



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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Our Shrinking Newsletter

With no radio activity on Curacao there is less and less for me to report here. Rather than fill it with fluff, I'll let this newsletter find its own best size depending upon what's going on month to month. Once we get active again on the island there will be news and photos, and newsletter will re-inflate as needed.



The coax entry bulkhead and filters when everything was shiny new, September, 2002.

CCC Stands for "Continuing Curacao Crises"

I have whined to you before in these columns about the headaches of long distance real estate. The latest crisis is a panic call from Zoom that the plants are all dying. I had been worrying about this because I normally can see a bit of water via the surveillance camera on the patio every evening after the irrigation comes on, but that has been missing lately. The system is controlled by an irrigation computer in the laundry room and consists of about 70 drip outlets all in one zone.

These kinds of systems are headaches under normal conditions and require constant attention. With the pandemic it's even worse to care for it. Nozzles plug,

lines break open, the computer itself fails, or the 9 volt battery dies. I know from experience that I can NEVER stay away for more than four months without big problems at the station, and this is no exception. It's the fifth month now, problems have come up, and the pandemic prevents me from getting there.

Zoom is a sweet, very bright, wholly trustworthy person, but he has zero mechanical skills. I first suspected a dead battery in the computer but knew there was no way I would be able to coach him in how to change the battery over the phone. I've shown him many times in person, but it never "takes." Luckily, our across the street neighbor Dirk van Daam is very capable, and he replaced the battery per directions in an E-mail. But rats, he said that after he put in that battery the system came on fine, seemed to have good water flow, but that still nothing was coming out anywhere.

Next, Zoom phoned and I tried to explain to him that there is a break in a line somewhere and that huge amounts of water would be coming out there. No soap, he did not understand how to do that troubleshooting. Next I asked if he knew someone expert at drip systems and he said "Sure!" and said he'd get someone there and they would call me.

Days later that call came in and Zoom put his friend Rudy on the line. Rudy's English was slightly better than Zoom's, but it was soon apparent that he was not the drip system guy but an electrician there to fix the problem of the place being "black" at night. (The across the street neighbor Inge had complained that all our night lights are burned out.) Rudy told me he was sure there was a wiring problem and I tried to explain to him to just replace the burned out bulbs. I tried to explain to Zoom to replace the burned out bulbs. I offered to pay Dirk across the street to replace the burned out bulbs. None of this is happening and the place is still "black" at night. Rudy then called again to tell me he was going to replace the light sensors and I

finally convinced him to keep his hands off of those, but he still is not replacing bulbs. I stopped him when he was starting to open up an electrical box on the porch unnecessarily by shouting to him through the Ring camera. Gadzooks.

Then last week Zoom insisted that he take the irrigation computer to Gardena, a gardening equipment store, for diagnosis. I tried to convince him that was not the problem but he did so anyway. He said the lady there told him the computer was “kaput” but I know better because he only had the control head, not the valve body.

At least Zoom appears to have gotten out the hose and claims to be watering manually every other night. I’m sending him extra money to do that. But I know from the cameras that he’s only watering about once each 10 days. Welcome to my life. I have tried for years to find a maintenance man with skills and with whom I can communicate, but still no luck. This is really frustrating, and I’m resigned to finding most of the plants and light bulbs dead when I finally am permitted back into the country. Cripes.

CCC Big Donors in QST

CCCers are very prominent in the ARRL donor lists as our club group continues to step up to support the league. It’s heart warming to see this generosity and collective demonstration of love of our hobby. Our members K2PLF and NA2U are listed in the +\$50K group, and the Maxim Society +\$10K list includes NP2L, WB9Z, W9VA, and K0MD. Legacy Circle members (life insurance proceeds) include N5OT and W0CG. The list of large donors for calendar year 2019 includes CCCers WI9WI and KA9DOC, K2PLF, NA2U, and W9VA. Apologies to anyone I may have missed, including Mr. and Mrs. Anonymous. When you add in the callsigns of big donors who have at one time or another passed through PJ2T on contest crews, we can be proud to say that we know a significant proportion of the core supporters of the league’s present and future activities that are so critical to keeping our sport viable and our frequencies available. Hats off to all of them.



