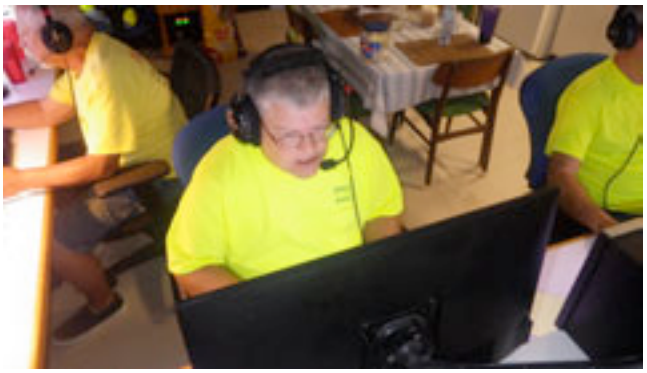
Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

Volume 21, Number 4 **April 15, 2021**

Welcome New CCC Member K4JC

I'm very happy to welcome Vince Weal, K4JC, to membership in CCC.



K4JC

Vince was here as part of the PCARS (Florida) team for ARRL SSB in early March. He's a very proficient contest operator and prefers SSB, so he will be particularly welcome in our CCC group of CW bigots. Vince is a super nice person who is not afraid to get his hands dirty, is a delight to spend time with and, most important, drives a Dodge Challenger. That's my most lusted-after car, and I'm determined to own an inferno orange version of the Challenger before I head out as a silent key. Here he is serving as the human winch when we reinstalled the US/JA 10 meter monobander.

Vince is also interested in RTTY and digital contesting, and his close proximity to Curacao from Central Florida means we hope to be seeing him frequently at the QTH going forward.

In real life he's an entrepreneur who owns three retail outlets that supply the auto detailing industry.

Welcome New Member N2BA

We welcome Brooke Allen, N2BA, to CCC membership. Like most of us, he was first licensed at 13, started out with minimal equipment, a homebrew 6DQ6B transmitter from scrounged parts, and progressed from there. He's retired from Wall Street and now works as a social entrepreneur and writes extensively as Len Bakerloo. See https://lenbakerloo.com . He has also written for *NCJ*, enjoys Burning Man, travels the world with his XYL, and can help you persuade your wife to come on ham radio trips (below).

Brooke is hoping to be able to make frequent trips to the QTH, a quick and easy itinerary from New Jersey, and expects to have time available to learn to "caretake" Signal Point and the station when Geoff, Jeff, Uli, or Gene are not available to do so. He's only the second CCC member to join without ever having seen the station, but his enthusiasm is very high, and we look forward to having him in the chair as soon as travel and contest scheduling permit. You can say "Hi" at brooke.t.allen@gmail.com .

Operating Report: WPX SSB 2021

I tried mightily to attract a team to Curacao for this contest. For awhile it appeared that K4UEE was going to be able to get a team together to reprise their WPX SSB trips here in the past, but COVID got in the way and Bob was not able to find enough people. I reluctantly relinquished the rental house reservation and looked for a Plan B.

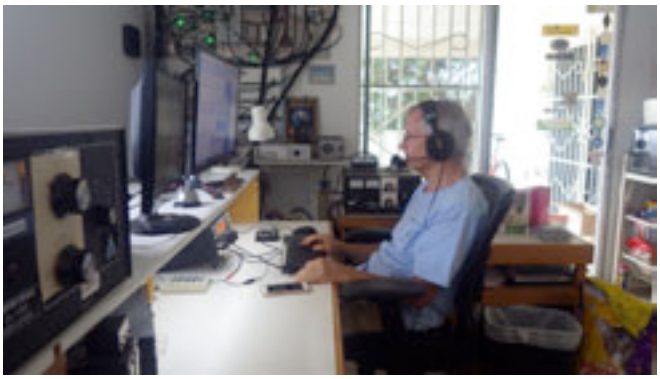
Attempting to set up a team such as for ARRL DX CW, with me on site and others operating via the remote, I practically begged for help. Quite a few of our CCC members were in the midst of establishing remote operating capability just prior to the contest, but when the dust settled it was just me, N7WA, and KY7M. Dink is a dyed in the wool CW operator, but graciously volunteered to handle almost all of the night hours both nights when he was off duty from tasks at home. Lee was available for one three hour shift each day, also very busy with other commitments in Arizona, but we decided to have a go at it anyway.

The result was pretty decent. We covered 40 of the 48 hours, logging 3510 QSOs and finishing 10th in the claimed 3830 M/S HP scores.

Band	QSOs
160:	0
80:	51
40:	741
20:	1227
15:	1497
10:	12

3510 Prefixes 829 Total Score 10,493,482

This was a shocker to many of you in that I made slightly more than half of the contacts, usually preferring to stay in the background during big contest operations at Signal Point.


Very rare: a photo of W0CG actually operating.

Conditions were excellent. The bands were quiet at night, signals were generally loud, and the equipment all played perfectly all weekend, subject to the usual challenges of remote connectivity. 10 meters was a disappointment, as I was only able to hunt and peck 10 South Americans on our SA tribander. This contest is always dominated by Eastern Europe, and this year was no different, with RL3A, UP2L, E7DX, UA7K and others crushing our score. They have the perfect geography adjacent to prefix-rich Europe, which is immediately next door on the low bands. But we did a super job, with fantastic rates on 20 and 15 Saturday afternoon as KY7M blazed contacts into the log from his desk in Phoenix. Our remote setup was very basic, and we did not even attempt to set up an online shared log, but even at that we posted an outstanding score for this hemisphere, bested only by PR4T.

