



Signals From The Point

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Editor: W0CG

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Presidential Ramblings by Jeff Maass K8ND / PJ2ND

These are the summer 'doldrums' for the Signal Point PJ2T station, the period between the end of the previous contest season and before the start of the new one. It's usually broken up a bit with Uli DL8OBQ coming over to operate the IARU World Championships and host the week-long Kalter Youth visit. And I usually spend some time on Curacao in the summer.

The Kalter group had to cancel their trip this year (reportedly issues of getting passports in a timely manner). Uli is still coming to run the IARU contest, and I extended my visit to last 43 days. My trip report (so far) is elsewhere in this newsletter.

One thing I will be doing during my stay is to present a program on PJ2T and the CCC to the June 14 meeting of the VERONA club. I'm assembling a slideshow now, which will start with a bit of the history of this neighborhood with Amateur Radio and come to the present facilities and activities. I have all 21 years of photos from my trips with me, so I will be sorting through the materials to find those that will keep the attendees from falling asleep! As I write this, the meeting is only five days off. I will make this slideshow available online for a time following my presentation.



When you are busy doing ARRL Field Day, Geoff W0CG/PJ2DX and Dorothy will be flying off to Italy. Geoff has been selected to serve as a referee at the WRTC festivities during the IARU World Championships on July 8-9.



For the IARU World Championships, we will do a 'hybrid' operation as PJ2HQ, with me operating from Signal Point, and others operating on the PJ2T remote facility. I will be sending an email to start the scheduling of shifts for this 24-hour contest, which will include CW and SSB operation. As a Headquarters station, we will work to pass out the multiplier representing VERONA and Curacao. Multipliers in this contest are ITU Zones and HQ stations, so we will be a much desired QSO! Watch your email for information Real Soon Now.

At the CCC Annual Meeting in Xenia last month, there was much discussion of the need for a very capable generator system to provide backup to allow full-power operation in times of power outages. This would have applications for keeping contest operations on task during commercial outages, but also would make PJ2T a very valuable resource in time of a possible disaster. This was driven home this past week, when power for the entire island was out for as much as 12 hours following a cable failure at a substation that cascaded through the entire system. Power was out at Signal Point for over 7 hours Thursday afternoon and

evening.

Things are in good shape at Signal Point, and waiting for the invasion of the contesters again come contest season!

Dayton CCC Annual Meeting Report

It was an all-time record: the smallest turnout in our history for a CCC Annual Meeting.



L-R: VE3CX, K8PGJ, K5LD, W8PT, K8ND, W8WTS, W9NJY, DL8OBQ. WX4W was there earlier but had to leave. (W0CG photo)

Per the agenda, we had an excellent discussion about strategic priorities for the next couple of years. Here's the ordered list that emerged.

1. Develop a list of “who to call” and “what to do” so that if Geoff is not on site the local ops will know where to turn.
2. Initiate an aggressive project to get solid backup power: a bigger and more reliable generator and transfer capability. We'll make mention of this project in the “Backup Power” section of this newsletter every month as this project gets started and moves into action. AC7DC has already done some design on this, and we have plenty of expertise in the club to pull this off. The group at the meeting agreed that AC power is our biggest vulnerability and is Geoff's biggest stressor.
3. Geoff will execute a 10 year lookback to identify and list problems and threats to our contestability that have actually happened. This will drive identification and prioritization of CCC projects. (That lookback appears later in this newsletter.)
4. Geoff will get a professional to do a full inspection on the shack air conditioner to help gauge the remaining expected life and to identify maintenance actions we need to take now.

5. We will find and post N7IR's list of the specs of all the K3s so they will be easily available to ops on site when there are problems and we need to swap in a K3.
6. We will aggressively recruit a PJ2T webmaster so that the present crummy site will be of value as a resource for members, and so that it will present a quality outward-facing image for PJ2T.
7. We will schedule CCC Zoom meetings several times a year. The meetings we had during COVID were popular and useful and need to resume.

And it's not formally on the list, but we decided that Geoff needs to start building comprehensive station and house documentation looking toward contests when he may not be on site. This will be a long term ongoing project.

