and SM.

Seasonality challenge

When the low bands get better, say to the USA and Japan, all the potential vessels are docked, while a

fleet of icebreakers start serving those harbors in Scandinavia that need to be kept open to facilitate sea transportation for goods to be exported to the outside world. The season is a big mess with drifting ice floes and heavy pack ice around places such as OJØ. Boats with proper ice-going characteristics are not in service during the low-band season and lifting gasoline and sizable objects by helicopter is simply beyond the regulations set for using a helicopter.

Setting up shop on Market Reef

Adding to the transportation challenge is the fact that standing on the reef is an abandoned lighthouse made of reinforced concrete and this massive building is impossible to heat for a comfortable stay. You can heat up

the air indoors in some parts of the lighthouse but doing so generates so much humidity, that keeping it cold may be better if your equipment and other supplies can stand the freezing temperatures. Temperatures often reach a low of -30°C (-22°F) during the winter months. Using Arctic tents on the reef itself might be an idea, but the weather can suddenly change, causing the mighty force of the sea to roll over the reef, leaving the lighthouse as the only structure standing above 100 meters of water.

Propagation challenge

Not many people can actually envision that working low bands from the proximity of the Arctic Circle is far from a guaranteed success. The auroral oval extending down to the area of SMØ, OJØ and OH2 makes

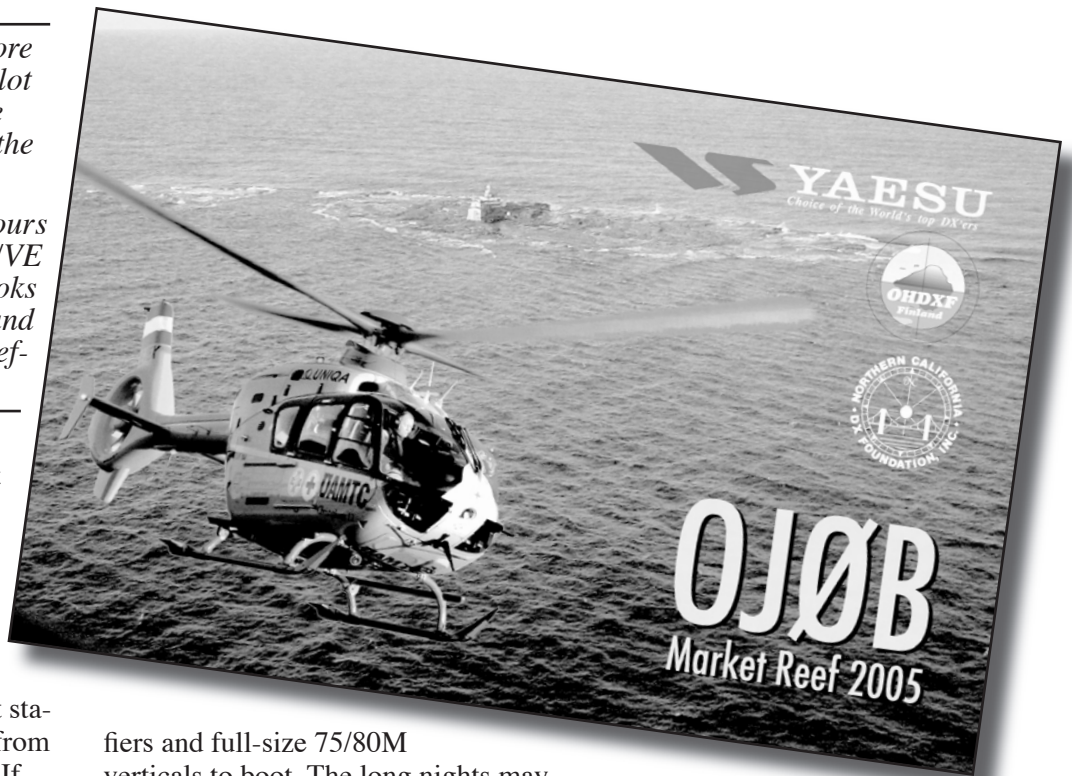
Left: Leaving Market Reef before we got our feet wet. And the pilot didn't mind getting out of there while his nose was still above the water.

