



Signals From The Point

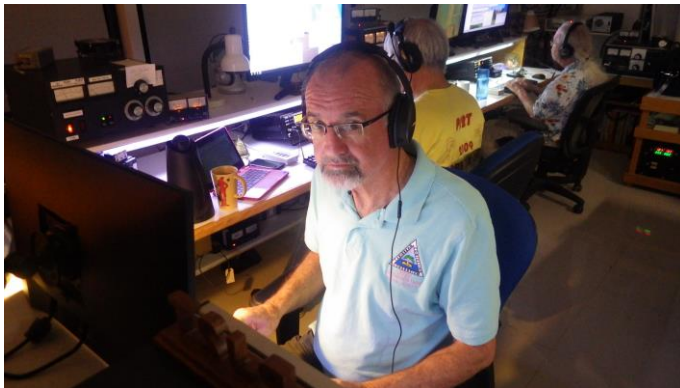
Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium
Editor: W0CG

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April 15, 2025

Rough News: Departure of KB7Q

Nobody died, but it felt like it in March when the surprising news arrived that Gene is leaving CCC as of the end of May. He said that at 78 he feels that he's too old for HF contesting, and will be moving on to other radio interests. As you know, he is an EME guru, very prominent worldwide in that sector of amateur radio. But he's also an extremely proficient high speed CW contester, and is personally responsible for millions of QSO points at PJ2T over the years.



KB7Q handling the difficult 40 meter QRM position, CQWW CW 2019

The debts CCC owes to Gene are almost uncountable over his 13 years of membership. It was Gene who years ago put us on to using K3s in favor of the Yaesu FT-2000s. Our first K3 was a gift from K8WDN (SK), Andy Catanzaro's old friend from high school. Gene picked up from there and encouraged us to move aggressively into more K3s. He was even able to secure the donation of Fred Cady's (KE7X, SK) personal K3. Gene also donated very significant dollars toward purchase of additional K3s. This change to K3s turned out to be a super good move, because these transceivers perform well, are affordable, are small and easy to transport, and survive the salt environment better than everything we have ever had.

Another debt we owe Gene is that he told me early on that if I wanted to get testers to come to Curacao, we would have to ditch Writelog and move to N1MM. We did so and have not looked back – N1MM+ does a superb job for us.



We also owe Gene and Joyce for taking over from me on a couple of contests and hosting teams so that I could stay home in Idaho for a break. They quickly found out that this was a daunting task, but handled it magnificently.

But, as you all know, Gene's biggest contribution to PJ2T is that he's the person who got us into remote operation. He had figured out how to use the RRC remote control boxes for his own use, then taught us to do so for remote operation into Curacao. Gene literally wrote the book that all of us followed when configuring our own equipment. That original PJ2T remote station was limited in capability, but still provided tons of fun. Later, I approached Gene with an idea for a sophisticated remote antenna switching scheme and a fully capable unattended remote station design. He liked the idea and supported me along the way as I designed and built that equipment, helping immensely as we established our high-end remoting capability, first with RCFORBS and later reverting to the superior RRC system.

Also, it was Gene who extended W8WTS' original wide area N1MM networking practice into using the Hamachi VPN. This has enabled us to easily include a remote operator into the M/M shift schedule so that we all see the same log in real time. That remote operator

is virtually like he is in the shack except that he doesn't use up any of the Signal Point beer.

As more of us moved to remote operation, Gene expanded his written documentation, held our hands, and very very patiently provided literally hundreds of hours of support and consulting time.

For as long as Gene has been at PJ2T he has also taken care of all of the PCs. When we buy new ones, he loads the software and makes the operating system work. Prior to contests, he logs in via AnyDesk and sets up all of the computers for networked contesting. Thus, we also owe him for being the PC guru for a very long time, saving me vast worry and time.

Gene has been just as helpful outside of the shack. For years he was pretty much the only other person who was physically capable of regularly working with me on the Ridge in the heat. He's three years older than I but always left me in his dust. Hunting and trekking in the Montana mountains has kept him extremely fit. Also, we have spent many hours together poring over sick linear amplifiers at PJ2T, making repairs and upgrades and keeping everything running.

Without KB7Q we would not be the capable, advanced competition station we are today. I'm terrified at the thought of moving forward without him standing behind my shoulder, but change happens and we will try to make him proud as we operate into the future.

