



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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Loss of a Great One: NP2L SK

By now you will have probably seen the sad news of the loss of long time CCC member Mal Preston, NP2L, on July 27 at age 85.



Mal Preston, NP2L, February 19, 2010

<https://www.ritchayfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Malcolm-M-Preston?obId=17673894>

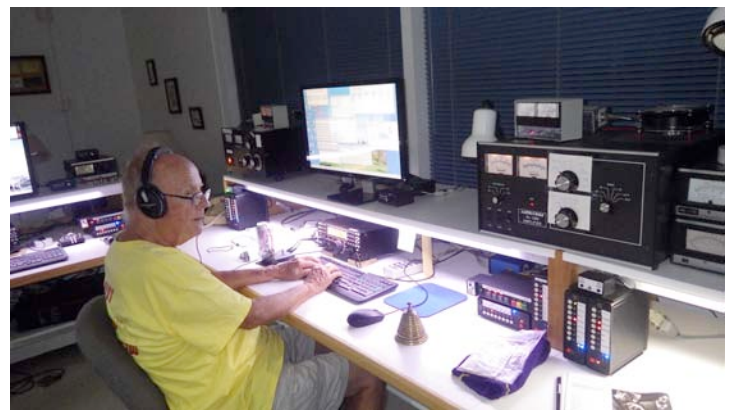
In possibly the nicest compliment I could ever imagine, Mal's affiliation with PJ2T is mentioned in his online obituary.

Mal was a fanatically avid CW contester, the nicest guy you could ever imagine meeting, and was incomparably generous in his support of CCC and the PJ2T adventure. I was fortunate to meet Mal through our common friend Jim Livengood, then KP2L. Both were living on St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands at the time. Jim talked up the CCC club, so Mal made a first trip to the station in 2002. Here's Mal in CQWW CW 2002 at the 10 meter station wedged in front of the door on a temporary station. Notice the IC-765, Alpha amplifier, and 40 pound CRT!



NP2L, CQWW CW 2002

Following that 2002 trip Mal was a loyal regular at PJ2T, making countless journeys to the island until his final PJ2T operation in February 2016, below.



NP2L, February 20, 2016 at the 80 meter station.

After that winter of 2016 trip Mal's doctor told him that he would be wise to cut back on traveling. Mal did not, of course, much like that advice but being the smart person he was, he heeded it with great regret. After he was unable to come to PJ2T he continued to support CCC as a member. He and I corresponded regularly, and it was clear that it was driving him nuts

to have to work PJ2T from home instead of being there. Then, adding to his stress, St. John was devastated by hurricane Irma in September of 2017, with his house suffering severe damage. After moving to Virginia to be closer to his family, his beloved XYL Susie passed away in 2019. In that QTH he had managed to get permission from the HOA to put a dipole in an attic and was still as active as possible, encouraging me to try condo ham radio. Here's his description of that setup from an E-mail to me in March of 2019.

You might want to try this zipper thing W0NB steered me to. Better than a buddy pole if the condo assn will let you. I negotiated the right with management before I moved in. Zero interference and they are happy enough to let another ham here do something similar. You just need a 65' run at the top of the attic. They put it in for me and ran the 100' coax down to a storage room across the hall and over to our apartment. I had to pay a "licensed" electrician to keep them happy and Simon, the maintenance guy to patch a bit of wall and paint it. Well worth it for me.

Contesters don't give up easily!

Mal and Susie lived for many years in their beautiful home at Chocolate Hole (below) on St. John, USVI. When Cindy (my ex wife) and I spent four months on St. John in early 2000 Mal and Susie opened their home to us many times (as did KP2L), and made us feel immediately welcome in our new temporary island habitat.



Part of Mal's challenging vertical driveway at his home in the Virgin Islands

In November 2007 I organized a CCC operation on St. John to sign our club call KP2F in the CW Sweepstakes. Mal worked tirelessly to coordinate that trip prior to our arrival and then made us all feel at

home at his QTH. Here are Mal and Susie feeding us a wonderful meal at their home on October 31, 2007. That's N8LGP at the right and Dr. Lora Kravec at the left, barely visible.



Halloween 2007 at NP2L's Home, U.S.V.I.

And in a typical example of Mal's endless kindness and generosity, the day we arrived on the island he handed me a set of car keys and turned his vehicle over to me and Cindy for two weeks! After protesting loudly, and then thanking him loudly, I got on the phone and cancelled my rental car reservation.



The wheels Mal loaned to me and Cindy in the Virgin Islands

Beyond that, he had already taken his beam down prior to our arrival and had it ready for us to take to the rental house. Here (next page) are Mal on the boom and N8LGP and W8TK carrying it into the courtyard at the rental QTH.



NP2L (center) and his loaned yagi for ARRL CW Sweepstakes, U.S. Virgin Islands

As you may see from the obituary, Mal was an extremely successful entrepreneur. After some time as a CPA/MBA in the paper industry in Wisconsin Mal decided he could do better on his own, and in 1977 took over Potsdam Papers at an existing manufacturing plant along the Hudson River. The paper business was very good and the company prospered, but Mal went a step further when he realized that there was potential for hydroelectric power generation at paper plants alongside rivers, and founded the Potsdam Power Corporation!



Current day view of his plant.

As a professor and student of business I'm always massively fascinated to hear business and entrepreneurial stories, so I quizzed Mal about his accomplishments. He was so humble that he was embarrassed to talk about his successes, and said to me once that "It was all really pretty easy." Unbelievable.

It was very hard for me to get much out of him because of his humility. But he did eventually disclose to me that he had been born an orphan. From that difficult beginning he became a loving and generous family man and an extremely successful business leader.

Mal also made his mark on CCC. Now and then, many times over many, many years, an envelope would land in my mailbox, addressed in Mal's left-leaning southpaw handwriting. Each time there would be a check inside for \$2000. Never once did we ask for this kind of support. Mal just DID THIS. Each time there was a note saying to use the money any way I felt best for PJ2T, and that this was his way to help because he couldn't climb towers or pour concrete. This was his way of helping. It's not exaggeration to say that the huge amount of funding from Mal alone kept the organization alive for many years through very lean CCC financial times. This is the sort of person Malcolm Preston was. We will miss his bright smile, his continuous lavish and probably undeserved praise of PJ2T's journey, and his superb skills at the radio.

