



*"Ohio First DXCC Field Checking Club"*

# The NODXA RAG

NO8DX - Special Event Callsign  
W8DXA - NODXA Repeater 147.360  
K8MR - PacketCluster 144.91 & 145.57

Web-site: <http://www.papays.com/nodxa.html>

Newsletter: [wd8iou@adelphia.net](mailto:wd8iou@adelphia.net)

Northern Ohio DX Association  
P.O. Box 450783  
Westlake, Ohio  
44145 U.S.A.



**November-December 2003**

## Fireside Chat With KB8NW

Fellow DX'ers,

The new year is approaching fast. It is only two weeks away as I am typing this. Looking back over the year 2003, I would have to say this was not bad year for DXing. To just to name a few, we saw some interesting activity from Annobon Island (3C0), Timor Leste (4W), Pratas Island (BQ9P), Ducie (VP6/D), Macquarie Island (VK0M), Johnston Island (AH3D - by OH2BH and W3UR), Wake Island (KH9), Europa (TO4), St. Peter & St. Paul Rocks (ZW0S) and plenty of operations/activity from Ogasawara (8N1OGA), Christmas Island (VK9X), Cocos Keeling Island (VK9C) and Albania (ZA). Hopefully, the year 2004 will be as active.

Personally, I sure would like to see a large operation to Scarborough Reef (BS7) come up. This is my last DXCC entity. The only bad thing going for the year 2004 is the continue downslide of the sunspot cycle. The year 2003 was not too bad, but I think in 2004 we may see a

big change in the propagation, unless the sunspots hit a plateau. We will just have to hope for the best.

Lastly, I would like to wish the members a great holiday season and good health to you and your family in the coming new year. This also includes good propagation for DXers/Contester in 2004. Hopefully, all of us will be able to work something new (maybe a new entity on a new band or mode). Have a fun and safe holiday/New Year.

73 and Good DX de Tedd KB8NW



## Minutes of the November 3rd, 2003 NODXA Meeting

Tedd KB8NW called the meeting to order at 7:30PM held at Laura's Kitchen in Broadview Heights, Ohio. The 22 members/guest made their introductions.

Mary N8DMM reports a balance of \$Ka-Ching! in the treasury.

A report on the packet cluster was made by Pete N8TR.

Dave WD8IOU requests articles for the Newsletter and informs us that the October Newsletter will be available this week.

Tedd KB8NW read a letter a request from six radio amateurs from the UK who are going on a dx-pedition to Eritria, using the call E30PA, in February, 2004 for a donation toward this event. Qsl to G3AB. Nick W8XD made a motion to donate \$100.00 toward this and was seconded by Bruce N8DJX. A discussion followed and a vote was taken and passed.

Another request for a donation toward a dx-pedition to Rodriguez Island in March or April, 2004, using the call 3B9C, by the 5 Star DX Association. A discussion ensued. A motion to donate \$100.00 toward this dx-pedition was made by Carl K8AV and seconded by Nick W8XD. A vote was taken and passed.

Dwaine K8ME related to us on the Special Qsl card and displayed one for the Cleveland

Rainforest using the call K8CRF/200 for this bicentennial year for the State of Ohio. The station can be contacted on 146.82 Mhz- repeater.

Bob W8GC announced that the CARS Christmas Party to be held at the Independence Civic Center in Independence, Ohio on Friday December 19, 2003 at 7:00 PM. Contact Steve N8IS or Gary N8IS for tickets or go to the website at [www.cars.org](http://www.cars.org) for more information.

There will be Amateur Radio classes starting in January of 2004 held by CARS as informed to us by Bob W8GC. For more information check the CARS website at [www.cars.org](http://www.cars.org),

George K8KR won the 50/50 raffle and his share was \$22.00.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07PM by Tedd KB8NW.

Secretary: Ron, K8VJG.

## Minutes of the December 1st, 2003 NODXA Meeting

The meeting, which was held at Laura's Kitchen in Broadview Heights, Ohio, was called to order at 7:30 PM and was followed by around the room introductions by the 23 members/guests in attendance.

A balance of \$Ka-Ching exists in the treasury as reported by Mary N8DMM.

Pete N8TR reported on the packet cluster updates and a discussion followed.

Dave WD8IOU informed us

on the Newsletter.

A letter of appreciation from the ARRL for the club's donation toward the anti-BPL legislation was read by Tedd KB8NW and also included was a Certificate of Special Campaign which was displayed.

A discussion on the Field Day 2003 results was opened by Pete N8TR.

The 50/50 raffle was won by Ray W8BIN. His share was \$20.00.