Next year, let's do WPX SSB really *right*, with a ton of ops on site and the Moran pool house as part of our experience.

East Bathroom Tile Finally Repaired

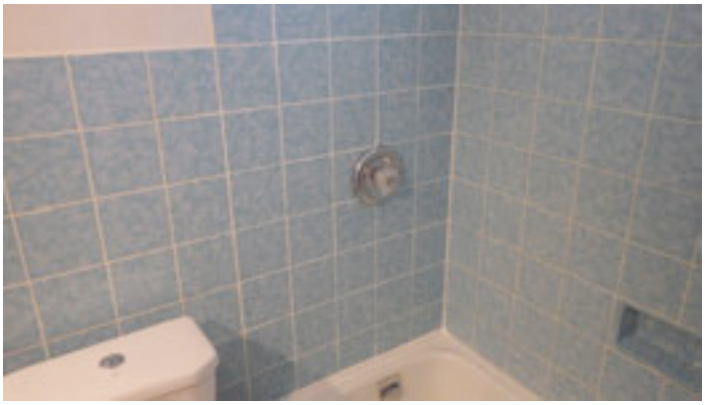
About three years ago K8ND heard a loud smack from somewhere in the house. Quite of bit of wall tile had literally exploded off the wall with a loud crack, and then crashed down in a heap on the floor. The glue that was used in 1970 had decided to give up, the tiles began to bow out from the wall, and then let go all at once. Since then we have replaced large areas of tile in the West Bathroom, quite a job because the old glue has to be removed with a power grinder, and that makes a huge mess of dust.

In February of 2019 Dorothy and I noticed more bowed tiles, and thus as a precaution took off all the tiles from the shower valve wall in the East Bathroom to prevent it from crashing down and breaking. This was important because we had zero spares and could not afford to break even one of these unique blue tiles.

Finally, after the long COVID delay, those tiles are out of their storage box under a bed and back on the wall.

Dorothy had the kitchen countertop contractor grind the glue off the wall, I removed the old failed shower faucet from the four inch thick concrete wall and filled in the void with mortar, Dorothy did the wall and tile prep, and on April 5 we re-installed the tiles.

By carefully swapping and trimming, we were able to cover the space where the old faucet had been and finish the job with *exactly* the right number of tiles, no spares. That job is now grouted and looks great (below).



Again, this is nothing to do with ham radio, but it's one more component of making your visit here a little more appealing.

US/JA Tower Report

Since mid-2017 almost all focus has, necessarily, been on the Europe tower as we ramped up to its replacement in December of 2018. The US/JA tower received only the minimum essential maintenance, and of course stood for 14 months with no care during the COVID year.

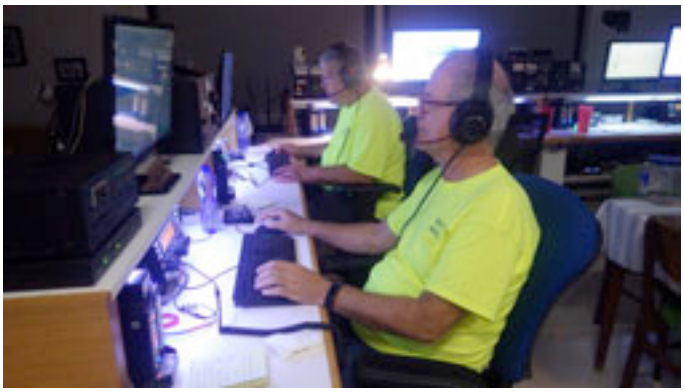
I'm happy to report that the tower is in decent shape. There are the expected rust blooms from top to bottom, particularly in the top 8 foot section, but all of this is manageable. I spent 10.75 hours in the first half of April on that tower (photo) with the Makita angle grinder, a twisted wire brush, and buckets of epoxy primer and finish paint in succession. This is the same kind of miserable, but essential aggressive maintenance that has kept that tower viable for 20 years, and I expect will do so for many more. There is one instance on the legs that will require addition of a leg splint, and since it's on one of the large diameter section receivers with hardware in the way, I'll need to custom make a splint and bring it in October. For all other upcoming problems on the legs, our new stainless splints are on hand and ready when needed.

W0CG painting epoxy on the US tower, April 11, 2021.

Our hope is that our tower professional NR0X will take over these tower and antenna maintenance duties once he is fully recovered from his leg injury. This work is rapidly becoming beyond my capability, and help is badly needed. Also, the new Europe tower will need a full coat of paint within a year. There is no damage or corrosion on it, but the life of a finish coat of epoxy in the severe UV here is about three years, after which time it begins to lose its moisture sealing properties and oxidizes on the surface. This is straightforward work that Jason can eat for lunch with his youth and strength.

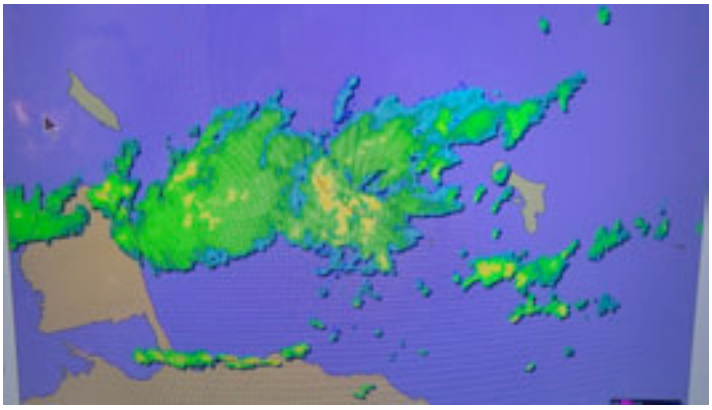
WB5ZGA Becomes K5LD

Congratulations to Walter Aucoin (photo next page), one of our three newest CCC members, on swapping his legacy callsign for a 1x2. He's thrilled, and all of his contest QSOs from home will proceed more quickly now.



