

# The Eastern Iowa DXer

The Official Newsletter of the  
Eastern Iowa DX Association



An affiliated club of the American Radio Relay League



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**September 2009**

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## Club Officers

President:	Joe Hetrick	KC0VKN	<b>Packet Cluster</b>	<b>WB8ZRL</b>
Vice President:	Tom Vinson	NY0V	147.51, 144.91, 223.40, CRNETROM	
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Membership Committee:	Jim Spencer	W0SR		
	Tom Vavra	WB8ZRL		
	Nelson Moyer	KU0A		

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## ***EIDXA Picnic – Saturday, Sept. 12***

The picnic will be held at W0AWL's QTH. The gathering will commence anytime after 3:00 p.m. Cooking of the brats will begin around 5:00 p.m. Don't miss this year's picnic – it will be a great chance to catch up on what your fellow club members have been doing this summer! See you there!



## ***President's Propagation, Pronouncements & Pontifications***

- **Joe Hetrick KC0VKN**



Hope everyone is looking forward to the BBQ at Terry's place this coming weekend. W0AWL was kind enough to offer up his QTH again this year and we owe him a round of thanks for taking us all in. BBQ starts after 3:00PM on Saturday the 12th. Brats should be sizzling by about 5.

Brad K4RT has bashed out yet another fine newsletter for us. I think it's chock full of interesting member provided info (including my own contribution!). Tom, NY0V has a bit about his tower transport from AZ to his new QTH in MN. I'll be looking forward to an invite to come up and operate his station, it sounds like it's going to be really nice. Jerry, WW0E sent in photos (lest we doubt him!) of his 5B DXCC plaque; Congrats Jerry. Larry K0IS has some photos of his new Steppir up, just in time for fall contest season.

If it isn't on your calendar, you should put the Iowa QSO Party there, Saturday October 17.

It should be a good time. I'm sure I'll be operating, I just don't know where! I've had thoughts of finding a nice vacant county in SW IA and trying to give things a run.

Dit Dit, Joe KCØVKN

## **Veep Ramblings – Tom Vinson NYØV**

Well, with the bands kind of in the toilet, I have not been too active on the bands as of late. However, that may be changing as K4M and FR/G are about to be showing up on the airwaves in the coming weeks.



I did manage to put the 7P8YI in the log on 40m one night. It was a tough shot as his transmit frequency was the listening frequency for a VP2V station! I just figured that a lot of others were probably having a tough time copying him, so I might have a pretty good shot at working him. Sure enough, after listening for a while to figure out how he was operating, I called a couple of times and he came back to me. Of course, who knows if the VP2V was calling me and thinking me to be deaf! 8-) I've also seen H44MY on the air from OC-127, Rennell Island. I picked him up at 2144Z on long path on 20m.

Some of you know that I am moving to MN next year. This past month I picked up a used LM-470 TriEx motorized crank up/tilt over. The only problem was that it was in Mesa, Arizona. I ended up borrowing a flatbed car trailer and driving down to pick it up. Upon my arrival I found that the owner had it laying on a similar trailer and “all” we had to do was to put the trailers back-to-back and “slide” the tower from one trailer to another. Did I mention that it was a noon and 112 degrees out too? I learned that in order to move an 1100 Lb tower 20ft, it takes 3 guys, several logs, two BIG crowbars, a boat winch, and about an hour and a half...plus a gallon of water each!

Getting it to MN was not an issue either. Except when you blow a tire in the Oklahoma panhandle when it's 104 degrees out! Fortunately, only 10 miles away in Hooker (yes, that is the name of the town, and no I didn't see any!) there was a tire shop. Thank Goodness the trailer was a dual tandem set up so I could keep driving as I didn't have the right socket size for that wheel! By the time I got into Hooker, the tire was pretty much gone.



**Arrival in MN and unloading of the LM470**

When I got to MN I had lined up a backhoe to meet me and so unloading went much better than loading. So I am happy to say that I now have the tower up and nested in MN. There is still work to do, but I am hoping the hardest part is over. I have also picked up a used 4 element SteppIR from the estate of K9LTN (He's the one who had a 2x3 stack of these babies, with a MonstIR in between them!) Maybe next summer I can get this entire conglomeration up in the air.



