



# Long Path



◆ Volume 19 Issue 03

SEMDXA NEWSLETTER

November 2001

## OCTOBER MINUTES

Detailed meeting minutes are not available as we go to press. A Treasurers report is not available. After calling the meeting to order, President **K8NA** noted that a possible new DXCC Entity was in the making. Ducie Island located near Pitcairn Island will be the site of an operation by members of the Pitcairn Island Amateur Radio Association. Call sign will probably be **VP6DI**. Ducie appears to meet the requirements of a Geographical DXCC Entity. The four islands of the Pitcairn group are Pitcairn, Henderson, Oeno and Ducie. The closest island is Henderson at a distance of 350 km. IOTA Number OC-182. Ducie is located at Latitude 24° 40' South and Longitude 124° 47' East. This operation is slated to take place on November 16 and last for approximately two weeks. Logging prefix is **VP6/D**. QSLing details are not available at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

## SEMDXA CLUB OFFICERS

President: Ted Pauck, **K8NA**

Vice-President: Hank Kohl, **K8DD**

Treasurer: Buck Switzer, **N8CQA**

Secretary: Stan Arnett, **AC8W**

Director: Open

Awards Chairman: Gary Rutledge, **KR8V**

QSL Manager: **AC8W**

Program Chair: Gary Rutledge, **KR8V**

LP Publisher: Gerry Fasse, **W8GF**

## NOVEMBER MEETING SITE

A change in meeting site is outlined on the back page of this issue of the *Long Path*. The next **SEMDXA** meeting will be held on November 9, 2001 at our old location at the Troy Elks Club.

## Harvey McCoy W2IYX

**W2IYX**, Harvey McCoy published the Long Island DX Bulletin for many years prior to his death in April, 1994 (last issue dated April 6, 1994). Published bi-weekly, the LI DX Bulletin subscription rolls were purchased by **VP2ML**, Chod Harris shortly thereafter. Chod published the weekly DX Bulletin and for a time published both newsletters separately but they were eventually combined into the DX Bulletin. After Chod's death, the DX Bulletin has changed hands thrice and is currently being published by **W3UR**, Bernie McClenny but now called The Weekly DX.

Harvey McCoy was a man of great achievement. What follows is a 1992 letter from Harvey to this writer which you will find interesting.

Dear Gerry,

Your comments on the characteristics of radio propagation deserve a bit of explanation. I hold a Doctorate in Electrical engineering and my life's work has been in the field of radio communications and radio navigation - plus being the holder of the patent which cured the Navy's SONAR problem.

During WWII, I was Senior Engineer in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, U. S. Army. Within a few months after starting that appointment, I earned a Presidential Citation for helping to curb the German submarine menace to our North Atlantic Convoys. We were, at that time, at the bottom of the solar cycle and the distress calls from convoys under attack were not being heard by our many military bases along the convoy's route. My recommendation to change the distress frequency from 500 KC to 100 KC (to better hug the earth's magnetic lines) was unanimously approved in a conference of all the NATO leaders and, after drawing up the necessary modifications to our maritime and fixed station receivers and transmitters to enable them to tune down to about 80 KC, I arranged a government contract to hire Dr. Harold Beverage (of Beverage antenna fame) to assist me. Together we visited our North Atlantic bases: Gander Lake, New Foundland - Goose Bay, Labrador - Julienhaab, Greenland - Reykjavic, Iceland - Prestwick, Scotland - North Caper, Norway and Murmansk, Russia instructing our Signal Corps teams on the installation of Beverage antennas. The first leg of our return trip was a flight from Murmansk to Greenland.

Upon arrival there, I was told that a big crate, addressed to me, had arrived there that morning. Upon opening it, we found a modified Hammarlund receiver plus a letter dated two days earlier which stated that they and other suppliers had

completed the installation of the newly modified VLF rigs on three convoy escorts the previous day. I immediately took the receive to their radio shack, connected the newly-installed Beverage antenna, plugged in the headphones and when I tuned it to 100 K I heard ...

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I grabbed a pencil, wrote down the given latitude and longitude and WOLFPACK 3. When I showed it to the Colonel, he said, "Wow! That position is only about 25 miles south of here. WOLFPACK 3 menace they're being attacked by three submarines. We're on our way." Moments later I heard the roar of aircraft engines and when we looked outside, Navy ships were already moving out. The result was two submarines definitely sunk and the convoy proceeded on its way. And that was the beginning of the end of the German submarine menace.

About a month later, I was summoned into the General's office. He said there was a reported shortage of telegraph operators in the battle zones. "Is there any way, he asked, to automate our international telegraph circuits and thereby release hundreds of cw operators stationed there for overseas duty?" I had heard that Hurst Publications of New York City had been experimenting with radio-teletype but had abandoned it because of frequent losses of entire paragraphs. I visited them and, as I had suspected, they were make-break keying the teletype code. Typical radio fading was the culprit. Knowing that radio fading did not occur concurrently over a wide range of frequencies, I decided to try sending the Mark and Space signals on separate frequencies. Borrowing a couple of 1000 and 2000 cycle narrow passband audio filters from our Fort Monmouth Labs, I built a couple of Frequency-Shift keyers and receiver

converters. When they worked well at our shop (located at WAR), I sent one of the rigs to our station outside London. The FS RTTY circuit performed well. We occasionally lost a character but never more than that. However, when we sent out invitations to bid on the receiver-converters, all of the potential suppliers reported their inability to obtain the specified filters. Western Electric Company came to my aid by offering quantities of their vast supply of 2125 and 2975 cycle filters that they used in some of their telephone circuitry. When I tried them on the Maryland/London circuit, there was no detectable difference and that is the reason my FS RTTY Patent Number 2,672,509 suggests an 850 cycle shift.

Following WWII, I accepted the offer of Pan American Airlines to be their Chief Radio Engineer and spent the next dozen years roaming the world (221 countries on all continents) updating their VLF Radio Navigation system and converting many of their point to point commercial circuits to FS RTTY. I resigned from Pan American to open my own consulting engineering company with an awaiting contract to design and build the radio navigation complement to the auto-pilot in the then new Piper Tripacer Aircraft. After ten years of continuous electronic developmental contracts, I sold the company when I was awarded and interesting political appointment.

Thanks for your letter and hope to hear from you again soon.

Harry McCoy, W2IYX

## DX Prospects

Solar Cycle 23 continues to puzzle the experts! Last month we reported that a secondary peak

seemed likely due to an astonishing surge in solar activity during the month of September. September's average flux value was 233.3 while the October flux average will be in the neighborhood of 205. This results in a smoothed flux value of 173 which is a gain of nearly ten points on the past two months. All this at a time when the present cycle should be declining!

Unfortunately, there is a down side to the recent surge in solar activity. Several severe radio storms were observed recently which have had a serious impact on propagation. This past weekend during the CQWW SSB DX Contest conditions were seriously affected by solar flares.

Local Six Meter operators continue to be frustrated by propagation anomalies associated with our geographical position. While Europe, Japan, South America and Oceania currently enjoy daily F2 layer DXing on a Six Meters much of the USA -especially the north central area- is shut out. Some well-equipped USA east coast stations and those in the more southern areas are able to work DX via backscatter and sidescatter as well as other modes. The root cause? We are too darn close to the magnetic north pole located at 75° North, 105° West. We will have to be content with our auroral propagation advantage during periods of solar storms!

**No SEMDXA meeting or Long Path issue is scheduled for the month of December. The next SEMDXA meeting will be in January, 2002. Ditto for the Long Path.**