Right: This QSL is now yours if you were lucky. 519 U.S./VE QSOs and 186 JA's in the books for 75/80M while 79 U.S./VE and 75 JA's for 160M. Worth the effort? Maybe so.

radio propagation awful — to put it mildly. Only certain southern regions of Sweden and Norway are generally exempted from this oval. Any auroral activity instantly kills all propagation for stations under the oval if they intend to cross the oval to contact stations elsewhere. Such directions from OJØ include the USA and Japan. If it is still your desire to go, it should be noted that aurora is present in these northern parts during the winter months 80% of the time.

Psychological challenge

As it happened during our 24 November-3 December 2005 winter outing, we got very little sympathy sitting on this icy, barren rock, freezing miserably and not hearing any signals. Typically, southern Europeans drop by on frequency to suggest that the setup on the reef leaves a lot to be desired — not realizing that the station is burning 15kW worth of fuel, running Alpha 91B ampli-



fiers and full-size 75/80M verticals to boot. The long nights may produce few contacts, if any. Frustration can kill the initiative. Why do we do all this? Is there anyone who can appreciate all the things we are going through?

Wearing awkward Arctic outfits for a week can make you hate yourself; even you won't stand how you smell.

Looking at the entire affair after the fact, the whole thing can be expressed in two sentences! You are totally out of your mind if you asked, "When do you go to Market Reef for 160M SSB?" And we, for our part, would appear to be out of our mind in extending our service that far. For those holding an OJØB QSL card, we

kindly ask for your understanding of the effort, the suffering and the cost it took to have that card placed in your exquisite QSL album.

Preparatory phase

During the summer, a preparatory trip was made to drill holes for the anchors needed to hold the guy wires for low-band verticals in place on the plain rocks. Hoisting the antennas in a heavy, icy breeze was expected to be an ultimate challenge; therefore, having the anchors done in advance was a pre-condition. As the reef itself is typically covered with thick ice, getting those anchors installed saved a lot of trouble.

Another pre-condition was that the trip out should be made by boat so that fuel can be carried for a one-week stay. The idea was to go ahead with the outing at the end of November just before the sea froze over. A detailed agreement was signed with a specific boat owner to keep his boat in the water beyond their normal sailing season, and if the timing of the trip out was successful, he should not worry about getting the people back but rush back to his origin. If the return boat trip was not possible because of the weather and icing,



The cast of characters who braved Market Reef, (from left) Lars Nikko, OHØRJ; Ilmo Antila, OH2BO; Martti Laine, OH2BH, and Pertti Simovaara, OH2PM.

a standby agreement with a rescue helicopter was to do the rest. The Northern California DX Foundation signed up to share part of the cost of a potentially needed helicopter rescue operation.

Off we go with *Lady Fortuna*

The day set for a first outing was exceptionally calm, with temperatures close to freezing point, allowing the boat to approach the eastern end of the reef so that unloading would be possible without a zodiac. The reef has no jetty because of massive rolling waves and iceloads. With God's blessing, the day could not have begun much better! The reef is 200 meters long but carrying all the equipment, supplies and fuel to the actual lighthouse over treacherously slippery rocks was peanuts compared to what it could have been. We switched on large gas radiators attempting to dry out the lighthouse — which was to be our home for the next seven days.

OJØB hits the bands

In no time, the generator was up and running and we fired up three stations. In addition to the low-



No wonder aluminum of U.S. origin can take a lot of hits. Our thanks to Rich, K7ZV, who provided two of these verticals. We found rolling waves made those guy wires loose — the vertical was “fishing” but did not break.

band, full-size verticals, we carried a SteppIR 2-L beam and an all-band vertical. The SteppIR vertical was the first one to go up, with wire antennas for low-bands hanging from the Market Reef light. The weather changed and, as it turned out, the

beam never went up and even the low-band verticals barely got hoisted — just for the last three days of the operation. Luckily, with the 75/80M vertical, there was a huge difference to the wire antennas.

Pertti Simovaara, OH2PM, ran the 80M CQWW CW contest single-handedly, racing against Ilkka Korpela, OH1WZ at OH2BH, with its large 80M 3-L beam from the mainland, both ended right at the all-time European record. The contest weekend was productive on 75/80M but also on 160M where another station was kept on signing OJØJ, and a third station giving out QSOs outside the contest, particularly on 30M.

I was responsible for 75M SSB traffic prior to the contest with the auroral oval hanging over my head. What frustration it was to see the small 100-watt Czechs cross the Atlantic with ease, with no signals reaching Market Reef. Meanwhile, 75M long-path provided some balm to the wounds, and dozens of stations made it that way without letting the auroral oval block their way. Those QSOs are a long distance on 75M: 31,500 kilometers, or 19,500 miles, apiece.



