



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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CQWW SSB Contest Report

Band QSOs Zones Countries

160: 418 19 46
80: 934 23 83
40: 2611 28 115
20: 3218 28 115
15: 2678 27 120
10: 503 18 50

Total: 10362 143 532
Total Score = 20,354,625

We're a contest club. CCC is busy all the time, year around, but the focus, the payoff, is to get on in the big ones and make lots of points. With CQWW SSB we've kicked off yet another contest season.

This was a *wonderful* score, and we're proud to post it for the world to see. PJ2T is alive and well and very, very visible.

We got off to a rocky start. The Thursday night 0000Z mockup went perfectly, with negligible interstation interference and good performance of all antennas and equipment. Between Friday afternoon and Friday night Murphy crept in. At the start of the contest 20 meters was putting out terrible hash on all bands, all antennas, even barefoot. W8WTS and I did emergency troubleshooting and eliminated components all the way over to the antenna switching panel. There, we cabled around the Station 4 A/B switch and that eliminated much of the problem.

Then when Jim tuned up to start on 160, we were seeing 5:1 SWR when output power was raised above 200 watts. After more frantic troubleshooting, including swapping the amp, we discovered that the same thing was happening on 80 at Station 1. That

eliminated the antennas and the amp and radio as culprits. We then connected the 160 L directly to the amplifier and everything was perfect.

It appears that multiple problems popped up literally overnight in the antenna switching relays or cabling, so we had to operate through the weekend with these patches. I will troubleshoot through the following week.

Conditions were better than expected in the days before the contest. So good, in fact, that K8PGJ led a schedule modification session Friday afternoon (photo) so that the additional open hours on the bands would be covered.

The photo shows the guys expanding the schedule for the unexpectedly good conditions. L-R: Ed (K8IV), Egon (KF4DX), Ray (ND8L), leader Pete (K8PGJ), and Ray (VE4GV).



As always the low bands were challenging and noisy, but the night crew guys toughed it out and posted good numbers. By day 20, 15, and even 10 were much better than expected. We made very effective use of the Force 12 to the States and the Bencher Europe Yard

antenna for Europe. At times these were as good as or a bit better than the primary antennas for those bands.

Here's the official team photo, taken Monday morning just before the team started heading home to all points of the compass. This was a fabulous fun group of guys with an incredible on-the-air work ethic.



L-R: W8WTS, VE4GV, K8IV, ND8L, W0CG, KF4DX, K8PGJ, CE3CT

Below, ND8L and VE4GV at the morning breakfast "grill."



Worked All Germany Contest Report

Prior to CQWW Uli operated from Signal Point in the Worked All Germany contest, a 24 hour event from 1500Z Saturday until 1500 Sunday, October 19-20. It was for fun, so he did not sit up all night fishing for points, but still posted a good score. He signed PJ2/DL8OBQ rather than PJ2T so as to be easily identified as a German.

40 125Q 23 mults
20 460Q 25 mults
15 316Q 25 mults

910 73 Total Score 103,149.

A bazillion non-German stations called him and he patiently worked them all for zero points.

Financial Snapshot

As of October 31 the balance is at \$4210.49. Thanks Treasurer W8WTS for all of your work. The large cost of the materials to rebuild our RX system infrastructure is paid, as well as the cost of shipping all of that materiel and 1300 feet of Heliacx to the island. The balance remaining will be used to fund an as yet unscheduled NR0X tower trip to the island and in support of ongoing maintenance of PJ2T.

Welcome New Member ND8L

We're very happy to welcome Ray Fallen, ND8L, to CCC membership. He very much liked what he saw and heard here on his first visit and quickly decided to sign on. Ray lives in Hubbard, Ohio, a northeast part of the Youngstown area, and he and I discovered that we formerly lived in the same neighborhood in Poland, southeast of Youngstown. Further, he's an aircraft owner, and we had fun dropping names of Youngstown area aviators that we had both known in our years of active flying in that area.



ND8L, 3:08 AM, 26 October 2019 on 40 SSB.

