

With Don Miller VQ8CBR at Rodrigues, 1967

by Larry Page, ex- WB2DHF, VQ8CH, VQ8CHR

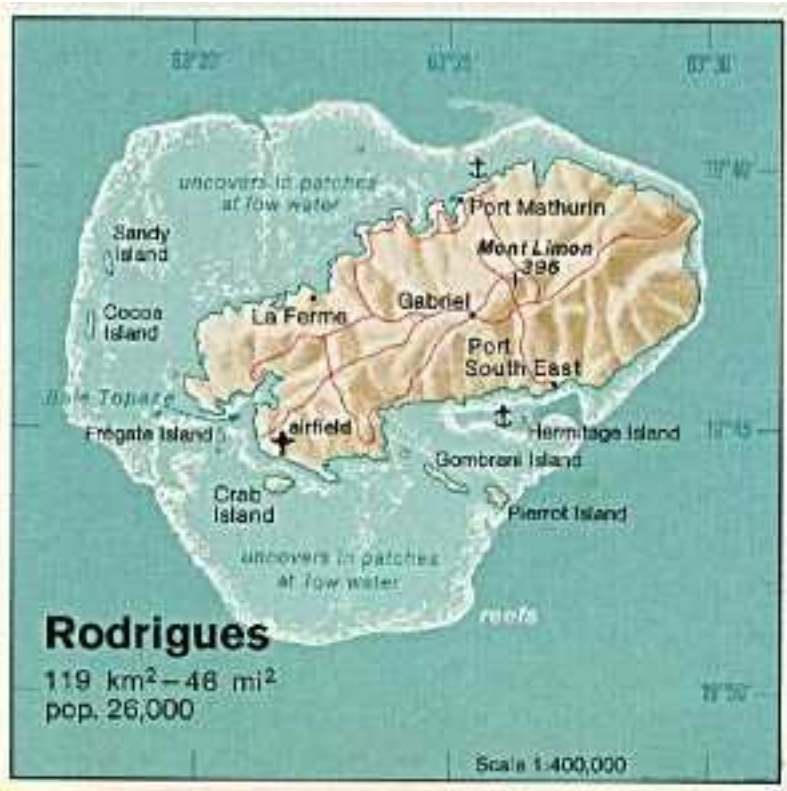
This account began [With Don Miller VQ8CBB at St Brandon, 1967](#)

On arrival back in Port Louis, Mauritius, from the St Brandon trip the *Edward Bear* took up its previous berth in Taylor Smith's dock used by two famous round-the-world yachtsmen. Firstly, in September 1897, Captain Joshua Slocum aboard *Spray* had received assistance during the first-ever solo round-the-world voyage. Secondly, and just before our return, 18-year-old Robin Lee Graham had arrived in the 24ft sloop *Dove* under jury rig following dismasting 18 hours after leaving Cocos-Keeling. He had cut the broken mast free, rigged the boom as a mast, and sailed 2300 miles to Mauritius on one of the all-time great yachting passages. He was going to need help from his National Geographic sponsor, and communications back home from friendly hams in Mauritius and California.



Meanwhile, Don Miller could not be sure of achieving his objective of reaching Rodrigues before the German operator on the catamaran *World Cat*, due from the direction of Australia. However, Don's politicking with the local authorities made sure that no amateur licence would be waiting when *World Cat* reached Rodrigues.

We knew that *Edward Bear* wouldn't be able to beat against the trades to carry the DXpedition to Rodrigues. Fortunately, the supply ship m/v *Mauritius* would soon be due to make one of its regular trips to the island, so the DXpedition reserved berths for myself and Don. Steve, VQ8CC, came along to help with operation and Lee Graham (whose mast wouldn't arrive for a couple of weeks) got himself aboard also.



The extensive reef at Rodrigues meant that the ship anchored well off Port Mathurin, and our gear was lightered off to form a big pile on the dockside. As well as the DXpedition's Collins S-lines and KWM-2, Steve brought along his Drake R-4A & T-4X. Our DXpedition was now travelling in considerable style, for we were to be accommodated in the bachelor quarter at the Cable & Wireless Mount Venus station. This was a wonderful early 1900s prefabricated cast-iron structure built in Britain for the days of the Raj. Each of us had our own room, and we dined with crockery and cutlery embossed with the C&W crest cooked by mess servants.

We set up the station on a cool balcony. Antennas were no problem, for C&W had thoughtfully made available lattice towers all ready for the TH-3 and our dipoles. The antennas had a really good take-off over the harbor to the Northwest. Because we had brought along a drum of extra diesel fuel, C&W generators were able to run all night. However, we were constrained for time as the ship would remain in port for only a few days.