**The tower laying over, ready to raise up and the tower raised up to vertical**

Finally, I was driving through Harmony, MN when I ran into an ATV mobile station that I thought you might find interesting:

See you in the pile ups!  
Tom, NYØV



## **WWØE Earns 5BDXCC – Gerald Rappel WWØE**



One of the most exciting facets of Amateur Radio operating to me is chasing awards. It's a major force that has motivated me for years. I love a challenge. I like to set goals, not with a definite date, just what I hope to achieve. One way I accomplish this is by pasting notes on my desk, something to stand out that I notice when I sit in front of my FT100MP. "Hey, that DXpedition is just 3 weeks from now, better get ready," etc. And by checking the DX bulletins on-line, QST, etc. 5BWAS, WAZ, WPX, DXCC, SSB, CW, MIXED (280), and many others that fill the walls in my radio shack.

But my goal was to obtain 5BDXCC. I already obtained 100 countries on 10/15/and 20 meters in years past. Hey, all I need are 100 more, on 40 and 80 meters. I use a Butternut HF2V for 40/80 meters. Had it for many years. I believe it was the early 90's, I tried for DX the first time on 40 meters, after coming across one of the DX nets. I was mainly on 40 and 80 meters checking into the 3905, Geritol, OMISS, etc. nets. Occasionally, a DX station would check in. All at once I'd have a handful of DX stations in the log. Not too bad, but I wasn't even imagining going for 100 countries at that time.

### Persistence

I came across a couple DX nets on 40/80 meters, and began to check in frequently to see what was happening. In a couple weeks I had CX, VK, ZL, ZS worked, even a T3 and JA. Hey, it's starting to get exciting now! So when the bands conditions changed that summer, I was off the air for a couple years doing sports and school events with the children. Family first. Later, I decided to try 40 and 80 again, I had done some serious reading about radials, and I put down a total of 30 ground wires on the Butternut, about 35' in length. Found a good buy on an Ameritron ALS,,600 amp. Began keeping track of all DXpeditions, etc. My same goal -- 5BDXCC.

A few short months of catching some good DX in the contests, DXpeditions, DX Summit, I was halfway there. Even e-mailing stations I had worked years ago on the nets, but I never bothered to QSL. This brought my total to over 60 countries. OK, now the hard part: I was watching DX Summit every night, going for everything I could use, along with dupes just to make sure.



About a year later I was up to 90 confirmed on both bands. Getting DXCC on 40 was not requiring much effort at all. Now 80 meters. It takes time; yes I kept hearing the same stations over and over. But then there were a few more DXpeditions, TI9, K5D, EL, VP6DX, etc. I was finally within reach. Even snagged Jacky, 3B8CF on 80 one evening.

### Patience

Waiting for every card to arrive proved to be the reward, after a long span of time. Finally, I had 106 for each band 40/80 ready for the card checker at the next EIDX meeting a few months back.

Well, it finally arrived on August 20, 2009. My 5BDXCC plaque, #6573 (see picture, which I have shown to my wife, friends, neighbors, relations, my dog, etc.) My log at this time shows 136 worked on 40, and 114 on 80 meters. Some of my best catches were 4X, D2, SV9, 3X, TX5C, XF4 on the bands. 90% of all DX worked was on CW, BTW.

### Next Goal

In October 2008, I began DXing 12/17/30 meters, worked about 60 countries on 30 & 17 last count. Also, just beginning to work PSK31, RTTY, and SSTV again.

### What's Next?

Six meters, hope to by spring of 2010 for the unpredictable propagation that everyone tells me makes band exciting. I have an Icom 706, just waiting for a good antenna.

Larry KØIS tells me frequently, there's even DX on 6 meters, imagine that!!

73, Jerry WWØE

## **Steppin' Out With the Steppir – Larry Albrecht KØIS**



After several years of planning and getting things together a little here and a little there (that's my story and I'm sticking to it), KØIS has finally gotten the Steppir he's been talking about for all too long in the air and it is great. Earlier this year, after doing some needed research I decided on the 3-element version with the 30/40 meter kit included at purchase.