Ray is an excellent contest operator and will be coming to PJ2T with Ed (K8IV) to put the place on in RTTY competitions. He served as chef for the October WW SSB crew (photo below) and treated us to magnificent meals. He also is a tower climber and a quiet mild-mannered gentleman. He makes his bed daily. In real life he's an insurance professional. You can drop him a note of welcome at ray.fallen@gmail.com.



ND8L serving up man food Monday morning after the SSB contest.

Maintenance: The October Curse

Since I moved to Idaho in 2008 it has not been practical to make as many annual trips to Curacao. For several years my pattern has been to leave Signal Point in March and not return until October. That leaves plenty of time for a lot of things to go wrong.

Here's the list, as far as I knew it, effective October 17: Europe Beverage inop probably because the construction broke the feedline somewhere; US/JA Beverage completely and irreversibly obliterated by the construction; Force 12 freewheeling because of a failure of the rotor brake, and at least one feedline is broken at the top of the tower; three element 80 reflector broken; three element driven element wire broken and switch and capacitor wire hanging in a tree; 160 meter inverted L transmit antenna broken near the top of the 100 foot tower; part of an element broken off the top US 10 meter beam and pierced the roof like a dart causing a big leak. And that's before I have had much opportunity to evaluate the condition of the equipment inside. I never like arriving here to so many problems, but that's the October curse and I just have to deal with it. On top of all that the lawn mower is running horribly and the grass is knee high in places.

After a few days of hot work things looked better. The 160 TX antenna wire was broken about 15 feet from the top. I went to the top of the 100 foot tower and set a pulley rope. It took several attempts at throwing, but I was finally able to get the pulley rope, with a big crescent wrench on the end, to thread and then fall in the correct position among the elements of the yagis below my position. This is always tricky in the howling wind. I brought down the top 15 feet of the antenna and the rope and insulator in my pouch. The next day I soldered the pieces back together, using about four inches of the antenna to make the splice. Following that it took about 90 minutes to take down some of the other wires and get the 160 into position to

be re-raised. Uli stood at the base of the tower and carefully pulled the rope as I guided the 160 back into the air. That went smoothly, leaving the antenna about three feet short of its final position. I then went to the top of the tower and tied it off in the correct position with a new black nylon rope. Per the lessons learned on the old tower, all tieoffs are on the braces and never anything on the tower legs. SWR looks great, except that the resonant frequency crept up a bit because of the four inches lost to in making the splice.

Diagnosing the dead Europe Beverage took a lot of sleuthing. I went up the hill to assure myself that the antenna wire was still there, and then traced the feedline back as far as I could see it before it became buried. Because of all the construction and excavation I was pretty sure that the buried feedline had been cut somewhere. To try to isolate that Uli and I set up the 2 meter radio link and I went out with a shorting wire while he watched the ohmmeter in the shack. I opened up the junction box on the wall at the road, and we were able to verify that the feedline from the shack to the road was still intact. When I looked up the other side of the line toward the antenna, I saw a dead short, also a good sign, indicating that either the path to the primary of the Beverage transformer was connected or, less likely, that the dug up line had ended up shorted.

I spent a couple of hours moving construction debris and brush across the street and finally found our Beverage feedline. I buried that in 2003 and had not seen it since, but the construction had unearthed it. Amazingly it all looked intact, and a huge thanks to our neighbor Dirk who saw to it that they dug very carefully. In fact it is better than that because he found our conduit, handled it with great care, and even poured the foundation of the new security gate around our cable, as seen below. The photo shows the grey conduit containing the Europe Beverage feedline, routed through the footer for the security gate. Thanks Dirk



So the visual checks of the feedline all looked good. After closer examination of the road junction box on my hands and knees with a flashlight, I realized that the coax connector was goosed up with moist conductive corrosion, surely from the flooding deluge that happened about three weeks ago. A river of water had flowed over and around this box during that storm. My careful waterproofing from years ago had cracked slightly and let in some water. After cleaning that up the Beverage suddenly worked again, and Uli used it to good effect working Europeans in the WAG contest on 40.

Repairs to the broken elements of the 80 three element were straightforward, but all of that takes hours to drag out extension cords and parts and the ladder, untangle things from the trees, and hook it all back up.

The photo below shows the hole in the roof where the broken 10 meter element pierced it like a dart.



