

## NEWS OF COMMUNICATION AROUND THE WORLD

**The Last Resort—End of an Era**

**A** long-time fixture on the amateur bands met an untimely end in late September. The Last Resort, one of the best-known amateur radio locations in the world, was destroyed (along with most of the rest of the island) when Hurricane Hugo slammed into the tiny Caribbean island of Montserrat.

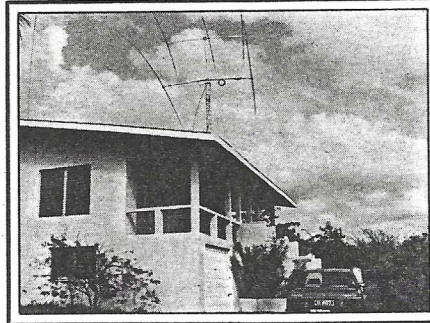
For much of its 20-year history The Last Resort was a rental QTH—a DX location open to amateurs around the world, complete with rig and antennas. The Last Resort was a training ground for hundreds of would-be DXpeditioners, providing a (reasonably) hassle-free introduction to what it is like on the other end of the pile-up.

The Last Resort was built on the easternmost tip of Montserrat about 20 years ago by Dr. Beverstein, VP2MZ, from Toronto, Canada. Doc and his wife, Hope, originally used the house as a winter vacation getaway, but soon moved to the island on a full-time basis, after Doc was diagnosed with a terminal case of cancer.

For months Doc had just enough energy to operate the radio for a few hours a day, running a Heathkit HW-101 into a 2-element quad on the top of a 55 foot tilt-over aluminum tower that his son, VP2MM, had installed in the corner of the property. Soon, however, Doc's condition began to improve. Whether it was Montserrat's tropical climate, its mineral-laden water, or the therapeutic properties of operating a VP2M callsign is unknown, but by the time Doc returned to Canada, all traces of cancer were gone!

For a few years Doc rented The Last Resort to DXpeditioners, who were then able to get a VP2M callsign. Dozens of amateurs visited the island during these years, and Montserrat became known as an "easy" multiplier in contests. (Probably the most unusual callsign issued during this era was VP2MJCA, to K7JCA.)

In 1978 an amateur from New England, fed up with snow and ice and looking for a warmer location with good radio propagation, spent a week at The Last Resort as VP2MAY, and came in second in the world in the WAE SSB test. Within hours after this amateur's return to the States, he had concluded an agreement to buy The Last Resort from Doc Beverstein.



*The Last Resort rental QTH in Montserrat before Hurricane Hugo.*

That amateur was, of course, the author of this column.

My family and I lived at The Last Resort during the last sunspot cycle peak, and between my own operating and that of numerous guest ops, The Last Resort gained a world-wide reputation as a competitive contest station.

Soon after my return to the States, I re-established the practice of renting The Last Resort at a nominal fee to DXpeditioners, especially first-time DXpeditioners. The combination of the exotic location, the superb propagation, and the ease of licensing and operating attracted DXers from around the world to try their hand at handling the pile-ups. The major contest weekends were particularly popular, and booked up more than a year in advance. However, many of The Last Resort visitors were average amateurs on their first DXpedition. Many of these first-timers became hooked on the sport and moved on to operate from more exotic locations. For example, Joe Adams, VE3CPU, graduated from Montserrat to Barbados, and then joined the recent Willis/Mellish Reef operation.

Such training was the primary reason The Last Resort existed. The entire DX community benefits from DXpeditions, but most amateurs hesitate before trying to master the multiple hurdles of getting to a rare location, hauling radio equipment, setting up a station, getting operating permission, and then maintaining order on the air. The Last Resort served as an intermediate step, providing some on-the-air experience and boosting the confidence of potential DXpeditioners.

In its long history The Last Resort became one of the most popular DX loca-

tions in the world, with more different amateurs operating from the same spot than any other such location.

That history came to an abrupt end when Hurricane Hugo hit Montserrat, the first such direct hit in more than 60 years. The Last Resort, in its exposed position above the Atlantic, was totally destroyed by winds in excess of 150 miles per hour and enormous waves. Since the house is in the path of a proposed new runway for the island's airport, rebuilding is not practical. Thus, one of amateur radio's DX institutions is gone.

Perhaps another amateur will carry on this tradition by equipping a home in a DX location with rigs and antennas and encouraging mini-DXpeditions.

**The Race to Bouvet**

On the opposite end of the scale from a vacation to Montserrat is a major DXpedition to Bouvet. As reported in October, the Norwegian Club Bouvet was hard at work raising about \$100,000 to finance a two-week operation from the number two Most Wanted Country.

Whether this operation will take place came into question in late September, however, when a group from Indianapolis, Indiana reported that they are going to Bouvet in February. The Legion of Indianapolis DXers, under the leadership of Mike Koss, W9SU, not only has landing permission and the promise of a license as 3Y0B, but they even have all funding in place, without requesting donations from the amateur community. *The Saturday Evening Post*, the National Geographic Society, IBM, Pentax cameras, and Yaesu will finance the majority of the costs. The group has the support of 15 colleges and universities for the scientific end of this joint amateur radio/research trip.

The DXpedition team consists of 12 amateurs and four other professionals, including photographers and a film crew to document the trip. Among the best-known DXers on the team are Rusty Epps, W6OAT, president of both the Northern California DX Club and the Northern California DX Foundation; Chip Margelli, K7JA, vice president of Yaesu-Musen USA; and Mike Wetzel, W9RE, an active contender.

The team will assemble in Capetown, South Africa in late January and leave for Bouvet on January 25 aboard the 168 foot

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