Originally I was leaning toward the 4 element Steppir, but after considering the

additional wind load of that antenna with a quarter inch of ice added to it I just didn't feel like having to worry about that any more than necessary all the time even though the tower can be cranked down – not a fun job if you have to do it frequently. Also, I was looking at one or two trapped antennas and had narrowed my choice down to either the 3 element Steppir or a Mosley PRO 57B. In the end and after talking to Rich Haendel who has direct experience with the 3-element version of the Steppir and is using the same tower as I do, a US Tower TX-455, the 3-element version sounded like the way to go. Also on the tower and about 7 feet above the HF Yagi is a 6 element Hy-Gain VB66- DX for six meters. There's nothing wrong with adding the additional 6 meter passive element to the Steppir, making it a 4 ele Yagi for six, but I already had the Hy-Gain and didn't want to give up the additional gain and slightly narrower beam width it offers and even with ice on it I'm still ahead of where I would be with the 4 element antenna. After talking to Rich about spacing between the Yagis he made the good point that if I'm really concerned about that, then just retract all elements on the Steppir and it's out of the way for all practical purposes. Also, I found the idea of having no lossy and sometimes troublesome traps to deal with a plus, the Steppir making for a full size monobander on 20 through 6 meters. There are those who question the efficiency of an antenna here you adjust element



length but not spacing and I understand the argument but living in a homeowners association as we do already, one tower was going to have to do even though I also have an extended double Zepp cut for 40 meter CW and fed with 450 ohm feed line as well as a Butternut HF2-V on the ground with 24 radials under it. I have to tell you, over the years I've had a TA-33 JR, a TH6DXX (when they really WERE Hy-Gain) and a 2 element Hy-Gain Quad, all at 60 feet and this Steppir is every bit as good as any of those and then some.

So far I couldn't be happier with the performance on all bands and being able to electrically "rotate" the antenna 180 degrees in about 3 seconds time is great. I've seen more than once this sporadic E season on six meters where six was open in one direction while an HF band open to just about the exact opposite direction. No need to move a thing, just push a button. Things like this were only a dream when I started out as a novice in 1966!! I have found one interesting thing, and it's not a problem but I'll mention it here. I use a Drake



TR6/RV6 combination of six meters and when the Steppir controller is turned on, faintly in the background noise of the receiver you hear a weak telemetry like signal on six. The controller is sitting immediately next to the rig though as well and as I said, it's really weak and doesn't interfere with operation on six unless signals there are extremely down in the noise. The only band I resort to a tuner on is 30 meters but I think that has to do with height and the fact that the terrain of our one-acre is by no means flat in any direction away from the tower. It's old rolling pasture land with a 40 acre corn field right next door to the west and at a slight incline going away from the tower, then there are 7 acres of meadow beyond our acre to the north but by the time you get out to the back of the yard and to the meadow you've

also dropped probably 25-30 feet in elevation from the house/tower. I never worried about modeling this because this is where the tower had to be no matter what.

When the day came to finally get the antenna in the air I have to say I had some excellent help. Not one, but two EIDX members were there to provide additional eyes, thoughts and muscle to the project. I have to say a big thank you to Gary Huff, KWØJ and Jerry Rappel, WWØE for their help. Their help was and is still greatly appreciated and it's always a lot more fun to work on antennas when you have additional hams to work with. The day was a success and the antenna and tower have already withstood winds in excess of 60 MPH without being cranked down. I owe some of that to the guy that did my concrete for me in that he went down an additional 2 feet beyond the US Tower specs in the hope of finding what he referred to as "sugar clay" and he did find it. This is a very compact and fine form of clay and undisturbed, as this was, I can feel a bit better about keeping everything in the air. So check out the pictures and remember those faces, because these guys are great antenna people and fun to work with as



well. I want to thank them again for helping me to finally get a directional gain type antenna in the air at KØIS after a number of years without.

## ***VKN's Small Key Collection – Joe Hetrick KCØVKN***

My XYL knew there was a problem when boxes started arriving that were more dense than their sizes would lead one to believe. Inside were keys!

It all started with the venerable Bencher BY-1. When I was first licensed I managed to find one cheaply and used it for several months as I got my speed up, and then I became enamored with the Begali Simplex, thus began the quest.

I don't really believe a fancy key will make me a better operator, what attracts me to all of the keys I've gotten so far (and those I'll acquire!) are the craftsmanship and "soul" of them. The fact that somebody takes immense amounts of time to create and craft such an object for such a small market is really quite amazing. The side bonus that some of them are extremely pleasant to operate with makes it better!

I thought I'd give a bit of a review of the 6 paddles I've currently got and add some photos to take up some space.

The BY-1 is a decent key, in fact, everyone that has one seems to love it. Many guys told me it was good enough, one (KØCF) had his for quite some time and uses it every day. I didn't like mine a whole lot. I don't come from a SK or Bug background, and my fist is quite light, yet I still found the flex in the arms and finger pieces of the Bencher a bit annoying when squeeze keying. The adjustment doesn't go quite as fine as I'd like as I like my contacts to be about as close as you can get them without expansion/contraction causing them to self actuate!

