



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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President's Notes Jeff Maass K8ND / PJ2ND

PJ2T Contest Season Has Arrived!

October opens the annual 'contest season' for Amateur Radio!

Geoff W0CG arrived on October 13 to open up the house and the station and then Uli DL8OBQ kicks things off on-the-air with the Worked All Germany (WAG) contest October 16-17. Then come the CQWW SSB, CQWW CW, ARRL 160-Meter, and ARRL 10-Meter contests. There are openings on teams for all but CQWW SSB: contact Geoff W0CG to join in on the fun!

As the contest season progresses, you can see the schedule and updates of the known teams online at www.signal.point.rental.information.htm. If you want to join in on the fun for one of the contests, contact Geoff W0CG! It is again time to enjoy being at Signal Point PJ2T!

PJ2T Remote Operation

With the arrival of the contest season, there will be people at Signal Point, and so the PJ2T remote station will be available to use! If you are interested in joining those who have already made use of the facility to run a pileup on CW, SSB or FT89 (ugh!) without getting on an airplane, contact Gene KB7Q or Jeff K8ND to learn the hardware requirements and get a copy of the 'remote Operation Into Signal Point' operating manual by return email!

K8ND / PJ2ND Curacao Travel Plans

Unfortunately, Anders SM4KYN and Ingele have again had to cancel their annual December / January stay at the station this year due to COVID travel

restrictions on them as Swedes. Because of this, I canceled my planned September trip and rescheduled to fill a part of the holiday season, December 17 through January 6, which includes the 'Stew Perry Topband Distance Challenge' ('The Big Stew') contest. Then, I go back home for a couple of weeks, and then return (perhaps with Jim W8WTS, tbd) for a couple of weeks (January 20 - February 1) including the CQWW 160-Meter CW Contest. Geoff and Dorothy will be arriving in January 25 to prepare for the 2022 part of the contest season (ARRL CW, ARRL SSB, and CQ WPX SSB).

Am I concerned about traveling as COVID continues? No. During my trip in April, COVID was far more prevalent on Curacao, and I wasn't particularly concerned about it then, and far less now. I am vaccinated and boosted. I wear a good-quality KN95 or N95 mask in the airports and airplanes (as required). My fellow travelers and I are tested 'COVID negative' in order to travel to Curacao. And I never hang out in Curacao bars or other places where unvaccinated / unmasked large groups might gather. (Although I can neither confirm nor deny any plans, if the annual 'Sports Illustrated' swimsuit issue photo shoot again stops by Signal Point during my December trip, I have faith that they will all be vaccinated, too!)

It is again time to enjoy being at Signal Point PJ2T!

73 de K8ND / PJ2ND

Curacao People Shipment Successful

QUICKIE SITREP: We have only been on site less than 24 hours, but thus far all appears to be in unexpectedly excellent condition. I have not tested all of the antennas, but I see nothing visually out of order, and everything I've checked works, including the Ridge. No apparent damage anywhere. The safe

opened OK, even on the six month old 9 volt battery. All equipment is now out of the safe and successfully in service. KB7Q is already updating all of the PCs remotely via Anydesk. The place is pretty clean and in good condition as we left it in April. We will find problems and failures, of course, as we dig deeper, but the quickie first look is darned good.

Dorothy and I departed our Idaho condo at 4:30 AM on Tuesday, October 12, and arrived on the island on schedule Wednesday afternoon after an overnight in the Miami airport hotel. The wonderfully professional people from Jan Thiel Rental Car were on hand to meet our flight and turn over the Kia Soul for the long six month rental.

Here's how our trip worked on Tuesday/Wednesday, October 12/13. Your experience may differ.

Wednesday the week before: We phoned our family medicine practice and requested that they generate PCR test orders for our travel the following week and FAX them to the hospital.

Monday 3:15 PM Local Pacific: Went to local hospital for COVID PCR tests. It was a drive-through line and free of charge. Using this line required that an order be FAXed to the hospital (above) several days prior by our family medicine practice.