Dayton Hamvention CCC Meeting Reminder

The 2024 Annual Meeting of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium (PJ2T) will be held during the Dayton Hamvention on Friday May 16, 3:00 to 5:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Hope Hotel in the P-51 Mustang Room as in the past three years. The Hope Hotel is adjacent to Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

Mark your calendars, and make plans to attend! (This is one of many reminders to come.)

CCC Annual Meeting
Friday May 16, 2024
3:00 -5:00 PM

Hope Hotel & Conference Center
P-51 Mustang Room
10823 Chidlaw Rd # A, Dayton, OH 45433

Partial Agenda:

- W8WTS financial report

- Plans for youth team October CQWW SSB
- Report on upcoming July youth trip
- W0CG: "The Saga of PJ2T's Generator Project"
- \$200 raffle prize drawing
- "K8ND PJ2T Yearbook, 2024-25"
- Work trip planning, W0CG
- Deposits prior to Curacao trips? (ND8L)
- What else?



WPX SSB Contest Report

After no interest for months, suddenly in the last week before the contest we had several operators pop up who were willing to participate in a remote Multi/Single team, with additional hours from me on site.

Then our youth member Connor, W4IPC, let me know that he had lost out at the last minute on access to a stateside station for his SO HP effort. After kicking it around, the other remote operators graciously bowed out so that Connor could make a hard run at this contest via the PJ2T remote station and build his case for participation in WRTC 2026.

Here's the super result. And it presently appears that Connor set a new world record in the Youth overlay, and won the contest in that overlay.

Call: [PJ2T](#)
Operator(s): [W4IPC](#)
Station: PJ2T
Class: **SOAB HP**
Class Overlay: **Youth**
QTH: SA
Operating Time (hrs): 36
Location: South America
Remote operation

Band QSOs

160: 2

80: 2
 40: 751
 20: 445
 15: 1204
 10: 1658

Total: **4062** Prefixes **1233** Total Score **17,458,047**

As the station hardware guy, I was very excited to see that the remote station held up extremely well through this hard weekend of 36 hours of full KW operation in WPX SSB. Connor uses the station very intelligently, selecting various needed antennas on the fly, and all of that worked perfectly. Over 4000 contacts on the remote in a weekend!

Fate intervened at about 8 AM Sunday morning when the commercial power failed. This was a time when Connor was running blazing QSO rates into Europe on the Ridge antenna, so he couldn't afford to be "down" for long. This was our first opportunity to use the new generator in an actual competition. Within no more than eight minutes Connor was back running rates with the full KW amp, everything normal, except that the AC was now coming from our generator. The photo below shows that this was child's play for our diesel powerplant, loaded only 8% while running the station, the rest of the house, an air conditioner, and the washing machine.

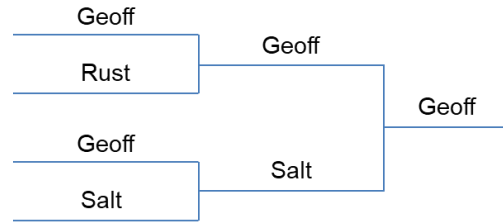


During WPX SSB, March 30, 2025, piece of cake

Congratulations and thank you to W4IPC for making PJ2T sound good on the bands, for a magnificent score, and thanks to N7NR and AG3I for stepping aside so that Connor could go forward. And what a perfect demonstration of capability for our new generator: It saved this contest with three hours of support Sunday morning.

March Madness: Curacao Style

We had our own version of the Final Four on the island, and as you see from the bracket diagram, I was the winner.



Within about an hour after the ARRL SSB team pulled out of the driveway on March 4 I had a can of epoxy paint open and started an intense period of painting that had me slinging epoxy almost every day of March.



The March paint work began with paint on the generator, starting with epoxy primer, then turning our new power plant epoxy green to obscure it in the leaves and trees and protect it from the salt air.

Days later that was finished, and on March 8 I continued putting a fresh finish coat of grey epoxy on the Europe tower, following the work already started in February. This was the every-three-year overcoat that's essential to protecting our investment. Finally, on March 12 the Europe tower was finished except for the bottom 20 feet, which did not yet need to be recoated. That required a total of 10 trips up the tower and 18.5 hours of labor, not counting prep, mixing, or cleanup. That's just boots on the tower time.

Then, beginning on March 18 I started on the US/JA tower, cleaning corrosion with the Makita power grinder, applying epoxy, then beginning the next day with a finish coat of grey epoxy. Altogether this required 9 trips up the tower and a total of 17.25 hours on board, finishing on March 27. The overall condition of the US/JA tower is quite good given that it has been in the air for 24 years, and I expect that with careful maintenance and installation of some splints we can get at least five more years out of it.