K8ND's September PJ2 Trip

American Airlines just (July 29) cancelled Jeff's September 2 flight reservation. As of today (August 12) Curacao's door is still closed tightly against U.S. travelers. As our handling of the pandemic gets worse and worse, so do the prospects that we will be permitted back on the island any time soon.

Curacao Travel Update and Outlook for CQWW Contests

The prospects for the October and November contests are looking darker by the day because our pandemic numbers are all going in the wrong direction. The odds that we will be permitted onto the island are not great, and my willingness to subject myself to travel is declining as the danger grows in the airports in Phoenix, Dallas, and Miami. I'm not quite ready to give up yet, though. There is still some possibility of operating, and I have some ideas about that which we should discuss. One possibility would be for Uli to organize a German operation for WW SSB because they ARE permitted into Curacao. Soon I'll call a Zoom meeting so that CCC as a group can talk about what might be possible. Stay tuned for an E-mail from me about meeting on Zoom to explore where we are and what we want to do in the WW contests.

PJ2T Glasses Arrive at ARRL HQ

I sent several PJ2T 20th anniversary glasses to the Contest Branch at ARRL many weeks ago. Nothing was heard until I received this kind E-mail on mid-July.

First off, my apologies for not contacting you sooner. ARRL HQ was closed due to COVID, and I just returned back to the office the day after Field Day, and

have been rather busy with handling inquiries during this rather unusual year.

Amongst the items that were awaiting my return was a pleasant surprise of the 4 PJ2T glasses. Thank you so much, I have shared them with several staffers who are contesters (and one is the station manager/trustee of W1AW) who were thrilled to receive them. I will be sure to display the glass in my shack proudly, as will the others that I have shared them with.

20 years is a great accomplishment, and I'm sure that you've made plenty of contesters happy by keeping PJ2T active during so many contests. I always look forward to hearing PJ2T on the air when I'm participating in contests.

73,

Paul Bourque, NISFE
Contest Program Manager

Tropical Storm Gonzalo

On Saturday and Sunday July 25-26 Gonzalo passed over Curacao. Thankfully it was pretty much a non-event. During the week prior it appeared that it would develop into a full scale hurricane with 70+ knot winds, and it was headed directly at the ABC islands, the first such southerly track I had ever seen.

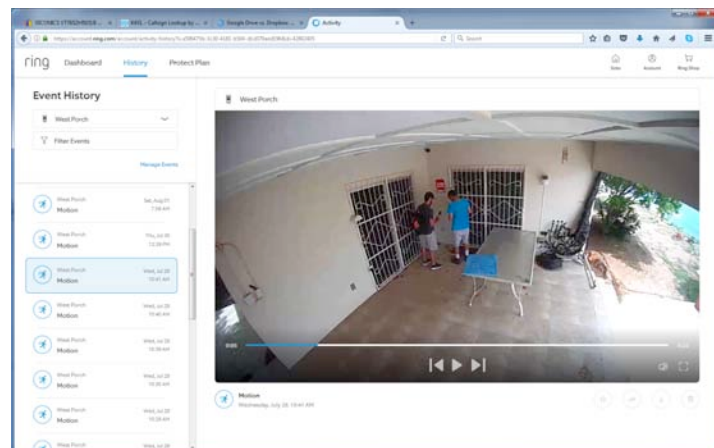


Fortunately, it was minor. I swapped notes with PJ2BR the Monday after, and he said that the winds were very light – it just brought a lot of rain and flooding but no significant damage anywhere on the island. The surveillance cameras at the house stayed up through the whole storm, and except for a couple days of grey skies and some light rain at the QTH we got off OK. Such things are, of course, heart attack fodder, and we have a long time to go until the storm season is passed.

Curacao is generally too far south for hurricanes, and here's hoping that holds true.

Status Report on Signal Point QTH

Brett, PJ2BR, did me the enormous favor on July 29 of making a three hour trip to the house. It had been nearly five months since Gene (KB7Q) was there, Zoom is very difficult to communicate with, and it was time for some checks and damage assessment.



PJ2BR and his son Josh locking up the QTH on June 29. (Photo from Ring surveillance camera.)

I sent Brett a huge list of “to do” items via E-mail. He stopped at Kooyman to buy some batteries and bulbs, and made his way to the QTH with his son Joshua.

All is well. There's zero apparent antenna damage, even the wire antennas, and everything in the air looks good. We can't tell about the Beverages on the Ridge, of course, but they will be easy to repair if we have problems. Brett saw no holes in the roof, no evidence of leaks indoors, and the QTH looked intact.

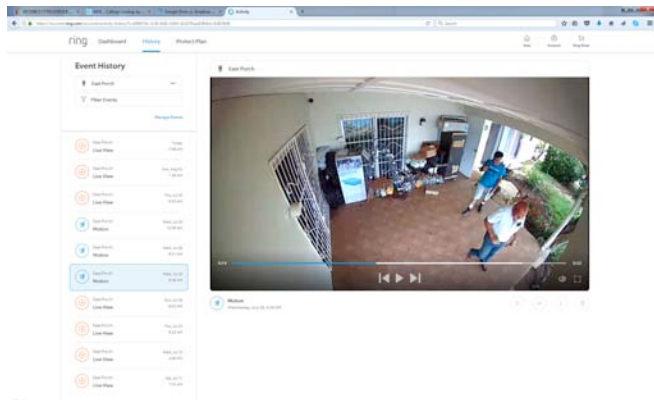
My biggest worry was the safe, which relies on a 9 volt battery. Brett did the monster job of moving patio furniture out of the East Bedroom to get to the safe. Sure enough the battery was completely dead, but he put in a known good new battery and it opened easily with the combination. Luckily the EPROM memory had done its job and remembered our combination through the battery outage. And by the way, Brett recommends Panasonic 9 volt batteries over all others for long life and non-corrosiveness. Duracell are the worst in his experience.