Needless to say, this had admitted a LOT of water into the West Bedroom. I extracted the element, patched the hole with roof tape, and now Dorothy and I have a couple of stained ceiling panels to repaint when she arrives. This element is part of one of two driven elements on the top 10, and that array worked fine when Uli was running 10 meters to the States the other day, so I'll probably defer this uncritical repair until I have another climber here to help me out.

The last remaining October repair that we knew of was to replace the rotor on the US/JA tower. Prior to arrival of the team I spent about three hours getting the old rotor out. It took a ton of effort to peel away the layers of paint and corrosion, but I finally got it down. The mast was secured using a new DX Engineering mast lock kit, which fit perfectly.

I finally got time to do install the new rotor on Friday of CQWW SSB, and with help on the rope from K8IV hauled up the new Tailtwister, freshly rebuilt by

CATS. It installed easily and passed all rotation tests in coordination on 2 meters with an op in the shack. With that done I happily weatherproofed the cable connection and climbed down. Well hell, upon arriving in the shack, Pete said the rotor did not work. I was not going to go up and work on it with the antennas energized all weekend. Fortunately, it was stuck on US/JA, so we did not suffer much from this in the contest. Monday after the contest I investigated and quickly found that the top locking sleeve on the quick disconnect had broken, allowing the cable plug to come out. I improvised a fix and now all is working.

W8WTS and K8IV both brought crimp-type coax connectors for repair of the broken 6 meter feedline at the top of the tower. I had never used these before, so W8WTS gave me a tutorial ahead of time, and I went up the tower with his crimp tool in the tool bag. It took about two hours, but I managed to get the two crimp connectors on and install a barrel and waterproofing. The six meter yagi is now back in service, but don't forget to cable around the low pass filter first! Thanks Jim and Ed for the donation of a stock of solderless coax connectors.

DL8OBQ Gets Right to Work



Above: CCC member DL8OBQ loading groceries at Cost-U-Less, October 17, immediately after landing from Europe.

Uli (DL8OBQ) arrived in Curacao October 17 after a 3 AM alarm clock, a drive to Hannover, a flight to Amsterdam, and then almost 10 hours in a 747 to Curacao. He should have been dead tired, but he happily accompanied me to get some keys duplicated, then to Cost-U-Less to pick up groceries. Once we arrived at the QTH he leaped into action right away helping with a zillion chores. What a guy. He piloted PJ2T in the Worked All Germany contest, then headed to PJ4K for the WW contest. There's absolutely nothing wrong with our members operating with other groups – the geographic and personality diversity is a lot of fun!

Don't feel too bad for Uli; he rode First Class on the top deck of the 747 from Amsterdam. Here's his ride (below), KLM 735, just after blocking in on the 17th of October after 10 hours in the air.



It's hard to get very deep because the dirt is so shallow here, but this is tough cable (Davis RG-8 BuryFlex), and I'll encase parts of it in tough flex conduit and then cover and tamp the ditch.

Resurrecting the US/JA Beverage (Temporarily)

We put in a new, much improved system of RX antennas on the Ridge in November, far away from any future threats from nasty bulldozers. But in the meantime the SSB contest was upon us and we needed something in the interim.

Our buried feedline to that US/JA Beverage was lying partly exposed on the ground after the attack of the bulldozer. I pulled the rest of it out and this ragged end is all that was left of our nice 840 foot receiving antenna, the transformer and termination system, and the radials at both ends. The photo shows the inglorious remains of our beautiful US/JA Beverage after the bulldozer got it.

From that tree we strung out a temporary 500 foot Beverage along the route of the old one. There are just enough trees remaining to provide reasonable support for the wire. The photo shows the green Beverage antenna looking toward the States.



This antenna performed very well in CQWW SSB, but we removed it the day afterward because this wire is much too visible and thus much too tempting to vandals and scrap metal collectors. Thanks K8PGJ and K8IV for help in assembling and installing this antenna. We used a new KD9SV 9:1 transformer at the feedpoint and a new 470 ohm termination, both from DX Engineering.

