

Happy Turkey Day

The North Florida DX Association

# PileUp

The NFDXA Newsletter



Volume I, Number 11

November 2009

<http://nfdxa.com/>

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## That Was The Two Weeks That Was...13-27 October VP5DX and the 2009 CQ SSB WW



It was the best of times...it was the worst of times. It was the 2009 NFDXA trip to the Middle Island QTH of N4KE in the Turks and Caicos to compete in the annual CQ SSB WW.

At the end, the traditional inscription on the now-empty bottle of Malibu White Coconut Rum shown on the left said it all: 8,893,776 points from 5311 contacts pretty much said it all. (See VP5DX Box Score below)

Although total Qs and initial points bettered the 2008 effort is it enough for a repeat North American Championship? Early returns posted on the 3830 Contesting Reflector show VE3EJ with the top multi-single score. However, only time and a CQ Contest Committee review of all logs submitted in the contest will tell. Stay tuned.

However, the story of the two weeks leading up to this annual NFDXA venture is still worth telling because each year is a new adventure. Among the unknowns this year for the seasoned VP5DX championship team of **Ron, N4KE; Jim, NU4Y; Steve, AB4UF and Mike, N4EPD** was the addition of contest 'rookie' **Warren, NW4C**.

But even the veterans had problems in the beginning. As the fates would have it bad weather prevented their landing in Charlotte in time to make the connecting flight to Provo. As a result they were stuck with an unplanned-for overnight stay and had to catch to catch their Provo flight the following day.

'Rookie' NW4C, meanwhile, had no weather problems with his Miami connection and arrived in Provo to find he had an extra day to explore the town. Just call it 'beginner's luck!

— See **VP5DX 2009 Page 2**

### VP5DX Box Score

Band	QSOs	Zones	Countries
160	266	13	51
80	507	19	79
40	733	33	119
20	1241	32	123
15	2378	33	136
10	186	16	34
-----			
Total	5311	146	542
	Total Score = 8,893,776		

### November Meeting

The November meeting of the North Florida DX Association will be 5 pm Saturday, November 7 at the St. Johns Seafood and Steaks Restaurant at 1161 Lane Avenue South in Jacksonville.

Officers will be elected for the year 2010 at this meeting. Forewarned: Be sure to have your avoidance strategy ready. :-)

Please RSVP by Thursday 11/5/2009 at <http://nfdxa.com/meeting>.



## VP5DX 2009—Continued



### GROCERIES AND OTHER STUFF . . .

Playtime didn't last long. As soon as the full team assembled the work began. A quick trip to Jodi's confirmed the team's VP5DX license and those of its operating team were in order. A short time was spent catching up on the news, collecting some 'bureau' VP5 QSLs from last year sent to Jodi (There is no bureau at VP5) and giving treats to her little dog who proved to be a master beggar.

After this courtesy call, the team was on its way its next stop, getting groceries for the two week stay.

Provisioning was done at a Provo version of Publix. With directions from **team captain N4KE** and **chef-designate NU4Y**, the shopping cart was quickly filled with necessities ranging from steaks and paper towels to Pringles and a Styrofoam cooler for the meat and butter.

Although there wasn't an exact food budget per se a close eye was kept on the total food bill because Provo prices ranged from two to three times what one would pay for the same item here in the states. Besides, the team had to be sure that enough was left in the kitty for beer!



Another side trip was made to a hardware store to replace a Bar-B-Q unit blown away from the VP5DX site by last year's twin hurricanes, Hanna and Ike.

Piling all the groceries, baggage, five men and a replacement radio into the van was a



challenge, but the team was up to it and they moved on to the ferry landing.

### JUST GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN . . .

To get to Middle one has to catch a ferry or charter a boat to North, transfer everything from the boat to a vehicle of some sort and then make your way through North on a good, paved road...then slow down and slowly wend your way around potholes and occasional washouts on what remains the hurricane-damaged causeway over to Middle.

