



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

Volume 24, Number 8

August 15, 2024

Last Chance to Order



This is what the glasses will look like, except with the updated logo shown in the next column.

These commemorative glasses are \$7.70 each plus packaging and mailing. Please E-mail Dink, N7WA at mwdink@gmail.com with your order. We thank Dink for taking the trouble to design these and handle the ordering and shipping!!



Thanks W1FJ for Donation

I was surprised to find a check from Al in our July 15 mail pile in Idaho. He contributed \$250, earmarked specifically toward the generator project. You may recall that Al was one of the six operators on the PJ2CC CQWW CW contest in November of 1967 from the Coral Cliff Hotel. At that time he was W1FJJ. In November of 2017 he joined our team in Curacao to commemorate the 50th anniversary of that epic first contest effort from our neighborhood, and we were lucky to win the world again, just as they did in 1967.

He is extremely active from his home QTH in Eastern Mass, often running QRP at about 96 words/minute.

25th Anniversary: CQWW CW Contest Event



W1FJ contesting at Station 1 with PJ2BR looking on, November, 2017

Al has been very generous to PJ2T, donating a K3, some Bencher paddles and other goodies, and dropping cash into the hopper now and then after never having been asked. Thanks Al!!

CQWW SSB Team Is Full !

The SSB contest will be upon us quite soon. KM4CLT has withdrawn, so our team now consists of W0CG, W3ACO, W7MAH, Erica Haendel, VE4GV, PC8M, KI5SXY, K0PZH, W4IPC, KN2P, DL3ON, W7EY, and possibly KG5XR. Unfortunately, I can not get to Curacao until October 17 because of astronomical airfares in the days prior to that date. There must be a huge special event in Miami for that date range. W7MAH turned out not to be able to come as early as had initially been hoped, but she will arrive on Saturday and be there to help me until she has to dive into grocery shopping duties the following Monday. The team arrives on Tuesday. This is going to be an extreme challenge for me without Dorothy's help. All beds in both houses are taken, and one of the younger victims will be on a couch somewhere. That said, all CCC members are welcome, and you'd just have to stay in off-site lodging.



KG5XR and K0PZH in CQWW SSB 2023



Our November team now consists of W0CG, K8ND, NA2U, N7IR, W9NJY, WA7LNU, NG7M, W8WTS, AD8CW (formerly K4LT), M0ORD, VE9AA, and K4JC. W1DED hopes to make it to the island in November with his XYL as a vacation trip, staying off site. He will assist where possible in shooting video material.

As you now know, I have bought some equipment and will serve as the videographer. The video will encapsulate the 25 year history of PJ2T.

WE STILL NEED ONE MORE OPERATOR. There's one open bed left in the West Bedroom. Can you help?

Generator Delivered to Signal Point 30 July

I made arrangements for Zoom and Dirk von Daam, our across the street neighbor, to meet the driver and supervise unloading with the forklift and placement of the genset exactly where we wanted it in the backyard. This placement was important both for security, and because we wanted it close to the location of the future concrete pad, but not directly atop that location. After placement on blocks, they wrapped the generator in a water-protective tarp to protect it from the climate and to obscure its identity as much as possible for security reasons. I coordinated in real time via live video from three cameras.

We paid Zoom and Dirk for their help. (Dirk is an engineer with immense common sense). This also reimbursed Zoom for his costs in buying materials to secure the generator. This was much cheaper than the cost of one of us making a trip to the island.

Here's a photo from one of the surveillance cameras showing Dirk and Zoom and the generator wrapped in blue protective tarps.



Zoom and Dirk with the generator, July 30, 2024

Costs for this project are thus far precisely in line with the estimates I presented at the Hamvention. See

<http://www.pj2t.org/ccc/Reliable.Power.for.Signal.Point.pptx> for a review of that information.

To date we have spent:

12668.97 generator, voltage setup, and local delivery in Miami

4327.27 shipping, taxes, and duty to Signal Point.

TOTAL 16996.24.

Anticipated additional expenses will be:

457.00 payment to Dirk and Zoom for handling the delivery, securing, and tarping of the generator at the house (now paid)

698.00 transfer switch (ATS) and Curacao duty, now bought and on hand in Ohio

265.00 265 ft #6 insulated stranded THHN wire (4 runs)

64.00 396 ft # 14 insulated stranded THHN wire (6 runs @ 66 ft)

120.00 100 ft x2 terminated CAT6 Ethernet cable

2000.00 construction of concrete pad

75.00 conduit fittings.

TOTAL 3679.00.

As mentioned, this comes out very, very close to the estimate of total costs as presented in the Hamvention meeting in May. Note that we did NOT incur costs to subsidize a trip for one of us to fly south to receive the generator.