CCC Membership Renewal Status

As of June 9, 23 members have renewed CCC dues for our 24th year of operation, ending May 31, 2024. This leaves only four yet to renew because our new members already paid up earlier for Year 24. These dues are central to our survival and to our ability to put lots of contest QSOs into logs worldwide. Everyone expects PJ2T to be on, and we do not want to disappoint them.

A few of our members have not been to Curacao and do not expect to get there, but they continue to very generously support the club. Also notable this year was the arrival of dues from K5LD less than two minutes after I sent the invitation letter, with WX4W just minutes behind Walter. (Curtis said he went to the bathroom at the time the letter came in.) And once again this year N7WA paid double dues in an act of great generosity and belief in what we are doing. We'll do our level best to continue to deserve your trust with lots of PJ2T contest QSOs happening in 2023-24.

THANK YOU to everyone for your generous support in these tight economic times.

Here and There Around the Hamvention

Saturday morning I got to the fairgrounds early, or so I thought, only to find a line of people hundreds of yards long, all waiting for the gates to open at 9 AM. (Photo next page.)



The giant line patiently waiting to get into the Hamvention grounds on Saturday morning.

Here's the way in. If you've never walked through this gate, you're missing a major ham radio life experience.



I met a few celebrities. Here's the man himself, N1MM.



N1MM, Tom Wagner, with W0CG. No, I am not standing in a divot.

In the next column, another technical master, Gerry Hull, W1VE, a master of all things remoting.



W0CG with remoting guru W1VE

Everywhere I went around the Hamvention I was getting stopped by people complementing us on the PJ2T operation and thanking us for the QSOs. For example I met W2WCM who gave me a QSL card on the spot. Bill is a retired Delta Airlines captain.



A happy PJ2T customer Bill, W2WCM.

In another memorable instance I was stopped by a young twenties gentleman from Iowa. He identified himself as a relatively new licensee, said that he loved CW, and thanked me for the contest QSOs and for always being on the air in the majors. His father was with him, and we had a great chat. He seemed astonished, in a good way, to see someone from PJ2T at Dayton.

PJ2T's Builders at Dayton

Some of PJ2T's key builders were at the Hamvention. In June of 2001 we built two towers, the US/JA (80 feet) and the Europe (100 feet). We then populated them with 11 yagis. EVERY ONE of those beams was built by Steve N8LGP, pictured on the following page.



Steve Ulichney, N8LGP and his XYL Dee

Those antennas were all second hand, taken down from here and there, and then homebrewed and upgraded. Steve is a machinist, and he did all of that work, then packed them all for ocean shipment. In December of 2000 his bedroom at home looked like an aluminum warehouse. Dee was very patient with all of that. Steve carefully labeled all of the parts for every antenna with an engraving tool, making it easy for me to assemble them quickly once on the island. All of those antennas are still in service!

Steve was with CCC beginning in the very early years of contesting from VP5 in the mid-1990s.

All of those antennas had to go somewhere. We needed towers. Once all the parts were in place and the guys had been fabricated, we put up the 100 foot Rohn 55 Europe tower IN ONE DAY. Bob, N8NR (photo follows) and I did the tower work with rope support on the ground from N8BJQ and my XYL.

Here I am (next column) with master tower-builder Bob Kuhnle, N8NR. He taught me many good safety techniques, introduced me to Anti-Seize, and patiently mentored me as we worked.



PJ2T tower-builder Bob, N8NR

When it was time to build the Ridge tower the biggest challenge we faced was wrestling the very heavy coils of 7/8" Heliac up the Ridge. We started out trying to do it as a two-man team, but I was slowing down Goose, W8AV, who took over and did it solo. Goose is a farm boy and thus very strong. He hauled that Heliac up the Ridge single-handedly! Keith (WA9S, SK) and Goose and I built that entire Ridge installation in about five days of hot effort.



Elmer Steingass, W8AV, Ridge system builder. (With a last name like that you can see why they call him Goose....)

Goose was one of the original members of the PJ2T group.

