

MINUTES OF THE LONG ISLAND DX ASSOCIATION

MEETING - NOVEMBER 24, 2020

The COVID virus lockdown continues and the November meeting of the Long Island DX Association was held online via ZOOM.

The format for this meeting was held in a different manner in that Club President, John, W2GW, invited John Miller, K6MM to be a guest speaker. John is an eminent DXpeditioner and he is the current president of the Northern California DX Foundation. John's topic for the evening was the January 2016 operation from Palmyra Atoll as K5P.

John asked several other famous DXpeditioners to join him for the evening: Rusty Epps, W6OAT; Glenn Johnson, W0GJ; Dick Williams, W3OA and Lou Dietrich, N2TU (LIDXA Honorary Member). Unfortunately, Lou was not able to be present. Rusty had been on Palmyra Atoll briefly in 1974. As for 2016, John, Glenn, Dick and Lou were participants, Lou was co-Team Leader.

The regular club members present were: John, W2GW, LIDXA President; Louise, K2MAU; Jack, NU2Q, Dave, KA2HTV; Karen, W2ABK; Walter, W2TE; Art, N2KA; Rich, KB2ZPV; Howard, WB2UZE; Pat, KE2LJ; Adrian, KO8SCA/VP9 (joined from Bermuda); and Steve, N2AJ.

The meeting started at 8:15 PM. All Club business being set aside, John, W2GW, opened the forum for John, K6MM, to offer his presentation of the DXpedition to Palmyra Atoll, K5P. John's talk can be divided and summarized into several sections.

History - the island was first sighted in 1798 and in 1802 a ship named the USS Palmyra was wrecked on the reefs. This gave rise to the island's name. Over the years many entities claimed and/or owned the island until today the island is divided between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy.

Curse - through the years, various mysterious and unexplained happenings occurred around the island, including the island's treacherous reefs. Palmyra was considered to be a cursed and dangerous place. Perhaps the most infamous incident that occurred on the island was the 1974 mysterious and grisly double murder of a couple who had sailed to the atoll. The DXpedition that Rusty, W6OAT, was on (KP6PA) spent a short time on the atoll. This DXpedition, however, left abruptly due to a man and woman who lived on the atoll whom the hams perceived would place them in danger. As it turned out, they were the murderers of the sailing couple.

In addition to KP6PA, another operation flew into Palmyra in January 1980. Upon landing, the plane swerved and landed into the trees. One ham was injured and had to be evacuated. Several

days later, another participant was injured by a shark and had to be evacuated. Thus the operation came to an early end. The last DXpedition to Palmyra was in 2000.

The Present operation - After years of applications, and appeals by the Pacific Island DX Group, the USFWS allowed The Nature Conservancy to accept proposals for an operation on Cooper Island, the only section of the Palmyra Atoll where non-USFWS personnel are permitted.

There were timing issues, transportation difficulties and operational hurdles that needed to be overcome. The final challenge was the prohibition which allowed only for vertical antennas. Yagis were seen as a threat to the birds which would land on the elements. Finally, the station erected two SteppIR BigIR verticals and a 22 year old Battle Creek Special. These antennas presented the group with unique challenges but adjustments were done and QSOs were made.

On air operations commenced on January 11th. The hams were able to operate from clean sheltered rooms. The food was good and sleeping conditions were excellent. The operation went QRT at 1845z on January 26th with 75,210 contacts in the log. These contacts were made on CW, SSB and RTTY. John, K6MM indicated that future DXpeditions would make use of FT8 as this mode allows for more contacts per hour than RTTY.

The pictures - John showed numerous pictures of the Atoll. He showed lush greenery, a hermit crab, a coconut crab, a king spider, and a beloved mascot, a red footed Booby. In addition, John showed stunning photographs of dazzling sunsets. Birds on Palmyra include the brown noddy, the great frigate bird and the sooty tern.

After the talk, John opened the discussion for any questions. Jack, NU2Q, asked about the type of equipment which took the photos. John replied that some better cameras were used but that many sunset pictures came from cellphones. Steve, N2AJ offered several comments and Adrian (who has been on DXpeditions) asked about the use of the Battle Creek antenna. John replied that this antenna has been used on numerous DXpeditions over the years, it is heavy to carry and to erect and that newer antennas will be used in the future. Howard, WB2UZE, asked John if he would speak to other clubs. John replied in the affirmative. Howard is co-founder of the LICW.

Rusty chimed in with a short story. He referred to the menacing couple. It seems that before he left, the man spread marijuana seeds on a section of the atoll for the birds to eat. This led to the observation that for a time on Palmyra, THERE WAS NO TERN LEFT UNSTONED!!!!

John, W2GW, reminded the club that the next meeting would normally have been our holiday party. With COVID, however, we will meet on ZOOM on Tuesday, December 15th at 8 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Phelan, NU2Q
Secretary

