Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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Call for Operators: ARRL DX CW February 15-16

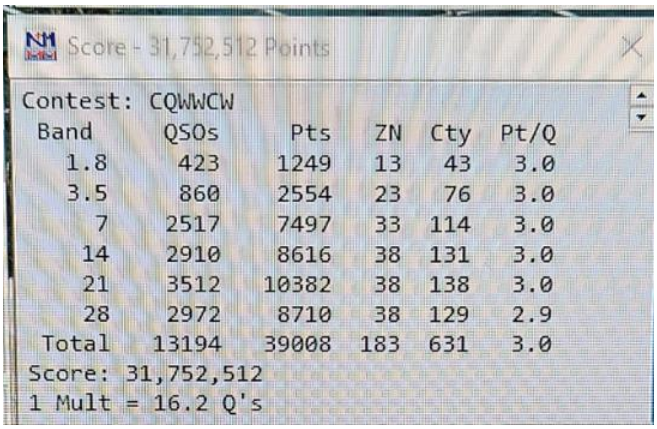
For many of us this is our favorite contest of the year. The stateside and Canadian signals are mostly strong and easy, and we have a natural geographic advantage that gives us a strong chance of a World #1 win.

We have the Moran pool house reserved, and we expect that Dorothy and I will be on site. She is improving daily.

We have a top team scheduled to come, including WI9WI, VE3CX, NF9V, W4SO, VA3CW, AD4ES, and N7WA. There is still one bed available. I will not recruit outside of CCC for another 10 days or so, hoping that one more of our members will sign up for this fun operation.

CQWW CW 25th Anniversary Event

Things were pretty rocky and did not work out as planned, but this event is in the books, and PJ2T's team posted an outstanding score (below), against all odds.



Score - 31,752,512 Points

Contest: CQWWCW

Band	QSOs	Pts	ZN	Cty	Pt/Q
1.8	423	1249	13	43	3.0
3.5	860	2554	23	76	3.0
7	2517	7497	33	114	3.0
14	2910	8616	38	131	3.0
21	3512	10382	38	138	3.0
28	2972	8710	38	129	2.9
Total	13194	39008	183	631	3.0

Score: 31,752,512
1 Mult = 16.2 Q's

Claimed Score: PJ2T CQWW CW 2024 M/M

The plan, brewing for two years, was to have a big bash commemorative event for our 25th anniversary of the first PJ2T QSO. I rented two houses such that we had spaces to sleep 13 operators, to include as many as 6 XYLs. I had hoped to recruit a VIP or two, such as W3LPL, from the early days of PJ9JT, and had also planned to make a high quality video to commemorate the anniversary.

We were able to recruit 12 operators, only one short of the goal. Try as I might, I could not find a 13th operator, but a few weeks ago it still looked like it would all work out beautifully, missing only that one operator.

But "thud," Murphy landed hard. Instead of the hoped for 13 operators, we ended up with 6.5 operators. I could not be there because of our family medical crisis in Idaho. M0ORD, who was going to shoot professional video material, cancelled at the last minute because of a family emergency (a murder) that required his wife to rush to South Africa. K4JC had a business emergency and had to cancel on short notice. VE9AA and his wife had already departed home for the trip, having driven three hours toward his flight, when he fell suddenly seriously ill, unable to travel. And we lost about half of W8WTS, who dutifully spent politically necessary time with his new girlfriend, and stayed off site at Coral Estate. K8ND had to cancel because of a difficult medical problem that prevented him from being able to walk reliably.

That left N7IR, W9NJY, NG7M, WA7LNW, AD8CW, and NA2U available on site for the full contest weekend and available to cover our five stations in a M/M operation. Impossible. W8WTS was available from about mid-day Saturday onward. For technical reasons the team did not want to take on additional shift operators via the remote station, so it was a long hard slog over the weekend.

