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DX
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Navassa Island 1992

"So---Let's Go On A DXpedition"

by Randy Rowe NØTG

The beginning of the 1992 DXpedition to Navassa Island began well over a year prior to our actual departure. This was to be my second trip to Navassa (the previous one was in 1978), and it began again this second time as it did the first time—a couple of us sitting around and coming up with an idea and statement "Let's go on a DXpedition". This soon was followed with "where", "when", "how". None of these questions could be answered with any confidence, but rather just dreams. We just put our heads together and with blind determination put it together. I need to say up front, however, that many fellow hams and friends assisted us in many ways to make the DXpedition possible. We note this with a great deal of appreciation. None of us are all that experienced at this sort of thing. The beginning of the DXpedition was from the time we first made the statement "let's go on a DXpedition"; for it was from that point forward that we began our planning.

About a year prior to the

DXpedition my good friend Dave WØRJU and myself began the process of setting where and when. At that same time I received a letter from Murray

WA4DAN who had worked the 1978 DXpedition to Navassa and was writing to me to inquire about any information that I could share from that experience

since he and his friend Bob KW2P were thinking of going to Navassa. Though a series of letters we became well acquainted with each other and shared many of the same philosophies. We learned that we possessed complimentary skills and so we formed the beginning of the 1992 Navassa team. Unfortunately, Dave WØRJU had to drop out due to business matters. This meant that we would need to add at least one more person and ultimately decided to add two more members to the team. Several months later Murray became the recruiter and received affirmative answers to join the team from Ron AA4VK and Will AA4NC. Speaking personally, what a great group of guys. Murray and Bob had worked together as a team on several IOTA DXpeditions. Ron and Will came well experienced having been to the effort in Russia. In the selection pro-



*Who said "that getting there is half the fun!"?
Randy NØTG and Bob KW2P are taking turns feeding the fish.*



Anticipation was high as we sailed from the big ship, in the dingy with one of the Jamaican crew members, as he directs the short but uneventful trip to our landing site.

cess we determined that if we were going to be living together for a week or so that a lot of things were important other than just being interested in DX or being a good operator. We went to great lengths to assure that our personalities were a good mix. It was important to us that everyone would be able to get along and to enjoy each other. We wanted to assure that this DXpedition would be to the best of our ability a credible operation as well as a fun time for the team members.

Selecting Navassa Island became more of a practical matter than anything else. Having been there I had personal experience to draw upon. Also, I had the contacts to make the necessary arrangements for a chartered boat out of Kingston, Jamaica to take us to the island. We felt Navassa was affordable, particularly if we could get some assistance. Navassa, according to *The DX Magazine* Most Wanted survey, was in the top 10 for JA, number 23 for Europe, and number 53 overall. Given the new WARC bands and RTTY it could be assured that Navassa would produce bug pile-ups and give lots of fellow hams that New One on some mode or band.

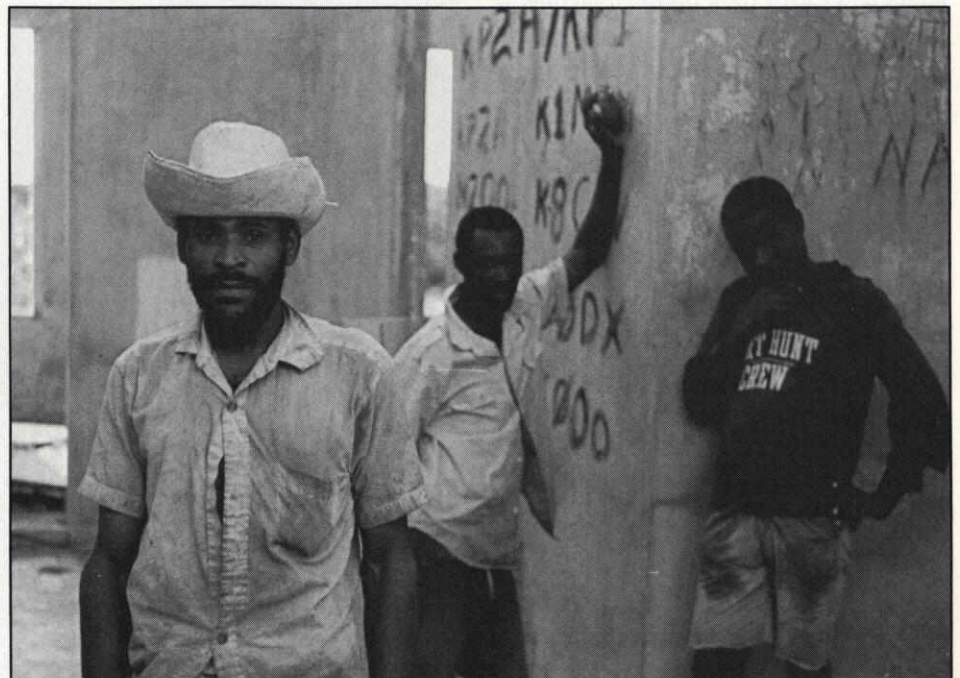
We planned for over one year; we sought financial assistance, determined equipment needs, prepared publicity, and developed a strategy to be able to

assure the maximum QSOs. Planning cannot be over emphasized and proved to be key in assuring minimal problems.

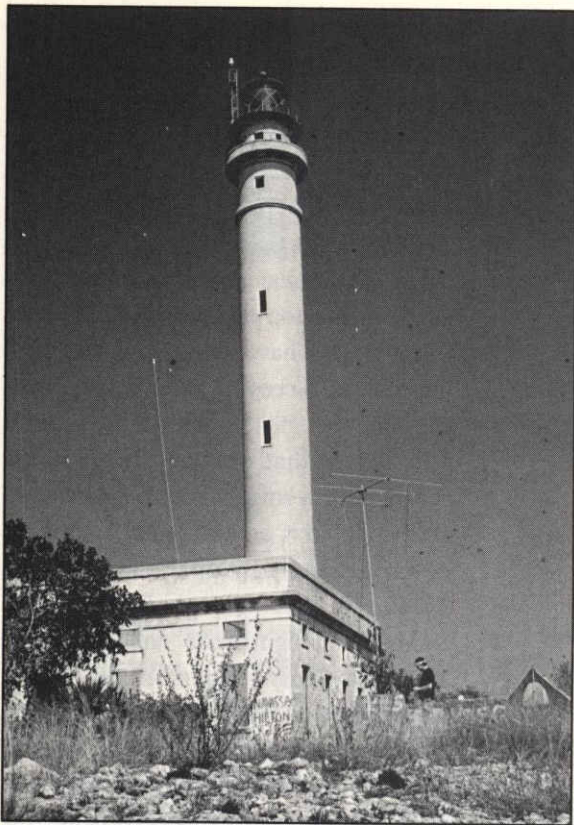
Navassa, the first U.S. possession in the Caribbean, is not a friendly environment. The island is uninhabited except for a half dozen or so Haitians who have taken refuge there recently. Navassa Island lies 90 miles south of Cuba, 100 miles northeast of Jamaica and 30 miles west of Haiti. Navassa Island, (Lat. 18-24 N, Long. 76-01 W) is a volcanic-type rock that jets out of the

ocean with 50-100 foot cliffs. There is no beach; it is a very non-Caribbean type island. The 1.5-square mile island terrain is extremely rough—very jagged razor-sharp rock, cactus, brush, ravines, and small trees. There is a relatively smooth clearing near the landing site as well as immediately near and around the lighthouse at the top of the island. Previous DXpeditions have set-up operations at these areas. Access to the island is possible only by climbing a stainless steel rope ladder that dangles 40 feet to the ocean from a cliff. The only installation on the island is an automatic, unattended navigational light operated and maintained by the United States Coast Guard. The lighthouse and associated lighthouse keeper's quarters were built in the early 1900's. The quarters are now ruins without a roof, but most of the walls and concrete floors are still in place. These old quarters became the operating location for the DXpedition. The lighthouse base is 250 feet above sea level. The height of the lighthouse is 150 feet.

