



RADIO CLUB D'HAITI



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At the request of Thomas Roscoe K8CX, I write my “*Memoires on HH0N*”.

Remembering HH0N DXpedition 19-26 July 1981

During the month of April 1981, at the Club we were contemplating an expedition to Navassa. We knew local fishermen visit regularly l’Ile de la Navase, and thought of searching for a suitable boat. After asking around, we were discouraged due to the danger involved. It became evident the safe way would be via helicopter. Jan Bernard Montes HH2BM (sk) suggested should write to Jean-Claude Duvalier, then President of Haïti. We did so on 8 June 1981 and to our surprise on 26 June received confirmation that we were to contact the Colonel G. Danache who is in charge of the “Corps d’Aviation des Forces Armées d’Haïti” for the trip.

On 8 June we requested from Conseil National des Télécommunications (CONATEL), the entity responsible for issuing communication permits, the ham call sign for the expedition and were issued HH0N (copy attached) for the period 18-30 July 1981.

At 7:00AM on 19 July we were at the military airport and a DC3 (picture attached) loaded with many drums of fuel for helicopter and for our 3 generators took off to Aux Irois, near Jérémie where he would wait for us. At about an hour later the team (5 Haïtian hams and technician) got on board (picture attached) the Presidential helicopter “*La République d’Haïti*” and took off to “Aux Irois”, escorted by two other choppers. These were to transport from Aux Irois to Navassa the fuel for our generators, water, generators, all radio equipments and food. Another hour later, we reached Aux Irois and the army transferred immediately the “cargo” from the DC3 to the 2 escort choppers, and all 3 choppers were refueled and headed to Navassa.

Navassa is about 50 Kms from Aux Irois, and therefore more than 200 miles from any US coast. As “*La République d’Haïti*” approached the island we saw ahead of us a US Navy ship and a chopper flying at same altitude as we are and coming toward us. One could call it provocation. Our pilot radioed the US chopper on various frequencies, but got no reply. He then advised us of his decision to land anyway, and was looking for a clear spot. While doing this approach we came in line with 3 large tents and 3 towers of about 100 feet each. It is a military camp, and learned later there were 119 marines. Our chopper finally lands in the central part of the island.

First thing we did, was to raise a mast with our National Flag on the top, and sing our National Anthem. Two US choppers were circling all the time. After our little ceremony, one decided to land not only very close to us, but also facing us with machine guns mounted underneath their machine and pointing right at us. We then moved behind the 3 officers accompanying us. Some 3 marines got off the chopper, heavily armed and with grenades, and stood around their machine. Then a Lieutenant got off accompanied with a marine also heavily loaded and with grenades. The “visitors” approached us, and without saluting our Haitian officers, talked directly to the chief mechanic. Brief technical conversation the Haitian Major interrupts by stating his name and rank. Oups! The reaction was the one we expected: the US Lieutenant immediately stood still saluting, giving his identity. After a moment which seemed like an eternity, he asked if could talk to the civilians? The Major said he was welcome to do so. The Lieutenant wanted us to show our authorization to land; the political side becomes inevitable, and we, the 6 civilians, said in one voice “***we need no permit to travel in our country!***” Immediately the rapsorts become *courtois*. You can go as you

please on the island (said the American lieutenant), and would be pleased to welcome you at our camp. You are welcome to use all our facilities. Then, after saluting militarily, along with his men, he departs. A few hours later, *La République d'Haiti* departs to return to the Capital.

That very same evening we began making calls with HH0N, and you can only imagine the pileups. Some stations even accusing us of not being on the island. To avoid suspicion, we told them about the Navy ship nearby with its name so they could verify. A short while later, pileup became even bigger. We had 3 operators on the air at all times, and worked over 7000 stations during our stay. Conditions were good on 10/15/20 but difficult on 40/80. We had a Kenwood 520 and 2 Yerasu which I do not recall their model, 2 tribanders and several dipoles. Also powered with 2 x 5kw and one 1000 Watts gasoline generators.

Those of you who remember "The Arabian Nights Net", our comrade HH2BM was a member. They usually met on Thursdays at about 8:00PM (0200Z) on 14.225, and that Thursday night HH0N was invited on their net frequency to make contacts with just about all the Nights. It was an experience ... To this day I still hear amplifiers being tuned on the frequency! Before that Thursday net, Zedan JY3ZH, brother of King Hussein JY1, would check in everyday with each HH0N station that was on, a way to give us support. His signal was outstanding.

Each of us were familiar with certain Nets, and checked in, unexpectedly, at least once. Can you imagine the noise created. Being on the DXer's side, is another trill, and one to be experienced.

Twice during our stay we encountered the US militaries, and rapports were courteous. First incident, HH2BM had gone hunting with his shotgun, and met face to face with a marine who was most likely lost. He invited him to join our camp and have dinner. Must have been weeks that poor soul was on MRE and was really enjoying our French/Creole cuisine. Second encounter, three of ours who went for a swim late in the afternoon got lost on the way back to camp as it got dark. Tired, brouses on their feet, starving, they arrived at the US camp where they are fed and brouses taking care of. The next day they are accompanied back to our base by a marine.

On 26 July, seven days after our arrival, and giving this DX rare contact to many stations, we returned, as planned, to Port-au-Prince, the same way we came. We are contemplating redoing this experience!

The HH0N team members:

HH2BM Jan-Bernard Montes
 HH2JR Jean-Robert Gaillard
 HH2CR Réginald Chauvet
 HH2PW S.G. Daniel
 HH2B Bernard Russo
 Francis Mitchel



Jean-Robert GAILLARD
 HH2JR
 Member HH0N DXpedition