W0CG with the Makita grinder near the top of the US/JA tower, March 18 (Photo W2APF)

Hence, all tower maintenance is pretty well caught up. We should not have to paint the Europe tower again until 2028, and regular annual maintenance on the US/JA tower will keep it aloft. This puts us in a very strong position on tower work.



Close-up of the super new epoxy finish at the bottom of the US/JA tower

If all this work sounds like madness, it indeed is. Working with epoxy paint 100 feet in the air, in very hot sun and sometimes 30 knot winds sounds a bit mad, and I can truly confirm that it is miserable, difficult, dirty work. I'm still hopeful that we can set up a system of shared pain over the next couple of years so that I don't have this fun all for myself.



March 25, Geoff painting below the 10 stack (Photo W2APF)

Welcome New Members W2APF, W4SO, and PC8M

In the last two newsletters I reported sorrowfully on the departure of three long-time CCC members. As things work out, I'm now happy to welcome three new members to the family.

Thaire Bryant, W2APF, happened to appear in House #7, having rented January – April to escape the New Hampshire winters. As I reported last month, I saw his antennas and invited him to contest with us in the ARRL contests, both modes. He did not view himself as a contester, but took to it immediately, enjoyed meeting the team members, was impressed with our operation and organization, and decided to join us. Thaire helped us immensely in the SSB contest by taking some thankless graveyard hours on 20, making hundreds of QSOs on a band that unexpectedly delivered good conditions. He and Debbie will be back to Curacao next year for that same rental period, but in a different location on the island.



Thaire Bryant, W2APF

In real life Thaire is a “foodie,” and enjoys cooking. As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, he cooked a scrumptious dinner one weeknight for the ARRL CW crew, spoiling us badly. He and Debbie also extended us numerous courtesies during their time in Curacao, including hauling us to Jan Thiel on our last day to turn in the car, then to the airport. Several days later he intervened with me using Facetime and fixed a problem with the generator.



Dorothy, Thaire, Debbie, Hato Airport, April 3, 2025

Professionally Debbie was a surgical nurse in Boston and Thaire was President and CEO of Sysco Foods. They are delightful people, and I hope you can all meet them. They will be at the Hamvention Contest Dinner.

Scott Cronin, W4SO, is part of the Melbourne, Florida PCARS club group of N1ZZ. This was his second year at PJ2T for the ARRL DX CW contest. Scott is a very proficient high speed CW operator and an agreeable guy who is willing to do whatever may be necessary at

the station and during the contest. He's a great team player.



AD4ES, W4SO (blue shirt), and Scott's not shy XYL Mercedes and son Brian on arrival at Hato, February 11, 2025

We're delighted to welcome Scott to the PJ2T family. Scott is with Morgan and Morgan, the nation's largest personal injury law firm, at their Melbourne location.

Pim Polderman, PC8M, first visited PJ2T with the youth group last October for CQWW SSB. He's a software professional from Rotterdam, is in his mid-30s, and is a highly proficient SSB contester and massively nice guy to meet. During that time last October he was astonishingly willing to do anything and everything necessary, including digging ditches with a pickaxe in sweltering heat and humidity. When we run the generator, that current flows in a ditch that Pim helped to dig.



Pim, PC8M (left) doing dirty, hard work with W7EY, October, 2024

To my vast surprise (because of the distance from Europe), Pim decided to become a member of CCC and is already scheduled to return for CQWW SSB 2025. He has a very broad range of skills, and is an extreme git-er-done kind of person who also has very high enthusiasm for contesting and is a pleasure to be around. As you see below, he is a volunteer for a future work trip. We're happy to have him in CCC!

Work Trip Volunteers

We were unable to recruit anybody for any of the three proposed work trips in March. Since then, though, we have happily had offers of help from W7EY, PC8M, and AG3I. James and Pim are both in their thirties, and both are experienced climbers. We'll see what might work out logistically as we compare everyone's schedules from now into the fall season. The updated work tasks look something like this, in no order of priority. All needed parts and materials for the below are on hand at the station except for unknown parts needs on the amplifiers.