Here’s Our Great Grandfather



A young John Thompson, W1BIH and PJ9JT, builder and original owner of Signal Point. Without him none of our great PJ2T adventure would be happening.

Speaking of John Thompson, here on the next page is a handwritten log showing a QSO with John, PJ9JT, on 23 January 1997. This was an extremely exciting event. Our long-time CCC member Jim Livengood, KP2L/W0NB, had just gotten himself sufficiently situated on St. John to have some time to toss up an antenna and get on the air. He and Mary would be building a home in the Virgin Islands and making a life there.

At the time of the QSO they were in temporary quarters in a beach cottage. I have been there – this spot fits your most perfect mental image of a tropical paradise, situated directly on a white sand beach ringed with palm trees. Jim tossed a wire into a tree, managed to get it to load, and got on the air initially with an IC-706. Our beloved departed amateur radio cartoonist W1CJD would have had a great time drawing the scene of Jim’s first V.I. QSOs. It seems really

prophetic that PJ9JT popped into Jim's KP2/W0NB log on the first day. Little did any of us know at that time that Curacao would become part of our radio lives three years later.

LOG of W0NB/KP2
23 JAN 1997 to
ST. JOHN

Date/Time	Call	BAND	RST/Mode	Notes
23 97 00	W3RDF	10.1	579 CW	Don - Myrtle Beach SC Kilom. alt + 1460000
2110	P49I	10.1	579	via K4PA
2250	PJ9JT	3.5	579	John -
2312	VK4IR	10.1036 10.1147	579	QSL sent 27.17 HEARD IS QUATAR
24 JAN 97 000512 ↓	A7ICW	3.502	579/579	see A45 XR
0058	GM3POI	3.504	" "	CLIVE SCOTLAND
0100	P40WA	3.5	" "	JOHN via K9LWA
1341	V3IRG	14	579/579	V3IRG MARTY Punta Gorda Bonaire
1353	W0PIE	14	579/57	Russ Timpis MF 14185 145AM 137/1352 Bonaire, Netherlands

Log of KP2/W0NB, St. John Virgin Islands, January 1997, courtesy of W0NB.

Our QST Article

I'm happy to report that the November issue of "QST" will contain an article entitled "A Million QSOs: Celebrating PJ2T's 20th Anniversary." This brief piece will contain photos of W0NB and VA7RR who made our QSO #1 as well as a photo of UT3V, QSO # 1,000,000. Alex's dog is also in the photo. Alex was thrilled to hear that he'd be mentioned in "QST."

HF-2500 Logistical Plans

I presently plan to drive to Ohio in late August to meet with my class at Kent State. The university will be "open" for in-person class meetings, and I want no part of riding the airlines yet, particularly not American. Hence I've made plans to stop by at NROX in Martelle, Iowa, and pick up the HF-2500 amplifier that Jason has so generously donated. I'll take it on to my home in Ohio, do the usual disassembly and preparation for shipment, and haul it to the island as checked baggage once travel resumes. N5OT has our white hard case, and will ship it empty to Ohio very soon. The RF deck of the new amp will just neatly fit in that case, as you will see from the dimensions below.

AL-1200 17 w 18 d 10 h

HF-2500 18 w 16 d 7/34 h

I'll pack the transformer in a separate piece of checked baggage, and the tubes will ride out of their sockets and wrapped in many layers of foam wedged safely

inside the RF deck. Thanks to Jason and Mark for supporting these logistics. And along the way I'm hoping to possibly drop by for a socially distant "wave through the window" at CCCers homes that may include KB7Q, W0NB, WB9Z, N8NR, and K8ND.

The Latest on Curacao Travel

There's restlessness on the island. I chatted for about 90 minutes last week with PJ2BR. Brett is as upset about being locked INTO the island as we are about being locked OUT of it.

