



DXpedition To Africa

Part I

BY GEORGE R. (DICK) McKERCHER*, W0MLY

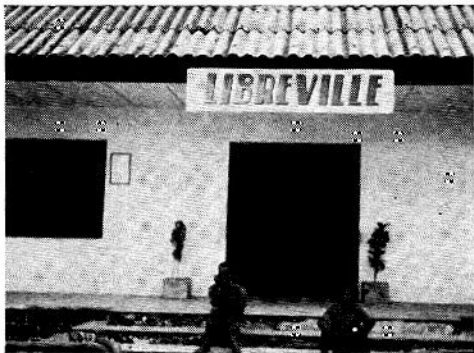
W0MLY, well known to the DX fraternity for his operations under such exotic calls as FL8MY, HZ1MY and 6L6MY, to mention only a few, has departed on one of the most ambitious DXpeditions of all time. Under the auspices of the Yasme Foundation, Dick is now in Africa and will be operating from as many of the new African Republics as possible. The following is Dick's account of the first leg of his trip which saw him operating from Gabon and which, incidentally, is the 98th different country from which Dick has operated. During his stay in Gabon, where he operated as W0MLY/TR8, Dick made over 2700 contacts in a relatively short period of time. Our hats are off to Dick for his persistence in spending twelve to sixteen hours a day, in heat up to 110 degrees, to give many stations throughout the world a new country. Dick will try to have an article in CQ monthly, describing the trials and tribulations of his trip and we hope you will find it as interesting as we did.

I WAS in daily contact with Dick, KV4AA, and I knew that the Yasme Foundation was planning to send a DXpedition to the new African Republics. I had assumed that the person to go would be an African operator or a European. The operators who could do justice to such an ambitious undertaking did not seem to have the time for such a venture. One morning Dick and I were discussing the latest news of the operation and he asked me if I would like to make the trip. I had several months which I could devote to the expedition and I decided to give it a go. To get the ball rolling, that same morning, I wrote several letters to the countries in which operation was desired. The following day I applied for my passport renewal. One month, much letter writing, and twenty-three shots later, the human pin cushion was on his way to New York.

My first stop was at Chicago where the HT-37A, SX-115 and HA-1 keyer, which were to be used on the trip, were picked up. From Chicago, I went on to Export, Pa. where I met Angus, 5N2AMS and his wife, Doris, 5N2DMS, who were visiting Walter, W3RIS. Angus, who is quite a DXpeditioner himself, having operated as FD8AMS, TY2AA, and 5N2AMS/TR8, had a few pointers which he thought might be helpful during my stay in Africa.

From Export, I went to Washington, D.C. in order to obtain my visas. Mike, W3AYD, was a very big help while I was in Washington.

From this point, on to New York where I spent a very enjoyable evening with my old friend, Willie Wilcox, ex-KT1WX and his wife at Riverhead, Long Island. The following day I met with a "friend" who was to have made arrangements for miscellaneous spare parts. However, he arranged for me to get these parts at full list price. Needless to say, my "friend" and I parted company at this point. I then decided to go to the CQ office where the editor, Arne Trossman, equipped me with log books and other useful information and directed me to Urb's (W2DEC) house where I spent the eve-



Here's a view of the operations building at the air port in Liberville. Missing equipment plagued Dick's operations but the Ole Iowan's ingenuity cleared things up in no time.

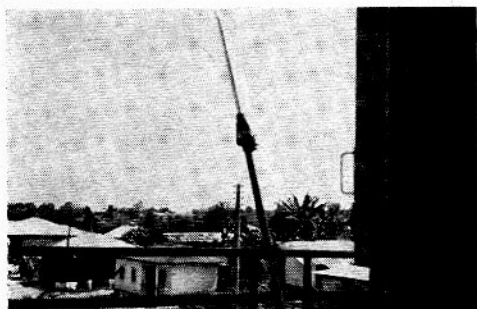
*Perry, Iowa.

ning. I got to Urb's to find out that a good-sized showing of the North Jersey DX Association had turned out and they sure did show me a swell time.

The following day a P&H linear was picked up at Lafayette Radio and then on to Idlewild Airport to drop my things off which were to be sent by air freight to Gabon. One small hitch developed; my intentions were to pay the air freight by check but that was not acceptable and I had to use part of my traveling cash. Unfortunately, this was on a Saturday and the banks were closed, so my Sunday reservation on the airline was postponed one additional day so that I could get to the bank on Monday. The North Jersey DX Association came to the rescue again and these fellows sure did everything possible to make my stay in the New York area a pleasant one. I spent that evening at W2JT's and we had another get-together with more of the local ham population.