- Repair driven element on Ridge tribander
- Rebuild the ruined and collapsed Europe 80 3 el delta loops
- Diagnose and repair the 6 meter 5 el yagi
- Replace rotor in Europe tower
- Take down 12/17 yagi, rehab the traps, install new trap caps, reinstall the antenna
- Repair and replace bad 160 Inv L radials
- Paint Ridge tower with epoxy finish coat
- Diagnose and repair problems with three amps: Titan III, HF-2500, Titan 425
- Sanding and varnishing, various locations

CQ MM DX Contest – Second Reminder

Second Reminder: This contest begins 0900 UTC Saturday, April 20, continuing until 2350 Sunday. It is organized by the CWJF group and PY4KL.



I was inducted into this group based on CW contesting activities, and encourage you to give this one a try. This will be the 14th running of the contest, and participation is high, with this year's goal being receipt of 2000+ logs.

Remote Station K3 Failure

As reported last month, the remote station K3 suffered a front end blowout. Thanks to efforts by AD4ES, that radio is now at N7IR's in Chandler for repair. Thanks Chuck and Gary!

Thanks N7NR for Another Donated K3

The K3 donated by N7NR has finally arrived at the W0CG QTH in Ohio after major delays at Fed Ex. I will see to it that it arrives in Curacao when that's practical prior to the fall contests. Thanks K4JC for keeping this transceiver and then shipping it north.

Ring Camera Failures at Signal Point

For years we have solid service from five Ring cameras, greatly enhancing the security of our QTH and station equipment. Last year I added a sixth camera, but it soon went blind, losing video last December. I bought a seventh camera to cover the area of the new generator, but then ran into major problems with it.



The newest camera would not connect to the WiFi, not even to the same router that supports the original five Ring cameras. I tried connecting that camera at the Maley house next door on his router, and also at House #7 with yet a different router. In no case would this camera connect to WiFi, trying every conceivable combination of routers, adapters, and parameter settings.

I scanned the Internet Ring user groups and found many reports of this same problem with these newer cameras. The next step was to spend over an hour on the phone with a Ring technical expert, and she finally gave up after trying literally everything to get this cam to connect. She left me hanging without recourse and said "Too bad."

Next I posted a fully factual negative product review on Amazon, and like a miracle Ring's problem resolution manager contacted me almost immediately offering help. After two telephone consultations of over an hour each with him and his team, they gave up, concluding that I am in an "unsupported area" even though there are Ring cameras that work at the house and all over the Curacao neighborhood. The next day they admitted to me that even the company does not have a list of the unsupported areas. Over three weeks this problem consumed very large amounts of my time and generated a near ulcer. The company offered to replace these two cameras for free. I have returned the bad cams to the company on their request.

Meanwhile, in frustration, I hurriedly bought two more Ring cameras on Amazon, spent \$165 to get them shipped to Curacao in a rush, and set about installing them. Astonishingly, both of them refused to connect. After another 75 minutes on the phone with their tech support, they gave up, unable to get the cameras to connect. Finally, I was forced to depart the island with these problems unresolved, and the generator and East Patio without proper video surveillance. Ring has shipped me two older model cameras to Idaho in the hope that they will work on the island. The legacy cameras that do work are the "Spotlight Camera Battery." The newer ones that fail are "Spotlight Cam Plus." We will find out in October if these older ones work.

Meanwhile, I have lost faith in this company, which clearly does not any longer have the necessary in-house technical IP expertise to make their own newer products nearly as robust as the old ones.

MyMalls Shipping Service

Per the above story, I had excellent success with MyMalls shipping service, recommended by PJ2BR. I ordered the above two Ring cams from Amazon for delivery to MyMalls in Miami. That was on a Tuesday afternoon. Thursday afternoon I picked them up at DHL in Curacao! It was expensive (\$165), but it's reassuring to know that there is now a reliable way to get emergency items to the island quickly. MyMalls' website and all aspects of my interaction with them were completely professional. See www.mymalls.com.