The irrigation system has been kaput for a long time and nothing I said to Zoom seemed to make him understand what to do. Brett confirmed that the computer controller is kaput, so now the water has been connected to the irrigation lines directly. Turning on the faucet in the back yard sends water to the tubing, and Brett verified that all outlets are getting water adequately. He phoned Zoom, who agreed to simply turn on that valve for 20 minutes every evening

to keep things wet. I'll install a new controller when I finally get back there.

There was no sign of cats and no food for them on hand even though I've sent Zoom funds for that.

Brett and Joshua got out the ladder and replaced all of the burned out light bulbs. And best of all they carefully walked me all around the QTH, inside and out, checking for problems and leaks. They also verified that the air conditioners are still operable.



Dirk van Daam and Brett on the East porch June 29.

We all owe PJ2BR a huge debt of gratitude for taking the time to do this. He's very, very busy, but understands our predicament because he has a house in Miami that he can't access either because of COVID. We're in pretty good shape now until I'm able to get back there, probably in October. If you wish, it would be nice if you would send a note of thanks to Brett pj2br@hotmail.com.

CCC Financial Snapshot:

Per W8WTS the end of July balance was \$6315.93. There are still some dues dollars yet to be received and posted.

Is Amateur Radio Dying?

Here's an article from "IEEE Spectrum." It's carefully researched and written. You can give it a read and form your own opinion about whether the hobby will die with all of us in the present generation.

https://spectrum.ieee.org/telecom/wireless/the-uncertain-future-of-ham-radio?utm_source=techalert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=techalert,07-16-20&mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiWIRBeFptSTFZVGcyTWpKaCIsInQiOiI0bXNTZVd4SHBvcUZwNHlkVVwvVW1EMVdOY2ZYMmRZekU5d0Z2M1VBc1htUEhPV00yVmNKOUI2SXIReDhxMU5EV0M5cW42aEVGUHlQZnhFakZvczJHT01qVElilnIzucU51QU5NSm9SZZzBqWkpGYIV1Z3I3NTZncm9BSVB2a0t3TXQifQ%3D%3D

Update on Annual CCC Membership Renewals

Only two members have not yet renewed. Thanks immensely to all of you for the kind and generous support in this year of unknowns. I'm struggling to keep the QTH viable and available so that when travel resumes, so will the RF. Your support this renewal cycle has been a great help.

KY7M in "NCJ"

CCC member Lee, KY7M, penned an absolutely outstanding article that appeared in the July/August issue of *NCJ*. Check out "Viva Bajaugua! Our Week at TI7W for the ARRL DX CW." The article includes excellent photos of Kam's place and of the context around the station in Costa Rica, a green and leafy world that contrasts vividly with our desert island of PJ2T. In addition to Lee, you'll also recognize G4IRN, who operated CQWW CW 2018 at PJ2T and was one of the tree removal crew prior to replacement of the Europe tower. It's a fun write-up, and I hope you'll take the time. Thanks to Lee for sharing their experience with the *NCJ* readership.

VIP Contesters in Coeur d Alene



Rich Di Donna, NN3W and Jon Kimball, KL2A July 30, in Idaho.

Jon Kimball, KL2A, is a globe-trotting contestator and DXer who never seems to be in one place for any period of time. He will pop up in Namibia one day and Bangladesh the next. Years ago he lived in Coeur d Alene, and I met him one morning in town for coffee. Some years after, he and I made a quick visit to WA7LT and on the way back he shocked me by meeting an "old friend" for lunch who happened to be the founder of ESPN! Then a couple of weeks ago Jon surfaced on the Spokane DX Association reflector. He has moved back to Idaho, so we met in town along with his house guest Rich, NN3W, another well-known contestator. We shared stories about N4RV and Cliffhangers....

Thanks N5OT

A big thanks to Mark for hauling the white case back from Curacao and then shipping it on August 7 to my home in Ohio. This is the hard case that is precisely in line with checked baggage maximum allowable girth dimensions, and has been back and forth to Curacao countless times with amplifier RF decks, minus HV transformers, inside. It will now be prepositioned in Ohio to receive the Commander RF deck that I am hoping to pick up in Iowa from NR0X later this month. Noel, W9EFL (SK) donated this shipping case many years ago.

Goodbye and Thanks to KF4DX

Farewell to CCC member Egon Behle, KF4DX/DK8FZ. Egon has been with us since 2018. In that time he has been very generous in supporting PJ2T, and is a top notch contest operator, participating in multiple contests from Signal Point. As you saw in a CCC newsletter last year, Egon has a long resume of corporate experience at the CEO level, has been an active amateur since his teen years, and at age 14 received top honors as one of the youngest glider pilots in Germany. He owns and operates a sophisticated Cirrus light airplane in Naples, FL, and is presently pursuing advanced licenses and ratings. Needless to say, given my personal interest in both business and in aviation, I greatly enjoyed chatting with him about all his experiences. Here's the link to his bio from the CCC newsletter.

<http://www.pj2t.org/ccc/Newsletters/member.spotlight.KF4DX.doc>

Not only was Egon a generous contributor to the Europe tower and other CCC projects, but he did not hesitate to get involved in the dirty work, including the miserable job of painting epoxy onto the Europe tower parts prior to its assembly (below).



KF4DX and the epoxy paint

We wish him well in all of his future contesting, if the sunspots (and the world) ever come back, and appreciate his support of PJ2T.

A Different Kind of K3

Some of you have seen this "K3" photo before.



On July 23 I took my annual bike hike to the wheat country. I drive to Ritzville, Washington, and then hopped on my bicycle and rode many miles on the farm roads in howling winds through the wide open high wheat country. This clever welded robot, named "K3" is along the south side of Wellsandt Road, east of Ritzville. As you see in the next photo, there's not much else out there except sky and wheat in all directions for many, many miles. If I were a better man I would be operating bike mobile from out there.



The high wheat country in Central Washington, July 23.

Dorothy Steps Down

It's not ham radio news, but definitely relevant to us as a contesting group. Dorothy has publicly announced her retirement after 38 years as Executive Director of the Museum of North Idaho. See the article in our local newspaper, linked below.