The Trip

I departed on Monday, as scheduled, for Paris where I arrived at 7:00 A.M. I was to have been met at the airport by F9OE but, unfortunately, our signals had crossed somewhere and I was stranded at the airport. On arriving in town, I learned that hotel rooms were virtually non-existent due to the fact that a world trade fair was being held in Paris at that time. After much trouble and a little bit of good luck, I finally found a room at \$15 per day. Next, to clean-up and try and locate F9OE. There was no phone listing for him and then I thought I would be real smart and try to locate headquarters of the R.E.F., but they, too, were not listed in the phone book. The only thing left to do at this point was to board a train and go to Versailles and check Box 62, which is the R.E.F. post box. I finally found the address of the R.E.F. in Paris, so back on the train again, subway and taxi and I finally found F9OE. We had a very wonderful visit but I was to find out that much to my regret,



From the hotel in Liberville, W0MLY's Hy-Gain trap vertical was mounted on the balcony of the bedroom, overlooking the Gulf of Guinea. Dick knocked off 2700 s.s.b. and c.w. QSOs in nothing flat.

no one in France was going to be of much assistance with any of the details for my African trip. When the former French colonies severed their relations with France, that thoroughly severed these relations too.

That night, a very enjoyable evening was spent with several of the R.E.F. members in Paris. Little did I know that my troubles were about to start. I was to leave the next night at 2130 and finally managed to depart at 0200. After many other formal delays, I finally arrived in Liberville, Gabon.

Troubles

I was all set to go. Written operating permission in hand, equipment sent on ahead, all I needed was a room and I was all set. Three hours later and with all possible places checked out, there was *no* room available. I went up to the American Ambassador's house for help. He finally made arrangements for a place for me to stay for three or four days. It was an empty room in an embassy employee's apartment. I slept (?) on two packing boxes.

With the room arrangements taken care of temporarily, I went about the business of getting on the air. I went to check with the official who had given me operating permission to let him know that I was ready to begin my operation. However, much to my regret, I learned that he had been removed from office because of improper conduct and his replacement was giving me the well-known brush off. Finally at 2130 local time (they work nights here because of the heat during the day) I emerged with permission to operate for a ten-day period. The only reason permission was granted was that I had come over on the strength of the letter which I had received. I do not know what the future holds for amateur radio here but it looks dim at this juncture.

Well, at last I did have a place to operate and operating permission was granted. Now, back to the airport for the equipment, but alas, it was too good to last and now I learned that the equipment had not arrived. A radio tracer was sent out on the equipment. I was in very low spirits as I returned to my packing-box bed. At this point, I was really crying in my beer and one must drink beer here as you don't drink the water. Four days later, the equipment arrived on a non-scheduled cargo plane, or should I say that most of the equipment arrived. A quick check disclosed that one box was missing and much to my horror, the missing box contained the SX-115. So, there I was sitting with a license that was going to expire in seven days with a transmitter, antenna, and operating position, but no receiver. From this point, I decided that on any future trip everything was going in one box. One large box is difficult to handle but it is also very difficult to lose in traveling.

I finally located an old, inoperative S-76 at the airport and managed to borrow it. After a

considerable amount of effort, I got the receiver into working condition and the first CQ from W0MLY/TR8 was sent out.

Operations

The first few days were spent on c.w. only as the box which contained the receiver also contained the microphone. Quite a few Europeans were worked before the band opened to the States. One of the first W-contacts was W2JT and I asked Earl if he could get my sad tale of woe to Chicago and see if arrangements could be made to send another SX-115 to Brazzaville. After two days on c.w., I had an idea and looked around for someone with a tape recorder. I finally found one and for a nominal consideration, I rented the microphone for the weekend and W0MLY/TR8 was on s.s.b., much to the delight of the phone men. Tuning s.s.b. on the S-76 was quite a chore to say the least.

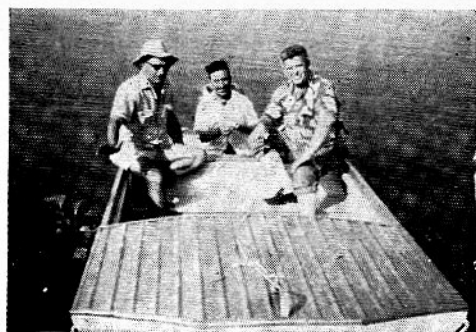
The /TR8 operation is now past history. With over 2700 contacts, I think Gabon can safely be taken from the rare list. At the end of the operation, quite a few CQs were called with no response.

Some trouble was experienced at the start, from some fellows wanting to work me many times; not just *twice*, but eight or nine times, if I let them do it. I finally had to call them down for it and this soon stopped. On c.w., I had to stop tail ending. Not that tail ending in itself is bad, it's only that very shortly, front ending, middle ending and complete bedlam takes place. One of my pet peeves are the boys who would not respect a directional call. At times I would come back with something like; K8A?? and I stand by. Listening on the frequency, you wouldn't believe there were so many K8A?? on at one time. So back I went calling the same fellow again. When everyone did cooperate, contact speed doubled. When the band was open, I averaged sixty to sixty-four contacts per hour. The best was five in one minute on s.s.b. What most of the W-boys didn't realize was that by the time the band had open to W-land, I had already been on the air for six to eight hours working Europeans and far eastern stations.

