

FT5GA – Glorioso 2009

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On December 24, 2003, the TO4E team, Europa 2003 returned to Metropolitan France after a difficult expedition, where they had to suffer a lot of serious troubles; among them were the random supply of electric current, and lacks of material and finally they had to remain several more days on the island, because of a cyclone, in the area. However, 30 000 QSO's were logged by a motivated and welded team.

After their return, we did not for a long time realize that a taste of unfinished remained in our throats. Other remote islands remained to be activated and we decided to take up a new challenge: To go on the Glorious islands.

Working on the new project, the first difficulties appeared. Several members of our team had to leave it for professional or private reasons. We were also informed that to negotiate the authorisation to land on the Eparses islands (Europa, Gloriosos, Juan da Nova and Tromelin) will be restricted , but the French authorities in La Reunion had the possibility to permit (or not) the landing. So considering that the Gloriosos were a very rare location, we were all forced in our mean : Never not to give up project; to go there! The main problem is the access of the island. Even if this one is strictly controlled, it's difficult for a transport aircraft to land on Glorious Grande, that's one of the reasons it's prohibited . Landing by the sea is also very hazardous. Only the military tactical planes of transall type are entitled to land on the made of crushed coral track.

From 2004 to 2006, while the negotiations with the French Military and Civilian authorities, some various events, went so we had to postpone the expedition several times in a row. At the end of 2006, we were reaching the goal, but once again Mr Murphy was here. Among the troubles, the sanitary situation on La Réunion Island made the transit to Gloriosos via Saint Denis airport impossible, because of the chikungunya fever. We postponed one time more.

2007 made us out of any project for the Civilian administration of the Eparses Islands, formerly put under the Reunion Department Prefect authority , was transferred under the Prefect authority for the French Antarctic and Australes islands (TAAF), which is also the referent for Adelie Land, and Crozet, Amsterdam and Kerguelen Islands.

We had to repeat our efforts from the beginning . One year was necessary to see the Eparses under their new administration, led by the Prefect of the TAAF. Our new project had to wait this time to be sent again, through the Military Forces HQ for the Reunion, to the new TAAF Prefect, Mr MOUCHEL-BLAISOT, who , finally, received us in Paris on June 2009, 18th. Very interested by our project, the final permission was quickly granted to us. We were also informed about some restrictions about fauna, flora and also to the environment of the Gloriosos archipelago. Gloriosos 2009 was on the go!

The crew was ready to go for a July 2009 expedition. It was postponed again because the flight plan of the aircraft scheduled to carry the crew to Gloriosos was modified. The Transall was affected to research survivors of an flight crash near the Comoros archipelago..

Whilst this time, the final call sign was issued as FT5GA, thanks to a real and efficient coordination between all the French authorities for the Indian Ocean zone. The permission granted included also

our presence besides the French Foreign Legion on Grand Glorioso island, for the same period i.e. about 20 days.

Many hams were surprised by the callsign FT5GA; The authority transferred to the TAAF, the callsigns had to follow the new rules, so FR/E became FTdigitRx, FR/F is now FtdigitJx, FR/T is FtdigitTx and our Glorioso Dxpediton was FT5GA in place of FR/G

Some days before the departure, Yves/F5PRU, Franco/F4EVR and Didier/F5OGL, carried 290 kg of gear, on a pallet to Paris CDG airport, in Roissy en France .Mr Alain LE FELLIC, of the Freight Society LOGFRET, helped us as much as he could to insure us a safe transport to La Reunion.



The largest part of the transceivers, PA's, and Antennas were a loan of our Radio Club de Provins, F6KOP, friends. These hams never asked why we were doing that. All we needed and possible to be lend was loan.

It was for us something pleasant, for you know all, that the dxpediton was criticized a lot even long times before it begun. Beside the F6KOP material, the largest part of the transceivers were personal ones. We never counted big dealer in our sponsors, except BATIMA. Many dealers did not answer our letters. We were upset to see the Most Wanted 4th entity to be activated with so less interest from manufacturers, dealers and even the Ham World.