WARC Tower Sarcophagus

The March newsletter wrapped just prior to the pour of the concrete. That pour succeeded on March 16 (Tuesday), but it was anything but routine. I had worked through Zoom to arrange for two strong guys with a cement mixer to show up at about 9 AM that morning. Unfortunately, they showed up concurrent with the heaviest rainstorm of 2021 thus far, as pictured below on the radar.



March 16, 2021, 9:45 AM.

As you see, the Coral Cliff area was precisely in the bullseye of a small but very intense line of rain showers that were heaviest on our end of the island. At the precise time we were slated to begin mixing concrete, the sky opened up. One of the guys sat in his truck waiting and the other on the back porch with me trying to kill time and make conversation. It seemed that the rain would never end. Finally we gave up waiting and dove in.

All the rest of us had on boots and socks, so Dorothy volunteered to go into the backyard lake to get the wheelbarrow.

By the time we started mixing and wheelbarrowing in the concrete the entire backyard was a mass of mud. This was a problem because we were mixing outside the front driveway gate at the road and had to wheelbarrow each heavy load of concrete through this muck to the tower.

Once we finally did begin to mix, and we thought the rain was about ended, another wave of rain, heaviest of all, descended and caught all three of us soaked to the skin. I ran for a piece of scrap plywood to cover the mixer and save the first load of concrete from getting wiped out.

These two great gentlemen charged us a fair price to bring thea mixer and do the hard labor on the shovels, wheelbarrows, and buckets. This is the pile of sand and gravel that I got from our across the street neighbor. It was surplus to his project needs. This was a brief moment between downpours.

Below, looking down into the pour, we have about one third of the concrete in the forms. It was already apparent that my super strong forms were going to hold up perfectly. Here's Wawawa (Yes, that's his name) bucketing concrete up into the form. He is tall and very strong and made the difficult look easy.

We plugged away for a couple of hours, the rain subsided, and ended up with the pour complete and a bit of material left over. I had bought seven bags of cement, and this turned out to be precisely the correct amount. The ARRL PCARS crew had checked my calculations prior to the pour, we both got the same answer, and the materials pile was spot on.

On Wednesday afternoon I took off the forms, recovering lots of screws to be used again in another project, revealing a perfect pour, pictured below. I kept the concrete damp for four days afterward, and this now secures the WARC tower to outlive all of us, barring a hurricane.

The total cost was about $60 to Dirk for sand and gravel, about $60 for cement, about $15 for hardware, and $285 labor for the guys and the rental mixer. I built the forms from scrap that was on site or in the rubble pile across the street, so this kept the cost way down. This is a very good use of your Station Support money. The concrete triangle at the bottom is PJ9JT's original 1971 base. The next layer up was from June 2001 when I added to the base for stability using hurriedly built forms and mixing by hand in a wheelbarrow. The top is dated March 15, 2021. Project complete.

New Sliding Glass Doors Coming

You read last month that we have committed to Wiltraco, N.V. for two completely new custom made sliding glass doors and screens. On Friday, March 19, their guy showed up at the house to take the final pre-production measurements.

Here's Stephen, who turned out not only to be the production manager, but owner of the company!

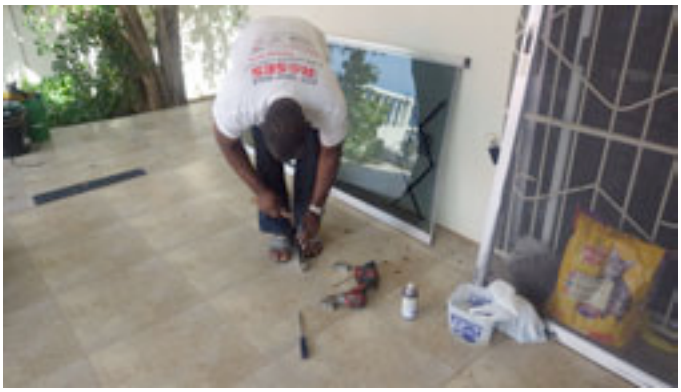
It was the end of the work week on Friday afternoon, and he seemed in no hurry, so we poured a couple of beers in him and enjoyed sitting for about an hour getting to know each other. He explained that production mistakes are the make/break for his corporate profitability, so he does all of the specification measurements himself. His father started the company, and Stephen is now growing it by leaps and bounds. Once he makes enough at this, in some years, he hopes to return to his first love of music production and already has an impressive studio at his home.

The doors are scheduled for installation in October into the East Bedroom and the East Porch. We have 100% confidence that this will go well, and that Wiltraco will be on hand to support us with expertise, parts, repairs, and any needed maintenance well into the future. Sliding doors have been a major headache with the house since forever, and this problem is now solved.

We will evaluate late this year whether it makes sense to replace the other two on the west side, although these are in much better condition, as explained below.

Sliding Glass Rollers Fixed!!

The photo is from March 20, a Saturday.