There was one particular W3 who insisted on trying to break up my s.s.b. contacts with his c.w. I warned him three times but he did not heed the warnings so I deleted him from the log and I will certainly not work him at any future stops. After working for twelve to sixteen hours in 100° to 105° heat, with nothing but QRM, patience wears thin at times, at least mine did.

There were times when I just could not send what I was thinking. My fist just would not cooperate. An electronic key was also new to me and I had only a few hours practice before leaving the states but I will whip it before I am finished here (I hope).

All operation was accomplished with a 10-



Moving on from Liberville as W0MLY/TR8, Dick took time out in Brazzaville to visit with TN8AL and TN8-AJ. That's one of the few powered boats on the Congo River.

15-20 meter Hy-Gain trap vertical without the radials. It worked so well I did not bother to install a beam for 20 meters. If more people worked 15, I could have had more contacts with the states. I ran out of stateside contacts on 15 and the band was open to the states when 20 meters was not. I got quite a chuckle out of one fellow who told me he had been calling me for two hours on a transceiver and on every call he had to tune from 14001 to 14340. This should be quite a test for the gear-train mechanism in his rig. Then there was one W2 who insisted I was not W0MLY, as he looked in the *Call Book* and W0MLY was listed as George R. McKercher, and I was giving my handle as "Dick." I wonder what he thought the "R" stood for, Rabbit perhaps?

The operation was closed down at 0700 GMT, June 6th. The gear was packed and shipped to Bangui, TL8-land, which is the next stop. I departed for Brazzaville to obtain the new receiver which was waiting at the South African airlines office. After a three and half hour uneventful trip, I arrived in Brazzaville and checked into a hotel. I went to the bank to pick up some money which had been wired ahead. The bank was closed so things were again back to normal. I was unable to locate the airline office and checked with the American Embassy. They told me that a Mr. Jones handled the South African airlines from his home. So, out I go and, you guessed it, no record of shipment of my receiver. I went to the airport and checked with the other airlines but no luck there either. Tracers were immediately sent out but nothing positive was established. I thought things like this only happened in stories, not in real life. Fortunately, I had the foresight to get the use of the S-76, if I promised to return it. At least I will be able to get on the air in TL8. I do not expect to get any results before I leave for TL8-land, so I am still sitting here crying in my beer. I guess I had better have another ham sandwich and get to bed.

So, Phase I of the trip is now history. Will keep you all informed of future operations! ■

DXpedition To Africa

Part II

BY GEORGE R. (DICK) McKERCHER*, WØMLY



As you will remember, last month I was sitting in my hotel room in Brazzaville crying in my beer because the second receiver had not yet arrived. For some unknown reason, I decided to stay in Brazzaville for one extra day before moving on to Bangui, Central African Republic. So, on Sunday morning I went to the airport to change my reservations. To my dismay, everything was at a complete standstill. The President of the Republic of Congo was returning from a trip and in the due course of events I arrived amidst the cheers from the throng which had gathered at the airport.

But, as fate would have it, while I was wandering around the airport, I came upon a KLM wagon with air freight piled on top of it. With nothing better to do and being of curious nature, I started looking over the freight and lo and behold on one end was a box with a Hallicrafter label. My excitement at this point must have reached a fever pitch and as I was unpiling boxes to see if this one might belong to me, the guards started coming out on the double. Then things really began to happen. With me trying to haul the receiver off and the guards holding me back, the airport manager came over to see what was the cause of the trouble and why such a sizeable crowd had gathered on a quiet Sunday morning. He explained that KLM was going to open an office but had not done so as of yet and suggested that I should come back next week. When I had come so close to getting my receiver I was not about to let it out of my sight. So, we compromised. He went up to call the KLM agent and I stayed and watched my receiver. In a couple of hours the agent arrived and he explained that he was very sorry but the office had not yet been completed so they were not open for business. All hell broke loose again and in no uncertain terms I told him I was going to take the receiver with me or that I was going to go to jail trying.

Safe At Last

Finally he agreed to take the freight charges and he let me take the receiver. This was highly irregular, he told me. I was the first KLM

customer in Brazzaville! I thought I had won this hard fight when I next discovered I could not have the receiver, due to Customs, and since this was Sunday, Customs was closed. At least I could understand this so I escorted the receiver to the Customs House and left after I was sure it was safely under lock and key. I was so relieved that I forgot my original purpose for coming to the airport and did not cancel my reservation for Monday. Sunday night was a night of rejoicing.