I cleaned up the end of the coax (seen above) and Uli and I ran some checks to verify that the cable was still good from the shack. There was enough length left to get to a small and sturdy tree along the cliff edge, so I set about digging a trench to get it as deep as possible in the hope that it would survive for the contest. Here's the ditch at about half depth. I finished it the next day.

After our new Beverage is completed on the Ridge, this BuryFlex to the temporary Beverage will remain in place, possibly to serve as the feedline for an 80 meter TX antenna at the water's edge. However, if construction eats the cable again, we'll know we tried our best.

Coral Cliff Neighborhood Security Gate



Here's the new security gate in place. The hard work is done, but the toothed bar and drive motor and controls still need to be installed. There will be multiple ways to activate the gate, including keypad codes, remote transmitters, and something like EZPass for the garbage truck. We owe a huge thanks to our neighbor Dirk van Daam, who prevented the contractors from digging up our buried transmission lines to the Ridge.

Ocean Shipment Delivered October 18

Here's Uli, DL8OBQ, with all 16 items of the ocean freight, delivered in good condition to the Signal Point backyard on Friday, October 18, precisely on schedule. This shipment includes antennas, AL-1200 (7), and all of the assets for our new and improved receive antenna system.



KP2F License Renewed

I just received the renewed KP2F license for "CCC St John," valid until 19 January 2030. My name is listed as trustee. That callsign is available for the use of all CCC members when traveling to the V.I.



Above: Curacao Twilight Beauty -- PJ2T half way through CQWW SSB 2019

ON4ANN Visits Signal Point

A great many ham radio tourists have visited Signal Point in these 19 years. Some are just on the island for a few hours off a cruise ship, and others vacation here for a week or two. In the latter category, we had a visit Tuesday after CQWW SSB from Erik de May, ON4ANN. He made an instant hit walking in the door with a big bottle of Glenlivet double Scotch malt whiskey!

Erik got on 20 SSB Tuesday while I was making multiple trips to the airport and grocery stores, and by the time I got back he had 621 QSOs in the log. He said it was a great thrill for him to visit and operate from here, and it was a delight to make a new friend. He's a true globetrotting ham, having operated from such exotic spots as 4S7, ZA, and many others. The photo on the next page shows him at Station 2 on Tuesday, October 29, 2019.



Eric de May, ON4ANN

I Did NOT Get My New Sedula !!

You've read in the newsletter about my trials in getting an appointment for the five year renewal of my Curacao ID card, the "sedula." The appointed date finally arrived, and I was at the desk checking in at about 10:40 on November 4 for my 10:45 appointment. At that moment the power dropped. This turned out to be the first island-wide power outage in 13 years, and it nailed me badly on the ID card renewal. Power was out for over 12 hours. I have been trying via phone calls and E-mails to get another appointment, but thus far no contact. This is normal bureaucratic life in Curacao. It takes huge patience to live here.

PJ2T's New RX Antenna Infrastructure

See the August newsletter article about "permanentizing" our RX antenna system. All of the needed materials for this project were in the ocean shipment, and work is now complete after about eight days of 8+ hours a day working in the heat, humidity, dirt, and sticker bushes. Here's a pictorial summary.

Following is a photo of the white aluminum post set in concrete with the RX cable junction box on top. The cable feed conduit behind the white post is 1 inch rigid plastic conduit. The four RX lines from the shack go up to the box from underground in the 1 inch. Each feedline to the RX antennas on the Ridge will connect into this box via flex conduit. It's white because that's the color of epoxy paint that I happened to have on hand. It has two coats for lifetime protection.



Here below are the four RG-6 runs from the shack, terminated inside the white box across the road.



The following photo shows part of the route the RX cables take from the shack to the box across the road. This trench is about 10 inches deep and was very tough digging because this area has been saturated with drainage water and driven over by vehicles for years. The underground portion of the route is comprised of two runs of 1 inch watertight flex conduit, 84 feet in length each, and each containing two RG-6 cables.



It took an entire day to make up the cable runs from the shack to the road. The first step was to persuade 84 feet of RG-6 through the conduit using liberal amounts of cooking oil. Following that, the single RG-6 was then used to pull two cables through, as seen below.



Next photo shows the arrangement for pulling two runs into one conduit. Each of the four pieces of coax is 410 feet long, so handling four of these was quite an operation working alone.