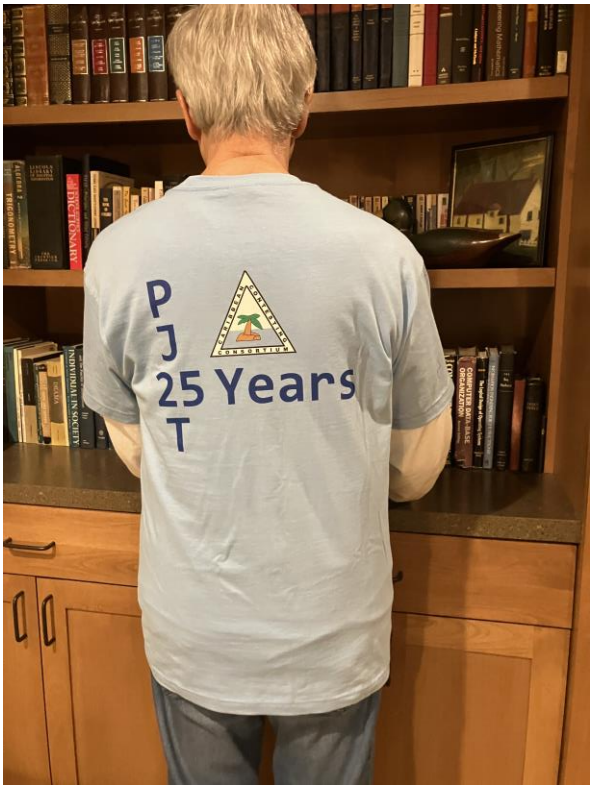
In spite of all this, they did the impossible! The operators put in killer long shift schedules, operated heroically, overcame horrible low band conditions, and

managed a 6th place claimed score in the M/M category. And it was close. The 3rd through 7th scores were all very close together. But because we were so short on people there were periods of time when bands that were open sat unstaffed, unavoidably. The score was an absolutely heroic outcome given the constraints.

Gary (N7IR), Andy (W9NJY), Fred (NA2U), Doug (AD8CW), Max (NG7M), Jack (WA7LNW). Jim (W8WTS) is missing from the photo

I thank Gary (N7IR) and Max (NG7M) for their patient work in setting up the stations for CW. The SSB team left the stations in good shape, but the CW part needed to be tweaked. Also, they worked together to figure out how to set up N1MM for networked logging, a task that I normally handle. W9NJY worked with Gary to continue work on sleuthing the source of our crossband 20 to 10 interference. W8WTS pulled out the old generator and got the shack partly online during a long power outage on Wednesday. (Jim also did a lot of work on the new generator system, see below.) WA7LNW consulted on all things, and he and Max were great at keeping in communication with me by phone and text and handling myriad tasks ranging from feeding the cat to setting up cooling fans and many other things. AD8CW kindly responded to a worried message from me soon after the contest had started to check the fuse box fan in the laundry room. It was a true team effort.

Thanks also to Fred (NA2U) for his work to get tee shirts for the team. This turned out to be a big challenge this year because his old shirt shop was unavailable. He had to root around in Phoenix, find another shop, and start over with a new supplier on the artwork and design for the shirts. And he did this interspersed with multiple fun international trips he and Liz made, including exotic places like TF and OX. Fred and Andy pitched in to pay for these shirts for the entire team, very expensive this time at $41 each. Thanks Fred and Andy! (The model in the tee shirt photos is an actor, not a real person.)



Special thanks also to Kevin (W1DED). You all know him from his famous YouTube production called "Worldwide Ham Radio." He and his XYL kindly scheduled a vacation trip to the island so as to coincide with the contest so that he could be at the station to

shoot some video material and try to at least partially save the day on the planned anniversary event video. Once his photos and videos arrive I'll try to cobble together an approximation of the video I had planned.

You can read the full comments about the contest on 3830 from the following link.

https://www.3830scores.com/showrumor.php?arg=RvYizV77nYL0nU

Max (NG7M) at Station 1. Photo by WA7LNW

So, in summary, this was a SUCCESS! The station got on the air, PJ2T was extremely visible over the weekend, and we had AD8CW on site 25 years after those weeks in Year 2000 when he and Noel and Jim and I first stood up the newly-purchased house. THANK YOU to all the team members who worked so hard.

And THANK YOU to the guys who had to cancel. Their situations were all unforeseeable and totally unavoidable, and we wish them well as they deal with the problems that prevented the trip. Every one of them very graciously reimbursed their expenses, even though they were not able to be there. That prevented me from having to eat thousands of dollars out of pocket for the rental houses, and also prevented the on-island team from the burden of considerably higher expenses because of the small team. That's the ham radio spirit at work!!

So What About the 25th Anniversary?

Here's what we can do. Next November (2025) will mark the *completion* of 25 years of PJ2T operation. That's cause for celebration, right? So we can try again at that time for a big team, a big video, a big anniversary, and big fun. And we already have a template for that 25th year event, thanks to NA2U's shirt acquisition.

New Shack Airco: Performance Report

As you undoubtedly read elsewhere, our shack air conditioner failed in October. Miraculously, I managed to get a new one installed with only about 24 hours left to go until CQWW SSB in October. The new unit is an inverter model, and thankfully it does not appear to inject any troublesome hash onto any of the bands. The photo shows the new compressor with the blue anti-salt paint the installer put on before mounting the unit and hooking it up. He was able to use the existing tubing runs from the shack to the back of the house, saving time and money.