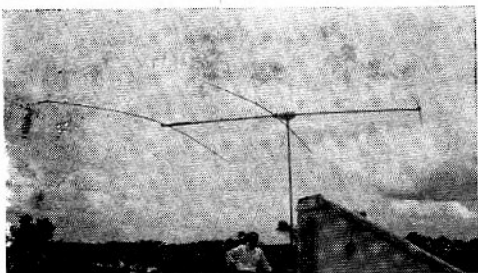
During the course of events in Brazzaville, I obtained a license to operate in TN8-land if I had the desire to do so. Since my equipment was sent from TR8- to TL8-land, there was not much chance. This was fortunate, since I had the opportunity to operate on s.s.b. for a few contacts as we will see later. One night, while visiting with TN8AJ, I did operate as WØMLY/TN8 for 46 contacts on c.w. I had some very nice visits with the TN8 boys. There are five hams there but only two are active and one does not QSL, hi.

Back to the story. Monday morning, bright and early, I went out to Customs. I was there when they opened the office and explained that this receiver was the one which Air France had misplaced and that I had paid the duty for all equipment in Liberville, Gabon. I produced the papers to prove this and also the claim against Air France for the loss. They told me



The local food situation was from hunger and far from being the best from the standpoint of cleanliness. To avoid any DXpedition-killing illness, Dick shunned local produce in favor of canned food wherever possible. Water, too, was of doubtful quality so beer or tea were the order of the day.

*Perry, Iowa.



Slightly askew, but workable just the same, is the beam used by Dick at WØMLY/TL8. The modern Hotel Rock in Bangui, the site of his Gabon operations, stands in striking contrast to the mud hut Dick was to operate from in the Republic of the Congo.

that the duty I had paid in Gabon was not applicable in Congo! So more talking ensued and I told them I knew that duty paid in any one of the Federated States which include Gabon, Congo, Central African Republic and Tchad would apply to all. They were quite surprised that I knew this, so there was nothing for them to do but shake their heads hopelessly and agree with me. They were probably thinking, what crazy people, these Americans.

With the receiver on my shoulder, I headed for the Air France freight office where I made out the papers to ship it to Bangui, but only after they promised that the receiver would go on the same plane on which I was to travel. With this accomplished there was nothing to do but go back to the bar run by TN8AY. I think that's all I better tell of this story!

The plane was due to leave at 1:30 P.M. Tuesday, so at 11:00 A.M. I was at the airport and checked the way bills for the freight going to Bangui and sure enough the receiver was there. I watched them load it on the plane and then went to lunch. I then returned to check-in and realized suddenly that I had not changed my reservation and not knowing what else to do I decided I had to bluff my way. I explained that I had telephoned on Sunday to change the flight. They proceeded to call and check this and found there was no record. I steadfastly insisted that I called so they decided to check with the Sunday duty clerk. The day was saved when he could not be located and since they had no way of checking for sure they put me on the plane.

At Bangui

The plane left on schedule and arrived on schedule, which is truly amazing. I arrived at Bangui Airport uneventfully and went to the American Embassy to notify them of my arrival. I was met with a very cold shoulder. They wanted to know why I had shipped the radio equipment from Liberville to the Bangui Embassy freight collect. I showed them the shipping bill and it plainly indicated that the equipment was to be left at the airport at the Air France desk. At this point, everyone re-

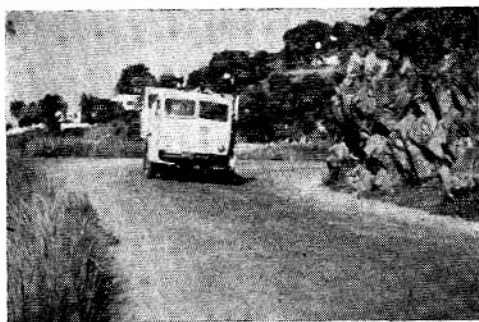
laxed and they told me the equipment was upstairs. On the way up I came cross Bud, K4ASU, installing teletype equipment. He had already opened the boxes and discovered who I was and if I did not arrive when I did, I believe he would have had the equipment on the air. Without any difficulty, I checked into a bottom floor room in the Hotel Rock. The next day I picked up the receiver at the airport and all the equipment was in one place for the first time since I left New York.

I went to the PTT (Post Telegraphs & Telephone) in order to obtain operating permission and was advised that Mr. Foucauld, who was the person to grant this permission, would not be in that day; however, he made an appointment for me on the following day. During the day, I checked the hotel for possible radio operation and decided to move to the top floor. It was a beautiful location and I spent the remainder of the day installing the equipment and the vertical.