Here (below) are the two conduits in their ditch along the wall behind the pile of old tower parts. Most of this had to be done on hands and knees because of the mess of old tower parts back there and the tight quarters and thick vegetation.



The conduits are in, the ditch covered, and the four cables are in the shack awaiting termination and connection.

It has been many years since we put the cable conduit under the road, but good preplanning at that time paid

off. The pull rope has been waiting patiently in the conduit all these years, and it was relatively easy to pull in the four RG-6 runs, two at a time, under the road. Here's the arrangement for the pull as seen in the backyard.



We almost didn't make it. Prior to installing the box the area across the road was a mess of piles of brush and dirt and concrete chunks from the construction of the gate. Our cables for the Ridge were somewhere in that mess. I knew that an excavator would be showing up some day to clean all of that, and when I heard him start I went running to protect our cables. The guy did manage to hook and pull out the Heliacx to the Ridge with the bucket of the backhoe, but my screams stopped him just in time and the cable did not get broken. I spent the next two days hand-clearing and grading the rest of that area, and then re-burying our cables for protection. Here's the Backhoe from Hell as he came close to trashing all of our buried cables.



It was a very close call, but the digging is now complete over there. Our cables (and water line and phone connection) are safe, and the area will soon be covered with geotextile and then a layer of decorative rock. I can breathe again.

All of this is unbelievably hard and filthy work in very hot sun and high humidity, but this definitely beats the surgery and days in the hospital that I endured in

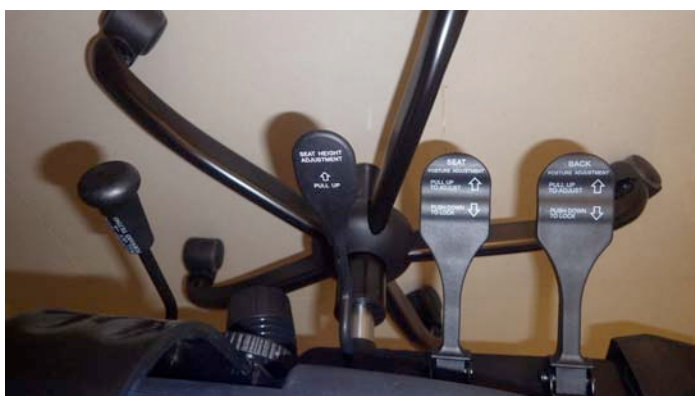
August and September. I'm fully recovered, have lost 15 pounds (that's good), and feel back to full strength and beyond. This hard hot work is good for me, and I'm so very thankful to be healthy and able to do it again.

Chairity from K8PGJ and VE4GV

All the shack chairs except the K8ND Station 1 chair are in poor condition and beyond repair. The SSB team toughed them out through the contest, but it was not comfortable. K8PGJ sent in \$600 after the contest, and VE4GV surprised me with \$300 in cash as he went out the door after the contest. Both said PLEASE get three quality chairs. On November 14 Dorothy and I went shopping and found three excellent commercial quality chairs at Curacao Office Systems. They were 50% off because they said that they had been unable to sell blue chairs and needed them gone. (The grey ones were selling like hotcakes.) They had exactly three blue ones in stock, we crammed them into the car, and below they are set up in the shack. \$824.23 out the door.



These are adjustable in many dimensions (next photo). If weight means anything they are great quality because each weighs about four times the old chairs. I needed help carrying them into the shack.



THANKS to Pete and Dr. Rob.

Remote PJ2T Operation Now Underway

I set up the remote station on Wednesday the 30th and KB7Q and K8ND quickly got into the action, making lots and lots of QSOs using the 500 watt amp on loan from K8ND. This is a fabulous benefit of your membership in CCC. Who will be the next member to join the remote ops activity? It's very easy to set up using KB7Q's superb documentation. We expect that the remote station will be available until early April. Once KB7Q mothballs the station and returns to Montana the remote will be unavailable because an on-site control operator is required. Now is the time to get in on the fun.

