

# **K1N Interview for MDXC by W0GJ**

February 23rd, 2015 written by IZ8CCW

## **1- The 1st question is “mandatory” Dott. Glenn: it has been 25 years from the last activity in KP1. This made of Navassa the Most Wanted #1. How did you feel being part of the team?**

We have been working on getting permission to operate from Navassa (and Desecheo) since 1998. It has been a very long and difficult road working to get permission from the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service who has jurisdiction over these entities. We had two Congressional hearings in Washington, D. C. , and several presentations and several appeal hearings (like a court hearing) at various high level USFWS offices. In 2009 we were granted permission for Desecheo (K5D) and we thought that Navassa would follow within 18-24 months. However, several key individuals retired and several were re-assigned to other posts and Navassa never happened. We literally had to start completely over with presentations and hearings. A small team of us (the KP1-5 Project) have spent untold thousands of hours working on this project. Consequently, the pressure to perform and make Navassa a successful operation was enormous. We carefully selected a team that were not only good operators, but experienced in logistics and other needed skills. During the entire preparatory time and during the operation there was not one instance of conflict or personality problems. We were focused to work together as a team and to be as efficient as possible.

## **2- Wich difficultier did you find (logistics, transposts, setup...) befre launching the 1st CQ?**

The most difficult thing was to find transportation. We found a nice ship with a helicopter but the cost was astronomical. We were very fortunate to find the Helidosa Helicopter Company in the Dominican Republic who operates all over the Caribbean as the most experienced with an impeccable safety record. They had a large Bell 212 which could carry 1000+ kg of cargo when fully loaded with fuel. (However, because of the extra fuel tanks needed for a round trip, the cargo was limited to 700 kg. Because of this limitation and the almost \$10,000 cost of a round trip to/from Jamaica, we came up with an MVC (minimally viable configuration) plan. This would get the team, infrastructure, food, water, radios and antennas in place. We were required by USFWS to have a support vessel, but January-February are the worst months for rough seas. (As it turned out, our support vessel was only able to be on station about 60% of the time because of high seas). We had basically only one day when we could off-load some extra supplies from the vessel. We could not bring any cooking or kitchen equipment, so we relied on MRE (the military meals-ready-to-eat) rations and water. Water cost about \$50/gallon (11 Euro/liter) delivered!!! USFWS would not let us go at any other time of the year because the January-February time has the least bird nesting. We had seven flights to the island and only four flights returning, as a lot of the initial weight was food, water and gasoline. (The helicopter also had about 10 hours of total ferry time between their base in the DR and Jamaica. )

## **3- European stations complained a lot for the short time you applied during the best openings towards Europe. It has been your strategy or what?**

QUITE THE CONTRARY!!!!!! This is a MOST interesting point of discussion! If you look at our logs, we spent MORE time working Europe than working North America. Our ClubLog statistics however show that North America had 58% of the contacts, Europe 32% and Asia 6%. WHY, then, if MORE time was spent working EU, was EU about half the number of NA contacts? Simple answer: RATE. Period. When you listened to us working

NA, we could cruise right along at 300-350 Q's/hour. When working EU, we would be extremely lucky to see rates of 125 Q's/hour. EU signals are as strong, if not stronger than NA signals, in the Caribbean. The west coast U. S. is much harder to work than EU. Here is a quote I received after I returned home. It is from a well-known DXer in Europe: "I listened to XXX working US pile-up on 80m. Fantastic, at least 10 QSO's minute and when he turned to listen for Europe, the rate was only 10 % of that. Same on the other bands and modes." The problem is THROUGHPUT. Rate. Efficiency. Cooperation. Whatever you want to call it. For the time we spent working Europe, we should have MORE contacts than with North America, but that did not happen. I COULD have happened! No one more than me would like to have seen the EU Q's outnumber NA Q's. For the "next one" I have some helpful suggestions to help those in EU to be more successful. Here is what I see are the issues:

1. Not listening to the DX operator
2. LISTEN to and LEARN the rate and rhythm of the operator
3. LISTEN to WHERE the operator is listening and his PATTERN of moving his VFO, know where he will listen next!
4. Learn to use your radio (split/simplex, etc)
5. Do NOT jump to and call on the frequency of the last station worked. The DX station will NOT hear you because the din is total unintelligible chaos. Move UP or DOWN from that frequency, as we on our end were continuously tuning up or down after each Q, so if one jumps onto the last-worked frequency, we will not hear you, even if you were the only one there, as we have tuned off.
6. TURN OFF ALL SPEECH PROCESSORS AND COMPRESSION! Do NOT overdrive ALC. There is a night and day difference in listening to NA/AS and EU pileups. The horrible distortion makes it impossible to copy many, if not most EU callsigns. There were MANY loud stations that we did not work, simply because we could NOT understand their terribly distorted callsign. Have you ever listened to yourself in a pileup? We gave many stations a "19" signal report. Very loud, but extremely unintelligible! You want to have INTELLIGABILITY, not distortion!
7. Give your callsign ONCE and ONLY ONCE! DO NOT KEEP CALLING! We would tune on by those who did not stop calling. We are looking for RATE and getting stations into the log. You should be, too!!!
8. If the DX station comes back with your callsign, DO NOT REPEAT YOUR CALLSIGN, AS WE ALREADY KNOW IT or we would not have answered you. Many stations (in all modes) would repeat their callsign two, three and even four times! We only want to hear "5NN" or "59" from you. Anything else is a total waste of time and CHEATS others out of a chance to get into the log. Only repeat your callsign if it needs correction, and then let us know it is a correction. Anything else is cheating others out of a contact, as our propagation windows and time on the island are limited and we need to maximize the opportunity for everyone. SPEED.
9. Take some time to listen to the next DXpedition working NA and listen to the rate and rhythm of the operator. It is fast, quick and efficient, and more people get into the log! Then listen to him work EU. The wise operator will catch on quickly to what it takes to get into the log!
10. SPREAD OUT! Our highest rates (for any continent) were working the edges of the pileup where there was less QRM and weak stations were much easier to work than loud stations in the middle of the pileup. If we say, "Listening 200 – 210," 70% of the pileup sits exactly on 200 in an unintelligible din, 25% of the pileup sits on 210 and is almost as bad. 5% of the pileup will be spread out somewhere between 201 and 209, making them very quickly put into the log. S P R E A D O U T ! ! ! !

11. LOUD is NOT better! MORE AUDIO/COMPRESSION is NOT better! Finding the spot to be HEARD is the MOST important thing you can do to get into the log. My biggest thrill (and I'm sure on both ends) is finding the lone weak station and getting him into the log quickly.
12. LISTEN to the DX operator INSTRUCTIONS! As we would constantly tune our VFO, if we find a clear spot, we would often say, "33" (meaning for YOU to transmit on 14033, 28433, etc) and a few would listen and get into the log very quickly. You cannot hear these hints if you keep calling calling calling calling..... Many times I would say, "listening 200-210" and after a while would say, "listening 240-250". Often 30-45 minutes, even and HOUR later, I would find MANY still calling on the original "200-210".... of course, they would never show up in our log, as I was not listening there. LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN and LISTEN SOME MORE. The less you transmit, the better chance you have of getting into the log.
13. LISTEN
14. If you don't want to get into the DX log, just ignore the above suggestions.

**4- We have seen in the photos published on your site that before mounting verticals and directionals antennas, you worked with dipoles. How did so simple antennas work with the pile-up?**

What is simple and what is EFFECTIVE? A high dipole is far more effective than a low beam (of any size). A dipole is 2.1 (or so) dBi over a vertical and can be up to +15 dBi at height. We had a full-size 160M sloper at 53M high aimed at EU. We had a full-size 80M dipole at 50M high broadside to EU. We had a 40M dipole at 35M and other dipoles at that height or higher for all bands, almost all broadside to EU. We found these as effective (or better) as the 2-el SteppIR's at 6M high. We had no verticals. At least for the low bands, we had better antennas than 99% of our audience! Beverages reduced our ambient noise from about S9 to S2, making for very workable conditions.