On September 11th, the complete crew composed of F5PRU, Yves-Michel ; F5LPY, Bernard ; F4EGS, Philippe ; F8CRS, David and F5IRO, Freddy, grouped together in Roissy CDG airport along with Florence, who will be the dxpediton journalist, to take thei their plane to La Reunion. Picked up by the personnal of the 181th Air base , they stayed two days with their military colleagues. On

September 13th, some had contacts with the crew, who was operating, thanks to Raymond/FR5MV's facilities, especially a vertical antenna, under HC/FR call signs.

One day later, the crew took place onboard and the gear was embarked on the Airforce Transall plane. On board were also, Mr. PERILLO, assistant of the TAAF Prefect Services and in charge of the Eparses Islands, and the Colonel SIOZARD, in charge of the logistic Division of the French Forces in the Indian Ocean South zone HQ. Thanks to these two persons for their help. Their influence was very efficient to get the granting to go to Gloriosos.

After the departure from La Reunion at 10h35, a stop was scheduled on Mayotte Island at Dzaoudzi Airport where they landed at 12h10. All of the crew members were welcome by the Captain CARRARO, of the French Foreign Legion, another very helpful French Officer. Then began the first meeting between the crew and the Foreign Legion detachment led by the Adjudant CINIAWSKI, native of Poland. When they will return home, 25 days later, the crew will count a new friend.

The crew was then presented to Mr MOUCHEL-BLAISOT, prefect of the TAAF, who granted the operation. He will take part of the journey. On September 14th, after six years, a new Ham dxpedition landed on Gloriosos Islands. 16h27 was the beginning of the Dxpediton, the pallet of Ham gear was unloaded. The Place Chief gave the instructions and a first reconnaissance for the antennas set up was done before the night. They must also to be careful; most part of the island was forbidden for the antennas.



Grand Gloriosos Military Quarter

On September 15th, the presence of the Authorities, was a bargain to show them why some of their servicemen, also Hams, made efforts and efforts during six years to go there and traffic on amateur bands. A five band Spiderbeam was quickly set up and beamed to Europe. At 11h00, the crew operated and some other explained to the VIP, Mr MOUCHEL-BLAISOT, Prefect of the TAAF, Mr DERACHE, préfet of Mayotte, the lieutenant-colonel SHIFFER, Chief of the French Foreign Legion Detachment in Mayotte, the lieutenant-colonel LE GUEN, the captain CARRARO et Mr PERRILLO, what means ham radio and what services hams are able to bring to the community. After this demonstration ended, there were no more emissions until the night.

Military first, each operator had to take the mandatory orders, especially concerning safety, and to study the timetables for the next days. They took then the quarters. They all were soon ready to set up V80 so two stations were able to traffic quite at night.

September 16th, the crew sets up the antennas under Mr Murphy jokes sometimes but the members are more clever. A second Spiderbeam is in place. So is also a V40. Bernard/F5LPY sent the first CQ CQ de FT5GA FT5GA at 21h08 on 20m CW, followed by Phil/F4EGS on 30m/RTTY. Phil was unlucky “no Takers” so he had to switch on 40m, no more answer. During the night the European then American CW lovers enjoyed the big party. It was also a great pleasure for the CW’ers on 40 and 80m, in the middle of a huge QRN because of the winds, which made the bands more and more noisy. On Tuesday, Sept 17th, the crew logged more and more QSO’s, but the low bands must be used the next night. It was time to set up the Array Solutions’ K9YA.



In front the K9AY and behind the V80.

Friday, September 18th. FT5GA set up the V160. This band is the most noisy that we never thought it could be so; permanent storms on the northern part of the island are certainly one of the reasons of this noise. Even very important, the traffic must stop every day; all have to participate to the generators maintenance. It's mandatory and not negotiable, even in case of more interesting conditions. The maintenance doesn't suffer any delay. Beside the traffic, each operator must do his regular Service job. Sometimes they receive other assignments to do. September 26 and 27th, week end. The digital modes operators made an entry in the CQ WW DX RTTY.

Monday, September 28th. It was a good surprise! 10 meters was open, so three modes op's went on this band for a long while.

Tuesday, September 29th – Saint Gabriel Day. Each year the Signal Corps celebrate the Saint Gabriel Day, to honour their Patron; the FT5GA team didn't miss to do.

In metropolitan France, studying the traffic reports, the back-office, saw that the 40 000 QSO's were logged. The end of the expedition going to be closed, and the first goal being reached, they decided to assign a new goal more important.



