

Rexpedition2009!

Dateline Thursday morning 11/05/09, Email received:

Rex - we're looking for a place on the coast with some shelter for a day. Mike Rainey AA1TJ has been using a voice-power 5mw station. We'd like to do a transatlantic QSO with it. Seab says he'll put up a killer ant, but we need a place on the shore with a bit of space and a shelter... cottage or house to keep us warm for the day while we try this. Any suggestions OM. Just need it for a day. Hope your job search is going well. Jim W1PID

Dateline Friday evening 11/06/09, Email sent:

Jim, here is an aerial shot of someplace I have in mind for the expedition. My cousin owns the house & little shack on the water. We could probably operate from there. I'm trying to get a hold of her now.

<<http://maps.google.com/maps?q=alewife+cove+cape+elizabeth+me&hl=en&client=firefox-a&ie=UTF8&hq=&hnear=Alewife+Cove,+Portland,+Cumberland,+Maine+04107&gl=us&ei=IMX9So6HIpPalAeNxeiHCw&ved=0CAsQ8gEwAA&ll=43.588807,-70.21115&spn=0.001752,0.00338&t=h&z=18>>

(Everybody is on board with the site and want to arrive on Sunday...)

Dateline Friday evening 11/06/09, Email received:

He'll be contacting people tonight and getting back with us tomorrow with host locations and an idea of accommodations. Because of travel time/distance we should start planning for two overnites, probably departing home early Tuesday, arriving (wherever) mid-afternoon, to get some kind of wire up before dark at 5:00PM, to test the location and prepare for the big push Wed. afternoon and evening. Return home Thursday.

(I don't even have a place yet and it has now expanded to 3 days & 2 nights...My cousin and I played telephone tag until Sunday noontime..)

Dateline Sunday evening 11/08/09, Email sent:

NEWS FLASH: My cousin's little shack is out but my uncle's beach front cottage is in! I just got off the phone with Uncle Arnie and he says that we

can use his cottage for the Rexpedition. The enclosed front porch has all his summer patio furniture stored at one end... but 1/2 of it is usable. There is no running water as his water line broke last year and he was never able to fix it this summer.

(So it is agreed to arrive Monday around noon and operate until Wednesday noon... And the game is underfoot!)

Monday around 1PM I arrived to this character, AA1MY, taking pictures... From my camera angle, Seab is about magnetic north and off towards the right edge of the picture is Portland Headlight.



A 'wimpy' corner mast is guyed of to the left side of the picture and a discussion is in place between Seab and Jim, W1PID, as to the suitability of these 2 items laying on the ground being used as the second mast on the 20m half-square. Both are rejected: one is too short and the other is a metal flagpole pipe and will alter the antenna field.



Look hams look! See the 'wimpy' mast for the 20m antenna. Jim kept wanting to replace it before it broke...(at any minute now). We had to finally take it down, break it apart, and store it back in the garage after our Expedition concluded.



I set up to take a picture from our operating position showing the beautiful view of the ocean and Portland Headlight off in the distance and get a shot of Seab taking a picture of our operating position instead. Oh well! You can still see the ocean and Portland Headlight...



I scare up a nice 20 foot wooden fire ladder from Cape Elizabeth Fire Department Ladder Truck 20 (retired) to serve as the second mast for the 20m half-square. Michael Rainey, AA1TJ, arrived and takes in the site and sights. We scab up a piece of driftwood to the fire ladder to make it a 24 foot mast.



OK. Jim is taking a picture of the 'wimpy' mast before it breaks... Actually, I think he is taking a digital video, hoping to get a video of it snapping...at any moment now! Here is a look from behind the 20m half-square antenna showing the salt water path directly to Europe.



Seab and Jim discussing whether or not the 'wimpy' mast should be replaced... Jim is lobbying hard for a much more sturdy mast!



Now I'm looking in at the operating position...



Another picture of the antennas under construction.



More hemming and hawing about getting the coax out of the 20m antenna field so that it won't produce any deleterious effects. We want all of AA1TJ's whopping 15 milliwatt signal heading out towards Europe.



Mike starts hosing up the New England Code Talker.



Here is the test signal out of the Code Talker transmitter. Full scale on the homebrew wattmeter is 20 milliwatts...



Seab hoses up the hardware for a crack at his personal holy grail: A trans-Atlantic 160m QSO using QRP transmitting power. He gets to operate for about an hour or so before he has some 'issues' with how the wind is treating his kite. His test run with his #1 kite on Monday evening ended up with the bridle line parting and his kite sailing off into the general vicinity of Europe. His backup kite was used in the future attempts after I was unsuccessful finding a lifting kite in the Portland area... After hosing up new hardware for a modified antenna (the backup kite couldn't lift the original 8 pounds of antenna wire) he tunes up the rig and prepares to make his attempt.