We have a job to do but we need wipers for our eyeglasses. “Where are my helpers?” asks Pertti, OH2PM, after a third day of trying to hoist the 75/80 vertical.

Life is plain and simple

The routine was straightforward — drinking hot tea and eating, and making QSOs. Taking a bath was totally out of the question. It was dead freezing. The whole operating crew slowly became a smelly bunch — opening the zipper on our arctic outfit even caused the seals to run back to the sea.

The end is near

While the time slowly came to an end so did the fuel. Continued high winds caused the reef surface area to get smaller and smaller. We had also reached the limit of our tolerance with the hygiene conditions — we all smelled (really, really bad). We smelled so bad that we could only laugh at ourselves and at those who convinced us to come here.

We saw a low pressure front fading away but another, heavier weather system was following two days later. We knew that the sea would not calm down in between, but we were all in agreement without a word spoken: let's get the hell out of here regardless of cost and risk level.

A medical rescue helicopter from the Åland Islands landed right next to the lighthouse. This was far costlier than we originally estimated, but we were in a state of nirvana and nothing really mattered. Setting all our smelly clothing on fire, we considered the mission completed — we had 12,200 low-band QSOs under our belt. We already envisioned some QRP types asking “When 160M?” — at least we had no idea and simply did not care.

After a few showers aboard a luxury liner plying the waters between the Åland Islands and Finland, adding to a beer or two, even before the anchor was dropped on arrival in our home port, we looked at each other, asking “Where do we go next?”


We were feeling the itch again, because “DX is...” especially to those who produce!

Our cast of characters: Lars Nikko, OHØRJ; Martti Laine, OH2BH; Ilmo Anttila, OH2BO, and Pertti Simovaara, OH2PM. We were supported by the Northern California

	160	80	40	20	15	10	30	Total
USA	63	486	3	226	28		131	937
VE	16	33		35	4		14	102
NA	6	30	5	11	6			58
SA	8	28	8	11	16		2	73
EUR	3083	3991	1037	703	172	1	826	9813
AF	14	29	18	17	14		7	99
AA	156	282	43	55	38		57	631
JA	75	186	17	71	1		68	418
OC		19	1	3	2		10	35
Total	3421	5084	1132	1132	281	1	1115	12166

DX Foundation Inc., OH DX Foundation, Rich Chatelain, K7ZV, and Mike Mertel, K7IR, at SteppIR. We got sympathy from families and dear ones back home. Helicopter operations were provided by Medi-Heli Mariehamn, Åland Islands. Equip-

ment and QSL cards were courtesy of Vertex Standard (Yaesu).

Daily news and pictures were released from the DXpedition site on the website www.kolumbus.fi/oh2bn/pagemarket.htm 



Heavy Hitters for 2005

We sincerely thank these supporters of the Northern California DX Foundation for their generous contributions during the 2005 calendar year.

\$10,000 or more — K3NA.

\$1,000 or more — K6RIM, W6EUF, Southern California DX Club, Northern Illinois DX Association, Northern California DX Club, Willamette Valley DX Club, Central Arizona DX Association (K7UGA).

\$250- \$500 — Anonymous, K6ANP, NC8B, W6OAT, W6OSP, W6SZN, PY5EG, KJ9C, N1CYA, AA6IR, JA1EM, K6UM, KI6T, KI6WF, LA7XB, MØCCE, N2WN, N3KS, NW6P, W1PNR, W3UR, W5IZ, W5ZPA, W6BGK, W8QID, Twin Cities DX Association.

My Kure Atoll (K7C) diary

Ann Santos, WA1S

After more than two years of planning and political negotiations, the Kure Atoll Expedition (24 Sep-6 Oct 05) became a reality. Some people thought I was crazy to go on such a DXpedition but I've always enjoyed a challenge and a new adventure. A trip like this makes *Survivor* look easy, and I owe a special thanks to Garry Shapiro, NI6T, for inviting me to be part of the team. It was an adventure I'll always remember.

Starting out

My 13-hour flight from Manchester, NH, to Honolulu, HI, was uneventful and, not being able to sleep on a plane, I was running on pure adrenalin by the time I arrived in Honolulu. Charlie Spetnagel, W6KK, and John Kennon, N7CQQ, greeted me at the airport and then we headed off to the S/V *Machias* — our transportation to Kure Atoll — where I dropped off my bag and we met up with Bob Schmieder, KK6EK.