Having decided that Navassa was the place, the most immediate concern was



The local Haitians living on the island helped carry equipment from the landing site to the top of the hill.



The Carolina Windoms and the six-meter beam make a nice addition to the Navassa Hilton, known to the locals as the lighthouse ruins.

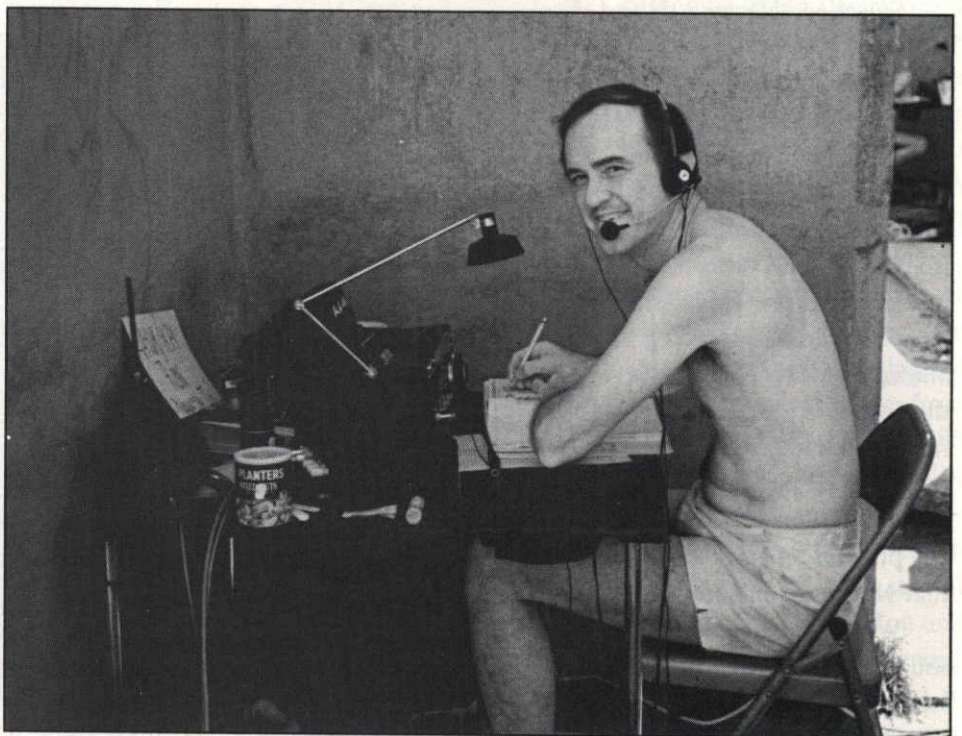
whether we could acquire and afford the boat transportation required. I contacted 6Y5LA Lloyd in Kingston, Jamaica who assisted us in 1978. It was a great reunion and Lloyd took on the assignment and indicated he would get back with me in a couple of weeks. As we awaited word from Lloyd, Murray WA4DAN, Bob KW2P, and myself began the process of initial equipment and logistics planning. Ron AA4VK and Will AA4NC had not yet been recruited. We signed them up several months later.

After a few weeks I received word from Lloyd: the boat was a possibility. This was exciting news which I immediately shared with the other team members. Lloyd had made a number of inquiries and it appeared that our best opportunity to locate a boat would be to talk with Frank Vieira. Frank was the boat captain for the 1988 Navassa DXpedition lead by Bob N2EDF. I contacted Frank directly and we worked out an

agreement to charter a 60-foot fishing boat. At the same time both Bob KW2P and I talked with N2EDF regarding his experiences in 1988. Bob N2EDF provided invaluable information regarding the boat arrangements, customs, island conditions, and logistics. Various considerations went into selecting the date of the DXpedition. The hurricane season runs from about June through September. The other consideration was to choose a time that would maximize the low band efficiency. We set January 18 as the date to begin operations. Due to cost consideration and available vacation time by the participants, we felt that 6 days of operation would be the duration.

Hours and hours over the next several months went into planning every detail that we could possibly think of. We planned for five operators. The reason we chose

five is that we felt that it was a cost-effective number of operators. More operators than that would increase our support considerably in terms of food, water, transportation, equipment, etc. Also, it was nice that we could put five stations on the air simultaneously. That way, there was an operating position available at all times. This eliminated scheduling problems between operators had there been more than five. Everyone was busy all the time—no idle time to get bored or on someone else's nerves. It really worked out fine. Everyone had fun. Having fun, as well as providing KP1, was one of our up-front priorities. Our team made 33,462 contacts in five and one-half days of operation. Each operator supplied his own personal transceiver. The radios consisted of an IC-735, IC-751, (2) TS-440S, and FT-901DM. No linear amplifiers were used. Additional, the IDXF with the assistance of John KP2A loaned the team a TS-690S for use on six meters. RTTY equipment was loaned to us by the International RTTY DX Association through the coordination of W6PQS. Thanks to this group for which



Ron Oates AA4VK enjoys contacts made while using the Icom 751.

579 RTTY contacts were made possible. Murray WA4DAN and myself furnished the generators. We used only Murray's generator to power the five stations with my (NØTG) generator, graciously acquired from Tony ADØP who also was on the 1978 team, as a back-up. The generator was a 2200-watt Honda. It performed flawlessly. Murray did the load calculation requirements and son layout of AC cord runs. We were initially concerned that unleaded gasoline would not be available in Jamaica. We discovered when we arrived in Jamaica that unleaded was indeed available which made us feel more comfortable that the generator would perform according to its specification.

