



# Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium  
Editor: W0CG

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## Be Alert About Your Passport

To travel to Curacao your passport must be valid for six or more months after the date you plan to depart Curacao.



Passports are in the news because processing times have become very long owing to lots of people traveling and a system that shrunk in capacity during COVID-19.

Please if you're planning a contest trip to the island check carefully that your expiration date meets the requirement.

## Moving Toward PJ2T II

I have been blessed with superb health which is a product of luck, good DNA (also luck), reasonably disciplined habits (I have never smoked or drunk), and very aggressive efforts to exercise hard and regularly.

But in spite of that the time comes when all of us begin declining. I'm on the edge of that process now, so it becomes important that we collectively begin transitioning to a Second Edition CCC (PJ2T II) in which the club can stand on its own without as much of my involvement.

This will require that some folks step up. I have been gradually transferring responsibility to others, as we begin the transition to a true collective effort to operate PJ2T and the CCC club. I will continue to handle all the responsibilities of the house and real estate, but the radio stations, towers, antennas, computers and IP infrastructure, and feedlines need to be eventually fully understood and taken over by the club.

This translates to several tangible goals that we need to attain fairly quickly.

- Train about four more people who can open the QTH from mothballs, set up the stations, host a contest, tear down the stations, and then re-mothball. (K5PI will be the next member to be trained.) After that, hopefully K5LD, K4JC, W8WTS, K8PGJ? Others?
- Attain the goal of a quality generator and transfer switch designed, acquired, and installed by the backup power committee with very minimal involvement from Geoff.
- Find someone to take over the web site and bring it up to date with better organization and improved usability.
- Document everything fully so that block diagrams, circuit diagrams, checklists, and inventory are up to date and accurate in order to support maintenance and repairs without Geoff's heavy involvement.
- Train at least two club climbers to do all of the required tower work including scraping, priming, and painting the towers as needed.
- Handle the transition to a new QSL Manager without my involvement.



W0CG in the tower painting gear

There are several in the club who have indicated a willingness to take on these expanded roles and responsibilities, and we will work with them as we transition over the next couple of years. Are you a volunteer for this?!

### **Save the Date: November 23-24, 2024**

The November 2024 running of CQWW CW will mark 25 exactly years of contesting from Signal Point as PJ2T. We will soon begin planning a publicity splash for this quarter century milestone, and to augment our CCC team we will invite some celebrity ops who have been key to the long history of Signal Point. I also hope to have visitors from VERONA and Bureau Telecommunicatie on site during that contest.

What are your ideas for this event that will celebrate what we have done and will heighten our visibility and respect within the contesting community?

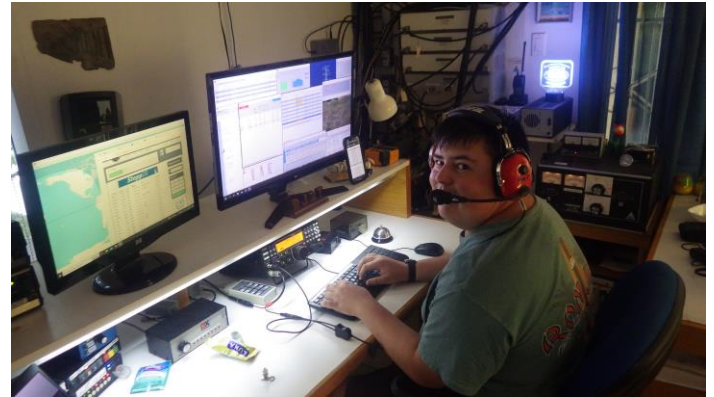
### **CQWW SSB Planning Is Complete**

The October team is fully staffed and all beds at the QTH and rental house are taken. As always, any additional CCC members are welcome to join this team, sleeping off site, and the team will cover the fair proportion of those lodging costs.

Four CCC members are on the team. Rich, W3ACO, will again be on hand together with his daughter Melissa (W7MAH), and like last year she will be our team chef as well as my help with projects on the Ridge. She is extremely physically fit, and I will welcome her help. Rich travels from Iowa and Melissa from Oregon. Rob, VE4GV is returning to Signal Point, thus Winnipeg's top endodontic surgeon will be able, if the need arises, to do a field root canal using hand tools from the PJ2T kit. Amstel will serve as the anesthetic.