Tourism is about 36% of the economy of Curacao, and of course that has dropped to zero point zero these past four months. The resulting economic pressure has forced the government to announce a temporary 12.5% salary cut for employees and recipients of government benefits, which is a really significant slice of the total population. As a result people have been pouring into the streets in Willemstad and Otrabanda demonstrating. The property damage has not been very severe, but this is indeed frightening. Worse, Brett reported that there are gangs of thugs who are being paid to set brush fires, upset and break planters, and do other low grade property damage. This is connected with objectives of certain political parties in Curacao. None of this is happening anywhere near our remote west end of the island, thankfully. As people get squeezed more and more, and real fear sets in, this kind of civil unrest is inevitable. The government has re-imposed a strict nighttime curfew to try to help keep things quiet.

I'm writing this on July 1, the first day that travelers from the Netherlands and some other countries from Western Europe will be permitted to enter Curacao. That experiment will help provide data that will drive the decision about when to readmit people from the U.S. Our recent exclusion from the European Union does not bode well for America's global reputation for our mismanagement of the pandemic. We wait and watch.

Contest Update for Fall 2020

It's still my intention to be on hand to host both CQWW SSB and CQWW CW. Dorothy plans to be along for the code contest. W3ACO has opted out on the SSB contest on advice of medical professionals, and N7IR and NA2U from the code contest for good reasons of caution. We are all in "wait" mode to see what happens.



Update on Annual CCC Membership Renewals

I sent the membership renewal invitation letters on May 21. Of our 23 present members, 19 renewals have already been received. Two additional members were already prepaid for the year, so that leaves only two. WI9WI renewed with a generous amount of \$750. Thanks to all of you for helping to keep our club afloat during the world crisis.

CCC Financial Snapshot:

Per W8WTS the end of June balance was \$4818.76.

KB7Q Grid Activity

As you know, Gene and Joyce are on the road extensively camping and putting on grid squares. Check out <http://kb7qgrid.blogspot.com> for some wonderful photos and stories of their adventures. Here are a couple that will make you want to go sightseeing in the wide open West.



Looking east from KB7Q's 2 Meter DN65 grid.



Social distancing is not a problem in Montana.

Maybe this Should Be Our New Logo?



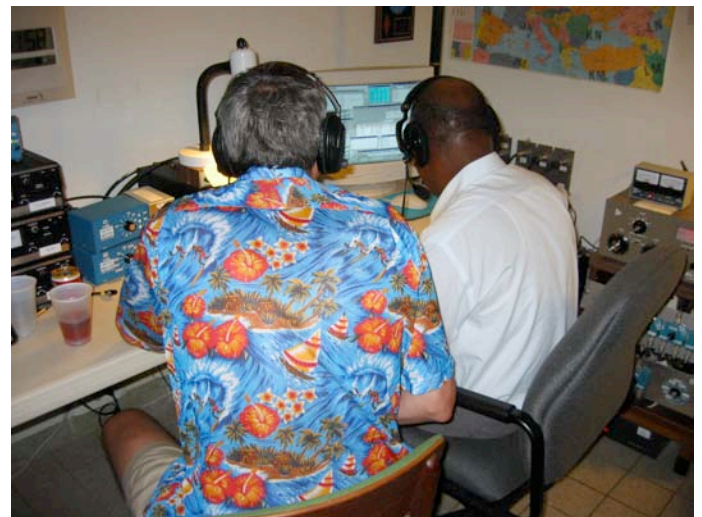
When it's warm in Idaho I spend a lot of time on my bicycle. One of my favorite training routes is an afternoon out from our condo west to the state line with Washington, and then back without stopping, a total of about 36 miles. Near the state line there's a strip mall, and this sign is on the back of one of the stores at the delivery entrance. Escaping to the shack room at Signal Point and giving out lots of "59s" is indeed our CCC escape adventure.

K8ND Upcoming PJ2 Trip

Set 2 – 15 All Asia SSB and WAE SSB, travel permitting. We'll keep you posted.

