

The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the
Eastern Iowa DX Association



An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



April 2009

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President:	Joe Hetrick	KC0VKN	Packet Cluster	WB8ZRL
Vice President:	Tom Vinson	NY0V	147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM	
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Membership Committee:	Jim Spencer	W0SR		
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Greetings & Good DX!

The April 2009 EIDXA meeting will be held **Friday, April 10**, at 7:30 p.m. at Kirkwood Community College in Room 219C. We expect to receive a report on the recent Desecheo Island (KP5) DXpedition from Glen KØJGH, who was among the Desecheo operators. In fact, Glen launched the effort that culminated in the February Desecheo DXpedition in a phone call back in July 2002. Glen has had some major computer troubles but is trying to prepare for the meeting. As a backup Tom WØWP will be bringing some DVDs and we can choose one and view that and Glen can report on Desecheo at the next meeting.

President's Propagation, Pronouncements & Pontifications

— Joe Hetrick KC0VKN, EIDXA President



Another newsletter has arrived, and spring is just around the corner. I hope everyone managed to keep aluminum in the air this year. It certainly helped not having as much ice as the previous two years! I'm sure everyone managed to log KP5, fortunately for me, I'm near the beginning of my DXing habit and several upcoming DXpeditions are entirely new for me. I don't need to worry about filling band/mode - I just need the entity! With KP5 I managed to hit 170 worked, so, I'm a bit over halfway there.

No large projects over the winter. I spent some time fixing some bugs in my portable 3-ele phased vertical setup in time for CQWW and then got it back out again for ARR LDX CW and had a bit of fun with it on 40M. It makes just enough difference to make it

President's Propagation, Pronouncements & Pontifications

worth putting up and using. In both contests I found the RX directivity to be almost more useful than any TX gain I may be realizing. There were many instances where I just wouldn't have heard the station with a single vertical element. I'm going to now beg for program ideas for the 3rd meeting of the year, if anyone has any ideas, that'd be wonderful. My first two were easy with NYØV, KØDAS, and KØJGH being at the loud end of the pileups!

Dit Dit, Joe KCØVKN

Veep Ramblings - Tom Vinson NYØV**Sunspots and DX**

So, here we are in the 12th year of the 11-year sunspot cycle. It seems the sunspots have joined with Wall Street to stay low for a while. From what I have read, Cycle 24 really has begun as a few sunspots have been seen with the tell-tale reverse polarity. However, it looks like this minimum may just be the lowest minimum that has been recorded for over 100 years. Does that mean that we should forget DX for a while? Uh, no.



Even for a low sunspot cycle there is plenty of good DX available out there. The CQ Challenge ended up with some nearing 300 countries worked last year, so it can be done! I've been hearing good signals out of Africa in the afternoon and some out of the Pacific in the later afternoon. And even in the last few nights, 20m has been open into JT1CO with over S9 signals over the pole. With the broadcast SW stations vacating part of the 40m band, I've heard good signals from Siberia over the pole in the evening. Some recent "in the logs" are: H4ØFN, C31CT, VK9LA, V63PR, C91TX, J5UAP, E51COF, 5X1NH, TLØA, 3B9/SP2JMB. The 3B9 I snatched on 40m at 2343 the other night. I even worked NRØX on 6m...of course, he was remote from TX! So hang in there as all is not lost. We just need to keep our sticks on the ice for a bit longer!

Multi Op Contesting

When Rod and I were out in Hawaii at KH6YY, Alex was lamenting that it was hard to find operators for a Multi-Multi operation. During CQWW SSB, two ops were each running SOSB by themselves. That got me to thinking that maybe it would be fun to see if there are others in that predicament around here...like NØNI or WØAIH where we could help make a go of it some fall or winter contest. Is this of interest to any of you? If we had enough interest, then I would pursue that with whatever area contest station that could use the help. The other idea was to see if anyone would be interested in heading out to KH6 to run at KH6YY some contest. Over a weeks time you could run the contest during the weekend and still have time to see some sights. Ideas? Interest?