Another major builder of PJ2T, Rick, N0YY, had a flea market space. Rick conceived how to implement our pushbutton antenna switching system, assembled all the components, and put it all together in Curacao in October, 2015. As if that were not enough, he also designed and built with Terry, W0AWL, the beautiful operating desks we now enjoy.



PJ2T antenna switch system and desk builder Rick Heinrich, NOYY at his flea market space.

Rick was also responsible for multiple other innovations at PJ2T, such as the stainless steel thrust bearings that serve so well in the salt environment.

CQWW SSB Planning Update

Planning for CQWW SSB is now in full swing. And the political realities of my job loom large for this contest. Some potential (non-CCC) team members have flatly declared that they will not come to the contest if thus and such persons will be on the team. People approach contests with differing objectives in mind, and it falls to me to try to reconcile all of this.

As always, though, CCC members get priority in every way.

At present our October team includes WX4W, W3ACO, W7MAH (our chef), W4IPC, K0PZH, and VE4GV. K0PZH (Paige) is a newly licensed young YL who has already built a tremendous contest resume. DL8OBQ and N4RV are considering the trip.

Can you join us for the fun in October? We have the Moran pool house for the contest week, and Dorothy will be on site.

We will probably also make use of additional shift operators via the remote.

Geoff's 10-Year Showstoppers Lookback

As mentioned above we discussed strategic priorities at the Hamvention for our club in our next decade. K8PGJ very cleverly suggested that, since I am on site more than any others, I do a mental 10 year lookback at what has gone wrong that has threatened our contestability in the past. This is a standard management planning technique, and we thank Pete for this guidance

We can do that lookback right here, right now. Here are the problems that have popped up over the past 10 years. (This is Action Item 3 from the Hamvention notes.)

1. Power outages. By a long shot, my biggest stressor is my nightmare that a team could arrive, ready to contest, having spent a collective fortune to get to the island and stay for a week, only to have no electricity during a large part of the contest. This has happened. During WPX SSB in 2022 we ran on the generator for about five hours during the best part of the contest on Saturday morning. Running at low power cost us about 700 QSOs. Several outages over the past 10 years have also bothered us badly on weekdays before the contests. Every time the power drops we lose preparation and practice time, have to reset everything, and generally suffer.
2. Power outages.
3. Power outages.
4. Power outages. (You get the point.)
5. Bad weather. (Almost the same as above.) Storms often knock out AC power and/or Internet access. We can do something about the former but nothing about the latter.

6. Short notice operator cancellations. These are almost always beyond the control of the operators, but a missing person on a contest team negatively impacts the shift schedule and everyone's overall costs for the trip. One time we had an operator cancel (beyond his control) on Friday morning of the contest as I was preparing to go to the airport to collect him.
7. Failures of critical systems. A few years ago the Ridge feedline system failed three days before a contest. I fixed it, but it took two full days. That was a lot of stress and could have badly affected our contest. But I had the needed spare parts on hand. Other critical systems are the W9NJY switch (failed only once because of lightning), all of the antenna switching system, and amplifiers. We have enough spare parts on hand or manual workarounds in mind such that these have not been showstoppers in the past. One exception is that we could use two more W8WTS custom hardline splice kits so I can make repairs if the construction breaks that line. Those kits saved the day twice in the past. The other exception is that we need 7/8 inch hardline on site in spares in case of vandalization or theft of a segment of the Ridge hardline.
8. Hotel construction. We had major, major losses of capability when the bulldozers ripped out our Beverages and feedlines and destroyed our climbing route to the Ridge. But we overcame that through ingenuity and very hard work over two years.

Clearly, then, there is not much that has been able to hurt us over the period of this 10 year lookback except loss of commercial power. Thanks again to Pete for this advice, and see the following article!

Initiation of the PJ2T Backup Power Project

Those in attendance at the Annual Meeting in Dayton determined that improvement of the backup AC power situation at Signal Point should be a top club priority for the coming couple of years. (This is Action Item 2 from the Hamvention notes.) Power outages are the most ubiquitous threat to successful contest outcomes at PJ2T. It is finally time to turn to this project given that we are now in such good shape in antennas and towers, transceivers, amplifiers, computers, and spare parts except for 3CX1200A7 tubes. Now is the time.