Tedd KB8NW adjourned the meeting at 7:54PM.

Following the meeting a video on the BQ9P dx-pedition was shown.

Secretary: Ron K8VJG.

## A Ham's Night Before Christmas

(Yet another corruption of Clement Clarke Moore's classic Christmas tale, this time by Gary Pearce, KN4AQ, and the Raleigh Amateur Radio Society, Raleigh, NC.)

Twas the night before Christmas,  
And all through two-meters,  
Not a signal was keying up  
Any repeaters.

The antennas reached up,  
From the tower quite high,  
To catch the weak signals  
That bounced from the sky.

The children, Tech-Pluses,  
Took their HT's to bed,  
And dreamed of the day  
They'd be Extras, instead.

Mom put on her headphones,  
I plugged in the key,  
And we tuned 40 meters  
For that rare ZK3.

When the meter was pegged  
by a signal with power.  
It smoked a small diode,  
and, I swear, shook the tower.

Mom yanked off her phones,  
And with all she could muster  
Logged a spot of the signal  
On the DX PacketCluster,

While I ran to the window  
And peered up at the sky,  
To see what could generate  
RF that high.

It was way in the distance,  
But the moon made it gleam -  
A flying sleigh, with an  
Eight element beam,

And a little old driver  
who looked slightly mean.  
So I thought for a moment,  
That it might be Wayne Green.

But no, it was Santa  
The Santa of Hams.  
On a mission, this Christmas  
To clean up the bands.

He circled the tower,  
Then stopped in his track,  
And he slid down the coax  
Right into the shack.

While Mom and I hid  
Behind stacks of CQ,  
This Santa of hamming  
Knew just what to do.

He cleared off the shack desk  
Of paper and parts,

And filled out all my late QSLs  
For a start.

He ran copper braid,  
Took a steel rod and pounded  
It into the earth, till  
The station was grounded.

He tightened loose fittings,  
Resoldered connections,  
Cranked down modulation,  
Installed lightning protection.

He neutralized tubes  
In my linear amp...  
(Never worked right before --  
Now it works like a champ).

A new, low-pass filter  
Cleaned up the TV,  
He corrected the settings  
In my TNC.

He repaired the computer  
That would not compute,  
And he backed up the hard  
drive  
And got it to boot.

Then, he reached really deep  
In the bag that he brought,  
And he pulled out a big box,  
"A new rig?" I thought!

"A new Kenwood? An Icom?  
A Yaesu, for me?!"  
(If he thought I'd been bad  
it might be QRP!)

Yes! The Ultimate Station!  
How could I deserve this?  
Could it be all those hours  
that I worked Public Service?

He hooked it all up  
And in record time, quickly  
Worked 100 countries,

All down on 160.

I should have been happy,  
It was my call he sent,  
But the cards and the postage  
Will cost two month's rent!

He made final adjustments,  
And left a card by the key:  
"To Gary, from Santa Claus.  
Seventy-Three."

Then he grabbed his HT,  
Looked me straight in the eye,  
Punched a code on the pad,  
And was gone - no good bye.

I ran back to the station,  
And the pile-up was big,  
But a card from St. Nick  
Would be worth my new rig.

Oh, too late, for his final  
came over the air.  
It was copied all over.  
It was heard everywhere.

The Ham's Santa exclaimed  
What a ham might expect,  
"Merry Christmas to all,  
And to all, good DX."

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## First and Last Rule of DXing

The first and last rule for  
working DX has and will always  
be tune, listen, tune, listen,  
tune, listen....and tune, listen  
some more. This rule has held  
fast for so many years simply  
because if you cannot hear the  
DX, you cannot work the DX!

30 years ago, an hour spent  
listening to 20M on a good  
propagation evening would net  
you many rare DX stations call-

ing CQ. Not anymore! What has changed? Think for a few minutes. How many chirpy, raw AC CW signals have you heard coming from Russia lately compared to years ago? Not very many. Now you hear more lousy signals coming from USA stations. What has changed is this: During the past 30 years or so, better economic conditions in the world, and the breakdown of the old Russian federation have allowed the majority of DX in the world to have just as good, if not better, stations than stations in the states. Except for possibly some of the poorer third-world countries in Africa and Asia, the DX is no longer running low power homebrew or WWII surplus rigs and simple wire antennas. They are now using late model transceivers, linears, and towers with high gain multi-element yagis or quads. The rare DX stations with this setup now have just as good, if not better, country totals than we do. Now they are no longer calling CQ, but listening for a new one, just like we should be!