This led me to my Begali Simplex. See photo at right.

If one looks at the cost of a brand new Bencher and a Begali Simplex, there is about \$40.00 difference. I think the Simplex is just about the best bargain there is for keys. It's still almost my favorite key, despite being nearly the least expensive (I got mine at Dayton from I2RTF on my first trip). I think it was around 180.00. That's a lot of money for a switch.



It's a mighty fine switch. It's heavy and doesn't move around a whole lot. The arms and finger pieces are aluminum and don't flex at all. The resistance is via springs, like a bencher. The adjustment is very fine, and I can get the contact spacing to be about as close as I like. It's also a beautiful key. I like it quite a lot. This key is just a great value. It doesn't walk on my desk, and, I've got both long and short finger pieces for it. With the longer ones, a guy may be able to make it move, but, it stays put pretty well.

I began to peruse Piero's other offerings. The Signature does away with springs and goes to magnetic tensioning, as do all the keys above it in his line up. I was considering one after KØCF borrowed my Simplex for a week and then declared he was shelving his Bencher in favor of one. He let me touch it at an ICARC meeting and it seemed nice and smooth, in addition to being beautiful.



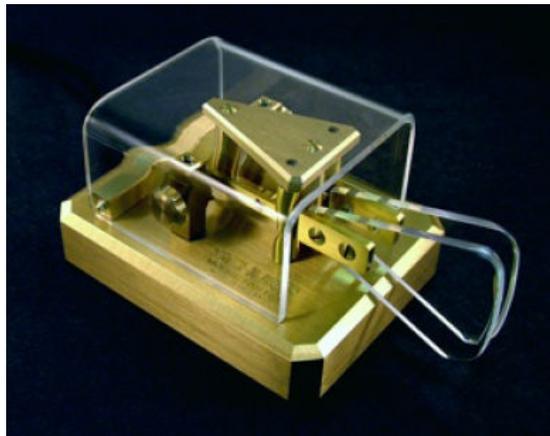
Randomly I came across a Begali Graciella, which is a vertical key. See photo at left. The arms pivot on a very short arc as they're oriented vertically, and the adjustments are many.

The height of the key can be adjusted up or down to suit. The width between finger pieces can be adjusted as well as the normal contact spacing, and tension. This is the key I use the most. It's magnetic tension is really very smooth to adjust. I can adjust the contact gap

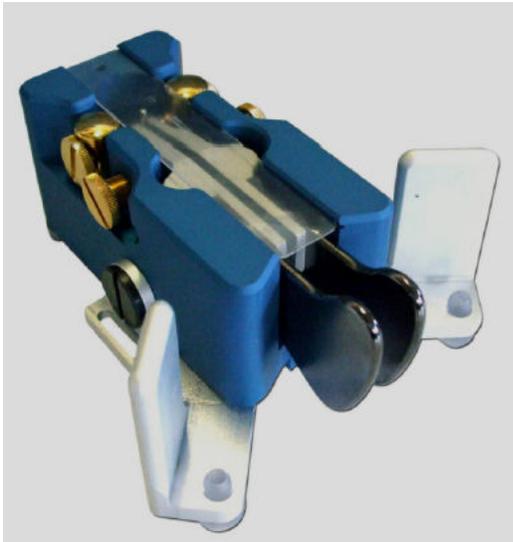
to angstroms and I suppose if I were more capable I could send at 70wpm without error.

The upright nature and squat/heavy base mean that this key would probably be ideal for somebody with a heavy fist. Your leverage on the key/body is so slight that I think you'd have a really hard time making the key move around the desk, even if it were covered in Teflon. I believe I gave around 250 for it, as it's got another hams call engraved in it. I believe I could purchase a new main-body from Begali and replace the engraved part quite easily. I had inquired about switching the base with the wide footprint version and Piero's daughter, Bruna, was going to stick it in with their Dayton stuff so I could pick it up there and avoid the costs of shipping a solid block of steel across the ocean.

Still keeping my eyes peeled for interesting keys, I came across a used Schurr Profi II. See photo at right. Gerhard Schurr is a (now retired) German machinist who built each of these keys by hand. They aren't overly expensive, even brand new. I'd always wanted to try one and a good deal came up on a list somewhere.