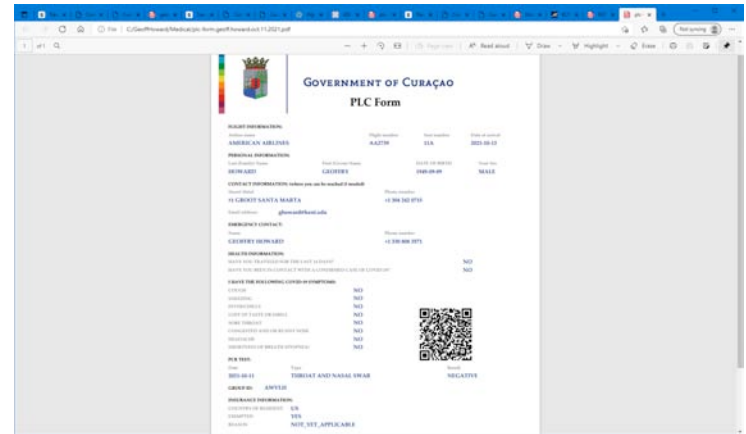
Monday 8:30 PM: I went to <https://dicardcuracao.com/portal#>. I clicked on the "Resident" dialog but your dialog will be very similar as an "International Traveler." This was within the 48 hour window for the 8 AM Wednesday Pacific time departure of AA2739 MIA-CUR.

It was easy to follow the web dialog. It is very professionally done and easy to understand. We entered that our accommodation on the island is #1 Groot Santa Marta. As part of the web dialog, they require you to upload a copy of your PCR test result and indicate that the result is negative.

You are redirected automatically during the dialog to a site to make an appointment and pay for your third day COVID rapid antigen test. The testing site we chose is ADC Palu Blanku. My confirmatory E-mail for the appointment arrived almost immediately, but Dorothy's required five hours. They are open Weekdays plus Saturday 8 – 11 AM. This place is easy to get to and professional and VERY fast and only \$20. Dorothy and I have been there before.

Once that appointment is made and paid for, we were presented with our PLC form. I printed it because this

is the magic document needed to get you into the country (below).



As I made my way through this process for Dorothy I was also be presented with a digital embarkation card. Here's Dorothy's. I did not need one because I'm a "citizen" of Curacao.



Print this also and put it in your travel packet

We also received a copy of your third day testing appointment to print and carry along.

Tuesday, 5:55 AM: We were NOT ASKED TO SHOW any of our travel documents when checking in for the flight at Spokane. The AA agent verbally asked us if we had documents for all the country requirements and we said yes. I asked her explicitly if the airline rules required that she see the COVID test, PLC and other documents and she said no. Again, your check in experience may differ. (Our agent did not seem very sharp or well trained.)

Midday Tuesday: The American Airlines flight from Phoenix to Miami departed five hours late because they couldn't find any flight attendants. This killed our restful planned night in Miami.

Wednesday, 9:15 AM: After a brief overnight sleep in the Miami Airport Hotel we rechecked the bag in

Miami and got boarding passes for Curacao. We were asked by AA to show our PLC forms. This happened to us because our planned overnight layover in Miami exceeded 12 hours. (In actuality it was less than that.) This will probably not happen for you. Again, nobody asked to see the negative COVID test result.

Wednesday, 2:35 PM: Upon arrival in Curacao we were asked to show the passport, as usual, and to hold the PLC form up to the plexiglass, whereupon the officer quickly scanned the QR code, and we were in. They collected zero actual paper documents. I was only at that window for about 20 seconds! The process was very professional, quick, and cursory as long as you have that PLC form. Again, **NOBODY** ever asked to see the negative COVID test result, nor the appointment document for the third day rapid antigen test. Uli's experience last night arriving from Amsterdam matched this, and he said the processing was very fast and totally professional. Their software is set up so that if you uploaded your test document and booked and paid for the third day test before departure, the resulting PLC form attested to all of that, and everything else was quick and easy.

Wednesday, 2:50 PM: After claiming our bag, we were waved through customs with no bag inspection, no X-ray, no interview. Even though our flight was the only one in a totally dead airport at that moment, we were waved through. Who knows what they will do in your case...?

Curacao Cargo Shipment Also Successful

One would not think so, but the process of doing these shipments is very time consuming. Items for the shipment converged on my garage at the W0CG Ohio QTH over the summer from various points of the compass, including Florida, multiple boxes from N7IR in Arizona, DX Engineering, my stops in Montana and Iowa, and many items we hauled east from Idaho in August. Here's my Ohio packing work table (next column) at the beginning of that process.



The packing work table at W0CG, Suffield, Ohio

Each item was unpacked, tested, and then repacked to minimize volume and minimize the box count, because "cube," much more so than weight, is the enemy of economy for ocean freight.

As you may recall, I hooked up the Commander HF-2500 amplifier at W0CG for a hot test, and it passed with flying colors. Then the next step was to remove the tubes and pack them separately in vast wads of bubble wrap. Next, I removed the transformer, and used that space inside the RF deck to pack lightweight and less fragile elements of the shipment. The photo shows that RF deck snuggled in the padding in the white hard that has been used for over two decades to ship radio assets to PJ2T.