<https://cdapress.com/news/2020/aug/01/museum-director-steps-down-5/>

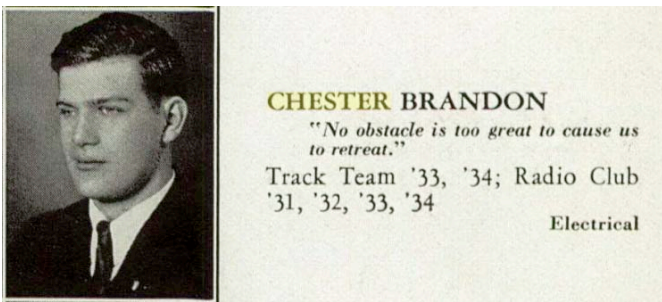
This makes me smile, of course, because now she will have much more freedom to travel. Her job is extremely demanding, she works every Saturday, and has many commitments in the evenings and even on Mondays, which has supposedly been her day off for all these years. Now her life becomes her own.

We will have the pleasure of her company on the island for longer periods of time, and she says she is going to help me to aggressively improve Signal Point. Maybe we will even get patio doors that work! They are searching now for her successor and hope to have the new person in place by October 1. She will stay on as needed to transition the new director. It presently appears that the new person's training will be complete at about the same time that COVID vaccines are predicted to be widely available, such lucky timing!

Chester “Chet” Brandon PJ9EE / PJ2CC (SK)
(Assembled by Jeff Maass K8ND / PJ2ND)

Jeff was kind enough to provide this wonderful article and photos about Chet Brandon, without whom there would likely never have been ham radio in the Coral Cliff area. –Ed.

Chester “Chet” Brandon PJ9EE / PJ2CC (SK) was a successful engineer who at 48 years old “retired”, built a hotel, and became a major factor in establishing the Dutch islands of Curacao and Bonaire as the sites of hundreds of successful Amateur Radio contest and holiday DXpedition operations over the past 50 years.



Cass Technical High School Yearbook, 1934

Chet was originally licensed as W8BFH in Detroit Michigan in 1934. In his late 20s, Chet moved to Cuba and supervised the design and construction of a large dam and hydroelectric plant, apparently for the Guantanamo Bay base. He then founded a company on Long Island (Brandon Scientific Development) which developed, manufactured, and marketed his innovative telescope optics and telescopes. Even today, the

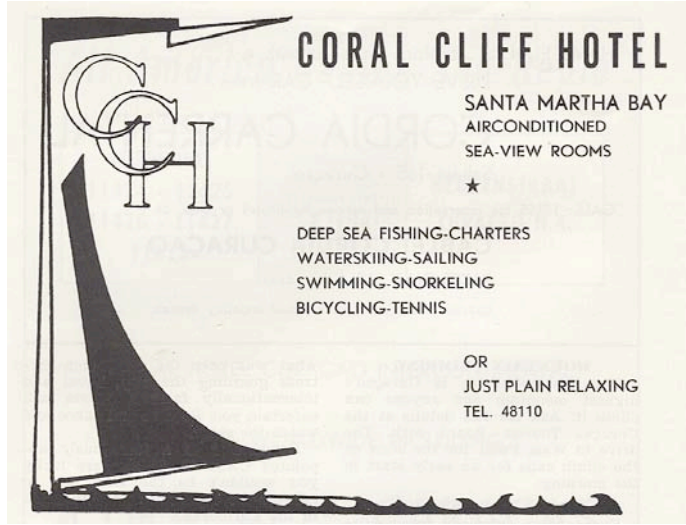
Brandon eyepiece for optical telescopes is favored by many amateur and professional astronomers. During WW2, Chet was reportedly involved in improvements to the Norden Bombsight. In 1948, his company was purchased by Librascope, and Chet went to work for them as an engineer. By age 40, Brandon had 380 patents in his name, mostly devices for the defense industry. He became Chief Engineer for Librascope, living in California and then Maryland. Some of his patents were related to optics for submarines and control devices for torpedoes and missiles. He moved to Puerto Rico in 1956 with his family, and manufactured his Brandon telescope eyepieces while continuing to consult with Librascope. According to his family, he was actively looking for a site to build a hotel, but decided that Puerto Rico resort market was already saturated.



Mexico, 1962

In 1962, Chet and his family moved to the island of Curacao to build a deep sea fishing and diving resort. After surveying the mostly-inaccessible area by airplane and then on horseback, he settled on a site at the mouth of Santa Martha Bay in the West of

Curacao, and began construction. By January 1964 the Coral Cliff Hotel was opened.



1966

Included as its amenities was an Amateur Radio station (PJ3CC), which was available to all licensed guests, and among the first advertisements for the hotel anywhere was one in the January 1964 issue of CQ Magazine.

Where to stay . . .

RECOMMENDED HOTELS

	A.P. American Plan including 3 meals	E.P. European Plan room only	M.A.P. Modified American Plan — room breakfast, dinner
	Dec. 15th — April 30th		
CORAL CLIFF HOTEL (35 rms) At St. Martha Bay, Tennis court, marina, ocean swim- ming, deep sea fishing, amateur radio station, observatory, scientific workshops. All rms. airc., priv. bath. N.Y. Rep: RR Hotel Reps. Tel. PL 7-4666	s: \$ 25.00 d: \$ 41.00 3rd pers: \$ 12.00	s: \$ 17.00 d: \$ 25.00 3rd pers: \$ 4.00	s: \$ 22.00 d: \$ 35.00 3rd pers: \$ 9.00
	May 1th — Dec 14th		
		s: \$ 11.00 d: \$ 18.00 3 rd pers: \$ 4.00	

While building and operating Coral Cliff Hotel, Chet continued to consult with Librascope.



Chester Brandon, 1964

Chet hosted the first major contest operation from Curacao 53 years ago. PJ3CC in the 1967 CQWW CW Contest was the first Multi-Multi to score more than 5 million points! In the 20 years that Chet owned the hotel, dozens of very successful contest operations were hosted at his Coral Cliff hotel, using calls PJ3CC, PJ2CC, PJ0CC, PJ0CW, PJ0DX, PJ0FC, PJ0JR, PJ9AF, PJ9CG, PJ9EE, PJ9GF, PJ9JR, P41C, P41E, and P42E. The participants included many well-known and any accomplished operators from the CQ Contest and Amateur Radio Hall of Fame (K3EST, K4VX, W1BIH/PJ9JT, W3GRF, W4KFC, W6OAT, W6RR, N4MM, and W4DQS) and other notable contesters and DXers including W4BVV, W3AZD, N4RV, W1WEF, N8II, W8LRL, and K4BAI.