The CQWW CW crew ran that new unit pretty much continuously for a week, and that gave us a chance to capture accurate measurements of power consumption. Incredibly, it appears at present that this new unit, 36,000 BTU, same as the old one, is using only about 40% as much electricity. This is a very significant cost savings for visiting teams, and will enable us to run that system more than previously without so much guilt about the cost.

The new 36,000 BTU compressor perched on the old one, drying the blue paint before installation.

Work Trips: March 2025

The following are possible opportunities for when we might be able to have a work trip to Curacao. None of these interfere with any major contests. Dorothy and I will be on site to support this. CCC would cover half of your airfare, with assistance from a presently anonymous donor. We will have the Kia Soul available on site. We have fallen seriously behind on maintenance because I lost half of the 24-25 contest season with our medical crisis.

March 4 – 11 or
March 11 - 18 or
March 18 - 25.

Here are projects that need to be addressed, followed by a priority level of Highest, High, or Moderate. Obviously we won't get these all done, but we need to make a sizeable dent in this list.

- Repaint Europe tower with finish epoxy, top to bottom. Highest
- Repair and repaint bad spots on US/JA tower. Highest
- Install stainless splints on bad braces in US/JA tower and on bad spots in legs. Highest
- Replace broken 20 meter driven element and feed straps in Ridge tribander. Highest
- Repair/rebuild Eur 3 element 80 meter wire beam. High
- Replace rotor in Europe tower. High
- Replace rotor in WARC tower. Moderate
- Diagnose why Commander HF-2500 amp is running dangerously hot. High
- Isolate problem and parts needs for repair of Titan III amp. Moderate
- Locate and repair bad radials on 160 Inv L and install correct Unum. Moderate
- Install new soffits on northwest part of house. Moderate
- Dig out most plants behind West Bedroom, Roundup, and seal with membrane. Moderate
- Assess T/R intermittent problem in Titan 425 amplifier. Moderate
- Sand and re-varnish mahogany front gate. High
- Varnish inside ceiling of Ocean Pavilion. Moderate

There is space at the QTH to bed down up to four people. We need preferably two tower climbers, one very good amplifier technician, and a general purpose handyman who can handle working in the heat. This is all work that I have been doing for many years, but which is now beginning to exceed my capability. A team approach is needed going forward to keep your station healthy and on the air.

We tried to set up work trips last year, but because of schedule problems, many of which were my fault, we did not get this done. March next year is a much better time and situation.

Please let me know if you can help, and we'll swap around some messages about scheduling and see what might be possible.

ARRL 10 Meter Contest Plan

This contest will run December 14-15, done entirely on the remote station. Nobody will be at the QTH because both K8ND and I had to cancel owing to medical emergencies. There's one cat left on site, but Bureau Communicatie declined to grant a cat license because her English language skills are sub-standard. The remote operator team will be N7NR, K8ND, NA2U, W0CG, and W7EY. There is a problem with the remote station's 10 meter bandpass filter, but we had the foresight to install a bypass capability on those filters, so we should be OK in this contest. In the 10 Meter Contest, Multi-op stations are required to operate mixed mode. Each operator will be free to choose a mode during his scheduled blocks on the air. We'll report the result in the January newsletter.