*Veep Ramblings***Pre-Dayton Swapfest**

Are you making that annual once-in-a-lifetime trip to Dayton again this year? Got some stuff you just as soon unload before you go? Or perhaps you are looking for some good item to take to Dayton to unload for a better price? 8-) Well once again the gang at Collins are going to have their Non-Hamfest, Swapfest. What that means is that everyone just shows up at the Collins parking lot due east of the 137-1 entrance on the back lot and opens their truck for two hours. That's right just two hours. This year it's on Saturday May 9th from 0830 to 1030. Of course, guys always show up earlier! It's a "non-hamfest" only in that there is no admission charge, no prizes, no vendors, and no concessions. We usually don't have any restrooms either, but this year the cafeteria is open due to a VE session going on in there! Even if you don't have anything to sell, it's a good time to just meet up with the guys after hibernating over the winter. You can always run over to the Springhouse and get some coffee together and catch up a bit.

ARRL Midwest Convention/Hamfest

If you are looking for some fun, try the Hamfest over at Sioux City, NE on April 17-18. There is a dinner on Friday night and the main Hamfest/convention on Saturday. Rod, KØDAS and I are slated for three presentations on Saturday! So, I'm not sure how much I'll be wandering the floor!

KH4M

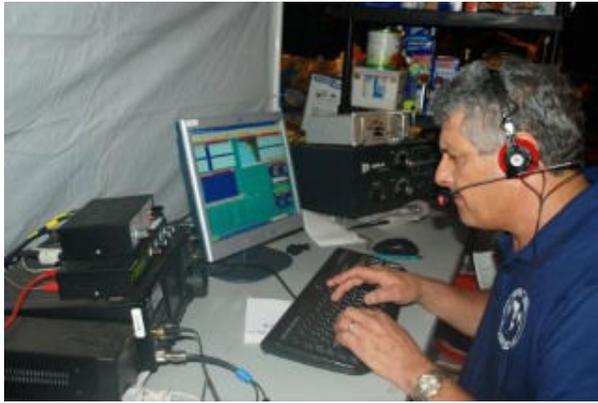
I think the next big excitement on the bands will be K4M on Midway this coming October. I had seen where the F&WS had opened it up for hams to travel there. When I looked into it, the price tag was \$5K for a week! Yikes! Last fall Rod and I did Christmas Isd/T32 for around \$2K each. When KH4 opened up, it didn't take long before their roster was filled with top notch ops. Which just tells me that these guys were already well into the planning stages when it opened up. Midway has some appeal for us who have an interest in WWII history- it would be a lot of fun to stomp around there for a week. I guess I will have to be satisfied with just putting them in the log on some new bands.

See you in the pile ups!

Tom, NYØV

KØJGH on Desecheo Island (KP5) - Glen Kesselring KØJGH

We'll soon hear from Glen KØJGH about his experiences on Desecheo Island, which was activated in February – the first time the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service authorized a DXpedition to the island in a decade. After the expedition got underway, the seas got rough, and Glen and others had to be flown out to Desecheo from mainland Puerto Rico. Glen has provided some photos to whet your appetite!

KØJGH on Desecheo Island – KP5


Glen KØJGH working a pile-up



Looking west toward the Dominican Republic

Notes on Rotator Inspection - Brad Farrell K4RT (ex KDØRT)


I bought my HyGain CD45II rotator in 1985 when I lived in Ottumwa. It turned a small 2 element quad for several years. I removed it from service as I prepared to move to Missouri to take a new job. 10 years and five states later, I'm living in Alexandria, Virginia in a deed-restricted townhouse. Recently, I decided to unpack the rotator and use it to turn a 144 MHz Yagi in my attic for sideband work. I have a low band inverted L (160-40 meters) and vertical dipole (20-10 meters), but the homeowners association does not allow towers!

After pulling the rotator out of its box, I clamped it to a large dowel (that is fastened to a board) and connected it to the control box with jumper wires. It was a little sluggish but it turned. However, when turning the rotator, the meter needle in the control box was sluggish in places. I thought it might be a good idea to open it up and check inside before installing it in the attic. This is not a how-to article for rotator maintenance or repair. But I'll share some notes on what I've found so far. As this article is written, I'm preparing to repack the bearings – the last step before putting the rotator cover back on.