Curtis, WX4W, and his XYL Cindy (N4LGL) from the Louisville area will be an expert addition to the team, and this will be Cindy's first visit to Signal Point. Also coming accompanied, W5GAI, Skip will be bringing Pam, representing Mississippi.

As usual, we were not able to recruit enough CCC members to staff the team, so we're fortunate to have three college-age top-notch operators also coming to CQWW SSB. Connor Black, W4IPC, was with us last year for this contest. He is a master contester, able to run very high rates while simultaneously maintaining full awareness of what is going on at the other stations in the room, and passing QSOs very productively. He was a WRTC 2022 Youth Team Leader but did not make it to Italy because his teammate had passport problems. Connor is studying engineering at Old Dominion. He's also a supremely nice person.



W4IPC running red hot rates on 10, CQWW SSB, PJ2T, 2022

Connor's friend Levi Stevens, KG5XR, is also an engineering student and also a top operator. While studying at Mississippi State, Levi moonlights as an amplifier technician at Ameritron and has offered to help us with the AL-1200s. He will be very busy in Curacao! Completing our team is K0PZH, Paige Harper, who is completing a Masters in social work at the University of Iowa and is considering continuing for a PhD. She is a budding contester with an already impressive resume of accomplishments on the air, and comes very highly recommended by W3ACO.

### **CQWW CW Planning Update**

I'm seeing some of the lowest afares to Curacao in a very long time. Two private rooms remain in the Moran pool house in case you decide to come to CQWW CW with a partner or XYL. The team for November is presently W8WTS, K8ND, W5MJ, NA2U, N7IR confirmed, with K9DR, and WI9WI possibles. This is a top-drawer contest team!

K5PI had confirmed, and will still be on site at Signal Point before and after the contest, but cancelled on August 9 to operate CQWW CW with PJ4K instead. He will depart Signal Point just prior to the contest and return after CQWW CW.

There will be a full Thanksgiving dinner. Two Canadian ops are waiting in the wings if there are spaces for them, but CCC members K9DR and WI9WI of course have priority. Please let me know right away if you decide to sign on for the fun.



## **PJ2ND / K8ND May-July Trip Report, Part 2**

Jeff Maass K8ND PJ2ND

In the June newsletter, I described my first two weeks at Signal Point during my May 30 – July 11 (43 day) stay. Here are some comments from the stay.

On Wednesday June 14, I presented a slideshow about Signal Point PJ2T at the monthly meeting of VERONA. It was received well, with some members expressing an interest in coming out to see the station in person.

The Stew Perry Topband DX Challenge is one of my favorite contests. Held four times a year, the June running is not so pleasant from Curacao, but I wanted to do what I could. The contest started slowly with really bad QRN, and 2.7 hours in the SWR went crazy. With one of my trusty flashlights, I went to inspect the 160-meter inv-L, and found the normally-vertical part of the wire laying (sic) on the ground. The insulator at the top of the WARC tower had come off the tower, and was suspended ~30 feet off the ground. The wire had not broken, but the lower portion was laying (sic) on the ground. The contest was over, with just 8 QSOs in the log.

On the Sunday following the Stew, five of the younger members of VERONA came by to tour the station. They were Michel PJ2NXX, Chelsea PJ2CC, Matt PJ2KK, Shurich PJ2SP, and Shanthony PJ2SG. They are mostly (all?) licensed to use VHP/UHF only at this time, but were fascinated by the scale of the PJ2T station.

In mid-June, the KPA-1500 amplifier began throwing faults when used on certain bands. First a couple bands, but soon almost all the bands were affected. When it faulted, it squealed locally, although the remote operator had no audio alert, just the big red fault field and failure to operate. Much troubleshooting was done by the remote ops. See the story elsewhere in this newsletter.

On Tuesday June 20 I got a text from the guy who has been cutting my 2-acre lawn while I was away. He found a 'wet spot' ten feet from the house, with water "bubbling up"! He had asked my neighbor Juliette to have a look, and also called my brother-in-law Lee who checked to make sure that there was not a lake in my basement. I contacted my water company, who came out and turned off the water to the house at the meter, which is out by the road in my yard. As it happens, a few years ago I signed-up for a HomeServe policy that covers the water service pipes! Called them, and set up an appointment for the repair for two days after my arrival back in Ohio. [After I returned home, I received my water bill. Normally ~\$14/month, the bill was for \$984!] [Side note: as I write this, I still do not have water, Sunday July 16, five days after arriving home. I do not recommend HomeServe!]