We have not asked for donations toward this project, yet \$1450 has been donated without our even asking! Plus, of course, AC7DC donated 5000 to start the project, and I donated an additional 4000.

We will plan to start the installation process in October. None of us are able to get there sooner because of other life priorities.

Thanks again to Jay Lopes, AC7DC, for triggering this entire undertaking.

Moran Pool House Rental Increase

I just received the unwelcome news that Osvaldo Moran has increased his weekly charges for his house by an amount of \$306.80. I sent him that difference immediately for the already paid October and November 2024 rentals.

Since the advent of Airbnb and VRBO, the houses in the neighborhood have become extremely busy with rentals. This is not a welcome change because we have a constant parade of people coming and going through the neighborhood. It is also unwelcome because it is bidding up the rates for these rentals. In the old days we were often his only revenue for several weeks running.

If the prices go much higher we will have to look for another alternative.

Plans Going Forward for Generator Install

Now that the generator is on site we need to install it into service. One critical part of this is the transfer switch. After considerable discussion among our AC power experts W8WTS and AC7DC, we have opted for this transfer switch (next page).



The PJ2T Transfer Switch

This is a 4PRO ATS-250A-4P-I switch rated at 250 amps, 120/208 volts, 4 wire, 50 Hz three phase, exactly what we need. Thanks Jay, AC7DC, for locating this product on the web. This is a hefty switch with more current capability than we need, which is fine, and the capability to support manual or automatic switching. This switch is a Chevrolet in that it has the capabilities we need without being excessively fancy. We were unable to find a BMW-level switch in the U.S. that would work at 50Hz.

It is roughly 18 x 8 inches and 10 inches “thick.” This will fit on the laundry room wall in space we have available, barely. It does not come with an enclosure, so we will have to fabricate or buy something on our own. An off the shelf Square D box would not be desirable because it will rust. It will be better to fabricate a cover from some aluminum plate that will fit over the entire body of the switch and mount directly to the wall with outward-bent flanges on all four sides. We’ll drill cooling holes into it. The small display and control module you see in the photo will be mounted outside the switch body.

This item is \$609. I will have it shipped to my Ohio address and take it down in checked luggage in mid-October. Thanks to W3ACO for his gift of \$1000 for a transfer switch. We’ll use his excess balance to fund copper wire. WTS and AC7DC have calculated that we will need AWG #6 copper, four runs, in a conduit at least 1 inch in diameter. I’ll install a larger conduit to than that handle additional control and signal wiring and have room for future expansion, as we did with the conduit for the fibre connection to the house. The run

from the generator to the house is about 22 meters. With wire at around \$1/foot, this will total about \$265. I’ll buy that in the States and haul it down to save money. Digging the ditch and installing this conduit will be a chore, particularly to get it under the sidewalk and through tree roots behind the house. This will quite possibly not get done until early 2025, but we will have the use of the generator before then in breadboard fashion.



The real dog work will be to put in a concrete pad for the generator. If you’re coming to the island, bring your biceps. We’re talking a roughly 4 x 8 pad that needs to be something like 18 inches thick with lots of rebar inside, coated to prevent rusting, and sitting on a very solid base in the dirt. The generator weighs about 2000 pounds fueled, and once we place it on this pad we want to never have to worry again about its support slab. We will need to do most of the dirt work ourselves because we don’t want beasts or a backhoe digging in this busy vicinity of buried radials, the fiber conduit, and our house power line. Once the hole is in, I’ll hire an island gang to mix and pour the concrete. This is almost two cubic meters of concrete, more than we want to do on our own. The goal is to have this installed and cured and the generator placed by early March, realistically. We’ll need to rent a forklift to do the final placement onto the slab.

Membership Renewal Progress

One member remains to renew. Thanks again to all of you for supporting PJ2T with your membership dues. We would not be here without that help.

A Note on the Remote Station Bandpass Filters

The note is that, well, that there is nothing to note.... It is now several months since we completed the installation of the bandpass filters on the remote station. These are between the K3 and the KPA-1500, of course, and one of the 10 filters is automatically selected when the remote K3 changes bands. We have run a couple of contests and a lot of casual QSOs since this system has been installed with good result.



The bank of filters for remote station

The bottom line is that we all forgot it was there! The filter system works perfectly and effortlessly, the earmark of good engineering design. Thanks again to N7IR, W8WTS, and KB7Q for helping me make this happen. A successfully completed project.