We then headed to Kimo Chun's (KH7U) where we joined Garry, NI6T, and Ward Silver, NØAX. Two more members, Franz Langner, DJ9ZB, and Richter Gerhard (Gerd), DJ5IW, arrived after dinner. The next morning we were off to Kimo's to load gear into a truck, and then John, Charlie and I headed for the airport to pick up our last team member, Steve Wright, VE7CT. That evening all the team members gathered for a bon voyage dinner at *Sam Choy's* and we were joined by Captain Bill Austin as well as some of our local support team: Kimo, KH7U; Pat Guerin, NH6UY; Mike Gibson, KH6ND; Lee Wical, KH6BZF, and others.

At the dock the next day, after we finished loading gear on board the *Machias*, Captain Bill Austin delivered a briefing and introduced us to the crew: Lass (cook), Mike (mate), Pat (mate) and Leimana.

Getting underway

We set sail on 15 Sep 05 at 6:13 p.m. for the journey to Kure Atoll. Many of us teamed up to take four-hour shifts at the helm; I took the 4-8 a.m. shift with Captain Bill and I learned a bit about his life. This interesting man played football for the University of Washington and the Los Angeles Rams before being drafted into the Army. In 1966, Bill purchased the *Machias* and has sailed all over the Pacific and, on some remote islands where modern medicine is out of reach, he is known as a great healer.

Most of us got only about two to three hours of sleep that first night; the bunks on the *Machias* were stacked three high and about three feet wide by six feet long. My bunk was at the bottom located directly across from the forward head. Two team members got seasick and Dr. Alan Eshleman, K6SRZ, administered Phenergan shots, which took affect within 15 to 20 minutes and lasted four to six hours. I guess I was one of the lucky ones; I didn't get seasick.

Passing Niihau, the last of Hawaii's main islands, the winds picked up and we experienced eight- to 10-foot swells. The currents and wind were in our favor so we erected the sails, and soon were sailing at the maximum hull speed of just over nine knots.

Along the way, we caught a 15-pound yellowfin tuna, our first of many fish, and just before sunset, we saw Necker Island. That night, Alan, K6SRZ, and Ward, NØAX,



The group at Midway Atoll where we made a brief stop for supplies on the return trip.

entertained us, playing the guitar and mandolin in the galley.

The next day we erected a dipole and unpacked an Icom 756PROIII, and had a team meeting to discuss our plans on Kure. At 2246 UTC Gerd logged our first K7C/mm contact with NH7D.

Just before sunset, we could see Gardner Pinnacles, two islets totaling five acres, the smallest land area of any of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). Around 11 p.m. we were awakened by a loud crash. A sudden change in wind direction caught the main sail and the main boom swung in the opposite direction breaking the safety ropes; luckily, no one was injured, however, we had to switch over to engine power.

We awoke the next morning to rain. Captain Bill was in the wheelhouse and Gerd, at the radio, explained to me that he couldn't tune the antenna. I told him the antenna was probably broken by the wind the previous night. Soon the rain cleared and we were able to assess the damage. The dipole was indeed broken and Captain Bill began repairing the ropes. In the meantime, we put out fishing lines and caught an 18- to 20-pound dolphinfish (mahi mahi).

The dipole was repaired and Garry



Erecting the 2-element SteppIR antenna.

and Gerd worked on the RTTY software. I operated 20 CW and worked George, W1EBI, and Alan, K5AB; the next morning I worked Tom, N4XP, our QSL manager on CW. In the afternoon, John, N7CQQ, gave a briefing on the use of the Icom 756PROIII and I gave a briefing on the use of N1MM. For the first time on the trip, we had a crystal clear night and could see the Milky Way, Big Dipper, Ursa Minor and many other constellations.

We awoke to two- to four-foot seas and caught several fish as we passed Midway Atoll.

Land Ho!

After over six days at sea, we finally arrived at Kure Atoll on the morning of 22 September. Cynthia, the resident naturalist, met us at our mooring, which was about four to five miles across the lagoon — the closest we could get to the island. With Cynthia's help, we began loading gear onto two small boats for the 30- to 40-minute ride across the lagoon to the island — a slow process.

