

From the Editor

Bob, K9RHY



George R. (Dick) McKercher, W0MLY became a Silent Key on 31 May 1999 as a "Top DXers", with 380 DXCC-Entities confirmed. First licensed 1930 as W4DVL, Dick DXpeditioned extensively during the 1950's and 60's mostly but not exclusively in Africa. Dick was a member of YASME's Board of Directors and an ARRL Life Member.

I first met Dick at a W9DXCC convention in Schaumburg, IL in 1984. Living in Rippey, Iowa and owning an active ham-oriented business (Antenna Mart, specializing in remote antenna switches) attending a local DX conference was a "no-brainer" for Dick. My most intense memory came from the annual DX countdown conducted by Jim C'Connell, W9WU. I suspect you know the drill: Everyone holding a DXCC certificate stands up and the MC starts counting up from 100 (usually in increments of 50—dropping to increments of 10 and finally to one until there is only one DXer left standing. My recollection was that Dick and Joe Schroeder, W9JUV, (who became a Silent Key in 2013 with 394 confirmed entities) were always the last standing.

In the early years I had to sit down pretty early in the countdown, but in more recent times, I continued standing for a bit longer, but not even close to these Giants of DXing.



(Although this wasn't intended to be a nostalgia piece, researching through CQ and QST editions from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's sure brings back a lot of fond memories. I suspect some of you OT's can relate to that.)

One piece of good news, the history of DXing is rich with stories about DXers past on whose shoulders we now stand. There is no shortage of material from which your SDDXC editor can draw upon for future editions of the Bulletin.

One more tidbit about the history of DXing, pictured above is a photo snapped by your Editor at an impromptu meeting of YASME officials W0MLY with Lloyd, W6KG and Iris Colvin, W6QL, posing in front of a list of the Colvin's many DXpeditions. I believe I took this picture at the W9DXCC convention in 1985.

From the Editor (cont'd)

Now to Africa.

Before leaving on his African tour of the "Terrible T's", Dick had operated from 97 DXCC entities, making him an old hand at pounding brass from remote locations. The "Terrible T's" were part of the African Federated States which included Gabon, Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad.

The trip starts in April, 1962 as Dick travels to Gabon to operate as W0MLY/TR8. Reading his travel notes in the ham literature of the day describes international travel as a lot different back then. Dick's challenges were mainly logistical (and mostly of his own doing): travelling without confirmed accommodations, equipment that never arrived, being stranded at airports, not carrying enough cash (credit cards were pretty scarce then), etc.

The Gabon operation was closed down at 0700Z (still called GMT in 1962), June 6th after 2700 QSOs. The gear was then packed and shipped to Bangui in the Central African Republic, (TL8-land), where it arrived on a Sunday—a day on which the Customs office takes off. But at least Dick had a hotel room, unlike in Gabon where he slept in an apartment that was leased to an American embassy employee who was away on leave.

En route to the Central African Republic, and with TN8 operating permission secured, W0MLY entered the Republic of the Congo and made 46 contacts as W0MLY/TN8 from the QTH of TN8AY.

Operation as W0MLY/TL8 then started on June 13th at 1815 GMT. Dick made 2,340 QSO's.

Dick next operated from the Republic of the Congo as W0MLY/TN8. This gets confusing, but the Republic of the Congo today is often called Congo (Brazzaville), with its capital added parenthetically, to distinguish it from the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is often referred to by its acronym, the DRC, or called Congo (Kinshasa). Are we there yet?



Map of Africa in 1962 with W0MLY DXpedition Stops

From the Editor (cont'd)

After wrapping up the short operation from TN8, Dick flew to his next stop in Bangui, Gabon. Operation from W0MLY/TL8 started on June 13th at 1815 GMT. Operating from the Hotel Rock, Dick was asked to relocate from the ground floor to the top floor at 2:30 AM local time because he was disturbing other guests in the hotel.

Wrapping up after making 2340 QSOs, Dick set out for a bus and truck ride through the African countryside to the village of Bayanga in the Republic of the Congo for a longer operation. Here he set up his station in a mud hut after arriving at 3:30 AM local time. Before Dick's arrival, there had been no SSB operation from TN8 so Dick provided a new mode QSO to many of the Deserving of the day. He fired up the rig and made the first QSO at 1810 GMT on June 18. His departure was delayed by 24 hours because of a rain storm that made the rivers rise making road travel impossible. A total of 1140 SSB contacts were made from TN8.