Member Profile: James Erickson, W7EY

I'm James W7EY and I currently live in Bozeman, MT. I earned my license at 17 in CA but didn't get serious about HF until 2008 when I had the opportunity to build an HF station at my dad's house in rural Vacaville, CA. I put up a 70ft tower with a 3 element force 12 multibander but it was a long drive to operate so I mostly visited on contest weekends. Eventually I moved to Redmond, WA and took my tower with me but at the bottom of the solar cycle I spent more time on 80/160. In 2019 I moved to Montana but I sold most of my gear so I've had to rebuild. I've gone fully Flex because I love how easy it is to operate remotely and now all my radio gear lives

in the basement and I operate from the comfort of my office/couch/hottub.

My background is in computer science even though I don't have a degree. I studied it on my own much like amateur radio and had a job fresh out of high school. I've worked for Yahoo, Facebook, Oracle, and Salesforce where I worked on things you've all probably used. I actually started at Facebook when they had less than 200 employees. Early during my career, I did security research, wrote security white papers, and hunted hackers on the internet. I'm currently a Principal Security Engineer for Salesforce but I design infrastructure/services in the cloud that are security related for the business.

Montana has been great for me as I love the outdoors. I'm heavy into mountain biking, skiing, skijoring, snowmobiling, and riding horses. Currently my wife is working on starting a Lusitano horse breeding farm. I've posted some of the horse content here: <https://www.youtube.com/@DiamondSkyRanch>

Since I am outdoors a lot I've also enjoyed finding ways to go portable with my radio gear. POTA has been fun for me and I love bringing out multiple antennas and a legal limit amplifier when operating portable. A couple years ago the 7QP contest allowed self-spotting so I thought that would give me an edge as a POTA station and drive QSOs to me that otherwise wouldn't be in the contest. Only one massive M/M county line station beat me on the number of Phone Qs by 10%. While I do enjoy big contests, it's just hard to compete in any international DX contests from MT so I'm looking forward to that experience from PJ2T.

- James W7EY

CCC Financial Report

As of the end of July the treasury balance was \$12475.40. Soon after that report was generated, we had an expense of \$5346.69 that covered the shipping costs on the generator, compensation to Dirk and Zoom for receiving and stowing the generator at the house, and a 50% upcoming work trip airfare subsidy for me. That leaves ~\$7100 in the account. We'll have an additional ~\$3200 generator expenses, and a bit more revenue from membership renewal dues. There will also be significant income to the treasury from operator Station Support contributions for the CQWW SSB and CW contests this fall, so we are on slightly thin ice but far from broke. And we have a shiny new diesel generator at the station now!! Thanks W8WTS for the financial reports.

Generator Transfer Switch Arrived from S50

I ordered the transfer switch on August 5, and it was projected for delivery in Ohio between August 20 and 30 by DHL. This lead time would give me plenty of time to get to Ohio and secure the shipment when it arrived. It was coming from Europe, so this shipping delay was no surprise. But the surprise was on me when I received notification that it had been delivered at my Ohio QTH on August 9! This was unwelcome news because it was left sitting somewhere outside my unoccupied home in Ohio, and I was still in Idaho. I hurriedly texted my son in law, who kindly went to the Ohio house and secured the box.

I arrived in Ohio as planned on August 13. Here's the box, a big heavy padded black brick, incredibly well-packed, before I started tearing it open.



Our transfer switch, arrived in Ohio from Slovenia in three days!



Thick-walled shipping box

Here's the unit, finally extricated from the packing, with my lawn mowing muffs for size comparison. It weighs about 24 pounds.



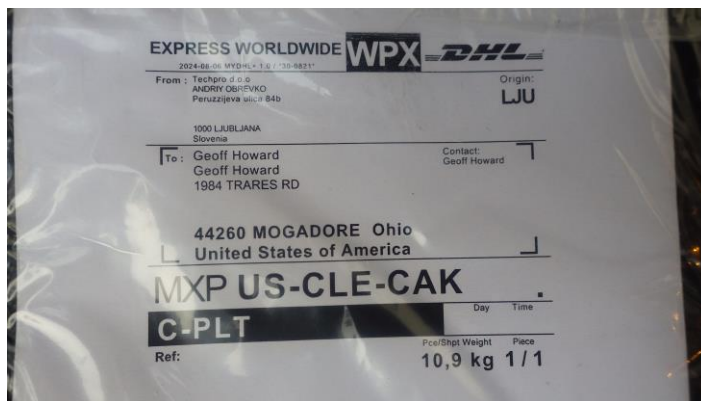
PJ2T's generator AC transfer switch

As noted previously, this item was \$609, and since it was an Amazon purchase the international shipping cost was part of that price.

We'll mount this on the wall in the laundry room at Signal Point and fashion a safety and mouse-blocker cover using either aluminum plate or plexiglass. This unit will definitely do the job. It's a massive 250 amp 4-wire 4PDT switch that will operate in auto or manual mode, rated for 50 Hz, so it will work perfectly for us. Thanks to AC7DC for finding this item on the market.