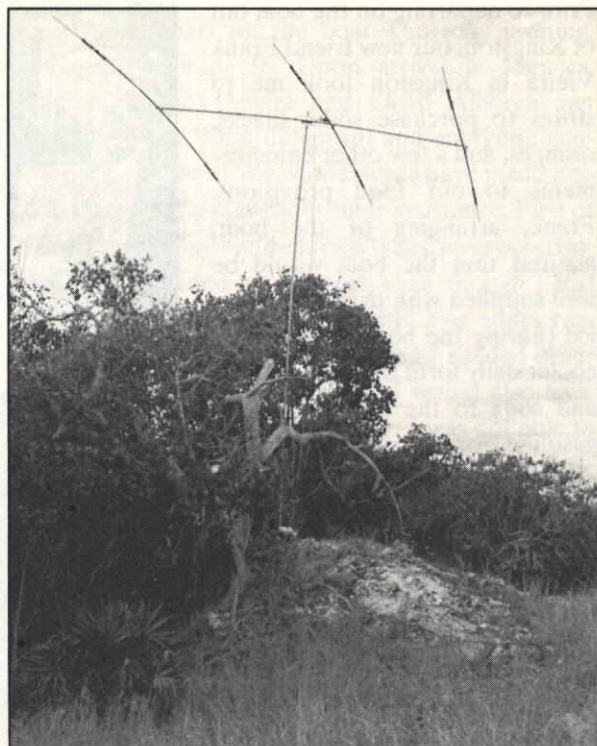
Antenna planning and evaluation ended with a decision to use essentially one kind of antenna. WØRJU provided propagation forecast data for our use in evaluating the type of antennas to use. We chose the Carolina Windom all band antenna—five of them. These antennas are made by The Radio Works, Inc. and were generously loaned to the Navassa DXpedition team by this fine company. They performed very well. On one occasion we know it out performed a three-element yagi by a bunch. The yagi was up about 25 feet and the Carolina windom was in a sloper configuration from 150 feet. They loaded very well on all frequencies including the WARC bands.

In all of the planning a primary consideration was to make every attempt to minimize the amount of items to ship. For the items that we determined were necessary to ship we worked at trying to keep the weight down. By hand carrying as much as possible and keeping the shipping weight down we hoped to minimize the cost. We shipped three crates: one crate each for the generators plus whatever else we could stuff into the crate and a third crate for various items—tools, camping equipment, AC

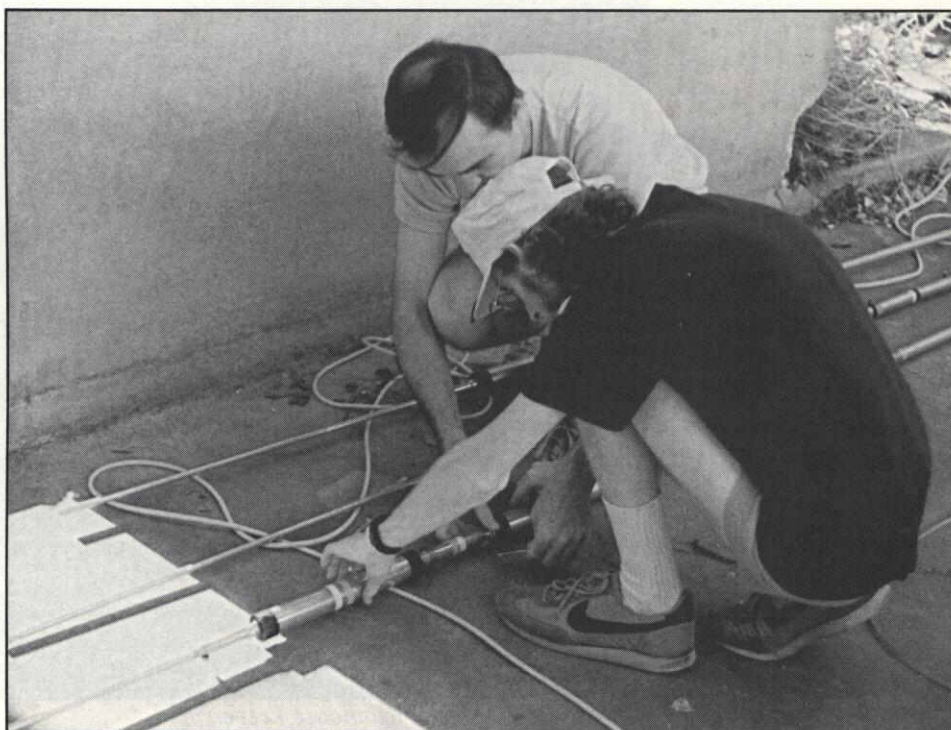
cords, rope, coax, etc. The final shipping weight was approximately 800 pounds. Everyone in combination of checked luggage and hand-carry luggage carried their radio, power supply, antenna, food, clothing, and many other things.

The planning continued.... What about tools, spares, medications, and first aid, rope for hauling equipment up the cliff, coax, tuners, keyers, night lighting, operating tables, chairs, log books, pencils, cooking utensils, sleeping tents, plastic tarps to protect equipment in case of rain, flashlights, AC cords, connectors, extensions, primary equipment, request for assistance, publicity, acquiring U.S. Coast Guard permission to land, food, etc. With regard to the food, we each took our own. We wanted to minimize cooking, so for the most part we all took freeze-dried meals for which the only

preparation is to open the package and add a cup or so of boiling water. Those meals were amazingly tasty consisting of beef and noodles, chicken and rice, pasta dishes, etc. They were light weight for shipping purposes and very filling.



A tree was used to brace the Tri-band beam.



Ron AA4VK and Will AA4NC are diligently putting together the three-element beam.

Prior to departing on the boat out of Kingston, our new friend Frank Vieira in Kingston took me to stores to purchase soda, snacks, oranges, and a few other enhancements to our food provisions. Frank, arranging of the boat, assured that the boat would be well supplied with drinking water, ice (having the boat crew bring a cooler daily from the boat with ice and soda to the operating site), gasoline for the generator, and propane for our camp stove to boil water and make coffee. The boat would remain off shore the entire time we were on the island.

The boat and shipping expense represented a major expense for the DXpedition. We needed to ease this burden somehow. We were prepared to provide for



Randy's son Carter has a knack for improvisation as demonstrated with his "Island-made easel."

our personal equipment and travel the Navassa team, thank you.

expense but very concerned how to off-set the boat cost. Based on the DXCC need for Navassa and a plan to work toward filling that need we were able to obtain sponsorship from *The DX Magazine*, the Northern California DX Foundation, and the European DX Foundation. This assistance accounted for approximately forty percent of the boat and shipping expense. This generous support allowed us to continue the planning. Additionally there were several club organizations who pitched in. I wish I could list all of the individual contributors who also supported the DXpedition—it was these folks who assured that the resources were available to make this event a reality. From all of



Many years ago this served as the quarters for the lighthouse keepers; it now provides 5 stations for our DXpeditioners.

Through the months ahead of us, the correspondence between the team members both written and by radio were important. This kept everyone up to date, assignments were made to individuals on various matters that needed attention, resulting in a team approach to all significant decisions.