The next stop was in Chad, where Dick operated as W0MLY/TT8 from the Hotel Chasser in Fort Archambault. Fort Archambault is much smaller than the main city in Chad, Fort Lamay, but this location was chosen because the prices were about one-half of what they were in Fort Lamay. This leg of the trip did not start off well (remember my comments about logistics?) because there was no transportation available from the airport to the hotel. Dick improvised and hired six locals (at \$2.00 per day each) to carry his six boxes of equipment and luggage to the town and the hotel.

Operation from W0MLY/TT8 commenced on June 22 at 1630 GMT. A few hours later the lights went out (welcome to the 3rd world, Dick). The reason for the outage was that the hotel management turned off the generator at 10:00 PM local time because they did not want to pay the attendant/operator to keep it running after 10:00. Quick-thinking Dick decided to pick up the tab to keep the generator operating 24 hours per day for the remainder of his stay. This set him back \$5.20 per day.

The TT8 operation came to a close after 1781 QSOs at 0552 GMT on June 27th.

Next on the agenda was travel to Duala in the Cameroons and operation as W0MLY/TJ8. Arriving on June 28, Dick started operating on June 29th and wrapped up with 2028 QSOs on July 5th. Because the hotel manager had "discovered" the equipment in Dick's hotel room, a surcharge of \$2.00 per day was added on to cover the cost of the extra electricity usage.

Next onto the La Plage Hotel in Contineau in the Republic of Dahomey and operation as TY2MY. The operation started on July 9th and closed down a week later after making 1674 QSOs. Conditions were not good.

The trip to Togo and operation as 5V7MY followed. Arriving in Lome, Dick checked into the Hotel Benim, a "luxury" location (which meant a swimming pool and air conditioning). Conditions continued to be poor, so only 1646 QSOs were logged.

The last stop on the DXpedition was in Mali and operation as W0MLY/TZ2. The operation from Mali started on July 24 but ended VERY abruptly on the 27th. The hotel caught fire, abruptly curtailing the

From the Editor (cont'd)

operation. All the gear was lost as well as some cash and papers. Dick saved the logs (on paper back then). His passport was at the American Embassy and his ticket home was at the Air France office, so he ended up travelling a lot lighter than when he arrived.

Clearly, a one-person DXpedition in 1962 was an adventure. But Dick persevered to provide a "New One" to many of the Deserving of the day. It's hard to imagine schlepping a Hallicrafters HT-37, SX-115 and a P&H linear all over central Africa. Operating from these "hardship" locations took a lot of courage and tenacity. Also, travel in that part of the world (even today in 2016) is a recipe for disaster if you accidentally eat or drink some of the local chow. (I can verify that just brushing your teeth in Africa can lead to an experience you would rather forget).

Thanks and 73 to a REAL DXer.

Bob, K9RHY

March Meeting Speaker

Ascension Island - South Atlantic Outpost

We've all worked Ascension Island, ZD8, but what does the place actually LOOK like? Definitely you wouldn't go there for the cuisine or nightlife, but there are other attractions. And the island is changing slowly with the creation of Green Mountain National Park and renewed emphasis on conservation and the planned formation of a marine sanctuary.

March speaker, Art Goddard, W6XD/ZD8G, will take you along on a 2015 CQWW contest expedition to Ascension Island. Tune into this program to get a feel for the place that has been pioneered by contesting greats like Jim, N6TJ/ZD8Z, Oliver, W6NV/ZD8W, and Marko, N5ZO/ZD8O

Biography: Art Goddard W6XD

Art Goddard became interested in Short Wave Listening in 1954, using the family's Philco console radio. In 1956, he earned his novice Amateur Radio license. He worked his way up through the ranks to Amateur Extra class. Art's radio activities include HF/VHF, DX, and contests.

Art is a life member of ARRL and Past Director of ARRL Southwestern Division. Professionally, he is a consultant in electronics systems, retired from Boeing (formerly Collins Radio and Rockwell International). Art and his wife Mary Ellen live in Costa Mesa, CA.