The Five bands Spiderbeam, heading Asia

Tuesday, October 6th :

On the morning the K9AY was dismantled, but on the upper bands a barefoot 100W transceiver, the 4th station which was formerly affected to replace the main ones in case of breakdown, was put on the air; it contributed to enhance the final results

Wednesday, October 7th :

The Dxpedition is quite finished!, They dismantle the antenna farm. At 08h55 a lucky JA Ham closes the log with the last QSO; it was on RTTY.

After a light cleaning of the antennas, the transceivers and PA's are dusted. The last Spiderbeam will be unsettled, the day after in the morning. In the afternoon, the gear , ready on its pallet, can return home. At 15h30, the Transall plane of the French Air Forces landed.



Departure with the Transall

Friday, October 9th:

The crew left the Gloriosos at 13h00 and landed in Saint Denis Airport, in La Réunion at 20h09, after a stop in Mayotte.

Tuesday October 13th :

Phil/F4EGS, left the team, and onboard of an Hercules plane of the French Air Forces, he will return the equipment from la Réunion to Orleans, via Djibouti. The other team members have been interviewed by Mr Neau, editor of the Daily Paper of La Reunion.

Thursday, October 15th, the team landed at Roissy CdG Airport. Florence, our journalist, will do so on next Friday.

October 20th:

For the last time FT5GA is on ; not on the air of course , but on. Didier/F5OGL and Yves-Michel/F5PRU, picked up the equipment, loan by the Provins ARC/F6KOP, in Orleans, and returned it at Thierry/F4TTR's. Thierry is the kind President of this ARC.

When the équipement return to our generous fellows, we realized that at this moment FT5GA was really closed down. In our small van, We watched us together and had a warm handshake full of emotion



Bird on the antenna



Turtle on Glorioso

FT5GA ended, I thought of the long crossed road along these five years. What works, what patience, but also what proudness to have put the expedition to success, out of the standards of the day. Not a big team of 20 or 30 operators, not 6 stations or more, and a little budget far from the thousands and thousands of dollars.

We suffered the useless and the unkind remarks; sometimes from some ones we suffered insult. The most part of them were made without any knowledge of the conditions in which the expedition had to be prepared and made.

We had even to hear some idiocies which we refuse to report here. The five guys who went to Gloriosos haven't disappointed me. Never discouraged, never tired (or quite so), they understood that some could had been frustrated and had said their frustration, even if they cannot excuse all they heard.

Having contact with FT5GA, a « most wanted n°4 » is being to be merited. None of F5CQ, Rafik, F6AOJ, Jeff or Floyd, N5FG our US Pilot, will say the opposite. In the shadow of the back-office, these three guys made the right job to success. All of our pilots throughout the world sent us, while these three weeks, their studies and remarks. They all did a Great Job, to make finally this fragile edifice right. But what an aventure it was!

Now I've to think about all these members of the Civilian and Military authorities, for whom the Ham Community is an eccentric people world.

These people don't always understand why we are always so hurry them to be granted to go there whereas the laws, and other Government decisions have forbidden to go there. And yet, all listened us understood the matters and helped us.

They all knew that the mediatic repercussions will be worth like peanuts, in front of the problems of the day, but we think they were happy to have helped this small group of DX'ers who had as a goal to go to this remote island of the Indian Ocean.

To say "Thank you" to all of those who helped us could be too long and I'm afraid to take the risk to forget some ones. It's the main reason which I prefer to invite you to have a look on our webpage at <http://glorieuses2008.free.fr>. Rafik/F5CQ held these pages in a masterly fashion. All our friends, civilian and military personnels, ARC's and ARS', Dealers, High Authorities or simply sympathizers, they are all here.

What will be remaining when the On button will be put to off ?

A great relief! All the shaky pieces of the huge puzzle took their place in time, and none were missing. FT5GA is now closed. We are working on another thing!

In this report, I'll name and thank only one person; my Stamps Collector! Carolyne my XYL. She was always for me an important help, against the difficulties. How much e-mails did she wrote, how many times did she encourage me. I'm afraid i cannot say how much. I'm in admiration seeing her now treating a big part of the FT5GA QSL'ing with me. Thanks to her, I wasn't never alone in this aventure.

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