Thanks SM4KYN

Wireless interface modules for the RRC box that we use to remote into the Signal Point station are unobtainium, to use N7IR's apt terminology. Anders (SM4KYN) knew we were on the hunt for a wireless module, found one for sale on the used market in Sweden, and surprised me by landing it in my mailbox in Ohio. What a great surprise to find this in my box when I arrived at 2:30 AM yesterday morning, August 14.



DHL shipping label from Techpro d.o.o., Ljubljana, Slovenia

The box was totally wrapped in an outer layer of waterproof plastic. Under that were two layers of bubble wrap, then a very hefty box with a band strap, and inside there the switch in a plastic bag. The photo (next column) shows the extremely heavy duty thick-walled box.



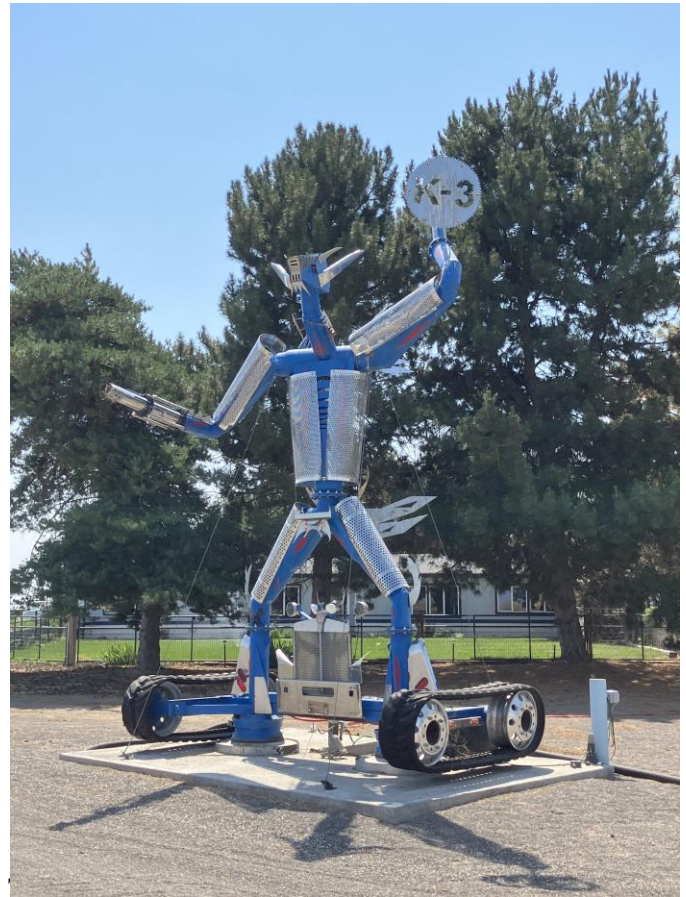
Surprise mail from SM4KYN, arrived in Ohio at W0CG

THANKS to Anders for obtaining this item. For reasons I won't bore you with, it is extremely difficult for me to connect my Ohio RRC box to the home network via an Ethernet cable. Now I need not worry, because this wireless adapter will eliminate that need. I'll be able to proceed to set up remote access to PJ2T from my Ohio QTH. I'm a bachelor for the next three months because Dorothy has opted to stay in Idaho until mid-November, when she will meet me in Curacao. This adapter will provide me with yet another very welcome project distraction while I am on my own here.

Revisiting the K3 Ranch

Some of you may remember this. Each year I do a long bike ride in the wheat farms near Ritzville, Washington. This year's ride was on July 18, when I rode outbound about 30 miles east of Ritzville on Wellsandt Road. It was 102 degrees F that afternoon.

The owner of the K3 Ranch likes to do metal welding art. Here is one of his pieces in the parking lot by one of the barns. Note the "K3" in his raised left hand. Little does this guy appreciate that he is advertising our transceivers!



K3 Ranch near Ritzville, WA, July 18, 2024

Historic Photos from Antenna Rebuild, November 2006



W0NB working on the boom of the 20 US/JA 5 element beam



A young N1ZZ at 66 cleaning up element joints on the 20 yagi. He looks absolutely just as good now at 85!



W0CG and W8WTS at 100 feet reinstalling a rebuilt antenna on the Europe tower, November 24, 2006.



K8ND joins in as we reassemble the rehabilitated antenna. Since this rebuild it has been trouble-free.



Our view down the tram line from the top



N8LGP with one of the boom cradles he fabricated using anodized aluminum plate and all stainless steel hardware. These still work perfectly in Curacao and are maintenance-free.