The present generator has served well, but it's a nothing more than a cheap 5 KW gasoline camping generator, and hooking it up is tremendously awkward

with the Romex laid on the ground. It's time for an improvement.

Hence, by means of this newsletter article, we are asking for volunteers for a backup power committee. The committee's charge is to research, design, specify, and install a new AC backup system at the QTH.



Jay, AC7DC, has already volunteered and done some initial thinking about this.

Here are the needs.

- Enough capacity to carry five full KW stations, lights in the shack, and at least two air conditioners.
- The committee needs to determine what KW capacity generator is required.
- There is no transfer switch at present. A manual transfer switch will be fine.
- The AC fuse and switch system presently in the house will be retained because it is fabulously reliable.
- It is not necessary that the generator start automatically when power drops, nor that the transfer switch act automatically.
- It is not our objective that this system will start and support the remote station when the house is unattended.
- Determine whether an outside enclosure needs to be built for the new generator. If so, what and where? If so, design this and arrange for construction.
- Decide if the generator should be diesel, gasoline, or propane-powered.
- Minimize maintenance required. Sometimes nobody is at the QTH for six months at a stretch.
- Consider what is needed to minimize noise and fumes into the house.
- Consider how to protect the unit from salty air.
- Diesel, gasoline, and propane gas are readily available on the island.
- The cost of fuel to run the generator is not an important factor because it will run very

seldom, and only a few hours at a time. The longest outage I can remember on Curacao was a day and a half, and that was very unusual. Average outages are around four hours.

- Generate a detailed estimate of all costs of the project, including travel to do the install.

Please drop Geoff a message (goward@kent.edu) if you are willing to be part of this committee.

CQWW CW November - News

I put out a call for operators but thus far only N7IR and K8ND are firm for that team. Let me know if you can join us for Thanksgiving dinner. We have the Moran pool house confirmed.

WPX CW Report

WI9WI and Annette (KA9DOC) arrived on the island Sunday, May 21 for their traditional WPX CW effort. Except for an invasion of dogs (story follows) the contest week went well. Here's part of Jim's 3830 comments, and thanks to Jim for once again putting PJ2T on the air in a very big way in this major contest.

Call: PJ2T
Operator(s): WI9WI
Station: PJ2T

Class: SOAB HP
Class Overlay: Unassisted Classic QTH: Signal Point
Curacao
Operating Time (hrs): 24

Total: 2316, Prefixes = 864, Total Score = 7,229,952

This was my usual minimalist effort. One radio, one amplifier, one computer, no spots or assistance. I've decided that my days of doing the full 36 hours in this one are over, so I put my efforts into the 24 hour Classic category.

Conditions were probably the best in years at least on Day 1. I was working Europeans on 10 meters 4 hours after their sunset on Saturday afternoon.

Not so great here on Sunday. Ten never really opened. I made a handful of contacts mostly with South America before I gave up and went back to 15 which was the daytime money band here. Activity seemed up with the better conditions and more room on the bands. There were endless QSOs to be had. I put in about another 3 hours after the 24 hrs for Classic. My

final SOAB score was 2546 QSOs, 894 mults for 8083548 in 27 hours.

Thanks as always to Geoff W0CG/PJ2DX, Dorothy and the CCC for the use of their fine house and station.

Thanks to CQ magazine and all the participants.

73 Jim WI9WI

QSL Manager W3HNK

As you know, W3HNK has been handling QSLs for us and many others for many, many years. Unfortunately, he appears to have reached a place where his health no longer permits him to do this. K8ND knows Joe well and is presently leading an effort to find a new card manager and to try to retrieve our large stock of PJ2T print stock cards that are at his home. We'll keep you posted. Meanwhile, the PJ2T QRZ.com info has been changed to reflect that we are presently without a card manager.