This is Sonny, a sliding glass door specialist referred to us by Wiltraco. In his day job Sonny works for Vermeer, the competition, but on evenings and weekend he does pickup work on doors for extra cash. He came to the house to assess our old doors a couple of weeks before, and headed off with some cash in hand to order parts. On the day before the 20th, Dorothy and I removed the sliding glass door to the West Porch, the one that had given us fits for years with a broken roller, and had it ready for Sonny's arrival.

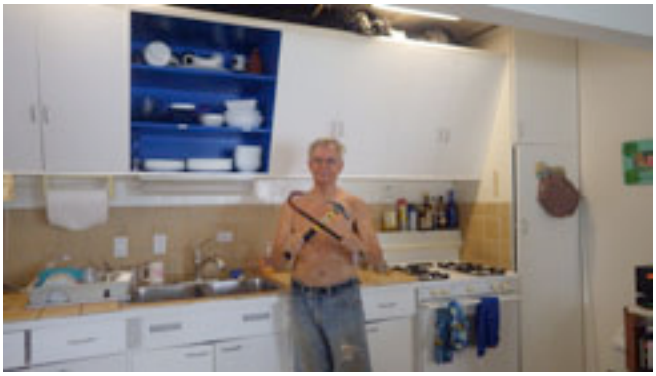
Sonny tore the old door apart in the manner W8WTS had described to us a couple of years ago, violently but successfully removed the old rollers, put in new high quality parts, reinstalled the door, and tuned it up. It works (!) perfectly for the first time in forever, and there is no longer an air conditioning escape gap. During his visit he also replaced rollers in bad sliders in the East Sunroom, and left us with a set of new rollers for the future if needed. This was money dramatically well spent, and he's on call for the future if I still am not fully confident about doing this myself in the future. It's easy, now, having seen the technique. Sonny was a good teacher and a super nice guy.

Following all of this we found a source in town for security system parts, I bought a new magnet switch assembly, and installed it in the repaired main door. The security system now arms after several weeks offline after a worker from Mike's house had broken the old magnet.

Major Kitchen Improvements

Last month we had obtained a slab of quartz countertop and staged it in the West Bedroom. As you may have seen on Facebook, all of that work is now complete and the kitchen is dramatically improved.

As most of you know, we have been making improvements to the interior of Signal Point steadily since 2000. Rooms have been completely redone, fixtures replaced, new beds and furniture and appliances installed, and all new flooring put in save for one last bedroom. It's the kitchen that remained original and ugly and off-putting. The photo shows me on Thursday, March 18, tools in hand and ready to begin the demolition of the ugly kitchen countertop and backsplash.



Dorothy and I decided after a lot of analysis to retain the original cabinets. They are superbly well constructed and have lasted beautifully for decades in this severe tropical climate. Our concern was that anything we could buy now would not hold up as well and would eventually rot, warp, or delaminate. In 2019 Dorothy put in tons and tons of hours over a period of several days sanding and then meticulously repainting them bright white, and that paint has held up very well. The photo shows the sanding tent that she made November 29, 2019, to contain three days of dust generation from the sanding.

Painting went on for days (nest page) – Dorothy is vastly patient and meticulous.

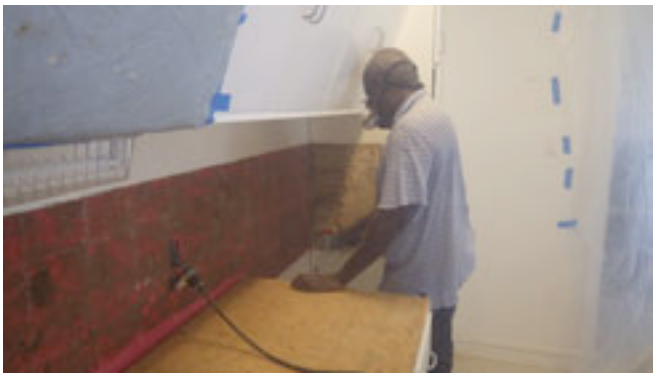
Fast forward 16 months. Here's the new countertop arriving.

Monday, March 15, 2021, arrival of the quartz countertop at home.

We were stunned that 1) it showed up on the scheduled day, and 2) these guys found the house from my hand-drawn map on the back of the order slip without the phone calls and lost episodes typical of deliveries to our very hard to find location on the island. This thing weighs almost 400 pounds, and we had them lay it across the beds in the West Bedroom.

So on Thursday the 18th we tore into the kitchen and demolished the 50 year old ugly tile. I had patched and fixed and repaired this for years, at one point even using pancake batter to re-glue some bad tiles, and so it felt good to rip it out.

Saturday, March 20, the big day. Here's the installer's helper (below) wailing away on the 50 year old glue on the backsplash and countertop. You can see that he's inside the dust cage we made for the kitchen, and this did help immensely to contain the mess. He's using a cool rotary tool on the angle grinder that did a great job of removing this very hard and persistent glue and making ready for the tile and countertop. He and his special blade did in an hour what would have taken me days on my own with my own tools. While he was on site, Dorothy talked him into taking the glue off the wall on one of the bathrooms, which simplified the tile replacement mentioned earlier.