The amp RF deck ready to ship, Ohio, Sunday, September 19.

I will reassemble that amp and put it in trial use at Station #1 if it all seems to be OK after the trip.

After many more hours of work than you might imagine for packing, building invoices and a shipping list, and generating and applying three different labels

to each box, the shipment boiled down to these nine boxes.



Nine of the ten boxes in the ocean shipment, packed at W0CG and ready to be dropped off at an Akron, Ohio FedEx store

Among the many items onboard include four Tailtwister rotors, two black face control boxes, an Autek WM-1 wattmeter, the big linear amp, a 3CX1200A7 transmitting tube from ND8L, our new VE3CX climbing harness and all the related accessories, four Bencher paddles, some headphones, two stainless steel door kickplates, six new window blinds, a new irrigation controller, a safety handle (from KB7Q) for the bath tub in the West bedroom, lots and lots of Scotch 33+, and many other smaller items.

I shipped these boxes to the freight forwarder in Miami via Fed Ex. This was cheaper at \$433.77 than my driving it down there, and also cheaper and more reliable than LTL motor freight. Once arrived, I added one more box, a Troy Bilt 21 inch 140 cc lawn mower bought from a Home Depot in Miami, mostly a donation from SM4KYN.

All these items arrived on Curacao on October 6 and were cleared unusually rapidly by October 8. I worked carefully with the agent at Caribbean Cargo Services to finalize the invoice details so that she could calculate all the shipping costs, the Curacao tax, the import duty, various multiple handling fees, and invoice me. I paid that invoice electronically (\$1079.49) on October 9 via a local transfer from Maduro and Curiel's bank. Dorothy and I will pick up the 10 items on or about October 19. The total ship cost was \$1513.26. All this is part of the unavoidable high cost of being on the DX side. If this were easy, everyone would be doing it.

Curacao COVID Travel Requirements as of Mid-October

The CDC presently lists Curacao at COVID-19 Level 4, "Very High Risk." They recommend that Americans avoid travel to Curacao, and if choosing to travel they should be vaccinated, of course. Because of this NA2U, N7IR, and W9NJY have opted to cancel their trips in November. Others had to cancel, with regret, because of other non-COVID medical problems. I point out that W9NJY is an Internal Medicine M.D., so his decision is based on a sound and complete medical evaluation of the risks.

See

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/non-e/curacao> .

It is up to each of us to evaluate the risks and make a personal travel decision. Dorothy and I traveled to the island on October 12/13.

Counterintuitively, COVID testing requirements have eased somewhat since the last newsletter.

- Entry to Curacao
 - Negative PCR test taken "at most 48 hours before your flight to Curacao."
 - (This is easier because it references your departing flight to Curacao instead of your arrival in Curacao.)
- Once in Curacao
 - Negative rapid antigen test on the 3rd day in Curacao. This is easily scheduled online before you leave the U.S. Dorothy and I did this in April. It is very fast (20 minutes), cheap (\$20), and results come in less than half an hour.
- Returning to the U.S.
 - Negative rapid antigen test taken no more than three days before the flight departs from Curacao.
 - This is much easier than the prior requirement of 24 hours prior to arriving in the U.S.

If you test positive while on the island, quarantine is permitted in private homes such as Signal Point, where the stay is free, the radios are available 24/7, and Geoff and Dorothy will feed you into overweight.

You can read all of the above for yourself at <https://www.curacao.com/en/article/travel-updates>

Uli and Worked All Germany

Long time CCC member ULi Thielke (DL8OBQ) arrived on schedule yesterday and will run the WAG contest this coming weekend as an SSB single op, high power.



You will not be allowed to work him unless you happen to be in DL for the weekend, but give a listen and cheer him on.



DL8OBQ at Station 1, October 15, 2021, setting up for the WAG contest.

CQWW SSB Contest News

We have a full team of superb operators coming in 11 days, and all beds are filled in both Signal Point and the Moran pool house. Ray (ND8L) is a CCC member and a proficient chef who fed us to the gills in 2019 and looks forward to a repeat. Rob (VE4GV) was also with us in 2019 and is an excellent contester who does endodontic surgery in Winnipeg by day and DXing by night. Rob will get to enjoy the chair he donated in 2019. Brooke (N2BA) is also a CCC member looking forward to his first time at PJ2T, and he will return in November for the CW contest. He's a humorist and

author, among many other things, and will keep us intellectually challenged. Jon (KL2A) is my neighbor in Coeur d Alene during those rare times he is not globetrotting for work or for radio. He has operated from points all over the globe, and his involvement this year stemmed from a chance run-in with me and Dorothy at an Idaho ice cream shop this summer.