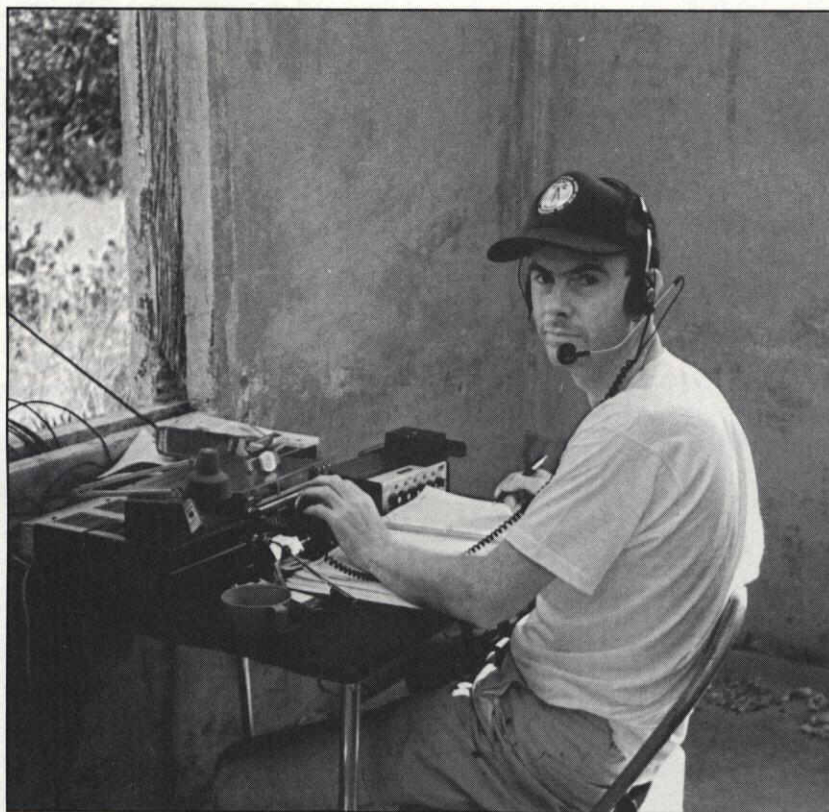
I, of course, knew that we would need U.S. Coast Guard approval to land on Navassa. Due to the good work of previous others who have gone to Navassa, the legalities and procedures had been worked out. In 1978 there was no problem getting permission. So, I was in no hurry. Well—never assume—I waited almost too late.

The request for landing permission is made by signing a release of liability form furnished by the U.S. Coast Guard. The form very clearly defines the landing conditions, the dangers up to serious injury and death, and that the U.S. government or any of its agents will not be held responsible.

When I initially applied to the Coast Guard the request went to a person unaware of the procedure and informally he denied us permission to land. I couldn't believe it. This was to be easy. Well, I immediately began to work myself up the chain of command making phone calls and writing letters. I also demonstrated from my 1978 files that we had previously been granted permission as well as other groups in the 1980's. After a couple of weeks, now getting close to the DXpedition departure date, we were able to get the attention of the proper authorities and landing permission was granted.

This was a stressful time after all the work and planning; but it worked out OK. The problem was communication, not procedural.

Several weeks prior to the departure date Murray and I contacted the airlines to finalize the shipping procedures. Soon after all that we shipped the two generator crates plus another crate with coax, a.c. cords, etc. The procedure for shipping to Jamaica was very straight forward. Little did I know at that time how difficult it was going to be to claim



Murray WA4DAN enjoys the view and a quick snack between calls.

the crates and the possession of them in Jamaica. The crates were to be held at the airport in Jamaica in bonded stores for Murray and me to pick up.

I traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, arriving the afternoon of January 14, 1992, Tuesday. The rest of the team were going to arrive the following day on Wednesday. I went early in order to have Tuesday afternoon and the following day to pick up the crates and attend to boat loading details. We planned to

depart on the boat Thursday evening, January 16. Upon arrival in Jamaica, Frank Vieira and Lloyd Alberga met me. What delightful and energetic gentlemen! We would never have made it to Navassa without their assistance. First of all, my hand-carried transceiver was confiscated by customs, even though I had a 6Y5 operator permit. For some reason, the customs insisted I needed other paper work and that I would also have to put up bond money. I was not able to persuade him that I had been to Jama-

ica before and had never experienced this difficulty. I tried to explain to the Tourist Board at the airpost—no interest in my problem. Jamaican Customs kept the radio which I could not get back for two days. This was the beginning of two full days of total ceremonial hassle. With Frank we went full speed from office to office to trying to explain who we were, why we wanted out shipping crates, what we were going to do with them, getting papers signed and stamped, etc. The first day when I arrived I checked on all the crates and the one containing the coax and electrical cords was

declared missing by the Jamaican cargo agents. I made a phone call to Bob KW2P that evening to report my findings. Bob and the rest of the gang were going to meet in Miami to connect to the Jamaican flight the following day. Prior to the final flight out of Miami Murray WA4DAN was sent out to buy coax, etc. This was an unexpected \$600 due to the inefficient cargo operations in Jamaica. The system for claiming merchandise is totally and unbelievable

inefficient and no one seems to care. It is also populated with corruption. It is a very helpless feeling—but again, thanks to Frank, we were able to get out cargo to the boat about an hour before departure on Thursday evening January 16.

It was great to meet the rest of the team as they arrived in Kingston on Wednesday January 15. I was there along with Frank who again assisted us in many ways. After everyone got settled in to their rooms we enjoyed a fine meal together as we discussed many details together. After our meal we all convened in my hotel room for a formal discussion relating to operating issues. The team wanted this to be a very credible operation. We all agreed to remind each other to give call signs often, to keep a legible log book and to list times often. Further, we discussed the importance to remain patient with the pile-ups, to always be courteous, to treat

everyone in the pile-up equally and fair, and to make this event a fun activity for all involved.

Our boat, "The Gabriella" was a 60-foot commercial fishing boat. Frank Vieira did an excellent job recruiting. The all-Jamaican crew consisted of Captain "Shortly" and four crew workers. These fellows worked very hard and took good care of us. We were finally able to load the boat after two days of working with the Customs agents and having them escort Murray and me with the shipped cargo directly to the boat. We loaded the boat at the hotel dock at Morgan's Harbor resort at Port Royal which is near the airport and directly across the bay from the city of Kingston. So after a year of planning, here we are ready to depart for Navassa at 2330 UTC (sunset) on Thursday evening January 16, 1992.

We placed the medicated patches

behind the ear to try to avoid sea sickness. Well, it worked until midnight. The seas were very rough all night long. Everyone got sea sick except the crew and my son Carter. Carter is not a ham but went along for the adventure and to assist us and to make my wife happy that someone would be there to take care of me. All night—you don't sleep. Some of the boys had set up one of the radios for maritime mobile operations; interest in that subsided rather quickly. The boat trip was originally estimated to be 12 hours. Thus, we were expecting to arrive at the sunrise (1200 UTC on Friday, January 17). The trip took 22 hours to arrive at the island. By the time we arrived and got our equipment on the island the sun was setting; we were 12 hours behind our planned schedule to begin operations.