Fortunately, the ferry crossing from Provo to North was uneventful. Much of the crossing is in the lee of Provo and several resort islands and the trade-wind driven chop was not a factor. Upon arriving at North the team was met by Mike, Ron's Middle Caicos next-door-neighbor with his large diesel pickup. Groceries and baggage filled the back of Mike's truck and everyone except Ron squeezed into the double cab. Ron chose to ride in the back with the baggage which at first seemed a reasonable choice considering the 90-degree-plus heat. But the sunshine shortly gave to a heavy, tropical rain shower soaking him to the skin. Also, the extremely bumpy ride across the severely pot-holed causeway couldn't have been fun either. Alas, leadership has its price. *(Continued next*

**Don't miss the  
NFDXA  
Weekly Net  
3625 MHz  
0000z**

**ANTENNAS, SKYHOOKS AND OTHER RADIATING DEVICES**



Set-up day morning began with a tropical sunrise that promised a good weather, some fried egg sandwiches, bacon and coffee for all who wanted and a Heineken for **Chef Jim**. Between making station repairs, equipment modifications and acting as chief cook for the nightly main meal **NU4Y** was a very BUSY man.

Another busy soul from the git-go was **AB4UF, Steve**, whose responsibility was setting up the contest station's computer network as well as establishing an Internet connection. Telephone service to Middle was down and had been down for several days prior to the team's arrival. Repeated attempts over several days to establish a wireless connection to a router in the nearby Blue Horizons Resort main office proved fruitless. Eventually, Steve had to go to the facility and personally replace and reset their unit. Phone service to Middle was restore towards the end of the first week and for the first time VP5DX had phone and Internet communications with the outside world.

Throughout the two week station set up period Jim and Mike, N4EPD, ran a virtual assembly line of connector replacements on every antenna and cable. Most of the contest station's equipment had been in storage on site since the 2008 WW and the island's salt air had taken its toll. But the advantage of leaving most of the radios and an assortment of antennas on site was the equipment would already be there—very little had to be carried down from the states.



The core antenna for VP5DX is a permanent three-element 30 through 6 meter SteppIR mounted on a 7-foot guyed Aluma tower which was installed after last year's twin hurricanes destroyed a similar setup. One of the first checks Ron made was to see if the replacement SteppIR and its Yeasu rotator were still working. To everyone's relief—

especially Ron's—they were. Lightning and storm damage are ongoing concerns at VP5DX. The constant worry about lightning damage is compounded by the fact that few things on Middle can be "grounded" in the traditional sense. This part of the island is mostly limestone. More or less solid rock which precludes the use of driven ground rods—unless, that is, if you want to jack-hammer down however far it takes to reach something that will conduct. In other words, electrically speaking everything at VP5DX is 'floating'!

*(Continued next page)*



**Fearless Leader  
Operator  
Extraordinaire  
Captain Ron,  
N4KE**

## Up go the Tribander, 160 and 80 Meter Antennas

(From previous page)

The first temporary antenna to go up was an A4 tribander perched atop a 30-foot tower. On the east side of the house. In the past this antenna had been used largely for multipliers.



**Tower Monkey Ron** with able assistance from **ground crew Mike** bracketed the first tower section to the house and had the remaining 20 feet of Rohn tower sections assembled and mounted with new connecting cable run in a matter of an hour or two. Fortunately for **N4KE**, the wind wasn't blowing too hard and the A34 slipped into its place on top of the rotator in short order.



**Netmeister and Telephone Guru Steve, AB4UF**



Next were the 160 and 80 meter Inverted Ls conceived by **NU4Y**. Each antenna was formed by mounting a base-fed 40 meter vertical section atop and insulated from a 10-foot Rohn tower section which had been jammed into one of the numerous crevices on the island's mostly lime rock surface. An appropriate length wire ran from the top of the vertical element to an anchoring point on the permanent **VP5DX** 70 foot Aluma tower behind the house. The 160-meter antenna was aligned towards the north while the 80-meter counterpart had a westward orientation.