I set up Station #2 for the contest. See the other article in this issue for a description the preparation and running of the IARU contest. After the contest, Uli used his height to get the KPA-1500 amp and K3 transceiver down from their remote station shelves, and to put up a replacement K3 and cable it for continued low-power remote use. He also climbed the WARC tower to do a temporary repair of the 160-meter inv-L to get it off the ground, and while up there removed the battery from the camera mounted there to recharge.



Uli on the WARC tower, a delight to Geoff's eyes.  
(Ed.)

I departed on July 11, and Uli was scheduled to leave a day later. We did some of the preparation for closing out the house but Uli did the final steps, moving the rest of the furniture into the house, rebuilding 'furniture mountain' in the East bedroom, etc. before he departed on the evening of July 12.

The house will remain empty until I arrive August 22.

Uli DL8OBQ was flying in from Germany on July 6 for the IARU contest. He brought with him an apparently new-on-shelf 3CX1200A7 tube, which we obtained for US \$400!



Uli with the new tube (Ed.)



Geoff will test this tube in October and report back.  
(Ed.)

### **PJ2HQ 2023 in IARU World Championships** Jeff Maass K8ND PJ2ND

Geoff reported in the July issue of this newsletter the results of our operation as PJ2HQ. Here is some of the 'backstory' on how it became a 2-man operation. We planned a 'hybrid' operation' as PJ2HQ in the IARU contest, with Uli DL8OBQ and I at the PJ2T station, and some number of remote operators using the PJ2T remote station. In the weeks before the contest, N8NR and N7WA had expressed interest in participating remotely.

In the week before the contest, the remote station KPA-1500 began having faults when used on any contest band other than 20- and 15-meters (see the separate article describing the remote station failures). So a schedule was assembled to allow the remote operators to use 20 and 15 while allowing the local operators some daytime offtimes.

We spent some time getting everyone networked using the Hamachi VPN client, and all seemed in readiness the Friday night before the beginning of the contest. However the remote operators had observed that they were not hearing many signals on the remote. This was confirmed by several remote ops, and a phone call allowed Dave N7NR to hear that the local K3 was hearing much better than the remote K3. Two hours before the contest started at 8 AM on Saturday, it was decided to scrap the remote operation.

So, Uli operated exclusively SSB, and K8ND operated CW. We each took a bit of offtime during the 24 hours of the contest.



Uli Thielke, DL8OBQ (Ed.)

As reported, Uli made 1652 QSOs on SSB, and Jeff made 2070 QSOs on CW, with a final claimed score of 4,288,065.

Note that 'Headquarters' stations are not really competing. Some of the other HQ stations consisted of as many as 12 stations in their countries, each doing a specific band/mode. Our 2-man, one site operation cannot compete with them!

### **Power Fails at Signal Point PJ2T,** Jeff Maass K8ND PJ2ND

Failures in the power grid on Curacao have become a regular event.

During my 43-day stay, there were two 7-hour power failures affecting the entire island! The first, on Wednesday June 7 was caused by a cable malfunction that cascaded to affect the entire system, for 7 hours at Signal Point, but for 12 hours in some parts of the island. The second, on Thursday June 15 was caused by road construction severing a main cable, resulting in a failure that cascaded island-wide. The afternoon of the day I departed, Tuesday July 11, Uli DL8OBQ reported a 2-hour outage (cause unknown), and on Saturday July 15, another 2 hour outage affecting (at least) the West end of the island.

The company that provides power and water throughout the island, Aqualectra, is being pressured by the Curacao government to do better. The Director of Aqualectra resigned in mid-June.

Recent outages provide further impetus for the completion of the in-progress planning for a new generator/transfer switch system for Signal Point.