ARRL 160 CW Contest Results

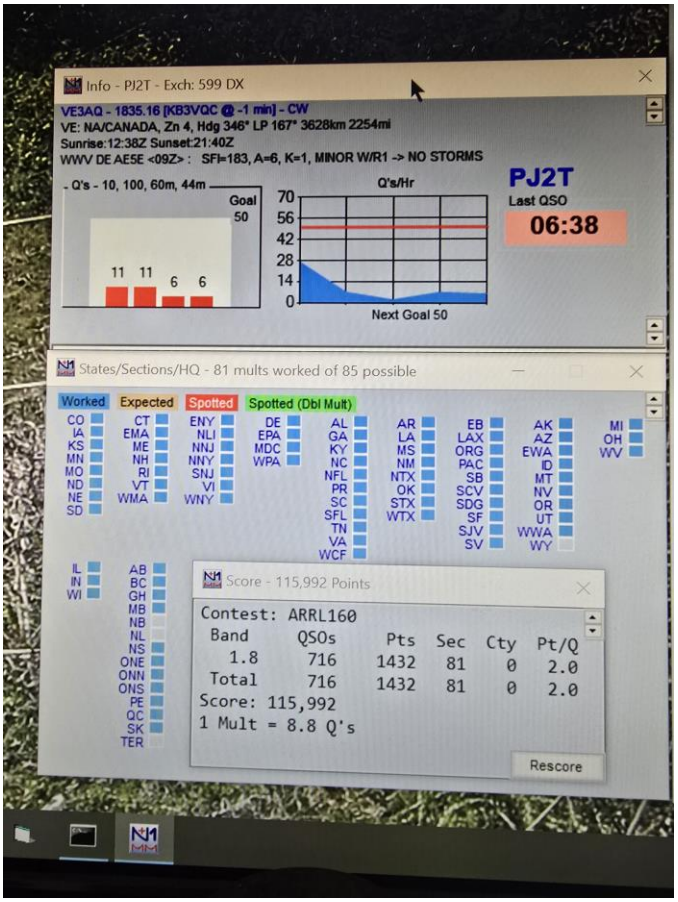
K8ND braved the possible bad TopBand conditions to run ARRL 160 CW as a single op, and the conditions turned out to be pretty decent. This was somewhat unexpected at this peak time in the sunspot cycle.

FINAL PJ2T ARRL 160 Contest
Single Op Assisted High Power
716 QSO / 81 Sections (of 85)
Score: 115,992
Ontime: 24 Hours 55 Minutes

As you will see in the next photo, he missed only Wyoming in the lower 48, and some of the normally missed VE mults such as Manitoba showed up in the log.

Jeff ran this contest entirely on the remote station, with the QTH locked up following the departure of the WW CW team. I thank that team for their diligence in closing down the QTH correctly so that unattended remote operation would work correctly. The remote station has proven its worth and durability. Since its inception, we have only had two problems – failure of the KPA-1500, which Elecraft fixed under warranty, and failure of the small DC power supply that runs the

RRC box. The antenna switching systems and DL8OBQ's software have been rock-solid. I'm still amazed that more of our members do not use this capability.



Screenshot from K8ND at the end of ARRL 160 CW. GREAT JOB Jeff!

WPX SSB 2025 Planning

Nobody signed up, so I cancelled the Moran pool house for WPX SSB. But Dorothy and I will be on site, so if anybody wants to set up a four-person team, there are sleeping spaces at Signal Point. Most probably, though, we will do another remote operation, like last year, with some participation from W0CG in the shack. <u>If we do a late March work team, possibly some or all of those ops would want to stay on site and run WPX SSB</u>.

Youth Team for CQWW SSB 2025

This is a go! WW SSB 2025 will be an almost exclusively young team. K8PGJ will join the team, KB7Q is planning to be on site as the logistics manager and tech consultant, and I may be there as videographer. Dorothy has said she will not attend because of the excessive heat in October.

CCC member Connor Black, W4IPC, is taking the lead in organizing this, with CCC member KG5XR also taking a major leadership role as food manager.

That team is already well-staffed, even 10 months out, including N4ML, DL3ON, K8LG, KN2P, W7EY and, of course, W4IPC, KG5XR, and K8PGJ. That's close to filling out all of the available bedrooms.

They have set a scoring goal of 35M, achieved by making some 15,625 contacts across 600 band countries and 170 band zones. They plan to set up a Station 6 that will be exclusively devoted to chasing multipliers.

As a youth team, they will need very substantial funding support. Violetta, KN2P, will lead this worldwide (yes, this is a pun) fundraising effort, as she did for Team Exhuberance at K3LR some years back. The team will fulfill their financial responsibility to the CCC coffers, so they will be doing their part in that way to help keep PJ2T on the air into the future, and they will receive lots of help for airfare costs. This is a high-energy, high-capability group who will bring great excitement to the operation.

The CQWW SSB 2024 contest is chronicled in brief in the YouTube video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXuaEFrysF8 .

CCC Financial Report

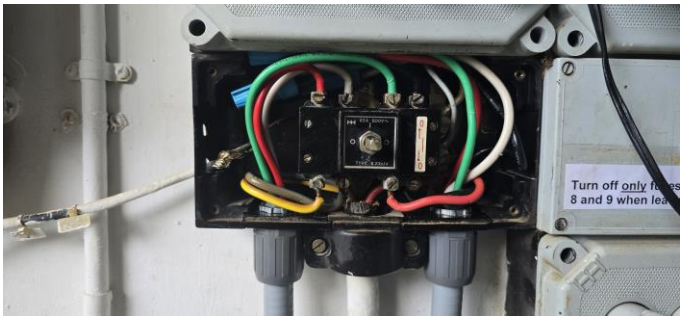
As of the end of October the treasury balance was $5922.58. Thanks W8WTS for the financial reports.