IARU Radiosport – July 12, 2003

Castro Mercalina (PJ2CFM) and Gary Stouder (K9SG) running at Station 1. In that era we hosted VERONA ops at the station every summer.



The only crystals were for the 80M Novice band. More precious money spent down at the hardware store for wire, cable, and insulators. I think I used a soldering iron left over from my Dad's old NRI courses. Dad wasn't happy with me walking all over the roof putting up the dipole. Tuning up was with a light bulb. The SWR meter sat in the corner, I had NO idea what that was for.

January 20, 1973 at 1938 local time (GMT? what's that?) WN7UVJ went on the air. Yeah, I still have that logbook. I called CQ 7 times over the next hour on 3.739 and 3.728 MHz with no answers. You had to log the CQ's back in those days and at age 14, I was really concerned about following the rules. I even signed each page of the log. I was sure the FCC was listening. Four days and 3 log sheets later, after many CQ's and even trying to call a few folks, I finally made a contact with WN7UVI who's callsign was issued just before mine. Dave in Bremerton it says in the log! The next day, I worked my first DX, VE7AJU.

I had fun. I even figured out what that SWR meter was for eventually. My Father went to the neighbors and told them all to see me if they had any TVI problems. By September, you only had a year to upgrade, I was ready to take the General. My father took me to the downtown Seattle FCC building with much grumbling (which I fully appreciate these days considering he had to take time off from work) and I sat for and passed that exam. I dropped my N and became WA7UVJ. Dad even helped me put up a vertical. Anything to keep me off the roof.

Being a Ham wasn't something that made you popular in school. We did have a Ham Club in high school with our own station. I bought and put together a HW-101 with the funds from my job as a deck hand in the summer following my sophomore year. It was a fun time for a couple years but real life intrudes. There were grades to earn, work, and, sometimes, girls. By my senior year, there wasn't too much time for radio. My radio knowledge allowed me to jump a couple quarters at Community College. I figured I was headed for a Broadcast Technician degree. I saw myself sitting at some Podunk radio station in the sticks tending a transmitter. Then I discovered digital electronics and saw my first PDP-8. I switched over to a general Electronics Technology degree. I also got married which was really a surprise due to my complete lack of social skills. My license elapsed (they were only 5 years back then) but I renewed during my one-year grace period. After graduating, we lived in a single wide in a trailer park for five years and I learned about CPU's as the company was starting a new design using

the Z-80. None of the other tech's wanted anything to do with it. I started studying microprocessors and dabbling in software.



Don't even bother trying to get on the air from a trailer park. My wife was confused as to what this radio stuff was about but it went away just as quickly as it started and I sold the HW-101. We worked hard and got our first house. Radio began to interest me again. I found a used TS-520 and I could now walk on my own roof to put up antennas. I found my first real radio club, the Mike & Key ARC in Seattle. After being a loner Ham for so many years, it was exciting to do Field Days, hamfests, and have local Ham buddies. Through the Mike & Key, I taught Novice classes at the local Community College and my wife Diane even earned her Technician license KB7DNE. Between my wife and the Club, I feel I have advanced beyond being a total introvert (though I still like my alone time). Diane bought me my first tower (HBX-40). Yeah, she had some guidance from me.

I joined the Western Washington DX Club. They are not as social as the Mike and Key but I did get involved in their efforts to open up the old Soviet Union by bringing in Russian Hams. I also went to the USSR in 1990 (missed the first WRTC because of that). I had to work a second job to get the funds but that trip was simultaneously enlightening and disturbing and well worth the effort. I still have friends there and licenses attached to my US address. In the mid-90's, I went back to school to get my undergrad degree in Software Engineering. I could see the future as a hardware technician was limited and I was already doing software. Again, going to work and school took its toll on radio activities but the Mike & Key and my wife provided a radio anchor this time. Around this time, I made application for the first vanity callsign gate after much soul searching. I remember reading a message on packet radio with the