There isn't anything bad to say about this key (I haven't sold it). It's got that distinctive DL utilitarian look, but, still looks very nice on the desk. It's probably the smoothest spring tensioned key I've used, and, the contact spacing can be run down quite a ways. Once again with a heavy fist, I think you'd be hard pressed to dance this one across a desk as well. It's got a low squat base that keeps it where you put it. The only oddity is that the width between the finger pieces is narrower than my other keys (but, I have the Graciella adjusted to the same width because I found it more comfortable). I probably use this key 2nd to the Graciella.



In 2008, I couldn't resist the wiles of Bruna Begali and came home with another expensive switch: A Begali Traveler (photo at left).

This little key is for that big DXpedition I'm going to go on, sometime, or something. It's a clever little key that has 2 wings that fold over to protect the finger pieces. You end up with a solid little rectangle that weighs a bit more than 1lb. It'd take a lot to damage it if you were traveling with it. I don't have to worry about mangling one of my other paddles when I travel places.

It's a bit lighter, and that takes some getting used to. On a poor surface (concrete picnic table, uneven wood picnic table, etc) it'll move around. The action, however, might be the best of all of the paddles. It's magnetic tensioned, can handle very fine contact spacing, and, the lever action is very short. It is also a great (but expensive) key.

My latest acquisition is from the estate of WØJP; a key built by Ivan Hand, WBØDGC, and designed by Dave, WØSS. It has a built in CMOS II keyer, and, is really mechanically clever inside.



I haven't had a chance to use it very much, but, it's easily the heaviest with its huge brass base, you'd need an elephant to shove it around the desk. See photo at right. The action on it is very comfortable, and, it's not too difficult to adjust to a fine tension. I need to open it up and lube and clean it, I think. I believe it was made some time ago, as was the design. It's got very short distance between the arm and the pivot (not long and flimsy like the Bencher and others). The contacts are at right angles to the paddle arms and the adjustment is right on the front of the box. It feels really solid when you use it. I think it's inner design is most like the Mercury Paddles (now marketed by Bencher, and reviewed in March 09 QST). I think it goes to show that good design is good design and it's timeless. I wish there were more examples of it out there.

What's next?

If I win the lottery, a Chevron Morse Key. These are custom paddles made by MØAGA and G4HCD. They get great reviews, even tho there are only around 50 or so in existence. I suspect if you spend 600 on a key, you'll never admit that it was a poor purchase (<http://www.chevronmorsekeys.co.uk/>).

I'd like to get one of the GHD Optical Paddles made by JA7GHD. These seem kind of nifty, but, I really wonder if I need yet another thing that needs power and cabling in the shack. Check *Youtube* for GHDKKey; they have some videos of their keys.

There are a couple of Mercury paddle makers besides Bencher; one is Long Island Mercury by Rich, KG2ED. I talked to Rich for quite a while at Dayton a couple of years ago. His keys are absolutely beautiful. He doesn't make many, but, he's an interesting guy to talk to, and the keys seem very nice in my limited use.

I'm sure somebody else will make a key I must have.

I'm certain the phone guys are amazed at the prices of the keys; I figure guys will spend a few hundred on a nice mic/headset; what's so wrong with spending a bit on a key!

## **WØDXCC 2009 – Glen Kesselring KØJGH • Photos by Stan Cram AIØM**

The WØDXCC convention was held in Rochester, MN again this year. They have hosted this again with great success.



This year there were double back-to-back sessions that allowed plenty of variety to your interests. Just look at this list of speakers:

John Devoldere, ON4UN Author of *Low Band Dxing* - (John was unable to make the trip but did an amazing Skype big-screen presentation that also allowed us to see John's rig in his QTH.);

Dean Straw, N6BV, Author of ARRL's *Antenna Book*;

Rob Sherwood, NCØB, HF receiver expert;

Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, propagation and sunspot expert;

Ward Silver, NØAX. Contester, Humorist, Author of *Ham Radio for Dummies*, and numerous ARRL's online courses;

Al Dewey, KØAD, *National Contest Journal* Editor and past MWA President;



Glenn Johnson, WØGJ, Co-Leader of this year's Desecho DXpedition (photo above);

Ralph Fedor, KØIR, Noted DXer and Desecho DXpedition member; and

Art and Marsha Clark, N4PJ & N4BU, a DXing couple.