Mae Brandon

Chet built a few houses in the 1970s on the land adjacent to the hotel, one of which was for John Thompson W1BIH / PJ9JT (SK). Over the next 30 years, John and his guests won many contests from that house, using calls PJ9JT, PJ9JR, PJ9MM, and P42J. When John sold that house in 2000, it became PJ2T, and contests continue to be won and many DX QSOs made from the neighborhood built by Chet Brandon.

After Chet sold the hotel and moved to Bonaire in the 1980s, the Coral Cliff Hotel continued to be a destination for contest operations. These included the very large operation of RadioTeam Finland in the 1990 CQWW Contests as PJ9A/PJ9W and many other contest operations using calls PJ9U, PJ9V, PJ9X, and many using PJ2/homecall. Some years later the hotel operated for 10 years under the name of “Sunset Waters Beach Resort,” eventually going bankrupt.

On Bonaire, Chet established the Geowatt Research Center in Belnam/Playa Frans, and hosted several successful contest operations there with the calls PJ1B and PJ9B.



Bonaire

WA3LRO and N7ZZ bought land adjacent to Chet to continue these contest operations when Chet returned to the USA for health reasons in the late 1980s. Bonaire has continued to be the site of many winning contest operations.

Chester “Chet” Brandon PJ9EE / PJ2CC was the “seed corn” from which literally millions of contest and other DX QSOs from Curacao and Bonaire have been harvested in the past 50 years!

A lifelong loving couple, Chet and Mae were born and died within a few weeks of each other.



A Cold Winter’s Night and a Radio by Gary Myers, K9CZB

For several years I’ve been admiring an old storefront in Wallace, Idaho, that is chock full of 1950s and 60s radios, transmitters, tubes, and all of the romantic equipment of the past that salts our nostalgia. The store is long shut down, covered in dust, and has apparently not been touched for decades. I love it. This story is taped inside the window. Here is it transcribed from my photo. To this day I still can’t read this without getting that lump in the throat – we’ve all been

there, and this is a wonderful reminder of why we love the hobby, and why we're more determined than ever to get PJ2T back in action, making magic. –Ed.



Peering through the window in Wallace, Idaho.

“The house is quiet, with the peaceful hush that winter brings. I gaze out the window at the moonlit landscape. The dog is at my side. Her fur is silky and warm.

Warm. Radios used to be warm. They smelled like hot wax and phenolic, and the dust that had settled on the tubes added a hint of unique spice.

Tubes. Tubes glowed, letting you know that they really were doing something. If you stared into a glowing tube, you could imagine that the faint sounds in your headphones were the voices of tiny beings whose universe was contained in the glass envelope. You could almost see the electrons streaming from that orange hot filament, alternately attracted to and repelled from the black plate, indecisive but energetic lovers whose fickle and fleeting emotions were fanned to a frenzy by the whispering of the grid.

The grid, that unabashed gossip, heard all sorts of things from a length of copper wire. Slowly you looked up from the glowing tubes. In the moonlight, through the frosted window pane, you could see rabbits in the snow, you could see stately pines and ghostly bare branches silhouetted against the backdrop of cold stars, but that precious length of wire was lost in the blackness of the bitter night sky. But you knew it was there. It talked to you.

You put that wire there. You scraped the skin from your arm climbing that tree to string it up, as high as you could get it. And the radio. You cut your finger removing metal burrs from the chassis with an old pocket knife your grandfather had given you. You blistered your knee with an errant blob of molten solder. You cut and drilled and bolted and soldered, you built that radio. And now, that congregation of

inanimate parts, parts that had arrived on your doorstep by Parcel Post or had been salvaged from someone's trash, was... alive. It talked to you.

You remember coming home from school and finding, not one, but two packages on the kitchen table. You tracked snow on your mother's floor, because you couldn't wait to take off your boots. Two brown cardboard boxes sealed with paper tape, one from Allied Radio, the other from Burstein-Applebee. Inside, buried in wadded newspaper or stringy tan excelsior, were magical devices. You stood there in a slowly spreading puddle of melting snow, still in your coat and boots, reverently laying them out on the table. Shiny glass tubes in crisp orange-and-blue or red-and-black boxes. Waxy yellow condensers, printed all over in blue. Brown resistors with multicolor stripes. A variable condenser, looking like a fossilized sea creature. Magic stuff.

And when they were all put together, those parts from far-off Chicago and Kansas City, when the last wisp of rosin smoke had stung your eyes, you held your breath and plugged it in. And the tubes glowed. And there was a faint hum in your headphones and... voices. It talked to you.

And after a while, your ears filled with wondrous sounds from distant lands, in the soft orange light that spilled from your electronic magic carpet, in your bedroom on that cold, crystal winter night, you placed your hand on the radio. It was warm. It smelled good. It talked to you.”

Member Spotlight: My Life in Ham Radio, Lee Finkel, KY7M

Walking the flea market aisles at Dayton in 2002 with my friend, John Arthurs, K7WP, we found ourselves feeling like we were in a museum of ham radio memories. We stopped to look at an Eico 720 transmitter when I told John it had been my first rig. The seller was only asking \$50 for the beat-up piece of old gear and John offered \$35 on my behalf. The truth was, I really had no easy way to get it home and no place to put it if I did get it home. One of these days, I thought, I will begin my own collection of original gear like so many others of my era have already done. (I still rue the day I sold my Vibroplex Lightning bug because I had been using Bencher paddles exclusively for years and the bug was just collecting dust!)



Vibroplex Lightning Bug (1938 file photo)

For me, the ham radio adventure began in 1961. My cousin Art was working at Allied Radio in Chicago and gave me a catalog. I poured through the pages and settled on a Knight-Kit Span Master. I built my kit and recall that it took some troubleshooting to get it working, but work it did, a regenerative receiver that could hear the world. I bought the companion SWL antenna kit and my father helped me install it on the roof of our three-story apartment building, the first of several antenna projects in which he would be involved.