The real fun came in running the four elevated quarter wave radials for each antenna through the tangled tropical growth of poison wood, vines and assorted briars that surrounded each installation while at the same time trying to avoid stepping into a brush-hidden crevice like the one holding the antenna's base section!

There was no other way to lay the wires down. As the line in the movie said, you just had to put your face down it and push! And the install crew did... Each member of the crew made numerous blood donations to the local biting insects but there were no complaints.. The effort produced good results from both antennas, especially the wind-whipped 160. After a few minutes on the band with the new antenna **Ron** proclaimed inverted-L the 160-meter played better than any other they had previously set up on that band.

(More next page)



The most ungainly-looking contraption was the top-hated 40-80 GAP which was set up on a sand bank just above the high tide line. The expectation was its proximity to the salt water would give it an extra reach.



Again, the set-up required a coordinated full team effort by Steve, Mike, Ron and Jim. First three sets of guys were set at a predetermined distance and anchored. The windward set was then used to pull the gangly affair into its (more or less) vertical position. No attempt was made to straighten the awkward bend in the antenna's lower section. As one team member noted, tongue in cheek, the bend was left in place on purpose to take advantage of "crooked path propagation".



**Chief Bar-B-Q  
Assembler  
Connector Repair  
Air Conditioning  
Expert  
Mike, N4EPD**



What was remarkable was this contraption stayed up through two nights and days of stormy winds when no one expected it to. Too bad its performance didn't equal its endurance.

Guying was a combination of fairly short stakes driven into the loose sand and tying the guys off to occasional "bushes of opportunity". *(More Next Page)*

## With Everything Up and Working It's SHOWTIME!!

(Continued from previous page)

The final antennas to go in place were NU4Y-designed Beverages with counterpoises which were run in four directions. As expected the beverages really proved their worth on the QRN-packed 160 and 80 meter bands. As those who have operated before from VP5DX are well aware, tropical conditions are often filled with either local or regional QRN. 2009 was no exception. It was unusual when a transmitting antenna could "hear" as well as a beverage on the same band.



**Head Chef  
Chief Operator  
13 year VP5DX**

**veteran  
Heineken  
connoisseur  
Jim, NU4Y**

All the antennas were in place and operational, the radios had been checked out with all operators making QSOs prior to the contest. Now, all that remained was the contest itself.

### THE FUN BEGINS...

At precisely 0000 Z on October 24th **Jim, NU4Y**, did the honors on a fading 20 meter band. With the high rate he was operating it didn't take too long with the fading propagation before he wrung the band dry.

Back to back with Jim was **Ron, N4KE**, chasing the early multipliers.



As the evening wore on **Mike, N4EPD**, relieved **Jim** for a short while on the run station. By the time it came **Warren, NW4C's** turn to run, the propagation had shifted to the lower bands and the static crashes and contest QRM were fighting for dominance. To the unaccustomed ear it seemed were about equal levels with the edge going to QRN on the S-meter. Warren worked **Dick, K4UTE** on 80 and was so intent on getting it right didn't even recognize his call. (**Dick** later noted, if **Warren** thought 80 was bad, he should be a man and work on 160...)



### Wrapping Things Up . . .

And so the fun continued for a total of 48 hours with the operators alternating between intense runs interspersed with periods of search and pounce for the score-raising multipliers.



After it as over, a celebratory beer (or two) out on the porch, the traditional inscribing of the final score on the now empty Malibu Coconut Rum bottle...and everyone got a short breather before starting the tear-down and put-away until next year.

Was it fun? You bet!!  
Would we do it again?  
In a New York minute!  
Did we win anything?  
Who knows?

Either way, we'll be back to do it again next year.

. . . . .