Once on the island I met Katie, our cook, and Pam who was writing and

filming a story about Cynthia. The next day we continued to transport gear from the boat to the beach and from the beach to the camp. We partially put together the SSB and CW tents but needed rebar to anchor them because the continuous winds on Kure sometimes exceeded 40 knots. We also needed to reinforce our tents from the rain, putting tarps over and around them. The rebar, buried under everything else on the *Machias*, arrived last.

After the CW and SSB tents were up, we began erecting antennas. I spent a bit of time with Ward, NØAX, working on N1MM and the networking. Before dark, we had erected two SteppIR antennas and a TITANEX antenna. Cynthia instructed us to put bright colored



The CW operating sauna, err, tent.

flags every eight to 10 feet on our guy wires and bury our ground radials to prevent the seals from getting entangled in them.

Contacts

At 0714 UTC, 25 September, Gerd, DJ5IW, logged JA3KQG on 20 CW and Alan, K6SRZ, logged 7N2DAB on 40 CW. I started on 20 SSB and logged JA1PEV at 0716 UTC. I operated 20 SSB for a while before turning it over to Franz,

DJ9ZB. We experienced problems with DXA at the server site due to the large number of simultaneous hits, which exceeded the server's bandwidth. Steve Hammer, K6SGH, our chief pilot in California, worked with the vendor to correct these problems.

Working 20 SSB again, the SWR went to infinite on the 2-element SteppIR. We took it down, along with a second 2-element SteppIR that wasn't working, and corrected the problems. SteppIR antennas have a control box that, when you switch bands, will automatically adjust the length of the elements for resonance. Every so often communications between the control box and the antenna lost its memory so we had to re-park the elements and reset them.

Completing the antenna installations, a few of us decided to take a dip in the lagoon to cool off; it got really hot during the middle of the day on the white, sandy beach; in the operating tents the temperature exceeded 100°F.

By dinnertime, we had just over 7,000 Qs in the log and after dinner, I got on 80 CW, but every time Garry, NI6T, transmitted on 160, my reflected power increased and tripped my ACOM amplifier. Garry suggested building a 92-foot-long open stub to insert in-line with my radio, so we took a few minutes away from

our pileups to find a roll of coax and



We needed to bury the ground radials to prevent seals from becoming entangled in them.



While on Kure, we had chores to do. Here, two team members paint the roof on one of the few remaining buildings.

cut a stub to length. It worked like a charm and I had constant pileups until I was relieved at 1:30 a.m. by Steve, VE7CT.

The next morning I operated 17 SSB, 15 CW and 20 SSB. I worked my husband, Russell, K1TSV, on 17 Meters then on 20 SSB followed by WAØWOK, XE1CI, VK3DYL and KØNEB.

Visitors

A NOAA vessel showed up overnight and stayed for a couple of days, studying and tagging tiger sharks at the edge of the reef.

We observed many birds on the island including frigates, boobies, terns, black and brown noddies and petrels.

There were big-headed ants, which were nothing but a nuisance and liked to crawl into our sleeping bags. There were big spiders, too, which I was told were harmless, but I never got close enough to find out. In the afternoons, some of us went snorkeling, and we spotted a variety of fish.

Overcoming obstacles

N1MM crashed at just over 30,000 Qs and I scrambled to create new database files on the seven computers.

One night it rained hard and one of our generators failed. Kimo, KH7U,

had stored another generator in a shelter at the end of the pier so at 3:30 a.m. five of us decided to haul it out. We dragged it across the beach to the CW tent and it started with the first pull. We moved the cables but nothing worked; the output voltage read only two volts. Temporarily, we moved all operations into the SSB tent and, at first light, we sent for a spare

rain, so I shut down, secured the tents and covered the generator. The rain lasted about 15 minutes, after which I uncovered the generator and continued operating. Alan, AD6E, joined me around 4:30 a.m. and operated 80 CW but not more than 30 minutes later, the generator stopped running. We tried to restart it with no luck so we moved over to the other tent and continued operating until we were relieved by Ward, NØAX, and Gerd, DJ5IW. Eventually, the generator started again.

As we neared the end of our stay, we started taking a few things down and sending them back to the *Machias*. I began working on merging the first set of logs.

We logged over 50,000 Qs and our last QSO was on 5 October at 2206 UTC on 20 Meters with Mike Mraz, N6MZ. Throughout the rest of the day and well into the next, we took down the camp and loaded the boats until the beach was clean. Bob, KK6EK, continued to work on his computer and DXA until he was forced to shut down.