The Ticket

Next morning I filled out the necessary forms for operating permission and was informed in an apologetic manner that it would cost me 400 francs or \$1.00 for the license. I think I almost tore my pocket getting out the money. Mr. Foucauld stamped the papers and was in business. I was confined to twenty meters for some unknown reason but I did not care to argue. The reason operating permission was so easily obtained was due to the letter of authorization to operate issued in Gabon by the Minister of Interior. That letter opened a lot of doors.

Operation as WØMLY/TL8 started June 13th at 1815 GMT with G4CP followed by JA1DM. First Ws were W4ML at 1843 followed by W1KXU. That night was really a mad house. K4ASU and myself divided the operating. The following morning I was told I would have to move rooms as I caused too much noise at 2:30 A.M. local time. Since I did not want to be put in the street at this



Some 2340 contacts after arriving in Gabon (TL8), Dick was on the road again. This time, however, his complete Hallicrafters rig was tucked safely under his wing in the rear of a truck. Next stop TN8.

time, we moved all the gear into another room. The next day Bud and I put up the beam for better operation to the states and it was well worth the effort. Closed operations after 2340 contacts with W7OCL at 0310 GMT June 18th.

TN8 Operation

Having made inquiries I figured I could get to Bayanga in the Republic of Congo for a couple of days of s.s.b. operation as there has been no previous s.s.b. operation from Congo previously, but quite a bit of c.w. operation. After four hours sleep I got up and packed the gear into the truck for the ninety mile trip to Bayanga. What a ride that turned out to be. Where they got the nerve to call that road a "road" much less put it on a map, I'll never know!

I arrived about 3:30 in the morning local time and proceeded to bargain for a mud hut which I could use for an operating shack. I came to terms and started to set up the equipment. Everyone in the village turned out and stood around and watched. I just put everything inside the hut, with the vertical in position and it started to pour. The roof seemed to leak everywhere. I finally got just about everything covered but all the gear was wet in the boxes. Nevertheless, when I fired up at 1810 GMT on June 18th everything worked fine and SM5UF was there waiting for me. He was followed by 4X4IX. The first Ws were W8EAP at 1845 GMT followed by K1ELS. All operation was confined to s.s.b. as no key or keyer was brought along. This was to be a test run to see how the s.s.b. boys would back up their plea for a new country. I was to depart on June 20th for my return to Bangui but the rains had caused the river to rise and covered part of the "road" so we could not leave until Tuesday.

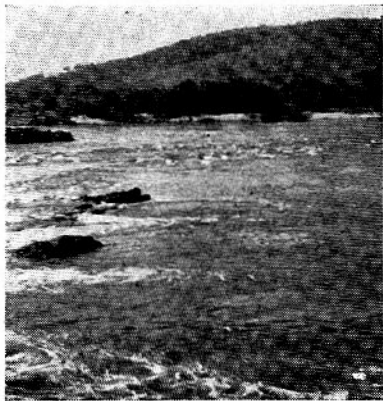
A total of 1140 contacts were made from TN8 with the last entry in the log being K6LED. So, after five hours sleep, back we went to Bangui.

TT8 Operation

This part of the trip was very uneventful. I started from Bangui in the Central African



The "Route 66" of the Congo! This narrow, rutted dirt road was responsible for many "saddle-sores" on the grueling 90 mile trek from Bangui to Bayanga.



Some 1140 s.s.b. contacts were made from W0MLY/TN8 in Bayanga. Dick's departure from the Republic of the Congo was delayed by a swollen and rather turbulent river that covered part of the "road."

Republic where I boarded a plane for Fort Archambault, Tchad. This spot was selected to cut expenses, which were half of what it would have cost to go to Fort Lamy. When I arrived in Fort Archambault, I was the only passenger to get off the plane. I waited for the equipment to be unloaded and then started looking for transportation to the hotel which was three miles away. There was no transportation available into town, so I hired six boys at \$2.00 each to carry one box of equipment to the hotel. We were quite a sight going down the main street headed for the Hotel Chasser. At the hotel, my room was waiting as I had reservations which I made in advance and had also determined that power was available. Getting set up in my room was no problem and I had a native climb a tree and put the vertical as near to the top as possible. It was not in the clear, but it worked out very well. Operation was started on the 22nd of June, 1962 when the first CQ was answered by VU2JA at 1630 GMT. He was followed by W1ZW and W2ZX. The battle was on once again.

At 2100 GMT the lights went out and after I waited for a few minutes, I decided to check on the trouble. The manager informed me that they stopped the power plant in the hotel at 10:00 P.M. local time. This was the start of some fast talking. It seems the boy who operates the plant is only hired until 10:00 P.M., so with the promise to pay for his wages for four extra hours a day, plus the extra fuel bill, I was back in business. All told, it came to \$5.20 per day extra. The owner of the hotel was quite willing since previously, they used candles in the bar after 10:00 P.M.

This was the first time I had ever operated completely under mosquito netting. The bugs and mosquitos were really terrible.