With the rare DX now listening instead of calling CQ, it is now more difficult to work a new one by just listening. The First and Last Rule still stands firm however. Since it is now more difficult to work a new one by listening, many of us have put our faith in Cluster Net spots. Cluster Nets have their good and bad points. More on this later. The problem with putting your faith in cluster spots for working a new is this:

By the time you get the linear tuned and on the DX QRG, the pile-up has always started, and your chances for working the new one have greatly diminished. Someone had to hear and/or work the DX to put the spot on the cluster. That someone could have been you, and you would have been able to get a probable first, second, or third shot at the DX instead of being in the middle of the pile-up. In summation, time spent just watching the cluster would be better spent just listening.

99.99% of the time calling CQ DX is a waste of your time. Unless you have a tower, high gain yagi, and linear (if needed), you should never call CQ DX. If do have a tower, high gain yagi, and linear (if needed), and you know there is a good probability the band is open to a part of the world that you need a new one, calling CQ DX may bring a rare one with a modest station out of the woodwork. Why? That station knows if he calls CQ that he would wind up with a pile-up he would not want or could not handle.

Tower/Yagi or not and you want to feel like a Big Wheel, call CQ DX one evening when the band is open to Europe. Oh yes, you will probably get a pile-up, fill up your log with DX you worked many times before, and increase the workload of the QSL bureaus. Believe me Europeans like to QSL. End result, you have to take the time (I hope) to reply to those cards. This time could be spent

more wisely listening for a new one.

DXpeditions have and will always be a good way to work a new one. For the past two years, there have been a lot of good DXpeditions to some of the most wanted. The First and Last Rule still applies. You have to be able to hear them to work them. Here is where the Cluster Net comes in handy. It is a very fast way to determine what bands and modes the DXpedition is working right now, so you save some time compared to just tuning and listening.

You still have to be able to hear the DX to work however. Never jump into a pile-up if you have marginal copy of the DX station. It only leads to the frustration of "was that my call he gave"? A good DX Op will always give the frequency range that he is listening up. If the DX just says up, and the pile-up is 10 KHz wide, get very comfortable, and be prepared to be at the Op Table for a long time unless you get very lucky. Many DXpedition Ops have the bad habit of only sending a partial call?, and a TU in return. Even if the partial call was close to yours, and the timing was right, you could very well wind up with a NIL.

Never consider the preceding scenario a good QSO. All good DXpedition Ops will send

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this months edition: N8TR, N8DMM, W8BIN, K88NW, K8VJG, K8YSE, K8AV, KN4AQ, AF8C, AA7UC, K4WLS, N0KFC, W1DLS, OPDX, MDXA, eHAM.net, and the ARRL Letter.

the complete, correct call of the station they worked at least once in the exchange.

Depending on the time of year, propagation conditions, and the location of the DXpedition, often times the higher bands will not cut the mustard especially for the Little Pistols (opposite of Big Guns). Do not dismay however. Almost all DXpeditions start off on the higher bands to get their QSO count up. At about the half-way point of the DXpedition, they will crank up on the lower bands. They will always shoot for the states on the lower bands when they know the QSO count for the states is low on the high bands. The DXpedition is usually running high power, good antennas, and a seasoned low band Op, and they know the sunrise times in the states. So, if you cannot get through on 20 - 10M, bet you will make it on 30 or 40M. Check these bands a few hours before local sunrise and sometimes 1 to 2 hours after sunrise on 30M. 99 % of time if you cannot cut the mustard on 20 - 10M, 30 or 40M will get the new one, even in the Summer.

Most major Dxpeditions, in the initial planning stages of the Op, study the propagation conditions of the location they are bound for. They obtain the latest propagation forecasts for that location, and prepare charts for times and bands to hit all the continents on the globe. They consider both short path and long path propagation for as much world-wide coverage

as possible. They want to give you a new one. So, when you shoot to work a major DXpedition, do your propagation homework as well.

Ask any seasoned DX Op the key to working DX. He will tell you listen, tune, listen, tune.....The First and Last Rule for Working DX!

Larry, K4WLS,  
Magnolia DX Association

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## Bill "Pick" Pickard, WA5PAE--SK



morning Billy G. "Pick" Pickard, WA5PAE, lost his battle with pulmonary fibrosis disease and became a Silent Key.

Prior to his death at the age of 68, Pick had a distinguished military career. In 1954, he joined the Air Force where he served in Tripoli, Libya; Ankara and Karamursel, Turkey; Germany; and Scotland. Subsequent assignments were to HQ, USAF Security Service; RAF Chicksands, Bedfordshire, England; and Viet Nam where he flew as a crew member on 101 combat missions in a rebuilt C-47 (Gooney Bird) loaded with advanced electronic warfare gear. Before retiring in 1977

On Sunday, November 23rd, the DX community was saddened to learn that early that

after twenty-three years in the Air Force, Pick was assigned to the National Security Agency for four years.