Generator Progress

My unexpected return to the States for the fall prevented completion of the generator project. But we made good progress in October by installing the transfer switch to the wall and digging the conduit route to connect the generator. Then in November W8WTS, with patient assistance from WA7LNW, connected the transfer switch to the building AC power system. This was not a trivial task because it is a three phase system and the available workspace in the prehistoric switch box is extremely limited.

Jim bought wire in Ohio and hauled down tools and other parts, and by Thursday successfully had the new transfer switch in the circuit. Connecting the generator will now be straightforward, requiring connection of four 100 foot runs of #6 AWG from the backyard generator location to the transfer switch.

Here's that completed wiring inside the very small master AC cutoff switch for the house. This is installed such that the pre-existing switch can de-energize the transfer switch so we can work on it as needed in the future.



W8WTS' skillful wiring in the building master switch box to connect the generator transfer switch.

The view following shows the connection of the Aqualectra three phase power into the transfer switch. The generator will be connected to the four open lugs in this photo. The other side (not visible in this photo) is where the "Out" power from the switch goes to the building load. Jim used flexible Aquatite conduit that was on site for RX antenna cabling, and conduit straps that I had left from other projects. He used 3/8 inch copper wire lugs that I bought on Amazon and took to the island in October. Jim took the conduit connectors to the island from Ohio. These far away DX projects have a lot of parts and strange requirements. So it takes time to get everything together. Being the DX is hard.

This Slovenian transfer switch is obviously an open frame type, so we will have to construct a safety cover for it. In the meantime, N7IR and NG7M crafted a temporary cover from cardboard and duct tape. Obviously, they saw the movie "Apollo 13."

Next steps? In January and February I will install the 100 feet of connection wiring in our 75mm conduit, glue and bury that conduit, and run the cabling into the building, connecting it to the transfer switch. That wiring will consist of 4x #6 AWG power lines, two Ethernet CAT6 cables, and four lengths of #14 stranded signal and control wiring. I'll then recharge the generator's 12 volt battery, check the oil, drain the sump, put in more fuel, and finally get the generator running. I will then be able to connect the generator to the transfer switch, and we will finally have reliable backup power for the station and house.

The generator will at this point still be in its temporary delivery location. I'll arrange for some workers to dig a hole for a 4x8 ft concrete pad for the generator, form rebar, paint it with epoxy paint, and then pour concrete. I'm anticipating the cost of this pad to be around $2,000. After a few weeks of curing time we will rent a forklift and operator through Tiger Equipment and have the generator set in place on that pad, bolted into the concrete. By then the genset will have two coats of epoxy paint. I'll install the connection wiring to the genset in permanent form, and install a Ring security camera looking at the generator. At this point this will be strictly a manual operation. Over time we'll explore what we can do to bring up remote monitoring and possibly remote control capabilities. These are "nice to have" but not imperative.

Utility system power entering the transfer switch.

ARRL DX SSB Contest Planning

K5LD is leading the planning for this fun contest, and we have him, me and Dorothy, AK4R, K4JC, K8PGJ, N0OJ, ND8L, KE3VV, and N1ZZ on the team. There's room for one more op, and we have the Moran pool house. Interested? Let me know, thanks.

Ex-Officio CCC Members Barb and Sam

This is my high school friend Barb Platz Earnest and her wondeful husband Sam Earnest. For many years Barb has been following PJ2T activities quietly from the background. She reads every word of every newsletter with attention and thoughtfulness, and often has good suggestions. She viewed the W1DED video interview with equal interest and excellent comments. Like me, she has taken a roundabout route to the present day, through raising kids, a divorce, multiple careers, lots of geographic moves, and has like me arrived at a very happy place in her relationship and in, well, her place in Fort Myers. She has been tightly woven into my own history because in high school she lived within a few houses of both my first and second wives, and she was good friends with both of them.

Prior to landing in their present Florida home they served in key management positions at The Bank of Nevada, retiring to sunny shores. Their welcome to Florida included the almost complete destruction of their home by Hurricane Ian while they were traveling in Italy in 2022. Imagine the stress of THAT situation. But they recovered bravely and gracefully.

It seems like only yesterday we were in high school band together in Poland, Ohio. Who would have thought we'd still be in contact? Since Barb and Sam have been cheerleaders for PJ2T for such a long time I bought them 25th anniversary shirts. Now they are really PJ2Ters.

Sam and Barb Earnest, Ft. Myers, Florida

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