### **PJ2T Remote Station Equipment Woes** Jeff Maass K8ND PJ2ND

The Elecraft KPA-1500 amplifier used as a part of the PJ2T remote station (courtesy of Dave N7NR) started having faults a couple of weeks before I returned to the USA. The amp experiences high SWR and displays a 'HIGH DISS' message and faults (with a loud squeal locally) when used (only) on 160, 80, 40, 12 and 10 meters. This disables the amplifier. It was also noted that on 40 meters the amp draws current but produces no RF. After much experimentation and troubleshooting, owner N7NR submitted a report to Elecraft, and they issued a 'Return Service Authorization' (RSA) number. We began to plan the return of the amp to Elecraft for repair.

After Uli DL8OBQ arrived, it became possible to fetch the amplifier off the top shelf and bring it down.



Geoff reminded us that taking the amp out of the country might result in large duty when it is brought back to the island, and wanted to arrange with Curacao Customs ("Douane") to register the amp on the island so it would not be liable for duty when returned.

I first scoured the Curacao Customs web site (translated to English) for a form to use in registering the removal, but found nothing. I had heard that Sherman Elizabeth PJ2MAN works for Curacao Customs, and I reached out to him to see if he could provide information on the procedure required. Sherman said that what I needed was a 'Temporary Export Document', and gave me the name of "Jonathan", a fellow employee at Customs to provide more information.

I spoke with Jonathan on the phone, and he directed that I needed to provide a document containing

manufacturer, model, serial number, and current value for the item. I would then present the document to a Customs agent at the airport, who would confirm that the serial number on the equipment I was removing matched the paperwork. I specifically asked if there was a special form required, and he assured me that I could type up the document myself. I asked twice.

So, I created the document, and planned to pack the KPA-1500 in one of my hard-sided suitcases for the trip home.

Meanwhile, the remote station K3 receiver was believed dead, so it was brought down, too. Using an Elecraft XG3 signal generator device, I compared the sensitivity of one of the known-good K3 receivers to the remote K3. The signal generator provided three signal levels at 14019.66 kHz, and the S-meter readings for each noted are shown below.

<b>SIGNAL LEVEL</b>	<b>KNOWN GOOD K3 s/n 157 S-METER</b>	<b>REMOTE K3 s/n 8079 S-METER</b>
-33 dBm	S9 + 25	S4
-73 dBm	S6	Nothing
-107 dBm	S0 – can hear signal	Nothing

So, I filled out another ‘Temporary Export Document’ for the K3, and planned to pack it in another of my hard-sided suitcases. To make room, I had to leave some of my items behind at Signal Point, but since I am scheduled to be the next resident (at end of August), that did not cause a problem.

I carefully packed the amp and radio in my two suitcases, to protect them during transport and to make accessing the serial number reasonably easy for the Customs person without having to repack extensively at the airport. In doing this, I used many of the Signal Point towels (which I will return when I go back in August).

I went to the airport three hours before my flight, and asked one of the American Airlines folks to call Customs for me. They pointed to a place in the Departures gallery where two guys in Customs uniforms stood (and apparently normally stay during the day). I explained my need for someone to check the documents/equipment, and they called someone and directed me to go to check in with AA and Customs would meet me there. I did so, and the American Airlines person behind the desk said Customs had been called and would be down momentarily. I stood off to the side, and as promised a Customs agent arrived.

The gentleman was Mr. Romulo Koster, badge # 334 (IIRC). I explained my need, and showed him my prepared documents. He scowled a bit, shook his head, and observed that I did not have correct export documents! I explained that I had gotten the advice from another Customs agent ("Jonathan"), and that I had been referred to him by Sherman Elizabeth. He asked what the equipment was, and I explained it was for Amateur Radio.

He initially said there was nothing he could do, and I would have to just bring back and hope for the best (i.e. sneak it in). I explained that I did not like the idea of 'cheating', and asked if there was anything else that I could do.

He called his supervisor and had an extended conversation in Papiamentu (or Dutch, I wasn't paying a lot of attention: I did hear him mention 'Amateur Radio'). At the end of that call, he smiled and said he could help me out this time by providing official stamp and signature on my incorrect documents. He then did so, made copies, and then re-entered all the information and official blue stamp on the copies he gave me. Scans of these are attached. (BTW, he did NOT require me to open the luggage to check the serial numbers!)

He emphasized that I should not lose the official copies, and I assured him that I would not!