The journey home

The *Machias* set sail at 9:05 p.m. on 7 Oct with two additional passengers: Cynthia and Katie. Before leaving the island, all the buildings were secured since Kure would be vacant until Cynthia returned in the spring.



On this spot stood a 625-foot Loran C transmitting antenna constructed in 1961 and removed 10 July 1992. This is dedicated to the more than 900 men and women who, over the years, stood the lonely vigil of isolated duty and kept Loran Station Kure Island "on the air and in tolerance" in defense of their country. "You can leave Kure Island but Kure will never leave you."

generator on board the *Machias*. We were down to our last two generators plus a small 2kW generator brought as a spare for DXA. There were also concerns about running out of fuel, so we needed to conserve.

At 2 a.m. I operated 40 CW for a while and I was the only one operating when it started to



Everything had to be hauled across the hot, glaring-white, sandy beach.



Our bunks on board the S/V Machias — they weren't made for lounging.

We arrived at Midway Atoll the next morning to drop off Cynthia; while there, Mike from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (which manages the atoll) gave us a tour and shared a little of the island's WWII history. At the Midway Mall, we bought some cold drinks, ice cream bars and t-shirts, then we found the Internet café to send email to our loved ones. While we toured Midway, Captain Bill secured items for our journey back to Honolulu.

As we set sail again, the wind and waves began to increase. A few of us passed the time in the galley playing poker for pistachios — there wasn't much else to do on a boat in rough seas. The next morning the pump

went out in the forward head so Captain Bill erected the sails to slow us down and make it easier for him and Mike to repair the pump, eventually replacing it with a spare.


Overnight we hit rough seas and blew a seal in the skylight causing saltwater to pour into the forward bunk area. Pat, Mike, Leimana and I got wet. We slowed down again to make repairs, clean up saltwater, wash our bed mats and change the sheets. We also took the opportunity to put up the dipole antenna so we could set up and operate the FT-900 radio for the voyage home.

The next morning I was up early and made my way to the galley — the driest place on the *Machias*. While there, I found there was an opening to the East Coast and worked my husband, Russell, K1TSV, at 0114 UTC. Those who weren't seasick spent the day in the galley — avoiding the saltwater bath on deck.

We had another rough night at sea, and, with the constant side-to-side motion, none of us were able to get much sleep. Everyone was anxious to

get back on dry land. Off in the distance I could see Nihoa Island, which meant we would reach Kauai the next day, and Oahu the day after that.

After nine days at sea we reached Barbers Point on Oahu at 9 a.m. — it was great to be on solid ground again. While waiting for Kimo and the others to arrive, we began unloading the *Machias*. Once the gear was unloaded, we went off into different directions — some to stay with friends, others to our hotel for a shower and some rest.

Before boarding planes for home though, we all met at *Pagoda's* for our last dinner together. 



Ann M. Santos, WA1S, lives in Milford, NH, and has been licensed

since 1979. She enjoys DXing, contesting, CW and DXpeditions. Ann is on the DXCC Honor roll with 340 confirmed countries. Other hobbies include scuba diving, photography and alpine skiing.

We'll see you at Dayton! 19-21 May 2006



One of the many species of seabirds we encountered while on Kure.



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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 for using programs in the FOUNDATION's library, but clubs borrowing materials are responsible for postage in both directions. If your request is received no later than two weeks prior to your meeting, it will be sent "Special Fourth Class" (\$1.75 for one video, \$2.25 for two); otherwise it will be sent "Priority Mail" (\$4.25 for one video, \$4.50 for two). Please give the name of the club, your meeting date and an alternative selection in case your first request is not available. Please return all material promptly so that it will be available for others. Mail your request to Dick Wilson, K6LRN, PO Box 273, Somerset, CA 95684-0273, USA; e-mail k6lrn@arrl.net.

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| 110. Ham Radio Olympics (WRTC 2000) | 114. VP8THU South Sandwich, 2002 | 121. Banaba T33C 2004 (VHS/DVD) |
| 111. K5K Kingman Reef, 2002 | 115. VP8GEO South Georgia, 2002 | 122. TJ3FR/TJ3SP Cameroons (VHS/DVD) |
| 112. D68C Comoros Islands | 116. WRTC 2002, Finland | 123. FT5XO Kerguelen 2005 (DVD) |
| 113. I2UIY Niger/5U 2001 & 2002 (PowerPoint) | 117. 3XY7C Guinea 2002, DL7DF | 124. K7C Kure Atoll 2005 (VHS/DVD) |
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