**'Da Rookie'**  
**Warren, NW4C**  
**Catching his breath**  
**under watchful eye**  
**of Captain Ron,**  
**N4KE**

### Wrapping Things Up . . .

The following pages contain a collection of photos that weren't used with the story . . . Enjoy



### VP5DX Views by AB4UF



Looking Northwest



Looking North



View to the South



Looking West at Sunset



Rugged Coast



Shoreline Cave

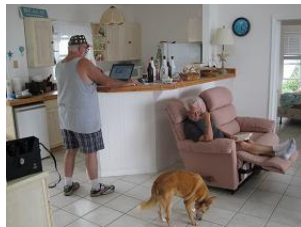
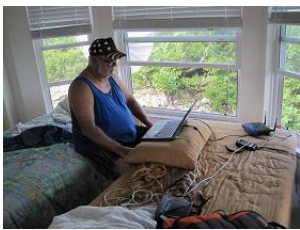


Peaceful Beach with Sleeping Dragon



Shoreline Cavern with Benches

And still more . . .



## The NFDXA Marathon Totem Pole Where Do YOU Stand? <http://nfdxa.com/cq>

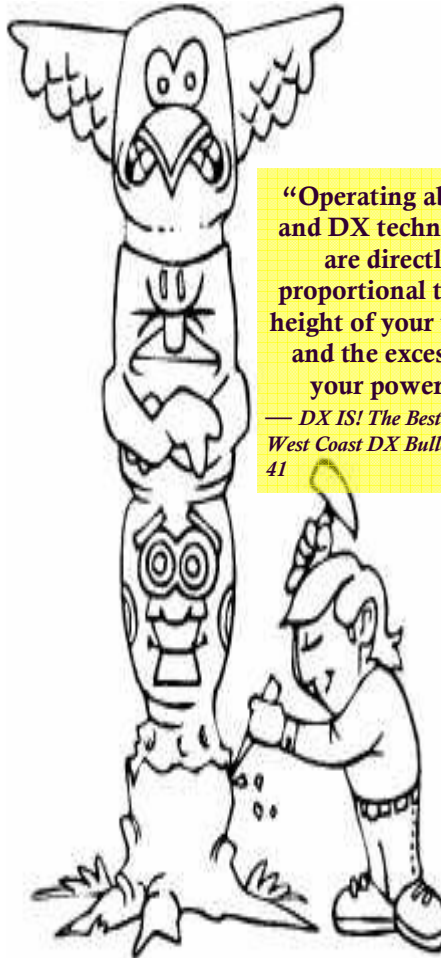


Between January 1 and December 31, 2009, work as many stations as you can, any band, any mode. Work each country only once, unless it spans zones. To add a new zone for the same country just type in the new call and zone over the old one and click the "Log It" button. To delete a call, erase the zone from your log page and click the "Log It" button.

### The Top 12 - 05/11

Entities Zones Total

N4NN	269	40	309
K4UTE	264	40	304
N4KE	239	40	279
K4EB	240	40	280
NF4L	177	36	213
NIWON	141	33	174
NW4C	104	28	132
WR4K	92	30	122
NU4Y	71	19	90
KC4FWS	39	15	54
AB4UF	1	1	2
W4FDA	1	1	2
All Others	0	0	0



**"Operating ability and DX techniques are directly proportional to the height of your tower and the excess of your power."**

— *DX IS! The Best of the West Coast DX Bulletin p-41*

### E4X Possible in Spring 2010



As reported in the Thursday, Nov 4 edition of *The Daily DX*, the possibility of a spring 2010 DXpedition to Palestine appears a little closer to reality.