As we arrived we were of course drained physically. All of us had been



Dating back to the turn of the century, the old Navassa Light keepers quarters is in a sorry state of disrepair.

sick, no one had gotten any sleep, nor food, nor drink—but the excitement of seeing Navassa on the horizon overcame all of the physical feelings. We had made it and eager to get set up on the island. As we arrived we noticed several small wooden row boats near the cliffs of Navassa. These were Haitians who come to the island to hunt goats and fish. Communication with the Haitians consisted of hand signs since neither of us could speak or understand each other's language. As it turned out, several actually live there and were very helpful in carrying our equipment and provisions to the top of the island. The landing site known as Lulu Bay was the site of operations for the 1978 DXpedition. This site however is shadowed by a large hill which is in the direction of Europe. Based on the need for KP1 in Europe, we decided in advance that we would set-up operations on top of the hill at the base of the lighthouse. The distance and climb up the small mountain from the landing site is very difficult, especially after having no

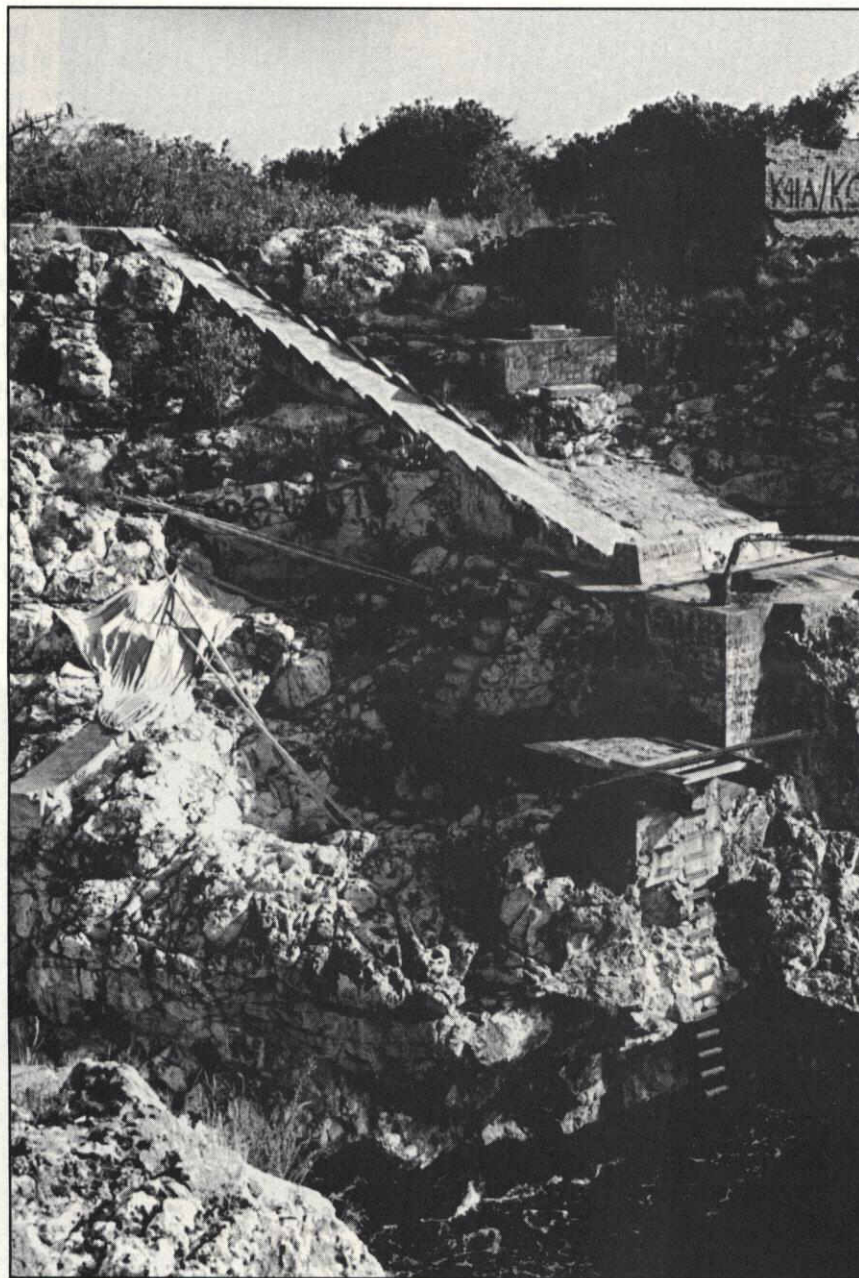
sleep or food and being sick for 30 hours or so. The Haitians, however, were tremendously helpful. I can still vividly recall how this one Haitian picked up my 128-pound generator crate, put it up on top of his head, and

proceeded to the top of the island—barefooted. Ron AA4VK and I could hardly carry our 13-pound transceivers and met the Haitian as we were still enroute to the top as he was coming down to make another trip. We, of

Murray's own words: "After a very rough 22-hour boat trip, we finally offshore of Navassa Island, KP1. It was quite a relief to finally enter the relative calm waters around Navassa. Despite the seasick patches, my stomach was

completely empty but was now beginning to settle down. I went down into the hold of our sixty-foot boat to get some raisins to eat for some much needed energy, my first food in about 24 hours. The crew on the boat readied a skiff in preparation to ferrying us and our gear to the infamous landing platform. We were anchored approximately 500 yards offshore. After the skiff was loaded, Bob KW2P, Will AA4NC, and I proceeded to make the first run to the island. The short run was smooth and uneventful. As we approached the landing, the all-important wire rope ladder came onto view. There had been a lot of speculation about the condition of the ladder and it was a concern to us. Except for the very bottom part of the ladder, it turned out to be in good shape.

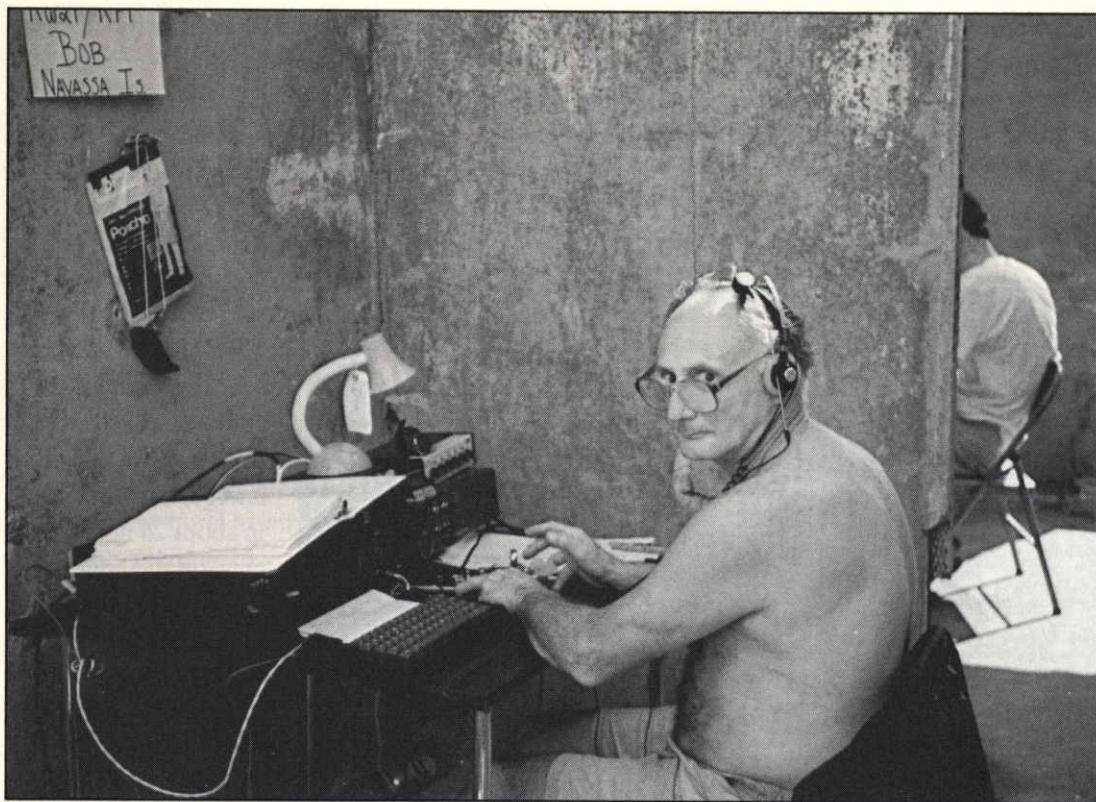
"Being assigned to take care of logistics for the unloading and hoisting of the gear, I elected to climb up the ladder first. The ladder dangles approximately 40 feet to the water from a small platform extended out from the rocks. This is the only way of accessing the island.