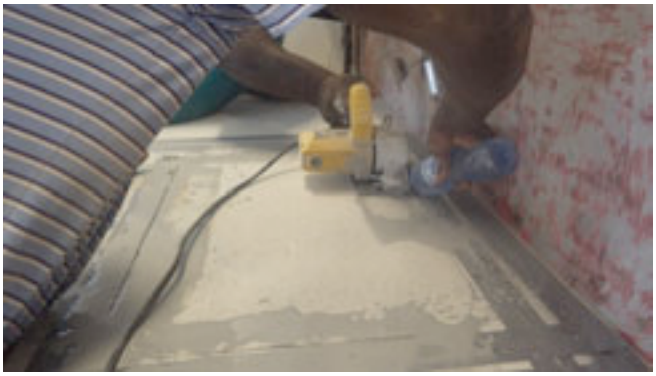


After very, VERY careful measuring and re-checking and consultation, Echi the installer and I agreed on the cutoff mark line for the quartz slab. Here he is (left) doing that critical cut with his helper watering the blade as he goes. Echi had the right tools and equipment and made this look pretty easy.

Setting the countertop, these big guys made it look easy – the slab weights about 375 pounds.

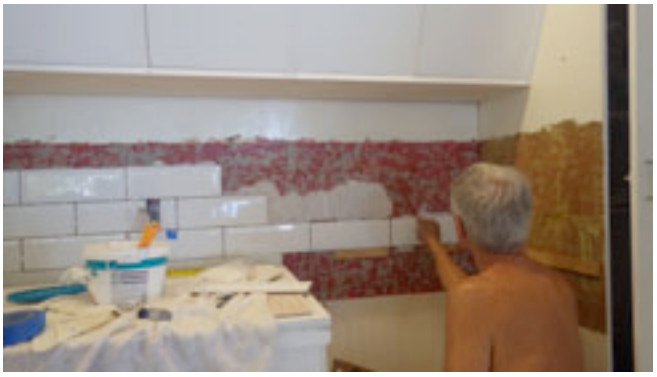
Now for the really hard part. You only get one chance on the hole for the sink. The sink has to be properly centered and also positioned to clear the counter base flanges underneath and connect OK to the plumbing. We had to cut out two legacy pipes under the sink because this new sink is much deeper than the original. Echi and I spent a LOT of time figuring this all out before I gave him the go-ahead.

This HAD to be right. Cutting the sink hole made an incredible amount of dust (the drape was again in place) and was a time of maximum stress. The guys built a platform underneath to support the cutout piece -- really clever.



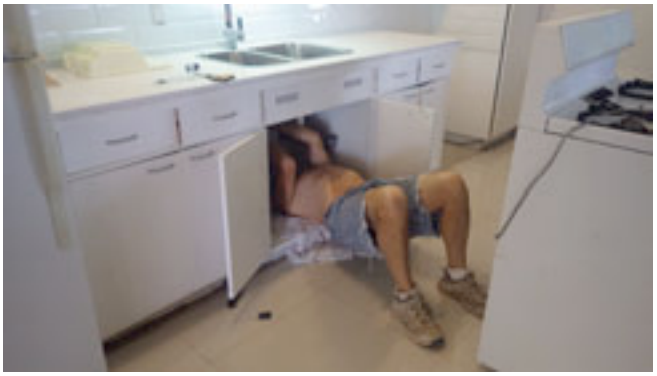
The very next day, Sunday, March 21, and it is time for backsplash tile. Dorothy is painting (below) the first of two coats of tile prep onto the concrete wall.

I have a lot of experience with tile, so we did the backsplash ourselves. I was more than happy to pay Echi for the countertop work, because I had not the experience nor the specialized tools. But tile is easy for me. The photo shows some tiles going in behind the range pocket. Notice the support ledges that I screwed into the concrete wall.



Maintaining our momentum on the project, we decided to put in the grout on the backsplash the next day, Monday, March 22. There are no photos of this because we worked with intense speed, putting in a large quantity of grout before it set up, and then making many cleanup passes to remove the haze while it was still easy. The job came out looking great after a four hour marathon work session.

Tuesday we made another big buying trip to town. This was the last day we were allowed out on the roads because of a COVID lockdown, and I needed some plumbing parts to adapt the Columbian faucet plumbing to our US house thread standards. Also I replaced a leaky faucet control valve. We bought the plumbing parts, an undercounter light, and a lot more, then on Wednesday I was finally able to install the faucet and drain plumbing (photo). Dorothy had been very patient, using the little bathroom sink in the West Bedroom for days.



The finished product is pictured on the next page. None of this is “radio,” but it all improves the

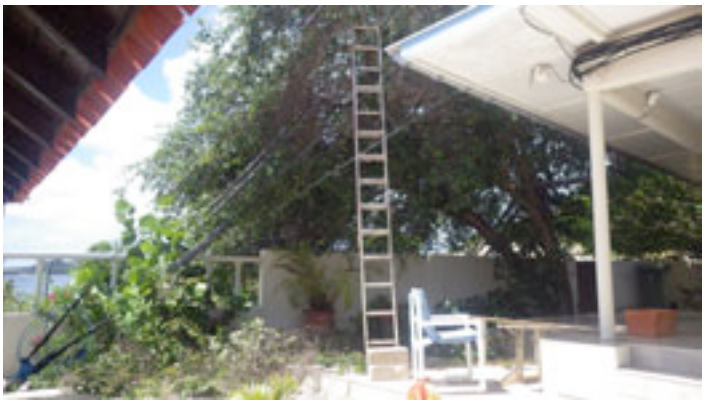
experience of being at Signal Point, particularly for our XYLs. The QTH continues to improve dramatically.

