



# Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium  
Editor: W0CG

Volume 20, Number 11

November 15, 2020

## DL8OBQ's Monster Project

You may remember a photo from a couple of months ago when DL8OBQ's house in Rinteln, Germany, was undergoing the massive project of getting a new roof.

It's finished. Uli took progress photos throughout the entire project. Here's the full photo essay. No matter how bad you think your roof project might be, his was much worse.

<https://speicher.united-domains.de/share/g5hqgp8biq>

As you will see, he has a retail tenant in the front of the house, a home décor store.

## Curacao Travel Update

Things are loosening up gradually. Except for residents of New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Florida, U.S. citizens are still not permitted into the country without a required two week quarantine upon arrival.

Beginning October 6 they announced an important exception. People planning to stay for 90 days or more are now permitted to quarantine where they will be staying, either as a homeowner or as a rental tenant. Permission from the government is still required in advance, and a negative PCR test is required, but this still represents a bit of progress.

Go to the link below and scroll down to "Announcement #201."

<https://gobiernu.cw/corona-travel-to-curacao>

Based on my study of AA.com on November 3, there are still no flights to the island, but a normal schedule is planned to resume beginning December 3.

## W8WTS' September Treasury Balance

Here's the end of month balance: \$4375.82. As you will recall we will be refunding about \$1320 of that to the membership in the extreme event that COVID keeps us off the island through the end of March, and we lose the entire year's contesting season. Let's hope that doesn't come to pass.

## A Good Callsign for Geoff

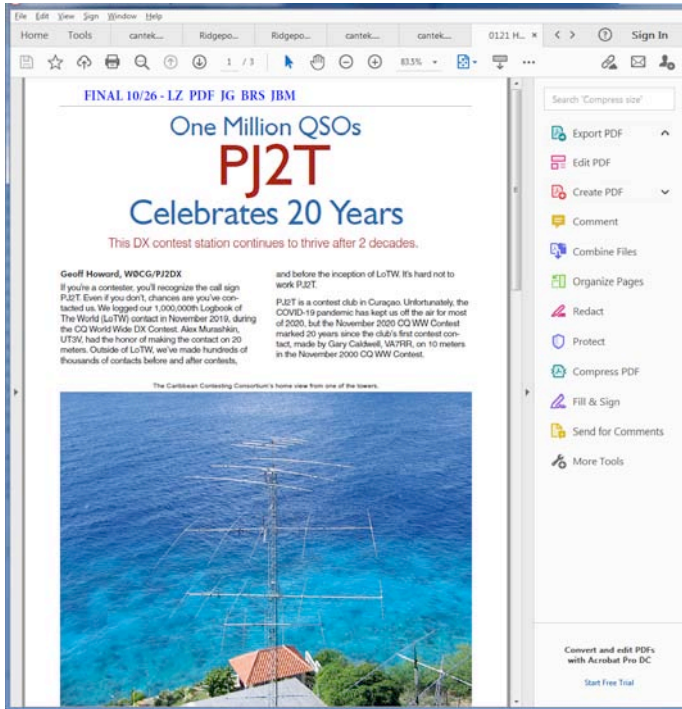
If I were ever to move to England this would be a perfect callsign for me because it's my initials. But I would bet the owner of this vintage VW microbus that's parked on the street near my home here has no idea that his license number is really a ham radio callsign in the U.K.



## Egg on Their Face at QST

You may recall my announcing months ago in this newsletter that there would be a nice article about PJ2T in November's *QST*. To my great disappointment and surprise, the issue came out absent our article. I made an inquiry, and Maty Weinberg responded immediately with an apology, saying that the piece had simply "slipped through the cracks." She encouraged me to revise it so that the language would be appropriate for the January issue. I made the changes that were necessary, and *QST* very quickly responded with this

proof, a clip of which appears below. The editing was the usual ARRL style: brutal, but I know from experience to just let it go. I found some mistakes that were introduced by their editing, sent those in, and we are now good to go for publication in January. It's a brief two page piece, but they did a nice job with the layout, and I think you'll be proud of the outcome.