K8ND on Site at Signal Point

As you read in his report, K8ND arrived at Signal Point on the afternoon of May 30 only a few hours after WI9WI departed. Jeff will be there until July 11. With this and his other trips booked to the QTH between now and next February, he will be on site 156 days. Jeff, CCC's president, is utilizing the club policy that members can stay at the QTH for non-major contest weeks at a 75% discount from the member rate. Members also contribute \$100 to the Station Support fund per week and reimburse the metered cost of utilities.

This policy was put in place many years ago as a requisite of CCC membership to allow occasional stays at the station. Very few have taken advantage of this until now. Long stays at the station potentially could block members from running contests for which they had not yet finalized dates at the time of the long term booking, and it was never intended that the QTH would serve someone as a second residence. We'll discuss going forward how to handle such instances, and whether a change to club policy or rates might be needed.

Progress on Remote Station Filters

I will return to Ohio in mid-August where I have access to tools and my ever-improving workshop. If very busy N7IR is able to find time to construct his filters and cabling and ship them east, then I'll build

the final modules and take them to the island in October. These are not essential critical assets, so if this slips into 2024 it will be OK.

This subsystem is important to protect our equipment in scenarios when there is a local operator or contest team and the remote station is being used concurrently.

The bandpass filters between the remote K3 and the KPA-1500 amplifier will default to “through” so that if the filter system fails the remote station will still work. Remote operators will have to click a new on-screen button called “Invoke Filters” in order to place the automatically selected filter in line for the band the remote is using.

Signal Point Is Going to the Dogs

WI9WI and KA9DOC had unexpected visitors during their WPX CW trip in May, and they weren't curious ham tourists for a change. Dogs! Seven strays showed up near at the beginning of their visit. Annette said they looked reasonably healthy and well-fed, but did not have collars or any evidence of vaccinations. The photo shows them captured by one of the motion sensor security cameras on the East Porch.



The invasion of stray dogs

Annette and Jim did not provide them with food or water, but they seemed to think that they had found home and moved in anyway. We'll see if K8ND is able to run them off, because these guys are dangerous without vaccinations, obviously have a food source somewhere else, and scare our Signal Point kitty friends.

Thoughts on Long Term PJ2T Finance

When the enhanced remote station first began operations, our thought was that its finances would be

completely segregated from the two other aspects of the club: the real estate fund and the station support fund.

As time has passed, the idea has arisen that it might make sense to direct all remote station utility usage fees to support of the Aqualectra electric bill for all aspects of the house's operations.



One reason for this is that it is already clear that few of our members who made the \$200 annual contribution for the remote will use the remote station heavily. In fact, only two members do so now. In their cases, the \$200 contribution to the electricity costs will be entirely consumed in a year. For others, their light usage is resulting in some surplus funds.

The second reason to divert some remoting money to the electric bill is that the remote station could not exist without the house, which provides a secure location, full Internet support, and power. Thus, the remote station ought to “give back” something to the house. This would help reduce the annual operating loss in the house fund. As time goes by and fewer people visit Signal Point for contests revenue drops, but much of the electricity costs remain.

In this first half of CY 2023 we have deposited all of the remoting fees into the house account with an eye toward helping to defer the utility bill, which runs around \$500/month. This has been a huge help. All of this is under discussion among the officers and directors, and your inputs are welcomed.

Additionally, the users of the remote station voted not to build an excess reserve of dollars against future repairs and replacements on the remote station, but instead to pass the hat when those problems arise. Thus the excess remoting funds are unobligated.

PJ2ND Summer Trip #1 by PJ2ND / K8ND

When I was employed, I wedged in two trips to Curacao each year: January for CQWW 160 CW Contest, and in the summer around the July 4 holiday. With retirement, (once I recovered from my ‘medical adventure’) I became freer to select my travel plans and spend more time on Curacao. This is my 42nd trip to Signal Point since 2002!

For my second trip of the year, I planned on June, departing before the Kalter Youth group's usual arrival in early July. Uli DL8OBQ has hosted that group four or five times since 2018. However, as I was coordinating my departure time with Uli and Geoff, we learned that the Kalter visit for 2023 has been cancelled, reportedly due to problems with getting passports processed in time. So, Uli cancelled his plans for July. (That has now changed. –Ed.)