Replacement of US Tower Equalizer Plate

This might initially sound trivial to you, but it turned into a pretty massive project with serious survivability implications for the 80 foot US/JA tower.

When we arrived on February 15 I immediately noticed that the tree by the west man gate had grown so significantly in the year away that its branch crown had spread to and surrounded the insulator junction in the top "Ocean guy" of the US tower. This is the joint where the Phillystran transitions into ¼ inch EHS steel for the rest of the way to the ground. To protect from salt corrosion all of these joints on all the towers here are encased in putty and taped with Scotch 33. Without this protection these joints eventually turn brown, begin rusting, and fail. Years back one such joint let go on a top guy of the US tower, and we nearly lost the tower when the guy came down on its own.

The Curacao Cherry tree is very hard wood, and it had chewed into the protective packet at the guy joint, opening it to the salt corrosion. I could see from the roof that the top third of the putty and tape had been scraped away and the deadend was exposed to the salt air. Frustratingly, this was not quite in reach, either from the roof or from the top of the stepladder. I borrowed an extension ladder from Mike next door, and in a classic stupid risky maneuver (below) leaned it into the crown of the tree from the patio. This enabled me to get up into the tree and cut out all of the offending branches, a huge pile of cuttings, but I still could not reach the bad insulator joint. Thus, the top guy wire had to come down in order to do the repair.



This is never fun. We dug out the 360 foot coil of 1/4 inch EHS guy cable, unrolled enough to get to the roof, then I went to the top of the tower with a tag line and Dorothy fed me steel cable until I had enough to attach it at the top. Next came the laborious process of opening up all of the putty and tape bundles at the guy anchor to be able to get to the turnbuckle. Eventually, after removing all the salt protection and the safety cables, I was able to tension the temporary guy, loosen the turnbuckle, and remove the permanent top guy. Encouragingly, the turnbuckle inside the packing was still perfect after years of service in the direct salt droplet path. This is a lot of rigging and hours and hours of time spread over a couple of days.

From there, it was easy to get to the damaged joint on the roof, inspect and clean, and repack the putty and tape bundle.

For three years one of the big tasks on the work schedule has been to replace this "Ocean" guy equalizer plate. Jason and I were going to do that in February of 2020, but COVID nixed that. There was a lot of serious rust evident on the plate, it was swelling and beginning to delaminate (yes, steel delaminates), and failure was coming. Since I already a temp cable on the top guy, I bowed to reason and decided this was the time to replace the equalizer plate. The new plate, fully prepped with multiple coats of epoxy and

stainless hardware, was on hand, helping with the decision.

So Dorothy and I dug out the yellow poly rope and she helped me rig a temp rope guy from the halfway point up the tower down to the ground. I rigged it to a column in the Ocean Pavilion and tensioned the rope with a second comealong as tight as I dared. The photo on the prior page shows this rig, with both guy wires now relieved by scab guys. Next step was to go to the backyard and take apart the steel safety wire assemblies on those two guy anchors so the lower turnbuckle could be loosened. After doing all of that over a period of a couple more days, I unpacked the tape and putty from the bottom turnbuckle and was not surprised to see that one ear of that turnbuckle was nearly rusted through. This assembly had been dripping red rust water onto the patio, ominously.

Following this, it was necessary to re-attach the top scab guy because it was hooked to the plate that was about to be replaced. I found an old guy turnbuckle, used four DXE saddle clamps to bind it to the guy anchor at the very ground level, and reattached the scab to that turnbuckle hook, retensioning it. The turnbuckle body deformed badly under the 600 pounds of load, but held without question.

The next step in preparation for replacing the equalizer plate was to remove all four "wind boom guys." These are lightweight Phillystran lines that run from the booms of the 20 and 15 meter monbanders to the guy point on the ground. Tension in these lines, which are attached to the boom about five feet out from either side of the tower, dramatically reduces the torsional twisting of the tower in the howling Easterly tradewinds and reduces load and wear on the entire tower. But all four of these lines attach to the guy anchor, are in the way of everything, and also had to be unpacked and removed in order to change the equalizer plate. More hours of work.

I dug into inventory and got out a new turnbuckle that had already been epoxied, a new ¼ inch deadend, and installed those on the bottom guy, cleaning everything in the process.

Finally the big day came, and on Monday March 29 I had everything prepped for the swapout. The bottom guys were all loosened equally to keep the tower plumb, the scab guys were rechecked and verified. All tools were staged in position, and I said a silent prayer. With Dorothy's wonderful help, I opened the turnbuckles, took out the bolts, removed both guy wires, and off came the old rusty equalizer plate. Look closely in the photo below – you can see the guy anchor loop empty! No hardware whatsoever attached.

This was the classic three minutes of total panic as I hurriedly installed the new equalizer plate, we put the two turnbuckles and their guys onto the plate, inserted the anti-seized new stainless bolts, and then practically collapsed with relief and exhaustion. It was now safe. The next photo shows the new plate (white) and beautiful new stainless hardware and a new turnbuckle on the bottom. Notice the very heavy application of anti seize on the turnbuckle threads. .

This photo below shows the new bottom turnbuckle, now tensioned and the scab guys gone.

Now for the four wind guys. Previously these attached to a large steel clevis around the guy anchor. As you

see from the photo this clevis and its thimble were badly rusted. Since everything was apart, I decided that we might as well go all the way and totally renew everything, do it once, and hopefully never have to deal with this again.