### Station Notes – What's Next, from N7IR

The next round of station improvements, in my mind, should include upgrading station 3 and 4 to automated band pass filter switching. After that we should consider automated stub filter switching at the optimum feed line positions relative to the amplifier output tuning networks. Double stub filters should be considered for problematic bands such as 20 and 40 meters. We will have to limit our choice of amplifier type to one per position because the optimum position of the stubs depends on the type of output tuning network. We now have enough AL-1200s so that should not be a problem. The LK-800 seems to be working fine and holding the desk down well at position 3, where it has been for every CQ WW CW that I have operated. We have plenty of 3CX800A7s to keep it healthy so it won't need to move.

*These are excellent ideas, and we'll initiate the process of implementing them after we get the station recovered from possibly a full year of no maintenance, post-pandemic. – Ed.*

### CCC Zoom Chat on November 10

We had a super turnout on November 10, and apologies to Uli and Joerg that our meeting time was in the middle their European night. There was no formal agenda, and we simply kicked around thoughts about where we are vis-à-vis the pandemic. Reluctantly we are starting to realize that we may have to let go of the ARRL CW contest next February, but have not made that decision yet. I did send the 50% rental deposit to O.C. a couple of weeks ago, so the house will be ours if we decide to use it. If not, that deposit will slide to subsequent contests. N1ZZ still hopes to take his Florida gang back to Signal Point for ARRL SSB.

Opinions vary within the club, of course. One person has said that he will travel as soon as the flights and his schedule permit, willing to take a chance with the virus. Another person has said that he probably won't want to go back to the island until November 2021 CQWW CW. My own position is that as soon as the two shots are in my arm, I will be willing to make the trip. I realize that the vaccines are not an absolute guarantee, but at some point the risks will become acceptable to me, and one just has to roll the dice. If that doesn't happen until late spring, I will still go to the QTH and get started on the big projects that will be needed to get the station back up and viable.

As you are aware, Dorothy is now retired. She is willing and able to go to the island for long stays, and is properly insistent that we make some aggressive improvements to the house. As difficult and costly as it will be, we will do everything possible to replace at least two of the ancient and unworkable sliding glass doors. Mike Maley found a pretty good contractor, amazingly, so new doors are now a realistic possibility. We will also make improvements in the awful looking kitchen, making it look better and improving functionality. And my big dream continues to be a garage. With a garage in place we would be able to get an island vehicle, and store it safely at the station. As you know Dorothy's as big a workaholic as I, so you can look for progress at Signal Point.

### The Great Antenna Rebuild Project of 2006/07

One fine day in the summer of 2006 my daughter Amy and wife Cindy and I were finishing up the painting and last touches on the newly-constructed East Sunroom. I happened to glance up at the Europe tower and my heart stopped. The reflector and about two feet of the boom of the Europe 15 yagi were hanging at a 90 degree angle. It was instantly obvious that the boom had broken, the big reflector element was dangling by a thread, and the whole thing was close to falling to the

ground. Total panic. I grabbed some tools and ropes and my climbing belt and scurried up to investigate. It was very tricky working alone, but I was able to throw a lasso rope around the dangling element and boom segment, rock them back and forth, and finally break it off, lowering the pieces to Amy on the ground. I was astonished to see, once back down, that the boom had corroded through at the U-bolt that held the overhead boom truss to the boom. Modern chemistry in action. Obviously, a zinc U-bolt, an aluminum boom, and salt are were a toxic mix. Here's the corpse, June 26, 2006.



Below is the offending U-bolt, with the stainless steel boom truss rope still attached. This thing had eaten clean through the boom.



Thus was learned the hard lesson about salty locations. Looking around further, it soon became obvious that nearly all of our antennas and most of the associated hardware was a short distance from failure. Next, for example, is a Phillystran deadend with serious surface rust and clearly headed toward failure. That same week one of the guy wires from the top of the US/JA tower

crashed to the roof of the house, its deadend having failed completely. This was an emergency.