Pick held an Extra Class license and was an accomplished CW operator who had the ability to copy through very difficult conditions.

Throughout his life, Pick was an avid DXer. He operated from Germany as DL4IZ and for the past three years Pick and friend Jay, K4ZLE, made three DXpeditions to Guantanamo Bay where Pick operated as KG4IZ and Jay as KG4MO.

In 1997, Murphy Ratterree, W4WMO, then president of the International DX Association, appointed Pick to the staff of the INDEXA Information Session where Pick dispensed DX and QSL information during the daily sessions. In 2002, Pick was elected vice president of INDEXA and continued in that capacity until his death.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003, Jim Weaver, K8JE, ARRL Great Lakes Division Director, appointed Pick to be the new Great Lakes Division DXAC Representative.

Pick was an Honor Roll Dixer and a member of the Southwest Ohio DX Association; the West Chester Amateur Radio Association; and The Greater Cincinnati Amateur Radio Association where he wrote a DX column for *The Mike and Key Newsletter*.

Pick is interred at the West Chester Township Cemetery and is survived by his wife of 43 years, Ethel Pickard; two daughters; and three grandchil-

dren. Condolences may be forwarded to Ethel at 8063 Pepper Pike, West Chester, OH, 45069.

Submitted by Judy, AA7UC

## Ground Radial Cutting Tool

I came across a tool for getting ground radials buried into the sod. I needed to get some radials placed into my back yard and the frost was beginning to already set into the ground. I had tried several different methods to do this in the past and nothing was working very well.



Then I came across this yard tool used for manually edging along sidewalks. It is called a Steppin' Edger and a company called Hound Dog, web site [hound-dog.com](http://hound-dog.com), manufactures it.

They have some pictures of this tool on their web site. It basically will cut a groove about 1/4 inch wide and 4 inches deep & about 10 inches long in one cut. After the radials have been placed into the grooves the 1/4 inch line will just disappear in a couple of days. A person can place many radials with this in a very short amount of time with very little effort.

Mike Roda, NOKFC, eHam.net

## Ham Radio 'Classic'

I believe that the future of ham radio can be found in it's past. As each year passes and technology advances, the magic of radio seems to fade. If we examine radio for it's utilitarian value, we find that the Internet is in many ways "better" than HF, and cell phones are "better" than VHF. And as we all know, everyone in America has access to both the Internet and cell phones. The military has abandoned Morse code, and even phone patches to the troops are being phased out in favor of Satellite communications. When every cop has a cell phone and laptop in his cruiser, how much value do the guys in the orange vests with HTs really bring to the party? (Yes, I think there is still value there, but the world has changed, and I don't think it is the same value that was brought to the table 25 years ago.)

So what's left? Plenty. There is still a hobby of radio communication, electronic experimentation, and antenna building out there. We need to take a lesson from the guys in the classic car clubs. Cars have become much too complicated for the average guy to work on. But Americans love their cars. So what do they do? Buy a Classic! -- One with a carburetor, and a real "points and condenser" ignition system. And real CHROME!!! You can still have a garage full of really cool tools, and a fun way to spend your time. The car guys know that

technology has passed them by, but they don't care. They know that the car they play with is not really that practical anymore, but that's not the point of it. It's a hobby, and they know it. And you know what? America is absolutely crazy about cars from the sixties. Cars from the sixties routinely show up in movies cast in the present. Manufacturers now make replicas of the VW beetle, and Ford Mustang from the sixties.

Guess what? Radios from the same time era are pretty neat too. You can actually work on them, they look cool, and when you turn them on the glow of the tubes is a lot like the rumble of the motor in that '65 GTO. Classic radios are like classic cars in that they both have souls. They both give you that exciting feeling that comes from knowing that "this thing could kill you if you're not careful." If you need a ride to work, take your 2002 Toyota. If you need to call work, use your cell phone. If you want to have fun, take the GTO and burn rubber. Or if you like radios, fire up the Viking II and the Skyrider and light up the ether! What will we talk about? Modulators, power supplies, and antennas, of course! Radio is our hobby.

Remember the guys who were into Photography back in the sixties? They had dark rooms in their basements, and SLRs with ten different lenses. They changed their equipment as Technology changed. Have you seen any "Photographers" recently? I haven't. Technology

## NODXA Club Officials for 2003-2004

President - Tedd Mirgliotta, KB8NW (440-237-2816)  
V. President - Dwaine Modock, K8ME (440-582-3462)  
Secretary - Ron Borkey, K8VJG (440-237-6718)  
Treasurer - Mary Michaelis, N8DMM (440-236-5426)  
Newsletter Editor - David Autry, WD8IOU (440-238-0417)

As of March 2002  
Current DXCC Entities Total is:

# 335

stole their magic.