It would be tough to find shortwave stations that were easy to copy, but occasionally I would hear loud signals around 14 MHz talking about school, sports, and local activities. These “hams” piqued my interest in the ability to talk back to the voices on the radio. As luck would have it, my father knew of two hams in the area. One was the son of a friend in the men’s clothing business. (My father owned Majestic Mens Store in Uptown, Chicago.) On a Sunday visit to the Hennis family in Highland Park, Illinois, I visited with their son Mitch, the proud owner of a Heathkit Sixer. He explained a few things about the hobby to me and proceeded to call “CQ” on his handheld microphone. The sound after each “over” was unscelched static. Finally, he said we should go over to his friend’s house – whom I do not remember, but he was obviously the “big gun” in the ham neighborhood and had an impressive station. That is a blur.

What stands out next is my first visit to the home of another of my Dad’s friends. Their son’s name was Phil, and he was blind. He was a general class ham with some of the finest Hallicrafters equipment of the day – customized to accommodate his disability. Phil’s call letters are etched in my memory – K9GBS (George-Bernard-Shaw). I presume Phil was very active in his day. He was also extremely knowledgeable about the hobby and he gave me all the direction I needed to begin studying for my Novice exam. Once I had the code mastered, I visited Phil and he administered my novice exam. I passed and Phil sent the paperwork off to the FCC.

I anxiously awaited the arrival of my Novice license for many weeks. Finally, the magical moment came, the envelope was opened and the “ticket” for WN9EBT was fondly displayed in the new radio shack. The equipment was already in place, an Eico 720 transmitter with a crystal for 7.050 MHz (also good on 21.150 MHz) and a Hallicrafters SX-140. A Hy-Gain multi-band dipole had also been purchased, but it was not yet on the roof of our apartment building. An impatient 15-year-old did what was most expedient for that first QSO, strung up the dipole from one end of the long apartment to the other and called CQ on 15 meters.



WA9EBT

My father was very helpful in the antenna category. Although he had no real interest in the hobby, he was supportive of my electronic efforts. This was due, in part, to the fact that he thought I had the aptitude to be an electrical engineer. This fiction would continue to be perpetuated until my junior year at Lane Tech High School when I took an Electronics Lab course with state-of-the-art equipment provided by DeVry Institute. I just never could “get it.” The electronic theory, that is. I could memorize enough to pass my

general class license test, but almost flunked Electronics Lab! That was my first clue that a future in engineering was not in the cards for me.

Lane Tech had an active radio club and a station tucked into the corner of the classroom where electronics was taught. Using the call W9WKR, I can remember working African DX using the beam antenna mounted on the roof of the school – a TA-36 about 80 feet above the ground. There was an active group of hams in the club. I remember being impressed when a few of them announced having passed their Extra Class license exams. I could not imagine learning enough theory to ever reach that level and, at that point in time, there was not yet any *incentive* to do so. However, I had no difficulty passing my General test and became WA9EBT, Easy-Baker-Tear.

I loved being on the radio. Every day after school I would listen on the bands with my dipole. I still remember the magical day when I called and worked my first European, a G on 20-meter CW. From there, I was on my way to a WAC award and DXCC. I was goal-oriented and collected awards from the beginning. In fact, I had enough wallpaper in those early days that to become a member of the Certificate Hunters Club, CHC, having graduated from HTH, Hunt-the-Hunters.

My passion in the evenings was the ILN, the Illinois CW Net, part of the National Traffic System. I do not remember who first recruited me for the net, but it was a wonderful match. I loved CW and here was a way to provide a public service. The emphasis on accuracy for traffic handling has served me well through contests over the years. And, the speed of traffic handlers at successively higher levels in the NTS forced my speed to increase as well. I was a regular representative to the 9RN, the Ninth Region Net, and occasionally, as time went on, I represented 9RN to CAN, the Central Area Net.



After passing my General Class exam, I needed a VFO. Here is another confirmation of my status as an appliance operator. As I recall it, the matching Eico VFO only came assembled and was more expensive than a Heathkit VFO. So, I bought the Heathkit and assembled it. The Eico 720 had an octal plug for connecting an outboard VFO. Unfortunately, the pin-out for the Eico VFO was not quite the same as what Heathkit had designed for its VFO (made for the DX-60). I did read schematics a little bit, but eight pins is eight pins – right? Well, needless to say, the Heathkit VFO blew up with a big pop when I plugged it into the 720 and first applied power.

After buying the Eico VFO (I don't recall whatever happened to the Heathkit), I wanted to get on phone. Eico also had the 730 Modulator unit that could be added to the 720. I bought an assembled unit along with an Astatic J-10 microphone. I finally was able to join the nightly 20-meter roundtables with the locals who had gotten me started on this adventure. Many nights would pass with the likes of K9DEG, K9DDB, WA9AIT, WA9DPR, and many other locals.

I would get up early on school days to call CQ on the 40-meter phone band. I was enjoying some wonderful phone QSOs until an unusual letter arrived one day from the FCC in Washington, DC. The Chairman of the FCC in those days was Newton Minow, famous for his "TV is a vast wasteland" quote. It seems that Chairman Minow's sister and brother-in-law lived in an apartment two buildings away from me. They had a newborn baby and an intercom between the baby's room and the master bedroom connected by a wire that was parallel to my dipole. It seems that they were not enjoying being awakened at 6:00 a.m. by my CQ calls on 40-meter phone.

I sheepishly went over to their building that day to apologize and see what I could do to make amends. It turned out that they were looking for a baby-sitter and, you guessed it, there was a happy ending to the story. I got my first baby-sitting gig and I *did* stop calling CQ early in the morning after that. Having the Chairman of the FCC taking a personal interest in my operating habits was not something I wanted to chance further!