Station 3 Has a New Monitor

I arrived in mid-October to find that the top third of the Station 3 monitor image had pretty much disappeared. We used a backup 20 inch monitor for CQWW SSB, but the CCC leadership instructed me to get a new, bigger monitor before the code contest. Here's the new Dell 24 inch monitor that I installed on November 10.



This was \$285 including tax at a local store. Good use of some of your dues money. The 40 meter operator will be happy in the CW contest.

Steve: Control Operator

I caught this cute shot of Steve (next page) on November 10, watching the amplifier LED power output bar jumping around as KB7Q ran a string of JAs on 20 CW. Gene was at home in Bozeman, and Steve was monitoring the SWR on site here.



New US/JA Beverage Is Complete

The bulldozers set us back for awhile, but now we have a better than ever permanent new US/JA Beverage. As planned, I installed an 880 foot run of wire very high up on the Ridge in an area where there will never be any development. It took seven long work sessions over six days up on the Ridge, but now the feed transformer, ground radials, and N7IR choke are installed at the feedpoint, and the resistive termination and ground are in place at the far end. If you look carefully you can see the green #14 solid copper wire draped through the very thick vegetation. This antenna is spaced a healthy distance away from the Ridge transmit antennas.



On November 12 I hauled the heavy reel of 1000 feet of RG-6 up to the feedpoint, connected and weatherproofed it, and started back down unrolling it. I took a route that passed it under the Europe Beverage at right angles and kept well clear of that antenna before turning southeast toward the station. Very thick virgin brush and cactus in that area. On the 13th I finished up, running the cable down the cliff from the top and then the balance of the distance to the white connection box. It's all hooked up now. Since RG-6 is so cheap, I made no effort to cover, bury, or otherwise obscure the feedline. If it gets vandalized we'll simply install it again.

Following is the feedpoint for the US/JA Beverage, complete with beverages on hand for the next visitors. The N7IR choke and transformer are attached together

and the whole assembly is screwed into a stout hardwood tree. The antenna wire is green.



Below is the final connection in the road junction box. It's gratifying to have this done after so many months of planning, acquisition of materials, and the hassle of shipping them here. Feedline length is 765 feet from the antenna to the road box plus 410 feet from the road box to the shack, 1175 feet of RG-6 in total. This project consumed hundreds of feet of wire, coax, and flex conduit, but it's done now and will be safe from bulldozer attacks.



New Switching Power Supplies Installed

Stations 1 and 3 now have new power supplies, 50 and 30 amps respectively. Thanks N7IR for making this happen. In connection with swapping the supplies, we installed direct DC runs to the K3s. Here's the small, lost-looking new switcher at Station 1.



Now all four stations have switchers, and the old Astron transformer supplies are being retained on site as backups.

Results of CQWW SSB Troubleshooting

I did some sleuthing after the contest. The problem at Station 1 turned out to be a bad Bencher YA-1 low pass filter. Anything above about 200 watts, all bands, kicked the SWR up to 5:1. I put in a new filter and the problem vanished. And thanks to ND8L who read my message about this and immediately donated a Bencher filter, which he promptly shipped to KB7Q for transport to CQWW CW. Now we have a spare on the shelf.

After more digging, I also found a bad 29 cent Chinese DPDT toggle switch in the antenna switching panel. It did something different every time I cycled it, so this took some patience to isolate.

Our third SSB contest problem was hash on all bands, all antennas, from the 20 meter station. It happened barefoot and on all antennas, and was pretty severe. I have been absolutely unable to recreate this. N7IR theorizes that it was being caused by some personal device which went home with the team when they departed.

CCC's K3 Number 5 Is Here

You read earlier about this fabulous donation from Fred Cady's family. KE7X literally wrote the book on the K3, and we're honored to have that radio on site now. Thanks KB7Q for securing this donation and getting the plaque made.



Now for the Next Big Question: Who will be the first to bring his new K4 to the island for a trial spin?? Scott?

AL-1200 (7) Now in Service

Here's the amplifier as it was loaded into my backseat at K2PLF's home in Maryland on August 31.



And now it's in service at PJ2T...! It's performing perfectly after the ocean trip, and we are much indebted to Art Brown, W3KHZ/VY2MM (SK) and Marty. We'll use it fondly in Art's memory.



Dorothy's a Workaholic Too!



73