In the wildest of coincidences, Jon was in town this week, and we met over coffee in Coeur d Alene on October 8.



Jon Kimball (KL2A) in Idaho, October 8.

Jon will be joined in Curacao by Rich (NN3W) from D.C. who has also contested from all points of the compass. Pete (K8PGJ) is a long time CCC member and the largest supporter of the Europe tower replacement project in 2018, and we're thrilled that he is returning to Signal Point to test out the chairs he donated. He's an aggressive contest operator who leaves no points on the table. Finally, we're privileged to have Martin (G4XUM), Roger (G4BVY) and Rich (M5RIC) who signed on nearly at the last minute. Martin is a former CCC member and the EU2 Team Leader for WRTC 2022. All three of these gents have operated from an incredible list of exotic callsigns.



This is an extremely strong and experienced team, all flights are booked, and we're looking forward to the week together.

We started collecting non-perishable groceries for the SSB contest within 90 minutes of arrival on the island. Here's Dorothy in Cost-U-Less on October 13. The shelves are full – there is not the slightest sign of the merchandise shortages we experienced in early 2021.



Dorothy in Cost-U-Less October 13, harvesting CQWW SSB groceries.

About CQWW CW

As you know, almost all of our original team opted out for good and proper reasons of health, COVID, and travel concerns. That left me holding the sizeable bag of a paid-for rental house, so with your assistance I sent a shotgun invitation to multiple contest clubs. That resulted in quick responses and a rapidly assembled team.

WI9WI and KA9DOC are not yet 100% committed, but strongly leaning toward making the trip. Dr. Jim and Dr. Annette have been CCCers for decades, and we are hoping that they will make it to the island in November. Annette takes care of the PJ2T kitties (she's a veterinarian), and they have their paws crossed that she will come. Brooke (N2BA) will return on the heels of the SSB contest the preceding month. Max (NG7M) is an experienced contester joining us from Salt Lake City. Ed (K1EP) is making the trip from New England, and Juan (AC6ZM) from the Tennessee Contest Group. In a great surprise, the famous operator Dick Norton (N6AA) has signed on with us for November, and we're looking forward to hearing all of the inside ARRL news. And in the mother of all lucky coincidences, KO8SCA (Adrian) was already booked to be in Curacao with friends and family for 10 or so days overlapping CQWW CW, staying in a rental home at Cas Abao, just a couple miles southeast down the coast from the station.



Adrian, KO8SCA

He was planning to fly to K1LZ on Friday, operate the contest, and then return to Curacao the following Monday! Imagine his delight when he found out that we were searching for operators. He's a famous DXpeditioner and contester whose vanity call mirrors his original Romanian YO callsign.

I plan to set up a five station multi/multi. Station #1 will double on 160 and 10. Station 2 will support 15 meters. Station 3 will as always be on 40. Station 4 will be converted to the 80 meter station because it has all RX antennas available, and Station 5 will be set up for 20 on the folding leaf extension cleverly designed by N0YY.

We still have three beds available if you would like to change your mind and join in, or in case there is someone you can nominate. KL2A will be in the region that week and might, just might stop through for the contest on the way back north.

ARRL 10 Meter Contest (December): CCC member N7NR is planning to operate this one via the remote if we are able to get that technology working reliably again after the long absence and the DSL service outages.

CQ 160 CW (2022): K8ND, W8WTS, possibly K1LT.

ARRL DX CW: Hopefully COVID will be much less a problem by then. There are lots of spaces available. Drop me an E-mail to sign up. Dorothy and I will be staying on the island through early April, and we hope to see a lot of our friends there.

ARRL DX SSB: N1ZZ and his PCARS (Melbourne, FL) group will return again, including our recent new CCC members K5LD and K4JC. This contest is open

to anyone else interested. K8PGJ will hopefully be on hand. Others?

CQ WPX SSB: K4UEE has multiple Georgia contesters signed up and is recruiting more. We have the Moran pool house reserved and Dorothy will still be on site in late March.

Dinner with K3LR

On Wednesday, September 15 we were fortunate, with essentially no notice or lead time or pre-arranging, to have dinner in Youngstown with Tim, K3LR (below).