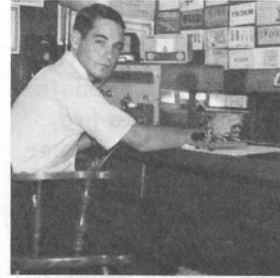
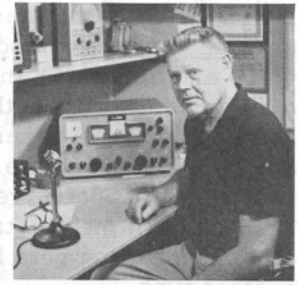
Newton Minow (left)

At some point in 1963, I convinced my father that I needed a radio that had SSB on it and saved enough money working at his store on Saturdays to buy a Heathkit Marauder. My father was more than a little nervous about a 16-year-old spending over \$300 for a kit. I successfully assembled it and everything was going along smoothly until I needed to neutralize the pair of 6146 finals. Despite the warnings about high voltage, I managed to get a jolt that resulted in a yelp as I knocked myself to the floor. Luckily, my heart did not stop, and I finished the process and had an amazing 180-watt transmitter. I wore it out and had to replace the phenolic gear that tuned the Marauder's VFO several times.

The day finally came for my first beam antenna. My father and I drove down to Newark Electronics and bought a TA-33 Jr. and a CDR rotator. My father went to the hardware store and bought a steel pipe for a mast, brackets, and lead anchors for molly bolts. The plan was to mount the mast against the 10-foot chimney on the roof of the apartment building with the beam just above it. I don't think my father realized what he had gotten himself into. The mast was the easy part since he had the right tools. It was the part about carrying that TA-33 Jr. up the ladder in one hand for which he had not bargained. Somehow, he got the beam up on top and aimed correctly. I was amazed at the results. With 180 watts from my Marauder, beginning 8/23/1963, I was a force to be reckoned with on the higher HF bands.

With the new antenna set-up, I found that my participation in the ARRL's Communication Department ("CD") Parties was much more fun. People actually called me in response to my CQs. It was my first experience at running stations in a contest. I had my picture published in the CD Bulletin along with one of my better CD Party scores.

On the right, W6CYO OPS in S.F., licensed since 1920. Bottom (L-R) WA9EBT ORS in Ill., with over 100-K last c.w. Party and W1GU, ORS Maine.



In 1969, I went off to University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Although there was a club station on campus, I stayed away. This was due partly to shyness and partly due to the fear that I would surely flunk out my freshman year if I spent any time playing radio. The fact of the matter is that I did not miss it very much with all of the other campus activities, including a thirst to run on the track team and enjoying various intramural sports with my new dorm "family."

Meanwhile, my family back in Chicago moved to a 16-story building on Lake Shore Drive. It was an old high-rise apartment building. We lived on the sixth floor. I spent little time there because of college, but the radio equipment was waiting for me when I came home on vacations. Knowing I could never get official permission for an antenna on the roof, I decided to take matters into my own hands. There was a fire escape outside the bathroom next to my bedroom. One morning I took a 40-meter dipole up the fire escape and planted it on the roof. I fed it with TV twin lead to be inconspicuous. A Johnson Matchbox had no trouble matching the load for the Marauder and I was back in business.

I learned that antenna height near Lake Michigan has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages were signals nearly as loud as what I had experienced with the beam – the dipole was up about 150 feet high. The disadvantages were caused by static electricity from passing storm clouds putting a significant charge into the dipole wire that shocked me on more than one occasion. Whether I ever had a decent ground using the steam radiator pipes, I will never know, but it did not seem to do much for the static build-ups. The other thing the static did was to melt the solder on the dipole so that the twin lead fell off at some point and had to be reattached on a subsequent trip home.

My college major was Radio-TV in the College of Communications, but I had an interest in going to law school. With the Vietnam War in full swing, I had enrolled in a 2-year Army ROTC program that afforded me a delay from active duty after getting my officer's commission in the Signal Corps at graduation in 1969, so I was off to The Ohio State University College of Law in the fall that year. Debby and I met during my senior year at U of I and we got married after my first year of law school. We both graduated from OSU in 1972, me with a JD and Debby with a BS in Social Work. We moved back to Chicago and both started our work careers in 1972.



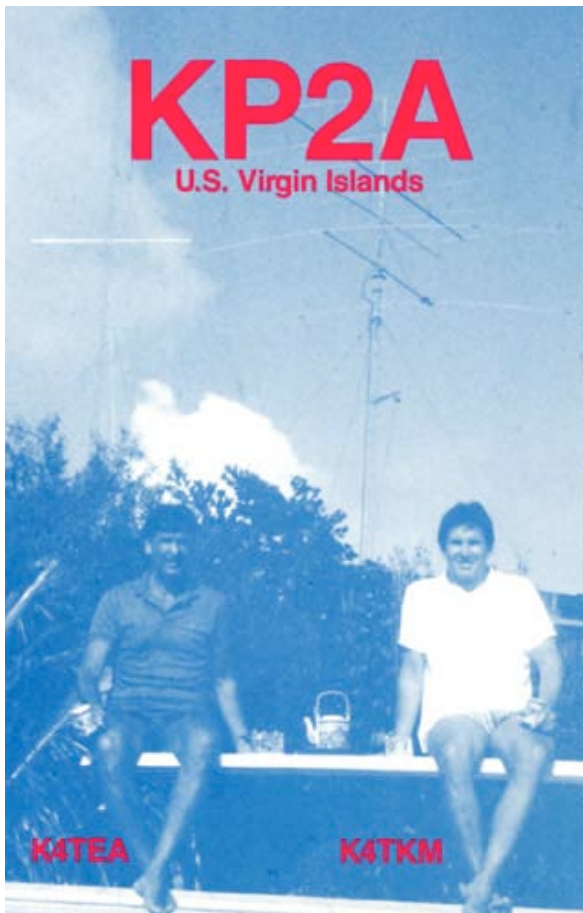
We lived in a small apartment in Rogers Park on the north side of Chicago near the lake. I bought a Yaesu FT-101 and some kind of vertical antenna that the landlord allowed me to put on the roof. It was not a great set up, but it got me back on the air. During that first year after law school, I had to spend a few months at Signal Officer School in Fort Gordon, Georgia, but the war had wound down and all the Army Reserve units in Chicago were full, so my active duty military career was over before it really started.