So I was able to extend my planned stay to last 43 days, from May 30 through July 11. While this period includes the IARU World Championships, my trip was not specifically for that contest. There has been some interest in running a 'hybrid' operation as PJ2HQ, with me at the station and one or more operators participating on the PJ2T remote. More on that by email.

As I write this, I have been at Signal Point for 10 days, and will be here about another month. My intent for this trip is to relax and do some more physical rehab as I am still rebuilding strength and stamina. I have with me my cameras and two drones.

On arrival, I noticed that an area of the 'Flats' on the site of the former Sunset Waters had been freshly bulldozed, and a large number of little yellow flags distributed throughout. After settling in a bit, I deployed a drone to try to identify what the flags were marking however on reviewing the video the flags were not obvious from the air. So I went out to the area with one of my GPS devices, and recorded the position of each of the flags. It appears that they mark the sites of four future buildings. See the separate article with a map of the site.

Another change from my previous 41 visits to the station is the presence of a pack of seven feral dogs roaming the neighborhood. When I arrived, they were all 'lounging' around on the West patio of the house. I loudly shooed them away. Someone (unknown) in the neighborhood is putting out food and water for them, with the area along the road just before reaching the Signal Point house their designated 'feeding area'. I continue to shoo them away, but they are established here.



On the radio, I'm doing something different than I have in the past. I normally like to run pileups on CW. This time, for now, I'm doing Search & Pounce for new DXCC band/mode QSOs. Since I've never really paid attention to DXCC, there were many available band/mode countries that were new to me. I've filled in at least 250 slots so far, especially on SSB (where I've spent little time in the past). I've just passed 50,000 QSOs with the PJ2ND callsign. I had previously made about 64,000 QSOs using the PJ2/K8ND callsign.

The first few days were much hotter than normal – mid-90s. Since then, the wind has picked up and the temperature dropped. Unfortunately, the wind has been such that it is outside the operating window to safely fly the drones, so they stay hangered for now.

The other notable feature of this stay was the 7+ hour power failure on Thursday June 7. Lasting from 1:25 PM to 8:35 PM, was the longest I've experienced here. The cause was reported by Aquallectra as "... malfunction in one of the main cables that connects the substation at Pereira", and the outage cascaded to black out the entire island, some areas for 12 hours! Aquallectra kept people advised of the status on their Facebook page. I spent most of the outage outside studying for my Part 107 FAA drone license, and then (after sundown) watching a couple of movies on my Kindle Fire. I survived with no ill effects. I have planned and purchased airline tickets for two more trips this year: August/September (35 days) and November/December (36 days). Then for 2024 CQWW 160 CW, January/February (42 days).

End of Month Treasury Balance

Per CCC treasurer W8WTS the balance in the Station Support fund on June 12 was \$6207.85. That will

nearly double as soon as Year 24 dues collection is complete.

Hotel Construction Progress, by Jeff PJ2ND K8ND

After a long period of nothing obvious happening other than moving some dirt around, some progress seems to have been made in the development of a new resort on the grounds of the former Sunset Waters Beach Resort (nee Coral Cliffs Hotel)! This area neighbors the Signal Point PJ2T station site.

The area to the West has been re-bulldozed, and small yellow flags have been placed, apparently marking the site of four large buildings to be built. On June 4, I marked each flag with my GPS, and plotted them on the map below. Those familiar with the old hotel will recognize the roundabout that was near the main building.

The nearest of these buildings will be 0.3 miles from PJ2T.



Historic Photo Strays



Pouring the base for the US/JA tower, June, 2001



W0CG building the Europe tower, July, 2001



N8NR, N8BJQ, and W9EFL (SK) preparing a section

of the Europe tower for the lift. Note that there is no perimeter wall at this time. July 2001.



W0CG's XYL Cindy on break during tower construction, July 2001. She was a proficient rope-handler, and station-building was a family project.



Bill, W9VA at Station 1 with the TS-930 he donated, 2001; photo by W9EFL (SK)

