



Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Signal Point PJ2T

2005 Station Manager Report

Jeff Maass K8ND
6/04 - 5/05





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PJ2T Station Status Overview

Once again, the PJ2T station is in better shape than a year ago.

The measure of our station preparedness is, to me, the record of failures occurring *during* a contest. Contests cannot be won if the operator has to step aside while a radio, amplifier, or accessory is replaced with a spare, or if an antenna stops working in the middle of a contest! This year, no contest win was threatened by equipment failure, although a little time was lost in the CQ 160 CW contest due to commercial power failure.

While the 2003-04 year was characterized by acquiring spare parts (tubes, rotors, etc.) for the spares closet, 2004-05 was more characterized by maintenance and station enhancements. This should be a continuing pattern.

This year, a total of \$6948 from the station fund was spent on the station. This is almost precisely (within \$30) the amount spent last year. As the Treasurer's report shows, this money came from three sources: 26% from dues, 37% from cash donations, and 37% from Station Support fees. With the exception of the "Hat in Hand" collection taken to reimburse W8TK for his shipment of the fifth FT-1000MP he has made available for use at the station, we did no "Targeted Fund Drives" this past year (as we have done in the past for flat-screen displays and operator chairs). We have, during the year, identified some small items that we had a need for, and the response was very, very good (and appreciated!).

While there are some major purchases made this year (for additional 8874 tubes, bandpass filtering hardware, used computers), a remarkable amount of money each year is spent on "small stuff", like fuses, antenna hardware, audio adapters, power strips, solder, RF connectors and adapters, toroids, our last stub assembly, new rotor cable, tower paint, etc.





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Also a big expense this year was repairs of existing equipment. While we try to do repairs on the island where possible, sometimes it's necessary to bring the broken item back to the States for proper repair. Our new Alpha 76CA developed a step-start power supply problem, and was sent to Alpha for repair. The Heil ProSet headsets have fairly fragile cables/connections that don't hold up too well with abuse (mostly, careless unplugging of the headphone plug), and the connectors are not field repairable (teeny little wires). Their ear pads break down and crumble in the salt air. The Heil Hospital renovates them to be as good as new. Four ProSet and two BM-10 headsets were rebuilt at Heil this year.

Geoff W0CG took advantage of our provision to subsidize travel to the station for dedicated work trips, and accomplished a great deal of much-needed station and house maintenance (which he does when he travels on his dime, as well!). Any club member is eligible to apply to be subsidized for $\frac{1}{2}$ his travel expense if he is willing to perform needed maintenance around the Signal Point Station.

In September 2004, Hurricane Ivan swooped down through the Southern Caribbean, and missed Curacao, passing 95 miles north. There were periods of heavy rain, but no damage to the station. Curacao is not in the normal "Hurricane Belt", but every 100 years or so it gets damage from a hurricane.



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PJ2T Station Improvements and Status

1. The first “pavilion portable” operations have been done, with a transceiver on the open-air pavilion overlooking the ocean. Cables are in place for transceiver power and feedline to make this easy to do.
2. The Station #1 bandpass filtering was replaced by the same type of hardware as on Station #2 (Array Solutions FM-6 switching of W3NQN bandpass filters). The radio now automatically switches filters even when Writelog is not running on it’s computer.
3. Station #3 now uses the W3NQN bandpass filtering originally used by Station #1. This is not automatically switched, but selectable from a control box. This is much better than the old “plug in the proper filter by screwing it into PL-259s on each end!
4. An error in the power wiring infrastructure was discovered and repaired, and the ability to switch from mains to generator power was made more foolproof by color-coding the plugs.
5. Audio interface boxes were installed to allow driving microphone inputs from the sound cards for phone contesting. These are shielded and filtered to keep out RF interference.
6. The coaxial stub sets that we have long owned have been permanently installed to prevent inter-station interference. Previously, specific stubs were installed only when interference was noted. Now, with the stubs and W3NQN bandpass filters both in place, inter-station interference is nearly eliminated.





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7. Badly rusted lower tower guy wires were replaced and fully sealed against future corrosion.
8. All the guy anchors were inspected, painted with epoxy paint, and the threads treated with anti-seize as appropriate. All ground anchors were declared to be in good condition.
9. The two USA/JA 10-meter yagis were cleaned up and weatherproofed by Geoff and Cindy. When reinstalled, the distance between the yagis was increased and the phasing lines replaced and tuned by Geoff and Jerry WB9Z to better take advantage of stacking gain. Improvement noted.
10. The European Beverage was vandalized and 500-feet of wire stolen. Hot and prickly repairs were made by Geoff W0CG and Jack Reichert N4RV in October before the CQWW SSB Contest.
11. A new Top Ten band decoder was purchased to replace the one at Station 1, which appeared to not be working. The problem was determined to be in the computer's parallel port configuration, and the decoder added to our stock of spare parts.
12. Lightning damaged the modem in one of our computers, and all the spares refused to work just prior to the CQWW CW Contest. A modem purchased locally at Cost-U-Less did not work in our computer. Jim W8WTS purchased several of a known-good model, and brought them down for us. This emphasized the desirability to keep identical spares for boards that have proven to work in our computers and under Windows 98.