Lulu Bay presents a formidable chore for setting up on Navassa.

course, expressed our appreciation to these folks with gifts of food and clothing.

I asked Murray WA4DAN (who was the first one of our team to set foot on Navassa) to express his feelings. In



RTTY was really a fun mode worked exclusively by Bob KW2P.

"I experienced no difficulty in climbing up, even though the ladder does tend to swing around, due to not being anchored at the bottom. After 18 months of talking and planning, I was on Navassa! What a feeling! No time to celebrate though; we have only two-and-a-half hours of daylight left and we have a lot of work to do.

"I guess most DXers dream about participating in a DXpedition. I was certainly in that class and I was living out a dream. All the planning and hard work had made this DXpedition a reality. It was a thrill and a privilege to be able to participate in the 1992 Navassa Island DXpedition. And yes, I would like to do it all over again one day..."

As darkness set in the generator was cranked up in order to have some general lighting. Several of us prepared our stations for operation while Murray led in getting a couple of the windom antennas up. The ruins of the lighthouse keepers quarters, dubbed as the Navassa Hilton, became the site for our opera-

tions. It was now around 8pm local time and I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to lie down and rest for awhile. I saw Will AA4NC over in the corner doing the same thing.

Will AA4NC was the very first to get on the air at around 7pm local time. The first contact was on 20 meter CW with KB8CFE. I asked Will to express a few thoughts and feelings in his own words as follows: "First off, the only emotion I remember about that first night's operation on 20 meters (think it was only about 30 minutes) was extreme exhaustion! After the seasickness, almost no sleep for 36-40 hours, and the landing/hauling equipment up the hill, I was dead tired. I just strung a piece of wire about 50 feet long over a tree branch and loaded up through a tuner to let everyone know we had landed, and were on the island. I fell asleep at the key about 30 minutes later. Working the WARC bands was exciting. 160 meters was a disappointment. Poor conditions, static, and noise really cut things down on the top band. Worst reminder of the

expedition: the #*!@ itch I came home with! Some of the locals dubbed it "Navassa jungle Rot." I think I got rid of it after about 20 days and medication. The pileups were incredible. The peak rate on SSB reached 320 per hour. Sometimes spreading 10 Khz on CW. The JA pileups on 10 meters (SSB) were so thick that going by call areas (with a 20 Khz spread) you could not pick out a single letter, much less a full call sign. In other pileups there are still way too many people using the last two letters on phone. This really slowed things.

"CW was the most fun mode for me. The pileups

are neater, and it's a more level playing field. On CW, a KW and QRP station can peacefully coexist, and very often are worked one after the other. Peak rates on CW reached 280 per hour for several hours" -AA4NC. As antennas were erected late Friday night, several of us got a few hours of operating in before getting several hours of sleep. It was early Saturday morning around 1100 UTC on January 18 when we began a full up operation. In our planning we had prepared a band plan of operation for everyone. This soon fell apart. We became so wrapped up in operating that it really did not matter who operated where. We tried to keep an awareness to ensure that all bands got their fair share of activity. Also, if any particular operator wanted to work a particular band at a certain time, that was no problem. We, in the team spirit, were accommodating to each others desires and interest. It worked out fine. Generally, we operated from about 6am until 1 or 2 am—about four hours sleep each night. During the day we would

take breaks but not very long. One of the nicest break times was for taking a shower. Murray furnished what is known as a "sun shower." It is a plastic bag that holds five gallons of water with a nozzle. We hung it in a tree and let the sun heat the water. it was great—not bad living conditions to be on a deserted island.

Most of the time there were five stations operating. There were some problems with hash/noise with other near-by transmitters, but not so great that we could not work around it. With a little more planning, we probably could have eliminated this problem. For example, during the middle of the week Ron AA4VK and I discovered a combination of radios and antennas that allowed us to operate two stations on 10 meters simultaneously—one on CW and one on SSB without interfering with each other.

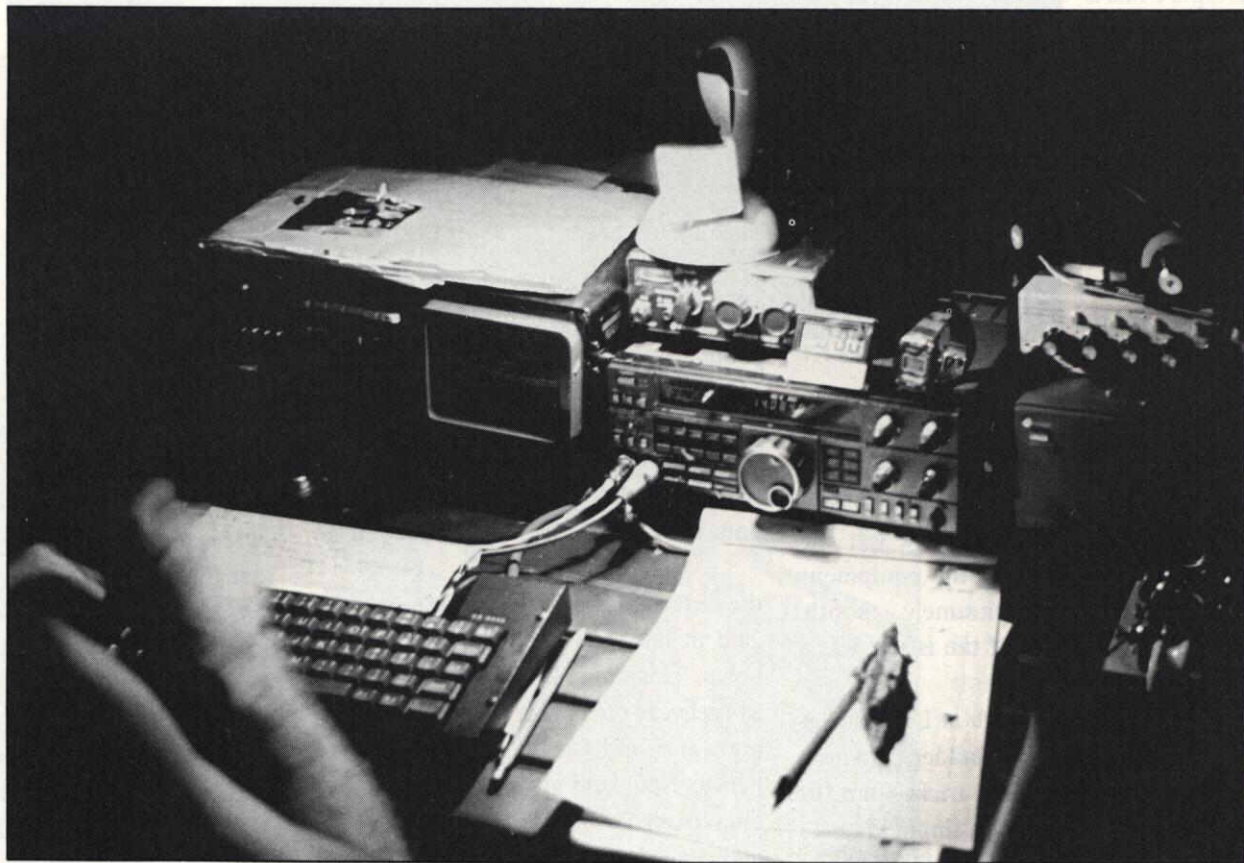
We had good propagation on all bands except 160 meters and 6 meters.