After being admitted to the bar in Illinois, I was recruited for a job as a labor and employment lawyer by a company in Des Plaines, Illinois. It was the start of a 16-year career in employment law that took me to

in-house counsel positions at Sears, Motorola, and U-Haul. It also led to my introduction to the evolving field of mediation. I eventually got training as both a mediator and arbitrator and was invited to join the professional panels of dispute resolvers at the American Arbitration Association. I handled a number of employment disputes as a mediator or arbitrator in the succeeding years in addition to my full-time jobs as in-house counsel. Along the way, we moved to a townhouse in Niles, Illinois and I traded my FT-101 for a Kenwood TS-830. I also put up a TA-33 on the roof of the townhouse and I was back on the air for contests and DXing.

In 1981, Motorola decided they needed a full-time employment lawyer in Phoenix, and I volunteered to leave snowy Chicago for the desert. By then, Debby and I had two young sons and we were ready for an adventure in Arizona that I was told would be for only three years. I took and passed the bar exam in Arizona (just in case I decided to stay past the three years). We moved into a house with enough room in the backyard for a 40-foot HDBX tower. I put up a Cushcraft A4S with the 40m addition and upgraded to a Kenwood TS-930S in the shack along with my first amplifier. I got involved with both the Scottsdale Amateur Radio Club and the Central Arizona DX Association (CADXA).

In 1988, I was invited to join the multi-multi team at KP2A for CQWW CW led by N6DX and a group of top notch contesters including KC7V, K0RF and N2IC. It was my first time operating outside the continental USA and the closest I had ever been to signals from Europe. It was the first time I had experienced run rates approaching 200 Qs an hour and it overwhelmed me. It also led to my fictional account of "The True Contest Adventures of Sparky and Runner" published in *The DX Magazine* and later the *National Contest Journal*. Our team set a North American M/M record, but only took third place in the world behind teams from 3-point locations (PJ1B and P40V).



A KP2A card from one year after Lee's visit.

My involvement with CADXA led to a more serious pursuit of DXCC endorsements and contesting. The club also exposed me to folks like Vince, K5VT, who were DXpeditioners traveling to rare places around the globe. Vince had one of the best stations in the Phoenix area and invited me to operate CW Sweepstakes there several times. I also got to operate from Mike, KC7V's contest station/antenna farm several times including one memorable CQ WPX Phone contest with Joe Rudi, NK7U, who was in town for Spring Training as a coach with the Oakland A's. Joe invited us to come up to Baker City, Oregon and operate at his super station whenever we wanted. I took him up on the invitation for the 1990 CQWW CW contest and wrote about my experience in *The DX Magazine* which included a cover photo.



Around that time, several of my CADXA friends were going to West Africa with some British hams in the recently formed Voodoo Contest Group (aka "Voodudes"), but it wasn't until 1998 that my phone rang and I was invited to join them for the first time at 5V7A. The trips that followed to West Africa included Burkina Faso (XT2DX), Niger (5U5Z), Mali (TZ5A), and Liberia (EL2A). They were life changing experiences seeing "Third World" countries and meeting the locals. It gave me an appreciation of how spoiled we are with our way of life in this country and how much we take for granted when others simply want clean water to drink and enough to eat for the next day. These trips also produced new friendships with G3SXW, GM3YTS, G4IRN and other hams who came along on various trips. When Ebola and travel concerns ended our West African trips, I joined a few Voodudes to operate from P3F (5B4AGN's QTH) in 2013, and PZ5V (PZ5RA's QTH) in 2016-17.



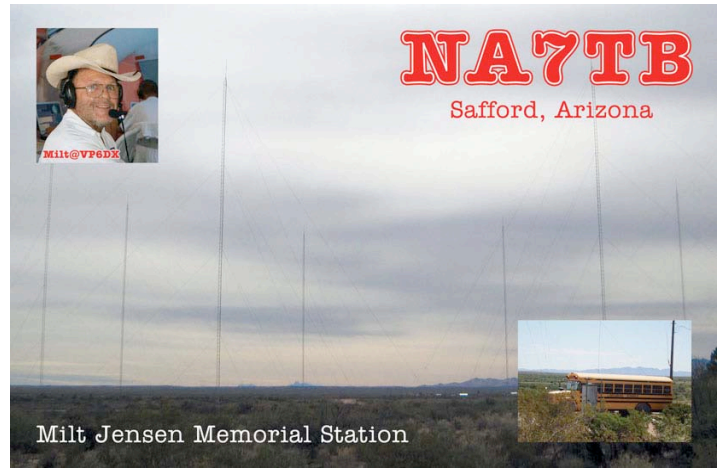
With Senator Barry Goldwater, K7UGA, 1993

In 2014, I had my first opportunity to operate from PJ2T. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and looked forward to returning for CQWW CW in years when the Voodudes did not preempt it. I had planned to return in 2015, but Debby had a medical emergency that required me to cancel. I came back in 2018 and again last year, bringing Debby along when Thanksgiving did not conflict with the contest weekend. My Curacao trips have given me another new “family” in the CCC and I am looking forward to more contests in the future from Signal Point.



I retired in 2014 after spending the last 18 years of my

working career at University of Phoenix in various administrative and legal roles. Since retiring, I have spent more time on the radio chasing grids on 6 meters during the summer Es season and contesting whenever I am so motivated. A large portion of my time since 2016 has been spent maintaining and operating a remote station in Safford, Arizona. Milt Jensen, N5IA/N7GP built his dream 8-Circle antenna for 160 meters at that site and then died in a tragic tower accident. The family asked if I would maintain the station as Milt’s legacy and, after recruiting my friend and electrical engineering guru, Ned, AA7A, that is what we have done along with Fred, NA2U. We regularly operate the station (NA7TB), usually as a multi-op entry, in the major contests and most 160 meter contests. It is a remarkable experience to use that 8-Circle antenna on Top Band along with Beverage receive antennas in 16 directions and a full-sized 4-Square on 80 meters.



I have served as the president of CADXA on three different occasions for a total of five years. I currently serve the club as past president, newsletter editor, webmaster, and Zoom Host. I have been a Director on the Northern California DX Foundation Board of Directors since 2018. I co-chaired programs for the International DX Convention (Visalia) in 2017 and 2019, and will again in 2021. I am an active member of the Arizona Outlaws Contest Club, FOC, and CWOps.