The next morning I was awakened by a pounding on the door. Making myself presentable, I answered the door and was greeted by the local law enforcement. They were quite

[Continued on page 92]

perturbed because I had come into town without checking in at Customs and Immigration. When I explained there was no one at the airport when I arrived, they really got upset. It seems that someone was supposed to have met me at the plane, but whoever it was must have been goofing off somewhere. After checking my passport and papers, we retired to the bar for a drink. Beer at 6:30 in the morning, ugggghhhh. But it was all worth it as we parted on the very best of terms.

I am now saying bonjour to everyone I meet and doing everything but kissing them on both cheeks. Perhaps when I meet a French girl, I will begin this custom also. I think they must hide all the girls when the American radio man comes into town.

The eating habits which I have established have paid off very well as I have not been sick for one day or even had a headache. The first few days in Gabon were very bad, but that was the effect of a shot which I had taken. An old saying which I had learned has really helped: "If you can't peel it, boil it." This includes everything, even water. I eat one meal per day in the restaurant. The rest of the time I eat canned hams, canned fruits and fresh fruits, mainly oranges, bananas and pineapple. The water you buy is in quart bottles which are shipped in from France, otherwise you drink beer, which is cheaper. Not being a beer drinker I do not relish the latter. At meals I get hot tea. Never eat any salad, that is absolutely out. Also, any item with milk or cream, such as custard and pastry. They probably use canned or powdered milk which is alright, but the heat over here soon spoils these things. Soup is alright since it is boiled. Once in a while I will eat a piece of meat in the hotel, but most of the time I have to send

it back to be cooked more. Never eat any meat that is the least bit pink in the middle. The hook worms are in all the meat over here. The heat will kill them, but you must make sure that the meat is cooked thoroughly to the center. Most of the time I slice the meat very thin and then send it back to be cooked more and it returns looking like crisp bacon. It destroys the flavor, but at least I am safe, I hope. There is an abundance of potatoes here so French fries are no problem. Another one of my staples is egg omelet. When I return to the states, I will not want to look at ham, or canned fruit for a long time. I have lost 18 pounds since I arrived in Africa, but I can well afford to lose it.

The TT8 operation came to a close after 1781 QSOs, the last entry on the log being W2ROM at 0552 GMT June 27th.

All the equipment is packed and will be transported to the airport by truck this time. I am all set to go to Douha in the Cameroons from where the stories will be resumed next month.

In closing this episode, I would like to add a few words concerning expenses. As I mentioned last month the Yasme Foundation is the sponsor of this DXpedition. Without their financial help I certainly would be in no position to make this trip. It would be appreciated if contributions could be included with the QSL cards to help defray operating expenses. I was very much surprised to hear that about 50% did not even send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for their TR8 cards. All QSLs for this expedition should go via GV4AA.

That about wraps it up for this month. We will have more for you next month. ■

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Part III, Conclusion

BY GEORGE R. (DICK) McKERCHER*, W0MLY

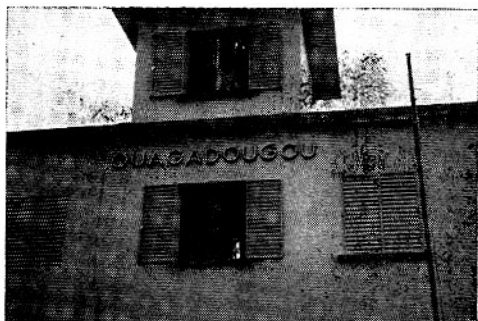
W0MLY/TJ8 is now past history. However, this last leg of the operation started when after signing off as TT8 at Ft. Archambault, I departed for Duala in the Cammeroons as W0MLY/TJ8. I arrived in Duala on the 28th of June and everything was in readiness, even the hotel reservations were waiting for me. It was quite a switch. The day after my arrival I applied for permission to operate and this was readily granted after I produced the other letters which I had from the previous places. After obtaining operating permission, my next stop was to the airport for the equipment and there it was. Although I anticipated some delay at Customs, I discovered that all I had to do was to produce \$20.00 and I was on my way with the equipment. Getting the equipment into the hotel room and set up was no problem, however, I didn't make it common knowledge that I had put an antenna on the roof out of sight of ground because I was sure Management would not approve. The first night of operation, all went well, which was June 29th, 1962. My first contact after eight CQ's was DJ1BZ at 1535 GMT followed by DL1PM at 1536 GMT and W2AEB at 1537.

The following day I decided to go down to the Post Office and upon my return to the hotel, the Manager called me into his office and demanded an explanation concerning the things in my room. It seems the cleaning boy "discovered" them and naturally reported it. After much discussion it was decided that I could remain if I paid the equivalent of \$2.00 a day extra for the electricity which I would be using. Since this was the only hotel, I agreed. From this point on, operation proceeded without any problems and ended July 5th, 1962 at 0619 with IIAMU finishing up as the last contact and I'd had 2028 QSO's. The gear was now packed up and shipped on to Contonou Republic Dahomey.