I asked whether the correct form was on the Customs website, and whether we could fill it out. He explained that the correct paperwork would be that provided by an 'Export Broker'. In future, I suggest that we establish a relationship with such an 'Export Broker' and make use of them.

Mr. Koster was friendly, helpful, and efficient, all those things you wish would be true of all government employees! We shook hands, and I checked-in my luggage with American Airlines.

The amp and radio made the trip without damage in my hard-sided Samsonite luggage, and have been subsequently shipped to Elecraft and N7IR (respectively) for repairs.

So, that is my tale of 'woe and intrigue' in returning the Elecraft equipment to the USA for repairs without having possible liability for paying duty on two expensive items!

## **K9QVB, John Meyer, SK July 25 2023**

I'm sorry to report the loss of John Meyer, K9QVB, a fine contest operator and extremely interesting personality. John operated with us at PJ2T for ARRL DX CW in 2013. His presence was a great deal of fun. He looked and sounded like the classic Chicago tough guy gangster. John had the look, the accent, and the apparent attitude. He seemed scary. But he was not scary, and had a heart of gold.

In chatting, I learned that John had spent many years as a union leader and organizer at the "phone" company. The way he carried himself clearly would have helped him in that role.



John Meyer, K9QVB (SK), February, 2013

Every time I worked John after his visit he took a moment to say "Hi." Also, over a long period of years, now and then he would drop a check for \$100 into my mailbox as an unsolicited donation to help keep PJ2T on the air.

### **Monthly Update: Backup Power Project**

W8WTS, AC7DC and W5XU have responded to my request for volunteers for the backup power project. We have met several times on Zoom, hashing out the outlines of this project.

So far the committee has decided to go with a diesel generator. Getting propane on the island makes us dependent on the vagaries of Curoil's deliveries, whereas we are in control with diesel. Also, W5XU has assured us that diesel has adequate shelf life (up to a year) with stabilizers added. And W8WTS makes the point that the MTBF of diesel engines approaches infinity. The committee has also decided that we will

not run the generator in autostart or autoswitch modes. We will only bring up the generator when there are people at the QTH, and we will do so manually. The remote station is not important enough to need power outage support. The exception may be a fully unattended remote contest weekend. We also determined that there is no need to replace the fuse-based system, which is simple and reliable.

The unit will be located directly behind the house under the glass block windows of the East Bathroom on a concrete pad. A sound-control enclosure may be needed. We have also decided to acquire a generator for which parts and service are available on the island. There is, for example, a big Caterpillar dealer on Curacao. We have also decided to avoid Generac, given a history of parts and reliability problems with this mainly Chinese equipment.

The house is supplied with three phase 50 Hz power, so some design will be needed to be able to support three single phase loads in the house at 127 VAC and 228 VAC. We await that design from the committee.

There is tremendous expertise on this committee, and we hope to move this project along rapidly.

### **QSL Manager W3HNK**

As you know, W3HNK has been handling QSLs for us and others for many, many years. Unfortunately, he appears to have reached a place where his health no longer permits him to do this. K8ND is presently leading an effort to recruit a new manager. Jeff is also actively working to try to recover our blank card stock from W3HNK's home, but this is proving to be very frustrating. The W3 Bureau manager W3KX has been working very patiently with us, and has shipped a big package of unanswered cards to K8ND in the interim.

### **Progress on Remote Station Filters**

I will return to Ohio on August 16 where I have access to tools and my ever-improving workshop. N7IR will ship the components to me there, and I will build the final units to be mounted on the wall with the remote station. This filter system will go a long way toward preventing another blowout of the K3 front end, as happened at the QTH in July.

### **End of Month Treasury Balance**

Per CCC treasurer W8WTS the balance in the Station Support fund on July 31 was \$11393.08.

## Remote Station Status Check

The KPA-1500 amp was repaired by Elecraft technician Rene Morris, K6XW, on July 27. His repair report indicated that they had been able to duplicate the problem we saw on the island. The fix was to remove a shorted LED on the low pass filter circuit board. As a precaution, he also removed the other status LEDs on that board, which are not visible to the operators anyway. He applied an upgrade mod to the input frequency counter, did a one hour full power burn in test, set the PA bias, and ran several other status checks, all with good results.