**5- How did you find the location during your activity (temperature, easy-to-visit, dirty...)?**

With rare exception, it was typically very hot. Some days were quite humid, others were quite tolerable. There was always a very strong breeze, sometimes uncomfortably strong. The recon photos provided by the U. S. Coast Guard showed what looked like nice smooth grassy areas to set up tents/camp. This could not have been further from the truth. The ground is extremely uneven and it would have been impossible to set up any op tent in "the grass." Jerry, WB9Z, and myself spent hours cleaning out the light house and acetylene house to use as op sites. It was very hot and VERY dirty work. No matter how hard we both tried to clean up, we never ever felt "clean" until we were able to take a real shower back in Jamaica over two weeks later! Water was so expensive, we could only sponge bathe on the island.

**6- USFWS men, there to control your activity, have been satisfied ?**

What a great crew from USFWS!!!! Half of them were biologists studying the island and half were law enforcement, with the duty to protect us and the biologists from any threats. They were extremely helpful in all respects. Most of us had worked with the same individuals while on Desecheo, so we were with "old friends."

**7- Glenn, tell our readers an episode you'll never forget about this magnificent adventure ?**

Our windows to Asia/Oceania were always short and signals weak, twice a day. We struggled to work these areas and made many happy in AS/OC! The very last 15 hours of the

DXpedition, Jerry, WB9Z, Craig, K9CT, and myself were left behind. During that time we had the most incredible opening into AS/OC of the entire DXpedition. The three of us put nearly 9000 more Q's into the log, the majority of which were AS/OC. This raised our percent of AS worked by about one percent! Several times when working EU, I would try to mix in a little NA and announce "give your callsign only once" and found the rates to EU could almost equal that of NA alone. That was rewarding on both ends! Most of us experienced a "strange" phenomenon. Usually in a pileup you might hear a weak "Lima Papa". I say, "Lima Papa, 59." The pileup dies down and "IZ7FLP" is LOUD! This time, most of us noted several times a loud signal and upon answering it, the replying signal was very weak. Sometimes we worked loud stations on 10M when it was midnight at that QTH. Sometimes we worked loud stations on 80M, when it would be noon at that QTH. REMOTE OPERATIONS!!! Either they were used to get our attention and then to "really" work them from home, or totally illegal and worked us completely through the remote station. This is going to be an increasing dilemma to deal with the awards. We log what we hear. The most difficult part of the adventure was turning off the radio at sunrise on the last day. The pileups were still huge. I was not ready to leave.... but please don't tell that to my wife! Hi hi ! This was by far the most enjoyable DXpedition I've ever participated in. Again, some is because I've worked so many years for this opportunity. Our team was fantastic to be with!

#### **8- Now K1N is a legend ... now whose turn for P5 ?**

I think it will take a special team to get into P5! Things change in the world and someday, we might hear just another, ho-hum, P5 calling CQ without takers.

I would like to comment on DXpedition funding. Even though Navassa is in the "back yard" of North America, the extreme difficulty in access to the island requires a helicopter as the only predictable and safe way to access the island. The nature of the helicopter business requires money up front and complete payment before completion of a project. Also, the USFWS regulations now require anyone accessing refuges in the Caribbean and Pacific areas, to pay IN ADVANCE, the costs of accompanying personnel and their transportation. In this case, these total costs UP FRONT were in excess of \$300,000 before we left our homes! This does not include any DXpedition equipment or infrastructure. Each team member contributed even more to meet these expenses. We now have all of our "usual" DXpedition expenses to recover, so please be generous when QSLing by whatever means. To those who donated BEFORE the DXpedition started, your LOTW contacts have already been uploaded. These donors will also get the first of the QSL cards when they go out. This is our way of saying thanks for helping make this DXpedition possible. We did not advertise this. So next time a DXpedition needs support.... hint, hint.... if you want a quick QSL/LOTW, please help them out BEFORE they leave. There are several very expensive southern ocean and Pacific DXpeditions in the works for the next year who would all be grateful for your support. These DXpeditions have huge deposits and fees to pay up front before they even begin their journey or set foot on the ground.

73 and THANKS for your support and THANKS for working us at K1N, Navassa Island!!!  
Glenn W0GJ