The trip from Duala to the Contonou Republic of Dahomey was quite uneventful. I arrived on Saturday, July 7th, 1962 and checked into the La Plage hotel. On Sunday, since it is a day of rest, I did just that by lolling on the beach and swimming in the Gulf of Guinea. It was a beautiful day and I thoroughly enjoyed it. This was heaven compared to the Central part of Africa. The breeze from

the ocean was unbelievable.

Another good thing was that my hotel was only one block away from the Air France office and they were open on Sunday. I just went down to take a little look and sure enough, the equipment was there, but it had not yet gone through Customs. So bright and early Monday morning I headed for the office of the Minister of Interior with all my papers and found that I only had one problem. He wasn't there. He was on vacation. So, after much explaining to the Director of the Interior and since I guess he felt that he was in charge and wanted to use some authority, permission was granted. I didn't argue. As far as my call was concerned, he said I could have any call I wanted so TY2MY was borne into existence for ten days. On July 9th, with all matters squared away and everything very official down on paper, I was on my way. Now, all I had to do was pick up the equipment. I say "all" because since I had no problems yet I felt this part would be a snap, fool that I am. Upon arrival I found that I had to go to Customs. Seemed like no problem until I learned that Customs was across the river, three miles away. So, off I go once again. There I learned that I had to pay 30% duty, but by this time I had learned to shrug my shoulders and wave my hands with the best of them, and was hoping for fast and favorable results. He wanted to know what I intended to do and what was the equipment for. I explained that I was a salesman and these were samples to show. He understood this, so would I please bring the gear to his office after lunch for an inspection.



One of the few places where Dick had no trouble with customs, visas and such was Ouagadougou, Mali. Not so for most other places, however.

*Perry, Iowa.



After his arrival stateside, Dick explains to Earl Lucas, W2JT that he's nowhere to be found in the log

Figuring this might be a little opening, I invited him to have lunch with me. Lunch at the hotel was very good and we agreed that he would return to his office while I would pick up the gear and deliver it for inspection. When I got to the Air France office they requested Customs papers, I explained before I could get the papers I had to deliver the equipment there for inspection. I was advised, no papers, no equipment. Finally, I decided to call the Customs officer and he told Air France to send the equipment over to him which they did and they opened every single box for my friend, the Customs officer, so that every single piece of gear could be examined. To him the HT-37 and SX-115 don't look like receivers, well, not like any he's ever seen anyway. However, after his free lunch I guess he wasn't in too much of a mood to argue. Next he wanted to know how he could be sure I would take everything when I left. I told him we could weigh everything and it would be the same weight coming in and going out. So, with a deposit of \$300.00, one third of the total value, I departed for the hotel. All I kept thinking was I sure hope I get this money back since it belongs to the Yasme Foundation.

The first thing I did was to install the vertical for hurry-up operation. I opened up shop at 1547 GMT on July 9th with ZS1JA, followed by ZS6AMV and MP4BBW. The first W was K5FLD at 1955 GMT ARRL ninety contacts later. The band was really lousy.

The next day I wanted to put up the beam, but no dice. So I had to stick it out with the vertical. After an uneventful operation, except for band conditions being poor, operation was closed down on July 16, 1962 at 0630 GMT with OH2PM I had 1674 contacts, not as well as I would have liked to have done, but the best I could do under the band conditions. During my stay at Contonou, I made a trip to Lome to get my operating permission and before you knew it I was on my way.

Lome, Togo, 5V4MY

Having packed the gear on Monday, July 16th, I proceeded to check out of Customs, picked up my \$300.00 deposit, and sent the equipment on its way via Manning bus. This

is the means of transportation between Contonou and Lome. Usually there are twenty to twenty-five people on the bus and overhead is all the baggage, some of which is chickens, bicycles, goats, etc. So, with all this, what would a few boxes matter. Upon arrival at the border, all passengers pile out and walk by the Police and Duane. The papers are then checked and a casual look is given to the "baggage" overhead. Then the bus is driven across the border and everyone piles back in. One thing, since I thought it would have been quite obvious if I had put all the boxes on one bus, I put only one box on a bus and six buses later, all was in the clear. Now, all I had to do was be in Lome when they all arrived. For a change, no hitch, and I checked into the Hotel Benim. This was class. Six stories, high, swimming pool, air conditioned. I was really living. Then, in the afternoon, surrounding the pool were bikini-clad decorations. What living and for only \$18 00 a day. Getting back to business I learned that I could put an antenna on the roof but no beam. Operation was started at 1531 GMT July 17th with 6OIND on the third CQ, then HB9KO at 1534 GMT. First W was W3ZKH. 67 contacts later. Band conditions were still poor. During my stay, I called on the Minister of Public Affairs for Mali, whom I had met when I applied for permission to operate in Togo. He was staying at the same hotel. After a few drinks, and a delicious meal, I approached him with the idea of operating in Mali. I showed him the equipment and how it worked. He was impressed and said he would inquire whether or not this was possible. Three days later I was informed that I could return the following Monday if I cared to. Everything was set. Since I had intended to finish up on Sunday, everything was working out well. Only comment to make at this point was that band conditions were poor and I was learning about some kind of ruling being made by the ARRL.