The radio comes on and right away there is a signal BOOMING in from Russia... We ALL get really excited!!!!!! I just barely have time to convert my camera from picture mode to video mode to capture this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qc9OV8qfxBM>

Right out of the box, on the first attempt, Seab has snagged the QSO that he has dreamed about for 16 years.



Shortly after Seab makes his dream QSO the kite's antenna line snags on the threaded bolt hardware on the only power pole within 150 feet of the camp!



Seab and Michael launched the kite at about 4AM in total darkness (no pictures of that). Just minutes after Seab's contact with the Russian, his kite comes down. The line is draped over the power line running to the camp. The kite ends up in the top of my cousin's oak tree 3 camps away. I fail to get a picture of the kite eating tree but I do climb it and retrieve Seab's kite in operating condition. The kite came down about 7AM on Wednesday. We have less than an hour before Mike goes on the air for his last shot at the 20m Code Talker QSO. We decide to secure the kite and concentrate on getting everything ready for Mike's attempt.



The sky on Wednesday morning.... You can see a small flag on Seab's kite line where it is draped over the power line.



Mike tries his best to eek out an extra milliwatt or two for that elusive 20m voice powered QSO with Europe.

Here are some links to some nice videos of Mike trying for his record QSO:

Tuning up his rig:

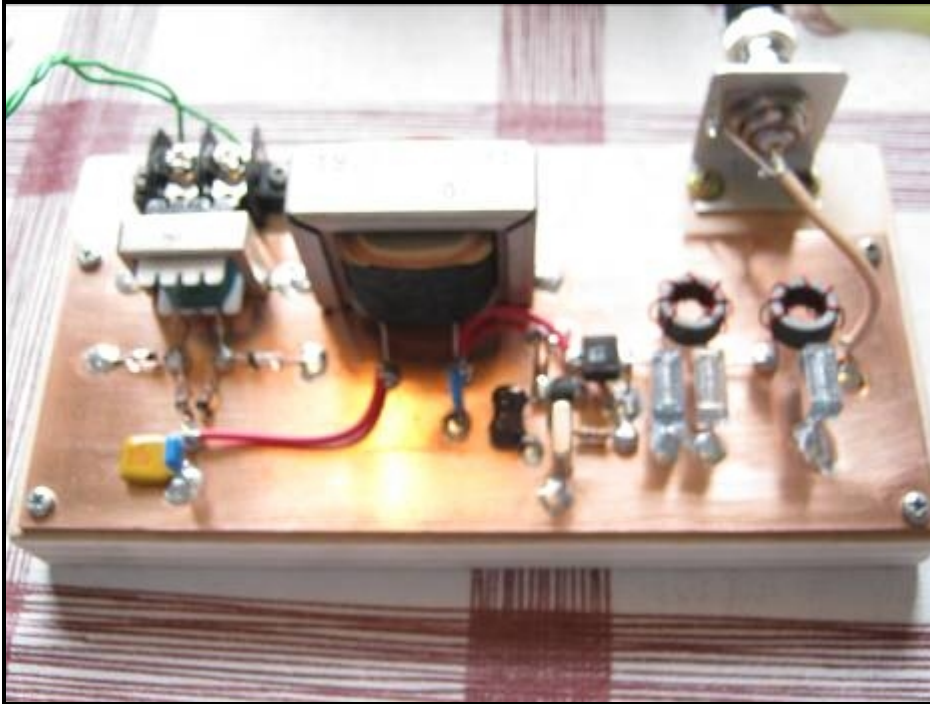
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtcvzGS4fKs>

A typical QSO attempt:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZdJEz2Dt18>

And his final QSO attempts:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZdJEz2Dt18>



Here is a nice shot of the beautifully constructed Manhattan style version of the New England Code Talker transmitter. It was a work of art and performed better than expected but not quite up to the challenge.



Here is another close-up of Mike's beautiful New England Code Talker.



The can I made for my code talker. I was just starting to build my version of the voice powered transmitter when I received the call instigating the Rexpedition. Of course, I always start out with the can first. I'll get back to it in a couple of days as I need some time to catch up on all the chores around the farm.

A good time was had by all and it was agreed that we would most definitely have to try it again. Rexpedition #2 is already in the planning stages.

WE want to thank all the QRPer's from all over the world who followed our adventures on-line, listened for us on the air, or tried to help us in our quest!

72,

Rex Harper W1REX