Operation soon got underway, using callsigns VQ8CBR on 80, 40 & 15M; VQ8CCR on 160 & 20M; and VQ8CHR on 10M. Highlight of the operation was a 160M QSO with W2RAA; unfortunately our 160M sked with W1BB was not successful.

Don worked nonstop into the night from the first day. While he was on the beam, Steve would be on the dipole. As I was the least experienced DXer, I was relegated to 10M or the less open times. Don had rules about not contacting certain individuals which dated back to past differences. When I was using Don's VQ8CBR call I was supposed to remember the offending call signs and to just pick someone else when they tailended in. It was very intoxicating to have a pile up trying to contact me and in my enthusiasm I would forget the list. As the forbidden call sign was tuned in, Don who by then had dropped into sleep on a bed a few steps away would suddenly awaken and leap at the rig killing the QSO. Even in his sleep his unconscious remained in control.

When the bands closed we toured the island with a Jesuit priest who had his own rock band and an inspirational British agriculture officer who was attempting to re-establish self sustaining food supplies. The majority of the people were Creoles, the descendents of slaves freed when Britain took the Mascarene Islands from France. Rodrigues had been a British base for the assault on Mauritius in the Napoleonic wars. The slaves of that time adopted many British characteristics which continued down to the present day. Interesting to me was the straw hats they wore which were copies of early 19th century sailor caps. Also too their boats were copies of extinct Royal Navy long boats.

All too soon the ship sounded her warning horn, as we packed up the gear. Lee Graham rejoined us after making many new friends and we finished the only leg of the 1967 DXpedition that could be called posh. Back in Mauritius I rejoined the *Edward Bear* and a life of fish curries resumed as Don plotted further DXpeditions. We re-stepped the new mast on the *Dove* and Lee continued his circumnavigation into very considerable fame. Don brought us charts and talked of Heard Island, Nelson's Island, Iles Glorieuses, and some reefs he wanted to operate from. It appeared that that we would be exploring the far corners of the Indian Ocean. We prepared the boat for another voyage, but that is a further story.

(Written May 1998)

References:

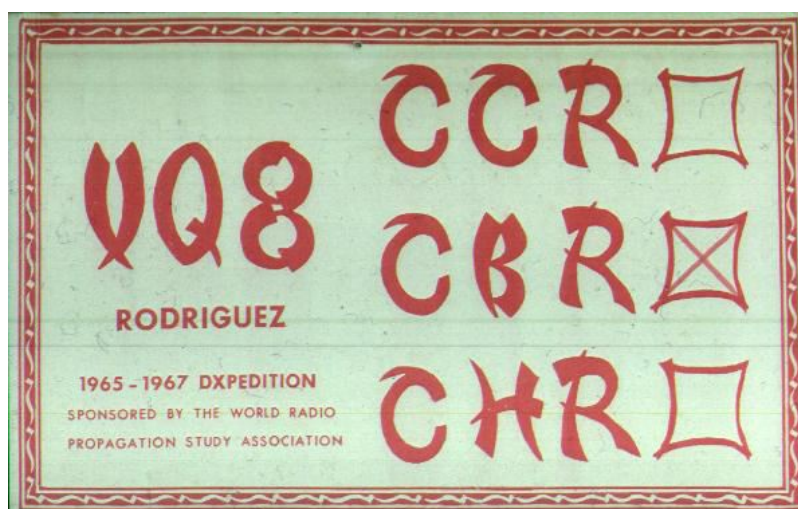
Slocum, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, Chapter 17

Graham, A Teen-ager Sails the World Alone, *National Geographic Magazine*, October 1968

Graham, *Dove*

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Return to K2CD's [Look back at Don Miller W9WNV](#)



VQ8: CCR **1965-1967 DXpedition** **Rodriguez**

CBR **OPERATORS:** STEVE GIBBS - VQ8CC
DON MILLER - VQ8CB LARRY PAGE - VQ8CH

CHR

Equipment: **Galaxy** Mark V Line, Drake, Collins, Heathkit
Waters Codax Keyer & Accessories
HyGain Antennas
Electro-Voice Microphones

Call	Date	GMT	MCS	Mode	R(S)T
K6EID	9-12-67	0415	21	SSB	5-9

QSL: VQ8CCR Via VQ8CC *Roy*
VQ8CBR VIA KØTCF VQ8CHR Via KØTCF

(Images fetched from the [W7HR QSL Gallery](#))