160 was very noisy—only 490 contacts. Six meters opened only one time during which 20 contacts with South America stations were made Openings for Europe were available on HF around the clock. Japan openings were limited. We would hear JAs first on 20 meters long-path in the middle of the afternoon

(2000 UTC). The primary times for JA were 2300 to 0200 on 10, 12, and 15. On 20 meters the JAs would come through at 0400 for a couple of hours. We worked 2400 JAs. Unfortunately, we have learned that there was a pirate on 10 and 15 CW using KP1/NØTG and KP1/KW2P who worked many JAs. Also there was some pirate activity using WA4DAN's callsign. I haven't counted the Europeans, but we worked thousands; Murray alone worked 1,680 stations in Europe. It is a different feeling as a typical U.S. ham being in a position where DX is competitively calling you... the BY station, please stand-by, be with you in a minute... now the TZ station, your complete call, please." It was great fun. RTTY was really a fun mode worked exclusively by Bob KW2P for 579 contacts. One of the funniest observations was at night watching Bob operating RTTY. The bugs, mostly moths, by the hundreds or thousands would surround Bob and his equipment. Bob

would just keep on going slapping and fanning and punching the keyboard. Will AA4NC and I (NØTG) worked most of the CW QSOs accounting for 9,034 CW contacts or 27% of the total 33,462 contacts.

I initially suggested that each individual use their own call/KP1. The reason for this was that each person would have his own sense of identity and the fun of using his call in a DX operation. It worked fine; few people worked more than one of us on a single band. We used a single address for the QSLs for the convenience of those making multiple station contacts. While it was a fun approach, it can be argued that it would have been more efficient and less confusing for us to have used a single call for CW and perhaps a different single call for SSB. Using multiple calls becomes a problem at times when trying to confirm contacts in the logs because people tend to get mixed up at times as to which station they worked—not a big



Slapping and fanning moths while punching his keyboard, Bob KW2P worked 579 contacts.

problem in general, though. It was just an approach that we wanted to do.

The weather was great. The high walls of the building ruins provided adequate shade from the sun. Only on one evening did it rain, a small shower that lasted for about ten minutes shut us down. We each kept plastic tarps by the side of each respective station to quickly throw over the equipment to protect it from the rain and condensation during the night while we were sleeping. The temperature during the day averaged 85 degrees F with a nice breeze at all times.

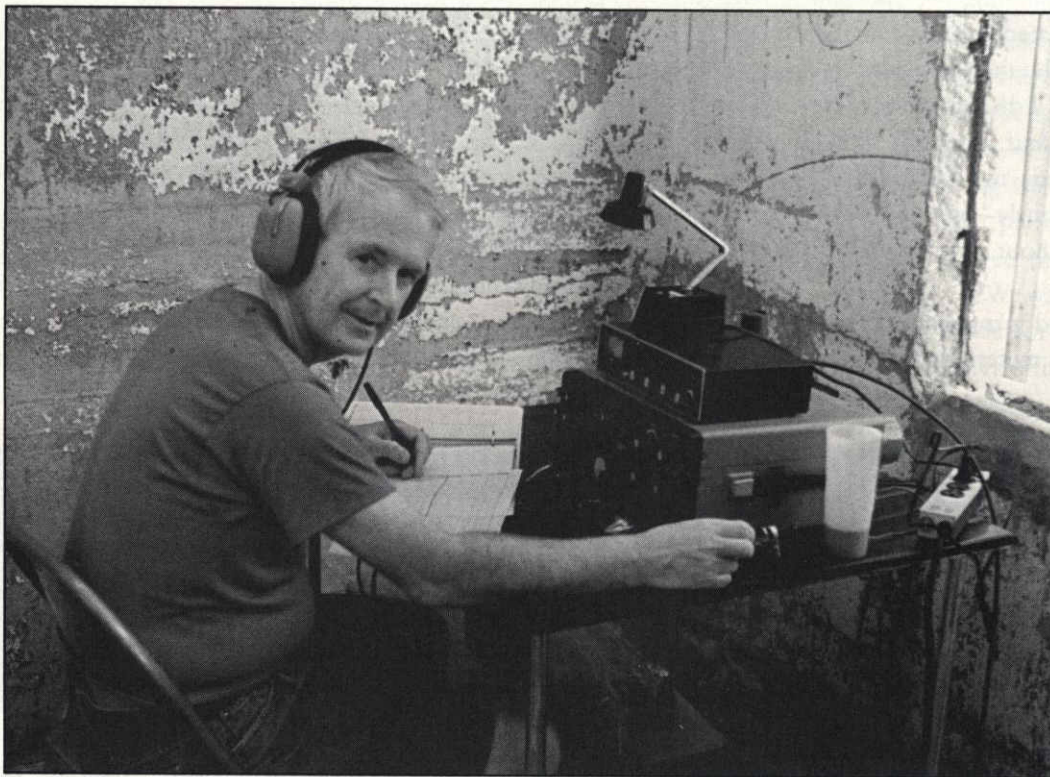
As the scheduled departure day arrived, we began to close stations down one at a time in order to keep at least a partial operation going as long as possible. Once again, we called upon the services of our Haitian friends to assist carrying the equip-

ment down the long trail from the top of the hill to the landing site. We closed down our last station at noon. The boat loading was complete and we left the island at sunset. Taking the equipment off the island went extremely smooth. Taking ourselves off of the island was a different matter.

The seas were rough at Lulu Bay as we climbed down the ladder and into the waiting skiff. The tricky part of getting into the boat was timing. Here I was at the bottom of the ladder but the

boat was six feet below me—then as the ocean swell rose, the boat would come within stepping distance. However, the boat was not always directly under the ladder. So you had to wait and judge as to when the boat would be in the right position and at the height of the swell.