Before we change the name of our hobby to the "Radio Professionals of America" or before we drop the code, or before we eliminate real QSLs, let's think about what will remain. It is a mistake to try to keep up with technology that passes the ham's ability to tinker. Just let the technology pass us by. We aren't the cutting edge anymore, and we never will be again. Let's accept it, and enjoy the hobby that we have created. If we continue buying boxes we can't tinker with, the radio hobby will offer nothing that the Internet and cell phones can't. At that point, the hobby will be lost. Let's build our own boxes. Ham Radio "Classic" is where the magic is!

David Sanford, W1DLS, via  
eHam.net

## Early Christmas Present for WD8IOU

After twelve years of "suffering" with a small three element tri-band, I decided to upgrade to the new SteppIR beam. This revolutionary antenna uses stepper motors to adjust the length of all three elements based upon the frequency selected via it's microprocessor powered control box. This beam



covers ALL frequencies between 20m and 6m inclusive so now I have an three element beam for the WARC bands and four elements (one passive) on 6m.

Assembly of the beam went smoothly and my crack ground and tower crew had the SteppIR on top of the 9-foot GM roof tower in short order.

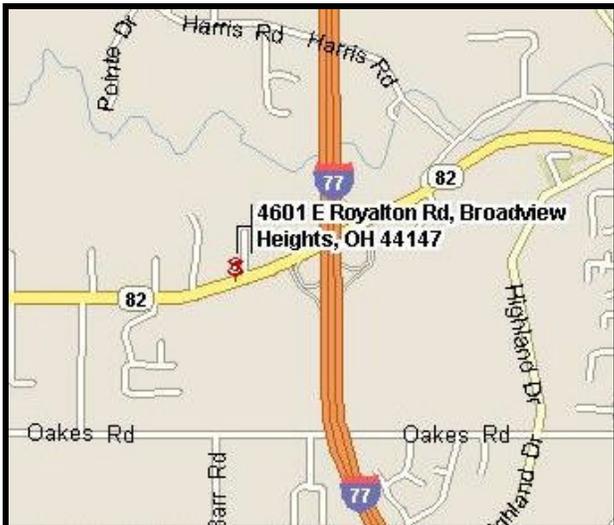
Unfortunately, there were some problems with one of the fiberglass tubes which resulted in the destruction of the driven element stepper motor assembly. FluidMotion quickly replaced the stepper motor and W8GC had a spare tube, but that still required the crew to make a second trip to my QTH to do everything over again!

Performance of the SteppIR has been great! So far, if I can

hear the DX, I've been able to work it bare foot! That was never the case with the old Wilson System 33 that the SteppIR replaced.

This beam has several features which make it a joy to use. The best is the "instant" 180 direction change. If you are listening to some DX via short path and would like to check it via long path, you don't have to touch your rotor control. Simply push the 180 degree button on the control box and, in less than three seconds, the SteppIR will change it's element lengths so that it is "pointed" backwards!

I would like to thank K8YSE, N8TR, WB8K, W8GC, N8IS, W8JGU, and KB8NW. Without your help, the SteppIR would still be in the box!



**NODXA** Meetings are held the first Monday of each month at the **Laura's Kitchen Restaurant** on RT.82 just west of Interstate 77 in Broadview Heights at 8:00 PM. Come early and have dinner and meet your fellow DXers and enter the 50/50 raffle.

### NODXA Application and Renewal Form

The Northern Ohio DX Association is a non-profit organization with a primary interest in DXing. We encourage all DXers to join our group and share the interest and fun of DXing. Please complete the application below and send along your appropriate dues or renewal to:

**NODXA, P.O. Box 450783, Westlake, Ohio 44145**

- First Time Membership/Renewal (U.S.) \$12.00
- Foreign Membership (outside U.S.) \$22.00
- \*Foreign Membership (no printed newsletter) (but w/Web access for newsletter) \$12.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Callsign \_\_\_\_\_  
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 Country \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
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 ARRL Member? \_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ DXCC Member? \_\_\_  
 Special Interest \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter circulation: Pete Michaelis **N8TR**, Mary Michaelis **N8DMM**, and "Radio Ray" **W8BIN**

**Dated Material  
Please Rush**



The Northern Ohio DX Association  
 P.O. Box 450783  
 Westlake, Ohio 44145 U.S.A