I used a 2.5 inch DXE saddle clamp from inventory, fabricated a backer plate for it from three pieces of scrap aluminum, took 12 stainless steel wire rope clips from inventory, then took apart all of the old puttied and taped Phillystran assemblies. All of those old steel wire rope clips were in good condition, a testimonial to the effectiveness of the packing technique.

After more hours of fiddling and a lot of help from Dorothy, we had the four wind guys reinstalled and retensioned, but this time with much, much better hardware. The photo below shows the complete new assembly, but with the massive improvement that everything is now stainless or aluminum, and there is NO NEED to protect it with putty and tape packs.

The final two photos are a post-mortem on this project. The first shows the rusted old equalizer plate with a huge blister and lots of material already flaked off.

Below is a close-up of the rusted turnbuckle ear from the bottom guy, approaching failure. This happened because there was a tiny flaw in the putty pack on this guy wire, and over many years the water seeped in and did its work.

Everything is now new, clean, and protected. We repacked all the exposed joints with putty, totally encased both turnbuckles in putty packs, epoxied the new deadend and puttied that. I still have not put away all the cables and tools and parts, but that is easy and this massive project is finished. Not recommended that you replace an equalizer plate at home, particularly working with just one climber.

One side of the bottom guy wire turnbuckle, approaching failure.

W8WTS' March Treasury Balance

The end of March balance in the Station Support fund is $4086.86. Thanks to the ARRL SSB crew in early March we had our first operational club revenue in an

entire calendar year. After the upcoming annual dues in May we will be in a position to consider acquiring another K3 and making other improvements to the station.

Curacao Made it to # 1

Part of what encouraged us to come to Curacao in mid-February was the excellent control of COVID on the island. Test positivity was only about 2%, and there had only been a small handful of hospitalizations and deaths. Life here appeared normal, and we moved about the island with no problems, noting that people were diligently adhering to mask and distancing requirements.

That changed on the evening of March 19, election day. I made a late afternoon run to Barber to get some ATM cash and was shocked to see the glut of people at the school and road intersection in Soto. There were literally hundreds of people and a backup of cars all over the village, gridlocking the road. Traffic was at a standstill. It took me almost 30 minutes to creep through the mob and get on my way to Barber. In Barber it was not much better, and a 20 minute roundtrip to the ATM turned into a two hour chug. I later found out that this kind of street partying is normal on election day.

Predictably, COVID hit with a vengeance about 12 days later because election parties like that had occurred all over the island, with all pretense of COVID caution being dropped on that one evening. The eventual result was that Curacao attained the highest COVID rate in the world, made it into the *New York Times*, and had to impose a severe lockdown.

Curacao worldwide corona leader - Curaçao Chronicle (curacaochronicle.com)

Starting March 23 everything stopped on Curacao. Everything closed except grocery stores and medical facilities, and the stores went onto limited schedules. An island-wide curfew was imposed first at 9 PM and later at 7 PM. Zero vehicle movement is permitted on Sundays. We were given two days per week to be allowed to drive, based on license plates, and only then with one person in the vehicle and only to grocery stores, gas stations, or pharmacies. Roadblocks were set up with plate checks and interviews of drivers. A 1000 guilder fine was imposed, and cars are being confiscated if you are on the road the wrong day. (Our permitted days are Tuesday and Friday.)

When the lockdown was imposed our next door neighbor abruptly departed for Illinois in disgust, but the impact of all of this on Geoff and Dorothy has been pretty much zero. We tend to stay at home anyway, have plenty of food on board, and are enjoying ourselves immensely. K8ND arrives on the date of this newsletter, and we have to figure out how to collect him at the airport, and get our outgoing COVID tests, but this will simply require some patience and research.

This will pass in a few weeks as vaccination rates ramp up on the island, and normalcy will return. The economic impact on the already broken economy is terrible, so it can not last much longer.

KB7Q and N2IC Rendezvous in New Mexico

Now both fully vaccinated, KB7Q and Joyce have resumed their nomadic lives. March 31 found them in Silver City, New Mexico, where Gene had been doing more EME work. A couple of years ago we had a logging disaster in the CQWW CW contest that potentially could have lost us hundreds of QSOs. At that time Gene appealed to N1MM expert N2IC, Steve London, for help. Steve put in a mammoth effort for us and was able to save our log, and that entire contest effort. Last month, Gene was able to properly thank Steve, as you see from Gene's E-mail excerpt below.

March 31, Wednesday: I had a nice visit with N2IC yesterday here in Silver City. I gave him a gift bag of a good wine, cheese, and fancy crackers to enjoy with his wife as a way of saying thank you for saving the PJ2T log when the contacts went missing in that CQ WW contest.

Our PJ2T Wish List

We have been bragging of late about being well situated with equipment, antennas and feedlines, the towers, and the house. Indeed, PJ2T has never been in such good shape.

But to stay there we need to lean forward and focus on what's needed to maintain this good posture.

Number one, by far, on my wish list is Jason. We very badly need a tower professional to take over my duties in the air, and he is ready and almost able as he

recovers from a broken leg and a very serious bout of flu at Signal Point in February of 2020. Our top spending priority needs to be for tower maintenance.

Also, PJ2T's Station Equipment Lead N7IR and a couple of the rest of us feel strongly that we need another K3 or two. We have five, but before long the sunspots will be back, we will want to run six stations, and need spares depth. Gary says these are coming onto the second hand market, so all we need now are some resources. In fact, three and a half of our five K3 radios have been donated. Can you help, or can you talk this up in your club groups?