I located the rotator owner's manual (which includes a wiring schematic) and, at the suggestion of a local ham (confirmed by information on the web site of *Norm's Rotor Service* www.rotorservice.com), bought white lithium grease to repack the bearings. Having had some experience with failed Chinese-made bearings that appeared to have been packed in mud, I was determined to use American made grease on my rotator bearings. A tub of LubriMatic white lithium grease I found at the hardware



Notes on Rotator Inspection

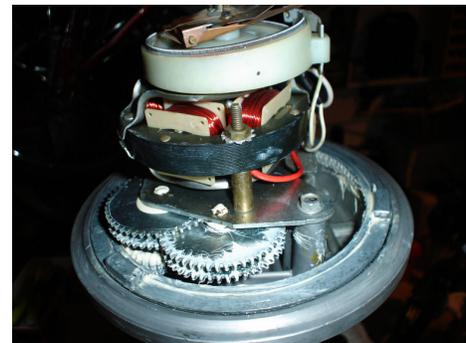
store did not include the country of origin in the label information. Internet research showed that the grease was made in the U.S.A.

With the rotator clamped to the dowel on my work bench I unbolted the top of the bell shaped rotator housing and pulled it off. Out fell the ball bearings in their race – a plastic ring holding 25 steel bearings. There are another 25 bearings beneath the steel plate to which the motor assembly is bolted. The bell shaped top housing has tabs inside at the bottom that rest against tabs on a ring gear. The whole assembly rests atop the bearings when it's assembled.



There appeared to be much less grease compared to when I opened up the rotator in the late 80s. The remaining grease was dirty – tiny pieces of metal and probably some dust that worked its way into the housing. I removed all 50 bearings and the races and soaked them in degreaser for three days. After the bath, I wiped everything clean of any remaining sludge with paper towels, reinstalled the bearings in their races and placed them aside, covering them with a towel to keep dust off.

I removed the motor assembly to get a closer look at the gears. I had expected to find some broken gear teeth, but the ring gear and smaller gears were in good shape. I applied some degreaser to clean the gears and a flat, narrow wooden coffee stirrer (thank you Starbucks) to apply grease to the gears. Since the rotator is a low speed machine I didn't go hog wild with the grease. I used degreaser to clean the machined grooves in the bottom plate (bottom groove not visible). The photo shows the inside of the rotator: gear assembly inside the bottom plate, with motor assembly above the gears and the directional potentiometer on top.



The potentiometer is wired to the control box meter. It was cleaner than I expected, but there was residue on the resistance wire. Using a can of compressed air and a small brush, I cleaned the pot assembly, including the underside of the copper wiper blade with fine steel wool. Be very careful cleaning the pot assembly. You may need to replace it if the part is available from MFJ, which bought HyGain and offers replacement parts.

Here's what I have learned so far:

- Make sure you carefully remove the top cover of the rotator to prevent the bearings from dropping out and causing possible damage.
- Check to see how the bearing races are positioned before they drop out as you remove the cover. I didn't and it wasn't hard to figure out, but there is a right and wrong way to position them.



Notes on Rotator Inspection

- Make pencil marks on the rotator cover and the bottom plate to make it easier to reposition the cover when it's time to reassemble.
- Shop around. MFJ now owns HyGain and sells the rotators and replacement parts. But MFJ wants \$12.77 (plus shipping & handling) for **one ounce** of bearing grease. The 16 ounce tub of white lithium grease I bought at the hardware store was \$6.96 plus tax and maybe 30 cents for the gasoline I burned to driver over there and back.
- Wear plastic gloves and wear eye protection when using degreaser.
- Work on your rotator where there is plenty of light.

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*See you Friday April 10
7:30 PM in Room 219C Kirkwood Comm. College
Pizza afterward!*



2009 EIDXA Meeting Schedule

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

Next Meeting

April 10 – 7:30 p.m., Kirkwood Community College, Room 219C.

- Glen KØJGH was among the K5D operators on Desecheo Island (KP5) and we expect a report. Alternatively, we will watch an interesting DVD.

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DXCC QSL Card Checking

DXCC card checking is available through ARRL Midwest Division Vice Director and EIDXA member Cliff Ahrens KØCA. You may have your cards checked by Cliff at EIDXA meetings, which he attends as his schedule permits, or by sending your cards to him by surface mail.

Contact Cliff via e-mail for more information:

cahrens@mywdo.com