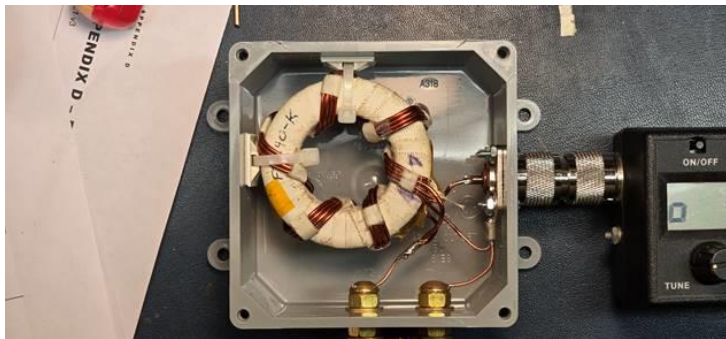


Update: Major Infrastructure Work

In late March Aqualectra and MNI construction completed installation of all the necessary conduits and power feedlines to totally re-wire our neighborhood. They then covered the ditches except for the areas where splices will need to be installed when the new circuits are ready to be energized. That was scheduled to begin on April 14. The company projection was that they would start at about 9 AM and finish by 4 PM that same day. I knew better. At this writing on Tuesday, April 15, the power has been off for 28 hours and we have no idea of the progress because all connectivity to the neighborhood is down with no Internet. Once this finally gets finished we can start breathing again after the power is restored and the ditches are finally refilled.

W8WTS 160 Unun

The legacy unun transformer on the 160 meter Inv L failed in mid-2024 after a lightning-induced surge. In October we removed it and connected the antenna directly to the feedline. This worked OK only because the antenna is missing so many radials that it has become a 50 ohm antenna.



Unun for 160 L constructed by W8WTS

Busy W8WTS recently found time to fabricate a new unun, shown in test in the photo, perfectly matching to the composition 50 ohm resistor at the output port. THANKS Jim, and we will get it into service on the

island for the fall contests.

New Washing Machine

When it rains it pours. By our last weekend on the island Dorothy and I were fed up solving seemingly an endless string of troubles and faults. We were hot, dirty, and mentally and physically exhausted.

Making things worse, Saturday morning, March 30, I woke up to a flat tire, dang it. I pumped it up, limped to the tire shop in Barber, and luckily it was an easy fix. Then it got double-worse because as soon as I walked back in the door Dorothy said that the washer had overflowed and she had been dealing with an inches deep flood in the laundry room. It was a sopping mess in there, with everything that had been on the floor wrecked including the heavy duty cardboard box on the spare water heater. And all that water brought out a couple of scorpions.

Some checks confirmed that the washer would not fill without overflowing. With only four days left on the island, and it being Saturday, I concluded that trying to get this 25 year old Maytag fixed was not an option.

Now we were in a time crunch because WI9WI is coming in May and a youth group in July. We had to get something done fast. So rather than the relaxing day we had hoped for, we hopped in the car, went to Building Depot, bought a very high quality washer, and extracted a promise that they would deliver it Monday. Two hours later we were back home, cleaning out the flooded room.

Sunday we removed the old washer and everything else except the in-service water heater, cleaned and dried it all, repainted the floor and then all the walls, ending up tired but with a totally renewed good-looking room. Naturally the washer did not arrive on Monday, but after many calls and going chasing after the lost driver on Tuesday, we got the washer. I quickly installed it, and Dorothy went to work running the backed up loads of laundry necessary to be ready for the next visitors.



The renovated laundry room, sporting the new washer and futuristic looking generator transfer switch. That's fresh epoxy paint on the floor.

The new machine is a Speed Queen Commercial Heavy Duty model, rated for 120 VAC, 50 Hz. It was just under \$2000. Welcome to island prices and import duties and taxes. But this is a solid, high quality machine, and we were lucky they had it in stock.

In a great surprise, SM4KYN sent us \$100 the next day as a donation toward the washer saying that he and Ingela had used that washer many times over many years. Thanks Anders!!

Generator Tidbits

I did an off-site remote test from my laptop March 22. The generator had not run for 10 days, but it started perfectly, and I shut it down 21 minutes later. The Noco Genius smart battery charger is assuring that the Ethernet gateway does not unduly draw down the lead-acid battery, and running in "Auto" mode prevents the Deep Sea 7420 controller from putting itself to sleep.

We appear now to be stable, and finished. The photo shows that aluminum protective panel that I put over the glass in the control door. This removes easily as it is attached with Velcro. The project is complete, and I

plan to do a test run weekly to keep the equipment healthy during the long period when nobody is at the QTH.



Final configuration, ready to save us from power outages

When I get time back in the States I'll make a very brief video to try to save others the immense grief and frustration I endured to get this thing commissioned, stable, and remote-controllable. It was not easy.



Finished!

CCC Financial Report

Per Treasurer W8WTS the end of March balance in the Station Support fund is \$5273.83.

New AL-1200 Tube

The 3CX1200A7 tube donated by K8ND is now at W0CG, and I'll take it to W8AV for testing next week. Thanks Jeff!