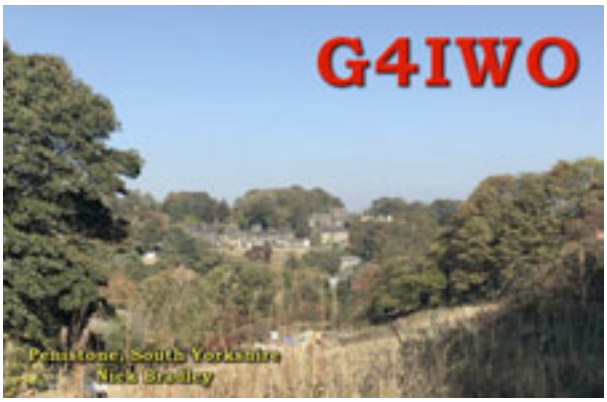
In addition to a new K3, N7IR has these suggestions for the station wishlist.

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, were 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.

Also on the wish list, under the heading of maintenance, I still want to get all of the antenna selection LED indicator lights working. And, in an intense personal quest, I still am determined to find the time to bring the Titan III back to life.

W0CG Presentation to British Club

On April 7 I was privileged to do a 90 minute presentation to the members of the Denby Dale Amateur Radio Club based in Yorkshire, U.K. This was arranged by Nick Bradley, G4IWO.



There were many participants on hand via Zoom, and the timing worked out well because 7:30 PM their local time was 2:30 in the afternoon here, and the sunshine and blue water looked great on the video.

Their interest was piqued by our article in January *QST*, and there are quite a few active contesters in their group. They enjoyed the video tour of the station, and we had a delightful Q&A exchange. I had been asked to fill about 40 minutes, but their interest was high so we extended to 90 minutes. We made some new friends and hope some of them may find their way to Curacao in the future.

If you have too much time on your hands, here's the link to the video.

Geoff takes us on a live tour of PJ2T contesting station - YouTube

Roof Repairs

The ceiling in the East Sunroom has been leaking ever so slightly, as shown by a tiny bit of mildew inside. This is because many of the tiles on the roof above have been separating from the concrete because the contractor rushed the job and did not properly prep in 2006. Thus, now and then, I have to remove and replace areas of the roof tile. The photo on the next page shows me in the final stages of my Fred Flintstone act after carefully chiseling out five bad tiles, cement, and grout in preparation for replacement. Using proper prep and proper thinset mortar, I now have the new tiles in and grouted with cement, so for now the leaks are stopped. What you can't see in the photo is the intense heat up there in mid-afternoon.

Bureau Telecommunicatie Inspection

Our PJ2T club license is in the midst of a long, complicated, and expensive renewal process. One of the final steps is an on-site inspection by a specialist from the technical department. He was here Thursday morning, the 8th, by appointment. As in past inspections, it was a quick visit. He recorded the serial numbers of the four installed K3s, updated the old form that showed two FT-2000s in service, and took about 20 photos inside and out. It was 25 minutes in and out the door, but a very important step toward renewal. It seems that every time I think this process is over the Bureau comes up with one more requirement, needs one more document, or assesses yet one more fee, but we need to be patient and courteous.

Routine Maintenance at 2 AM!

Yep, here's (next column) a shot of the front gate shortly after I finished varnishing. This needs to be done about every nine months because of the intense sun. I learned years ago that varnish and tropical sun do not mix because the new coat bubbles and fails if you put it on in the sunlight. Thus, the only solution is to do this in the wee hours, giving the spar varnish some time to begin curing before the morning sun hits it, and before the wind comes up and blows grass and bugs onto the surface. This job was well overdue because of COVID. I got up at 1 AM on April 2, set up the light at the gate, and worked until 4, finishing the front and side gates for another nine months of service.

W0CG's nocturnal varnishing setup at 3 AM.

PJ2T Acquires Another AL-1200

We felt that we had enough AL-1200s on site, but then fate intervened. PJ2BR bought a new state of art solid state amp, and suddenly on April 9 his old AL-1200 went up for sale. This was extremely attractive because it is our standard PJ2T amplifier, and it was ON THE ISLAND. This eliminated all of the usual headaches and costs of transporting boat anchors to the island, and the price was reasonable at $800. The officers talked it over and we decided we could not pass on this excellent opportunity. So now there are eight….

News Flash: All Rotors Are Working

I'm happy to report the shocking news that all three rotors are working. We had thought that both the Force 12 and WARC rotors were inop. But Dorothy and I did a rotor fault assessment just before going to press with this newsletter so I would know what parts to bring next trip, and after some patient manipulation both are working correctly. I did a total rebuild of the rotor shelf on the WARC tower, and put in a new rotor in early 2020. That work paid off.

Antenna rotators and salt air and high winds do not mix well, but for now we are in business. I have a T2X in Idaho ready to bring down next time, N7IR has one in Arizona that's ready to be transported to Curacao, and K9JF has offered to donate yet another Tailtwister, so we're in good shape. What's needed here? Two more K3s!!

Member Spotlight? Missing

Here's hoping that this space will be filled next month with radio bios from some of our newest members.

Celebrating Curacao's Beauty

Finally, here are some photo reminders of the tropical beauty of this place.

Dorothy having a quiet breakfast in the Crow's Nest.

Signal Point as viewed from the Sunset Waters Beach, April 2.

Contesters' view from O.C.'s pool, April 13, 2021 – note the PJ2T 40 meter beam above the red roof.

We will be here until April 16, working hard to make the QTH fully ready to support upcoming contest teams. We can't wait to welcome all of you back here.

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