After we were loaded into the skiff and began to pull away from the cliff, we were overtaken by one of the swells. The boat crashed into the side of the cliff, tipped severely to the side—so much so that it was under water. We all



Randy NØTG works CW, resulting in 27% of the total 33,462 contacts made.

scrambled and quickly were able to get the boat stabilized. We were able to scoop out the water with the camping pots and pans. As we began to pull away

the outboard motor prop became entangled in line tied to one of the Haitian boats. This killed our engine and made us feel very uneasy. We were still scooping water and the sea swells were still heavy. Bob held onto Will to cut the lines from the prop. I believe the dangers that had been listed on the Coast

Guard permission form flashed across all of our minds in a very real way. Finally, as Will and Bob were able to get the prop freed and after several attempts at getting the engine to run, we were off to re-unite with our boat anchored offshore, just as darkness came over the sea.

There was little conversation during the return trip. Everyone was dreading the long ride. The trip, however, was a pleasant surprise compared to everyone's expectation. The seas were

smooth, sea sickness was minor, and everyone actually slept at least some. As we woke up to the sun—there in view was the beautiful island of Jamaica. Once again, Frank was there to greet us and to assist in the process with Customs. It was a wonderful day—real food, a real bed, showers, sleep and

preparation for the next flight back to the U.S.

By the time I got home the QSLs were already arriving. So many QSLs that the postman could not get them in our mailbox and so he delivered them in boxes to our front door. A picture for the card was selected, the QSLs printed, and cards sent out beginning eight weeks after the trip. The target was for all of the cards to be out in three to four months. This has been an enjoyable process to write the card out. The diffi-

culties in the QSL process could be helped immeasurably if so many of the guys would be more accurate with the log "time". It is unbelievable how often the time is wrong by an hour or more. This same problem also exist for the date of the contact. Many fellow DXers miss the date by a day or more. The other big inefficiency in processing the cards is that every two-sided card should have their call sign on the side of the card with the confirmation data. Thanks to my wife, Sue, for her unending determination to find those stations with wrong data in the log. Thanks to all.

There were a few criticisms and we know there is always room for improvement. By and large, though, we have been recipients of many kind, appreciative, and kind comments. An example of one of the many letters received follows:

Hi Randy:

"Have just completed filling out my cards for contacts with your Navassa Island DXpedition and wanted to take a few moments to tell you how much I

enjoyed working you guys. I have spent more than a few hours these past several days just sitting back in the radio room and listening to the operation.

"I have heard numerous expressions of thanks and congratulations passed to you and the team by hundreds of Amateurs from several countries. I have also heard some of the ignorant and ill-mannered fellows that seem to feel they are the only one that's important. The calm, unflustered, and professional way you and the team dealt with this crowd is probably what I will remember most about your operation.

"This afternoon at 2207Z on 28396.5 (simplex) you were called by Lou KC4WUX. Lou can't hear too well and he made his call just after you had asked for JAs only. He's also blind and uses a voice synthesizer in his TS-440S (AT) to get on frequency. Lou is 85 years old and was first licensed as a Novice less that a year ago. He subsequently upgraded to Technician and General and is currently working on his Advanced. Although he called out of

turn, you came right back to him and gave him the QSO. I believe he has five countries confirmed now but you are his first "rare one" and I know that he will never forget this contact.

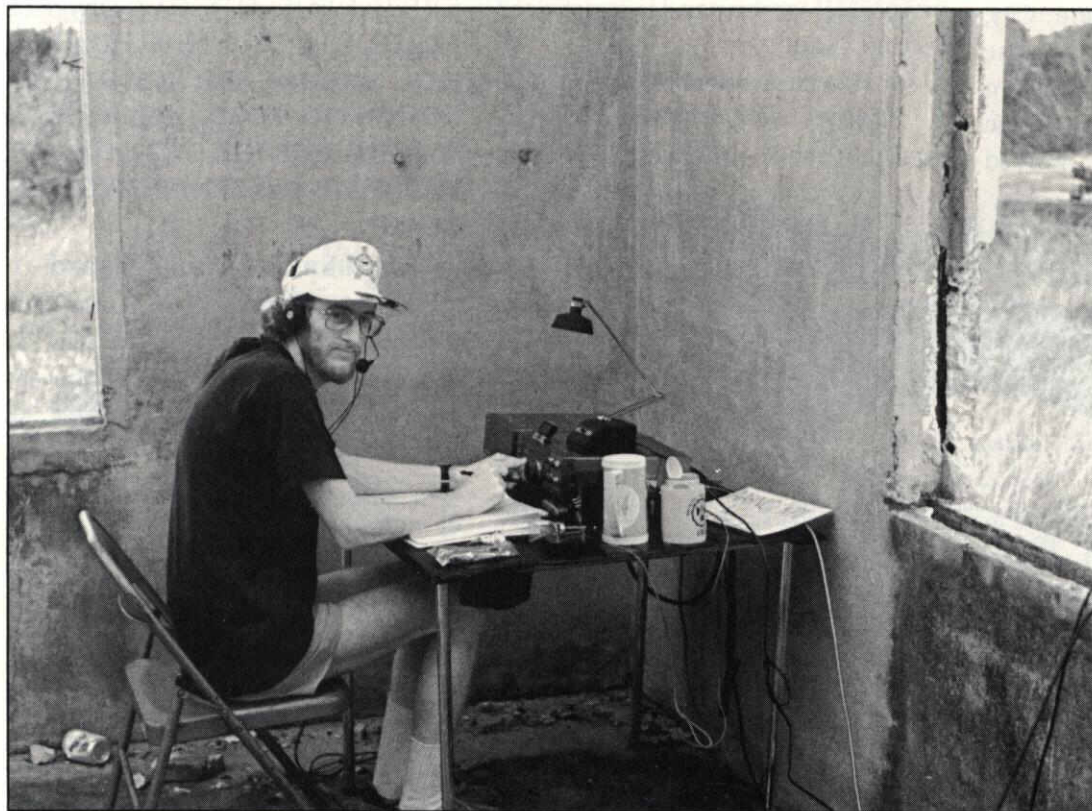
"I've spent a good part of my life striving to achieve and promote high standards, professionalism, and technical competence. I may not always make it myself but I've developed the ability to recognize these traits in others. Now, I guess what I want to say is that in my 40 years of both Professional and Amateur experience, I have never witnessed a finer display of high standards, professionalism, and technical competence.

"In my opinion you have probably set a standard of excellence that will be emulated for years to come. Future DXpeditions may come close to achieving the level of personal and team competence that you guys have demonstrated but no individual or team effort could be given higher marks.

"I run barefoot TS-4405 with a trap vertical and some wire antennas. It has been a distinct pleasure to have entered

all five of your calls in my log to have worked you on eight bands. Thanks and good luck in your future endeavors." (s) Best 73, Mel KN4ZT

Aside from the pure aspect, we desired to function as a team, to have fun, to be professional, to learn and experience new facets of the hobby, and to promote goodwill and brotherhood of amateur radio. Thanks to everyone who worked us and supported us in many different ways. So "lets go on a DXpedition." 73, NØTG, WA4-DAN, KW2P, AA4VK, AA4NC.



Will AA4NC worked up a thirst while having fun on CW.