My XYL Pam NØICF and I made the trip to Rochester the day before the convention to spend some time with my son Grant K1KD and family. Grant and I went over early to help with registration and antenna installation. In the photo, Grant crosses his fingers hoping his ticket will be drawn for the big prize. It didn't help.

Several from EIDX were there, including WB8ZRL, NYØV, AKØM and NAØIA.

73, Glen KØJGH

## ***Iowa QSO Party – CQ From the Tall Corn State***



The Ottumwa Amateur Radio Club got serious when the American Radio Relay League declared 2009 the “Year of the QSO Party.” Ottumwa hams drafted rules and started promoting the Iowa QSO Party, to be held Saturday, October 17 from 1400-2300 UTC (9 a.m. to 6 p.m. local time).

Contact as many stations as possible running no more than 125 Watts output power. Iowa stations send RST and County; stations outside Iowa send RST, State/Province or DX County. All voice modes, including digital voice (digital voice in voice sub-bands only), CW and digital modes may be used. Contacts may be made on any amateur band except 60 meters and the WARC bands.

Scoring is straightforward, but not the contest standard. Each complete, non-duplicate phone is worth one point. Each complete, non-duplicate CW or Digital contact is worth two points. Duplicate contacts are worth zero. A station may be worked once per mode. What this means is that one CW or digital and one phone contact with the same station during the QSO Party. Working the same station on the same mode on a different band is a duplicate contact. Therefore, participants may make just one contact per mode per county with any given station. Mobiles may be worked once per mode per county.

The multipliers get interesting. For in state participants, one multiplier for each Iowa county worked, one multiplier for each state (including Iowa) or Canadian province worked (NF, LB, NB, NS, PEI, QC, ON, MB, SK, AB, BC, NWT, YT, NU), and one multiplier for each of the current or past Iowa Section Manager residing in Iowa (SM1, SM2, or SM3). Participants outside Iowa, get one multiplier for each



Iowa county worked and one multiplier for each of the current or past Iowa Section Managers (SM1, SM2, or SM3) worked. Note that DX stations do not have any multiplier credit, but may be worked for QSO points.

*Earn 100 bonus points by contacting WAØDX, call sign of the Ottumwa Amateur Radio Club, which sponsors the 2009 Iowa QSO Party.*

There's more. Review the complete Iowa QSO Party rules before October 17 by visiting the Ottumwa Amateur Radio Club web site at [www.wa0dx.org/iaqsoparty.html](http://www.wa0dx.org/iaqsoparty.html). Be sure to check the web site for updates before you start operating, and have fun!

## ***DXCC Card Checking Is As Close as EIDXA***

EIDXA members can get their DX QSL cards checked for DXCC credit from the following club members:

- ARRL Midwest Division Vice Director, and EIDXA member, Cliff Ahrens KØCA attends EIDXA meetings as his schedule permits. You may also send your cards to him by surface mail. Contact Cliff via e-mail for more information and/or to make arrangements to check your cards: [cahrens@mywdo.com](mailto:cahrens@mywdo.com).
- EIDXA member Tom Vavra WB8ZRL. Please note that Tom is unable to check cards from deleted entities or cards for 160 meters. Contact Tom via e-mail for more information and/or to make arrangements to check your cards: [wb8zrl@arrrl.net](mailto:wb8zrl@arrrl.net).
- EIDXA member Mike Nowack NA9Q. Mike attends EIDXA meetings as his schedule permits. Contact Mike via e-mail for more information and/or to make arrangements to check your cards: [na9q@arrrl.net](mailto:na9q@arrrl.net).

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## ***Don't Forget – EIDXA Picnic Saturday, Sept. 12***

The picnic will be held at WØAWL's QTH. The gathering will commence anytime after 3:00 p.m. and the brats will start to fry around 5:00 p.m. See you there!



## 2009 EIDXA Meeting & Events Schedule

Look for this information on the club web-page [www.eidxa.org](http://www.eidxa.org). Meeting information on the web site is up to date to ensure everyone has timely access to the information between newsletters.

### Next Event

EIDXA picnic – Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup> at the WØAWL QTH starting at 3:00 p.m.



**EIDXA 1975-2010 • 35<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary**

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One EIDXA member's solution to RFI on coax getting back into the shack. This choke, made from about 26 turns of RG-213 on a piece of non-metallic PVC pipe (first coated with non-metallic black paint), was installed at the feed point of a multi-band inverted L for the low bands.