W0CG, Dorothy, K3LR, Warren, Ohio, September 15, 2021

Tim and I are “neighbors” in Northeast Ohio, and I’ve known him for decades, starting when we were both early in our careers and beginning the process of building contest stations. I ended up going overseas to do that, and he ended up going overboard, building probably the best contest station in the world. We got caught up on all things contesting and the recent news from DX Engineering, which is booming.

Location, Location, Location

As I begin the long process of getting the dilapidated W0CG Ohio station back into shape, it doesn’t hurt that DX Engineering is three miles up the road. Here we are on September 19 (a Sunday) waiting to pick up a screw-in guy anchor for an emergency fix at the station. Writeup of that follows.



The W0CG minivan at DX Engineering, September 19, 2021.

When I need something in a hurry, they are there and responsive, even on a Sunday.

CCC Membership Renewals

As of September 14, we have not yet heard from four of our members. Please, if you have decided to quit the group please let us know so we can keep the records straight and say a proper goodbye and thank you.

Vaccinated CCCers

We keep adding to this list as I hear from you.

W0CG (including booster) and Dorothy, N1ZZ, K8IV, K9DR, K8ND, N7IR, VA7AM and Gill, WI9WI and KA9DOC, W9NJY, N7WA, N2BA and N2GSG, VE3CX, SM4KYN and Ingela, K4JC, W8WTS, K0MD, W8PT, W9VA, N7NR, KB7Q and Joyce, K8PGJ, ND8L, NF9V, NA2U, N5OT and family.

Drop me an E-mail if you’d like me to add you to this list.

W8WTS’ Treasury Balance

The end of September balance reported by Treasurer W8WTS is 6448.68. This reflects dues revenue, and will be used toward the costs of the October ocean shipment.

Geoff Screws Up: Thanks K8IV

In August I got my house in Ohio back after several years of my kids living there. This afforded me a chance to take a careful assessment of things, and one of the first I noticed was that the 80 foot Rohn 25 tower was listing to the south about 8 inches at the top. Heart attack. This tower has earth anchors for the guy

points. I know that is a poor tactic, but it was all I could do at the time I installed it in early 1991. One quick look and it was obvious that the north screw-in rod had come about 7 inches out of the ground. It felt very loose, moved freely around in the hole, and it was obvious that it was near failure any day soon.

On September 12 I had a big birthday party at the house, and K8IV (CCC member Ed) was at that party. It was announced as a “no presents” party, but Ed is not that kind of guy and he stunned me with a gift card for DX Engineering. What a great kindness. The day after the party I looked on the DX Engineering web site, saw that they had a Rohn screw in anchor in stock, applied the gift card with about one buck to spare, and drove the three miles up to DX Engineering and picked up the rod shown below.



This was not an ideal situation, but I was desperate and working alone. This arrangement supported the tower while I removed the turnbuckles and deadends on the three guys, and then attached them to the new screw-in anchor. The next step was to do the best I could to screw the old anchor back into position. It felt like animals had burrowed around that anchor because there were voids in the hole. I mixed a batch of very soupy mortar and poured it in the hole. After that set up, I attached a second set of cables to the three guys and connected them to that second anchor on the theory that two were better than one, thus creating a failsafe of sorts. The old tower is now straight and much more secure. K8IV’s birthday gift helped save the day.



Photo: Geoff with a Rohn 4 foot screw in earth anchor. Very beefy design and construction.

The next morning I set up all kinds of support gear out at that guy point and managed with tremendous effort to screw in that four foot anchor by myself, offset laterally about 18 inches from the one that was about to fail. Next I used my heavy beefy commercial lawn mower as a temporary guy point and rigged up a kludgy set of temporary guys, as shown in the following column.

Rebirth of the W0CG Ohio Station

My big station in Ohio went into freeze dried status in 2007 when it was apparent that my marriage was falling apart, and that I would probably lose that home in a divorce. As it worked out, I was able to buy that home back from my ex-wife, but then I moved to Idaho and my kids moved into the Ohio house. 13+ years went by and the station gradually fell apart. When I arrived on August 29 this year, the shack was putrid, full of mouse droppings, covered in smelly mildew, cables had been eaten by rodents, and everything was covered by half an inch of dust. Most radios and antennas were nonfunctional. But since my kids had moved out and I got back custody of the house, it made sense to jump in and get to work.

The end of the story is that by the time I left in early October the shack was spit spot clean, most bad antennas had been fixed, both of my amplifiers were made to work, and I was making QSOs! What a thrill to put entries in that logbook after so many years of dormancy. I now have a working FT-1000, a Titan 425 amp, Henry 2K floor console amp, and these antennas