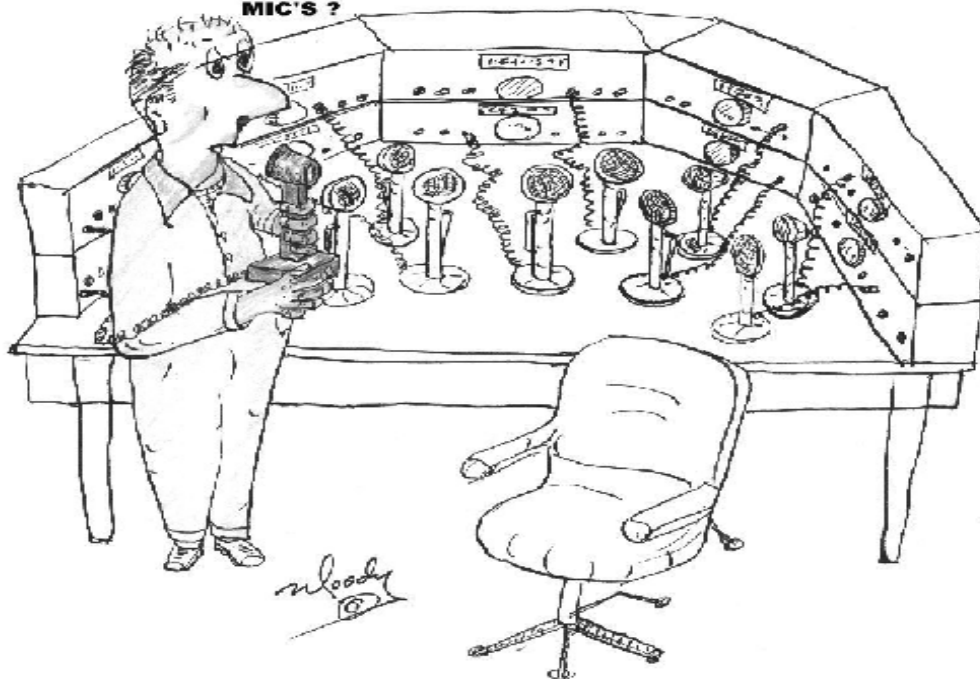
The call sign **E4X** has been assigned by the "National Palestine Authority" to a group headed by Spanish ham EA5RM, Antonio Gonzalez. More information including a propagation forecast is Posted on the DXpedition's web page at <http://www.dxfriends.com/e4x/>

<http://www.dxfriends.com/e4x/>



## HAM TOONS

JIM I KNOW YOU HAVE  
A BIG PILE UP HERE  
BUT DO YOU HAVE TIME  
FOR A LITTLE TEST,  
I WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE  
MIC'S ?



### As I See It . . .

As the opening line to the lead story in this edition of *PileUp* reads: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the 2009 CQ SSB WW from VP5DX." The line wasn't meant to be a parody of Dickens, but rather a statement about radio contests in general. In the course of a contest one often experiences good and the bad, like conditions being great and suddenly one's linear dies a smoky death . . . or the power goes out just as a call comes in from the last zone you need

Personally, VP5DX was a big check-off on my Ham Radio Bucket List, i.e., to go on an overseas trip with a major contestpedition. But with my being a comparative rookie in radio contesting there was always the chance that something would go wrong, and maybe even cost the contest team some valuable points.

But it didn't happen at VP5DX. The veterans on the trip, N4KE, NU4Y, AB4UF and N4EPD went out of their way to ensure I didn't do harm. When it was over I had made just as many involuntary blood donations to a variety of local biting insects as the next guy. We all had a rash or an itch somewhere from tramping through 'poison wood' plants while stringing beverage antennas and radial lines. And my tinnitus was just as loud as the next guy's after a shift at the controls of the run station on 80 and 160 meters!

The big 'runs' were great fun but intense, especially after VP5DX had been spotted on some cluster. The instant pile up made it seem every ham in the universe was calling you, personally! It gives one an appreciation for what a rare DX station goes through each time he turns on his rig.

Personally, I liked chasing mults. It's not unlike what I usually do at home—search for the station, listen closely for an opening and then pounce. But it's a whole lot more fun at VP5DX using its assortment of band specific antennas and an AL1200 linear than it is barefoot with a dipole at the home QTH.

So, in sum there was so much 'best' time for me on the trip that it's hard to find anything that even remotely resembled a 'worst' time.

Maybe I should go back and rewrite that opening line . . . **NW4C**