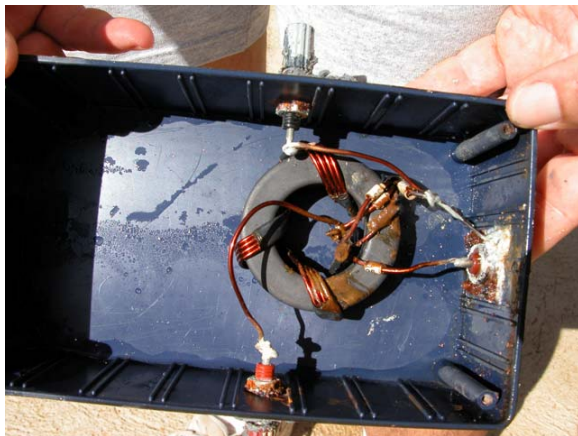


Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Signal Point PJ2T

2005 Station Manager Report

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13. The 160 meter feed Unun transformer box had corroded connectors, and was rebuilt and re-weatherproofed. A spare unun is at Signal Point.
14. The 160 meter inverted-L had intermittent SWR changes at high power. Problem was traced to the extra ~25 feet of wire wrapped back on the antenna at the upper end of the antenna to shorten it. The insulation had burned through, and was arcing at high power peaks. The extra wire was removed.
15. The Radio Closet was cleaned and organized with added labeling.
16. Amplifier fans have been mounted on feet, to eliminate the makeshift stands of bandpass filters previously used.
17. Tower painting continues at a pace ahead of plans. The rust “blooms through” the new coats of paint on the ocean side of towers much more quickly than we expected. Jerry WB9Z and Geoff W0CG did yeoman’s duty to keep the epoxy paint flowing onto the towers.
18. At least one Hy-Gain type boom-to-mast clamp on the 20 meter yagis is corroded and cracked and needs replacement. We also need a source of Hy-Gain element-to-mast clamps. We are seeking sources for these parts.
19. The Ten Tec Omni VI problem of chirp on 160 meters was diagnosed, and the repair parts are at the station for installation.





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Signal Point PJ2T

2005 Station Manager Report

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6/04 - 5/05

20. The Alpha 76CA amplifier purchased in early 2004 worked great in the PJ2HQ IARU Contest in July, but in October it failed to power-up properly. It was returned to Alpha for repairs. On it's return to Signal Point, an assembling "operator error" crispy-crittered some power supply components, which were repaired on-site. Geoff W0CG is becoming our "CCC Alpha Repair Expert" after enjoying the experience.
21. Three additional spare 8874 tubes were purchased and tested as good for our Alpha 76 and 78 amplifiers.
22. The search continues for a 4CX1600B spare tube for the Ten Tec Titan II amplifier. These tubes were discontinued by Svetlana, and no dealer has any in stock (for the past two years). There's likely one on a shelf somewhere, and we'd like to find it!
23. Tom Kravec W8TK provided us with another brand-new FT-1000MP Field transceiver, equipped with INRAD roofing filter.
24. SWR problems on the 80m delta loop array and the 160 meter inverted-L were fixed when the ladder line on the 80m reflector loop was repaired. This is a reminder that all antennas within the PJ2T "antenna yard" are in close proximity to each other, and have the potential to interact!
25. Three new Compaq computers were acquired by Mary NW0L on behalf of the club, had software installed, and are in the closet to serve as "warm standby" computers at Signal Point.