In those years CCC was in the habit of doing an extensive maintenance trip every September. We would assemble a crew of volunteers and work on fixing things up in preparation for October's start of the contest season. Clearly, the 2006 trip was going to be all about antenna rebuilding. We had learned several critical lessons: all hardware had to be aluminum or stainless; no plastic parts could be exposed to the air; any steel (deadends for example) had to be aggressively coated to keep the salt air away.

As soon as I returned to Ohio in July I got with our member Steve, N8LGP, and explained the problem. Steve's a professional machinist and a genius at all things metal. Starting from my pencil sketch, Steve created four sets of boom mast cradles. These would eliminate any non-stainless U-bolts from being in contact with tower legs, which were failing, and also greatly ease the installer's task. Below you see the boom cradles, made from anodized aluminum plates, DX Engineering stainless parts, and skillful aluminum welding.



What you see in the photo is the kits to mount two yagis to the side of a tower. All the installer needed to do is drop the boom across the cradles, then install the four U-bolts at leisure, not under load. Very easy and safe.



These antenna mounts are still in service, three on the new Europe tower and one on the US/JA tower, and still totally free of corrosion. Here's one set of them in place supporting an antenna boom.



That September several of us jumped in and took down almost all of the yagis, and painstakingly disassembled, cleaned, and reassembled using all

aluminum and stainless parts. That work continued into November at the time of CQWW CW. Here are K8ND and Jim (W0NB) working on the labor intensive rebuild of one of the 20 meter beams.



Below, Dan (N1ZZ) is cleaning corrosion from an element in the yard next door.



This labor intensive work seemed to go on forever. At the top of the next page is the Europe 20 monobander being reassembled for re-installation, November 22, 2006.



Here's my view from the tower just prior to hauling the 20 meter beam up the tram rope and reinstalling it, totally renewed and salt-proofed.

The next photo shows the replacement, using all stainless and aluminum parts, and covering non-stainless rope clips in putty and tape.



We pressed on through 2007. This is K8ND doing tedious detail work on the rebuild of the US/JA 20 yagi on November 27, 2007. Obviously, we had to run the contest that year with a reduced suite of antennas.

The antenna rebuild project continued into 2007. We took down all the yagis from the US/JA tower, resting them on the railings of the roof terrace. Here are some corroded parts on the boom of the 15 yagi prior to replacement, July 11, 2007.



At the top of the next page is a collection of just a few of the ruined parts we removed and replaced with non-corrosive components.



All of this work paid off. Following these rebuilds in 2006-2007 we have had essentially zero component failures on any of the antennas or guy wires. The towers themselves of course still need frequent and careful cleaning and repainting, but the antennas have been pretty much maintenance free. All of these hard-learned salt corrosion practices were chronicled in our July/August 2019 article in *NCJ*, "A Pictorial Guide to Corrosion-Proofing for Seaside Antenna Systems."

### Historic Signal Point/VERONA Open Houses

Until about 2009 we regularly operated the IARU Radiosport Contest each July. For that contest we extended an open invitation to all members of VERONA and their families to visit the QTH, have lunch, and operate in the contest if they wished. These were fun times making new friends and introducing some of the island people to HF contesting.

Here's CCC member Dr. Gary Stouder (K9SG) working at Station 1 with Castro Mercalina, PJ2CFM on July 12, 2003.



Below is part of the typical buffet luncheon feast that Cindy put together for the VERONA visitors on Saturday during the contest.



Here are PJ2EW, PJ2BR, and (standing) PJ2MR (SK) working the IARU contest on 15 meters at Station 2, also July 2003.



Next page, an eclectic collection of CCCers, VERONA ops and XYLs, and Coral Cliff neighbors getting to know each other over lunch. This was prior to construction of the Ocean Pavilion. That's the late Marlies Feyts in the pink shirt at the left and my XXYL Cindy in the blue dress at the right.