Elecraft has shipped the amp to K8ND. It arrived in Powell, Ohio at Jeff's place on August 7. Jeff will take it back to the island on August 22, a really quick turnaround given that he just departed Curacao on July 11. Assuming that N7IR is able to bring the K3 back to life, he will ship it to me in Ohio and I'll return it to the island on October 15. I will reinstall both the amp and the transceiver in the first couple of days after I arrive.

The amp repair was at no charge because it was within the one year warranty, but we incurred large shipping costs back and forth from K8ND to California. The remote operators passed the hat to reimburse the PJ2T Station Support treasury for that cost, and at the time of this writing adequate money has been collected. Thanks to WM5H, WI9WI, KB7Q, N7NR, K8ND, NA2U, W0CG, and N7NR for contributions. We agreed when we began remoting that we would not build a reserve for maintenance, instead preferring to handle those costs as they arose.

We owe a very large thank you to K8ND for all of his work in getting the export paperwork executed, packing and hauling the amp to Ohio in his luggage, and then re-packing it in his own KPA-1500 box to go to California. Now he's going to be doing the airline bag-drag to Curacao.

The remote station continues to be available at 100 watts output, and I for one have had no problem generating pileups on CW and SSB with low power. This PJ2T remote capability is fantastic for a condo-dweller like me.

## Documentation Is Being Developed

One key to moving toward PJ2T II with less Geoff is to generate good documentation. I have started on that. It took a full day, but I pulled together scraps of pencil drawings and notes to myself and generated an

organized, easy-to-read block diagram of the remote station.

If you're curious you can have a look at <http://www.pj2t.org/ccc/remote.station.master.block.diagram.3.aug.2023.with.modules.pdf> . If you have a color printer, it's easier to comprehend on paper. This diagram distills a quite complex remote station design into a simple and easy to understand modular diagram.

Same story for the PJ2T IP Architecture diagram that I created a couple of days ago. This pulls together a ton of information that was previously out of date and scattered. Because this document contains sensitive passwords, we're not broadly sharing it. We'll have a sanitized version available soon.



I don't have Visio or other sophisticated schematic tools, so I've taken the West Virginia approach and rendered these diagrams in PowerPoint. Crude, but it worked out fine.

## 25 Year Old CCC History: VP5FXB

I organized a Field Day style operation for ARRL DX CW in February, 1998, from Jody's rental station in VP5. This was one of several early CCC contest efforts before I bought the Curacao QTH.



Kneeling: Doug (K4LT), Geoff (W0CG)  
Standing L-R: Keith (WA9S SK), Dan (then K8RF), Steve (N8LGP), Noel (W9EFL SK), Tom (W8TK), Jeff (KU8E), Goose (W8AV)



Doug (then WD8AUB) and Geoff assembling a tower we shipped south for this contest, February 1998



W0CG, age 49, running 15 meters



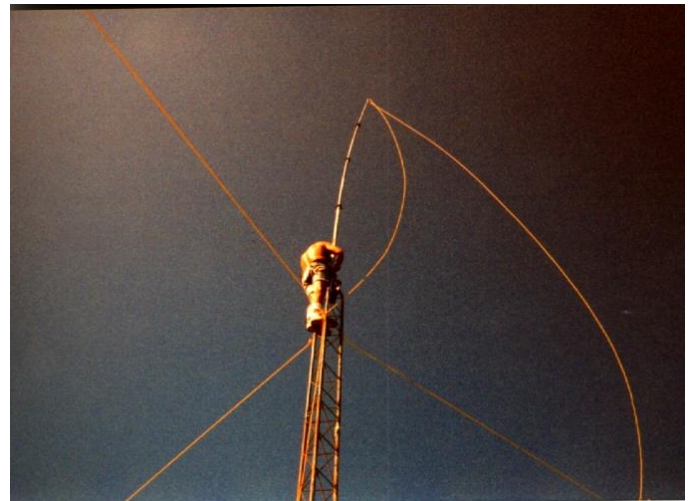
WA9S (SK) at the VP5FXB 10 meter station



W8TK running rate; I believe this is 20 meters.



W8AV on 15



K8RF, very very strong, installing an 80 meter vee on the tower we shipped and built on the island.