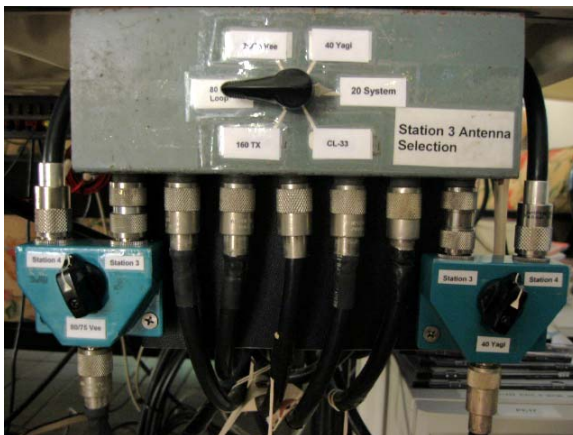


Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Signal Point PJ2T

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26. The generator became unreliable, and Keith WA9S brought repair parts and his experience with him and repaired it! He brought a service manual, carb repair kit, new ignition system, and new plugs.
27. Ongoing repair and enhancement of the radials for the 160 meter inverted-L continue, with Geoff W0CG and Dan N1ZZ noted as doing some of that work this year. The radials are mauled by the lawn mower, and some were unavoidably cut during the septic tank work.
28. Geoff hacked his way into the overgrown site of the US/JA Beverage termination, and inspected it for the first time a couple of years. All looked well.
29. The antenna selection versatility of the station was improved by applying our two spare Daiwa CS201 coax switches at Station #3 to allow us to the 40 yagi and 80/75 inv-V to Station #4.
30. One of the FT-1000MP Field radios suffered a failure of it's display, which went dark and would not recover. Some searching on the web found a description by a couple of people who had suffered similar failures, and who knew a good fix that could be applied on-site. Geoff fixed the radio at Signal Point, saving the bag-drag back to the States.





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2005 Station Manager Report

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6/04 - 5/05

31. Our oldest (1995) FT-1000MP suffered a failure that resulted in low output (~20W) on the high bands. This was diagnosed as a failure of driver transistor(s), and the radio was brought back to the US for repair. After researching 'MP repair persons, Paul Hansen W6XA of Anderson SC was selected, and fixed the problem, installed a set of performance-enhancing modifications (Roofing Filter, key click, AGC, noise blanker, K9AN audio), and gave the radio a general "health check" for \$401. Geoff W0CG, who traveled down to SC on personal business, had a chance to discuss radio maintenance with Paul, and returned with some ideas on how we can proceed with keeping our station equipment running as close to 100% as possible.
32. A deal is in the works to obtain the Ten Tec Titan I (Titan 425) in return for our Ten Tec Centaur amplifier, some 811As, and some cash. The Titan 425 was sent to Ten Tec for repair, and restored to excellent condition for ~\$200 + shipping. This gets us a full-power (1500W out: 2 x 3CX800A7 tubes) amplifier in exchange for a 500-600W amplifier. I predict that this will pay dividends in the next few years.
33. To my knowledge, none of the bag-draggs this year resulted in a demand for payment of customs duties by the Curacao Customs folks! This is much different than the situation several years ago, but does not necessarily mean that you won't get hit by such a demand in the future!
34. A group purchase of filters from INRAD is in the works to save \$66 (20%) of the price of the INRAD Roofing Filters needed for the two remaining PJ2T FT-1000MP transceivers which are not yet equipped with them.





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Donations To PJ2T

In preparing this report, I attempted to list the many donations made in support of the Signal Point Station in the past year, but soon realized that my records were not complete enough to avoid missing someone or something. It's better that I don't try to make a specific list for this year. The "CCC Donor Hall of Fame" on the Club web site includes a running accounting of items and support donated by each member.

We appreciate all the donations made, both those given in response to a specific need we've identified, and those serendipitous gifts that may fill an unrecognized need! And, although this report is specific to the Station Fund and Committee, donations have also been made to support the house and facilities.

I would be remiss to not mention the continued stellar support of Dr. Tom Kravec W8TK, who provided us with our fifth FT-1000MP this year, a brand new FT-1000MP Field with filters and Roofing Filter installed. Along with it, he provided a new Cabbage Case custom fit for the radio. Tom also provided a Roofing Filter for one of the FT-1000MP radios, more Bencher paddles, five Idiom Press Logikeyers, and four WinKey keyers to use with Writelog. As CCC Treasurer, Tom keeps track of the Station Fund balances, and keeps us apprised of our ability to meet pop-up needs.

Mal Preston NP2L provided us with a large and unrestricted donation to the Station Fund in April, which we will put to good use in the coming months to prepare for the Fall contest season.

Many others of you have donated items or cash as well, for the house and/or the station, and it's all appreciated (but none of it is tax deductible, is it Doug?).

Your Station

In five short years, the Caribbean Contesting Consortium has built a station that is recognized as one of the premiere contest stations in the World. Building the station is only a part of the challenge: maintaining and enhancing the capabilities of the station is a never-ending task!

Rust never sleeps, our competitors never sleep, and because of the support of you and your fellow members, we have a station that has been proven to be much more than a "flash in the pan"! I would suggest that we are not yet a "Legend", but we are on our way!