It was starting to get interesting. I could find no clear spots to operate s.s.b., the South American a.m. boys murdered me. With 1646 contacts, I completed operation, gear was packed and I departed for the airport. All I kept thinking was what lies ahead in Bamako. I had heard many stories about the place, but I felt there wasn't too much to worry about. We'll see.

En route to Bamako, there were no incidents. We did stop off at Ouagadougou for a few minutes, but that was all. There were no problems, not with Customs, not with Police. Perhaps because I was with the Minister of Public Affairs? He suggested that I stay at his brother's house and I went along with the idea as I felt I was on thin ice to begin with. As you probably know, Mali does not lean toward the West, which is putting it mildly. At the house, after proper introductions were made, I was shown my room, which was on the second floor and very nice. I learned that only



If you've got this octet of very desirable QSLs, consider yourself a lucky fellow. Only a handful of these cards were sent direct.

servants and stock used the first floor of the house. The equipment was delivered the next day and I was soon set up and operation was started July 24th at 1210 GMT with SP9PT followed by OK2KOG at 1212. The first W was K4TML at 1610 GMT followed by W2UVE at 1611 GMT. The band was very good that night, however, the following day it was very poor again, and it was the only time I was unable to keep a sked with KV4AA. I had only 79 contacts on the 25th and none in the USA. The band closed at 2043 that evening. The next morning I was up at 0500 GMT and I had no contact until 0554 which was with MP4BBW. While talking to Ian, I remarked there was a large amount of shouting and talking going on outside, however, I didn't pay too much attention to it. About ten minutes later, there was a pounding on the door. I told Ian to stand by and answered the door. A native was yelling Fumer, Fumer! Taking a quick look, I grabbed the mike and told Ian the place was on fire. I started thinking of things to take out. I did grab the logs and a few other things and headed out the window, across the roof and dropped down to the ground, which was about ten feet below. I was going to go back for more but the fire was well under way and there was no chance at all to get back in. Fortunately, my passport was at the American Embassy, my plane ticket was at the airlines office. Some of the papers were lost along with the camera, and some money. All the gear was lost. Nothing left to do but pack up and head for home. I left on Saturday, July 28th, on Air France heading for Paris. The last contact was, of course, MP4BBW, being contact #710 from Mali. You might say the DXpedition ended in a blaze, however, not one of glory. I arrived in Paris at 0700 GMT on the 29th and departed for New York City at 1200 GMT. I arrived in New York at 2031 GMT Sunday, July 29th. I rented a car and drove to W2JT's house because I had left my car there. Because I seem to time things right, I walked in on Earl's birthday party. That evening several of the NJDXA members came by to visit and we talked over the goings on of the trip. The next day was spent in New

York City, Monday to get all matters squared away and Tuesday evening I was given a very fine steak dinner by the gang. Brother, did I enjoy it.

On Tuesday, I left for Flint, Michigan to visit with W8EWS and gave him a rundown of the trip. Thereafter, Chicago was the next stop and I tried to explain the loss of the gear. A great weight was lifted from my shoulders when I was told not to worry too much about the loss. Had it not been for Halicrafters, this DXpedition would not have been possible nor would it have been as successful. Because of their generosity, Hams all over the world have many new countries and I had a thoroughly enjoyable experience, save for a few incidents here and there.

I left for home on Friday and arrived at 7:30 P.M. local time. Sure was glad to be there. Next morning, after taking one look at the yard, the garden, and a few chores to be done. I was ready to return to Africa.

Well, it was all over. I want to thank all the fellows who were cooperative. There was no one deleted from the log. Some might be having difficulty receiving QSLs because of various reasons, time, date, s.a.s.e., etc. However, all in all, considering the entire operation I had 99% cooperation. The other 1%, of course, has sent quite a few "pleasant" letters to me, but that's how it goes. Can't please all the people all the time.

One thing I can say with all sincerity. I did the best I could. That is all I could do. After talking to quite a few fellows since I've been home, I feel pleased in knowing most of you aren't complaining. That's good because who knows, I might just do it again some time.

Vy 73, Dick, W0MLY



"Sorry, old man, but they say you're getting into their drums."