



Signals From The Point

Official Newsletter of the Caribbean Contesting Consortium

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PJ2T – CQWW CW Operation at New QTH

By Jeff Clarke , KU8E

I was really itching to make a trip to the Caribbean this Fall to do a contest. When American Airlines came out with the Fall airfare sale and I was able to get a bargain fare (\$367 RT from Atlanta) that cemented it. Since this was going to be strictly a “radio” trip , I worked out a deal with my wife that we would drive to Roswell, Ga. , so she and my son could visit with her Mom while I played radio. Everything was set and we headed out for Georgia the Wednesday morning before the contest. It was pretty neat to work the guys on the net on 14.260 while we were mobile in Northern GA that night !

I arrived on Curacao on Thanksgiving day. The flight down was pretty uneventful. I was expecting the worst after hearing the stories about the Curacao customs but the officer I dealt with was very friendly and in the end I didn't have to pay any duty on the Kenwood TS930 and bag of parts that Geoff asked me to carry down. What a great start to the trip ! Geoff wasn't kidding about the heat and humidity . I couldn't wait to get to the house to put on some shorts !

PJ2T (Continued on page 6)

From The Editor

By Jeff Clarke KU8E

Greetings and welcome to the first issue of *Signals From the Point* . This newsletter will be used to communicate what is going on in the CCC to our members. First, let me introduce myself. My name is Jeff Clarke and my call is **KU8E** . I have been licensed since 1976 and have always been interested in contesting and traveling to the Caribbean. Since 1979 I have operated from FS , VP2E, VP9, J6 , VP5, and PJ2 .

I first hooked up With the CCC group when I joined the **VP5FXB** operation in 1997. I have contested with CCC members **K4LT** , **W8AV**, and **N8VW** for a long time. I am also a member of the Mad River Radio Club. My wife Jan, son Andy, and I live in Columbus , Ohio , where I am an intranet developer for the Bank One Services Corp.

I am looking forward to getting to know many of the CCC members. Many of you I know but some I don't. What I would like to ask everyone to do is to send me a short write up about yourself that I can print in the newsletter. Also, if you have a picture of yourself that would be nice to have. Any pictures or articles that you might have to share with the membership would be greatly welcomed. I would like to have a **Member Spotlight** column every issue. This would help us all to get to know each other. If you would like to have some type of column in each issue that would be great too..... I'm sure that you don't want to read only my comments every issue !! Hopefully by the next issue we will have some pictures to publish of some of our members travels to **PJ2T** for the CQWW CW DX contest. Until next time..... 73's

Jeff KU8E

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Needs for the House

By Geoff Howard , W0CG

I am gradually regaining control of my job after being away for 19 days, and starting to have a little time to think ahead. So now I'm thinking about the house. You have heard much about the **PJ2T** station, but very little about the house itself. Thanks to the heroic efforts of **KP2L**, **K4LT**, **W9EFL**, my work, and some hired helpers on the island, we have converted the place into a decent working QTH.

We now have hot and cold running water, two working toilets and showers, a washing machine, a kitchen that supports minimal cooking (but no range yet), and four full beds with new pillows and sheets. In addition, the horrid smell is gone and has been replaced by the fresh smell of paint -- a first coat anyway. We will get a new range right away in early January, and most of the range will be funded by the rent collected for the CQWW CW contest.

This will be the pattern -- the rent will be immediately reinvested for everyone's benefit. After covering all of the purchase, closing, and startup expenses, Cindy and I were able to come up with about \$6.5 thousand for renovations to the house. I spent a little over \$4K on the November trip (new appliances, tools, paint, plumbing parts, supplies, towels, sheets and pillows, etc.), and when the last couple grand are gone, it will be gone, and future improvements will move more slowly, funded by rent as it comes in. This makes me feel like the Salvation Army, but it struck me that one way to stretch the money a but further, to everyone's shared benefit, is to see if there is any stuff that might be surplus in your households that could be put into good use on Curacao. Anything we can beg is something we don't have to buy, and frees money for the really important stuff: RADIOS and TOWERS!

To that end, here is a list of suggested items we could use for the house, and that is small enough to be able to come in airline baggage. Do you have anything surplus that you could UPS to me for the December 31 trip?

All pots and pans

Kitchen knives

Crock pot

Tupperware food savers

Coasters

Full sheets, pillow cases, and mattress pads

Under-cabinet can opener

Blender

Coffeemaker

Electric mixer

Waffle iron

Dishes/glasses

All cooking tools

Two telephones (AT&T RJ-11, just like the U.S.)

Pot holders

Baking dishes

In short, the place needs just about everything to start up housekeeping from scratch. Very little of what was there before was serviceable, except for an old, small microwave oven that works great.

1200 Amplifier Fund

By Jeff Clarke , KU8E

Noel , **W9EFL** and Doug , **K4LT** traveled down to Signal Point the week before the CQWW DX contest to help Geoff and Jim , **KP2L** get the house to be in a liveable condition. Noel brought along his Ameritron AL1200 amplifier for us to use in the contest. He has offered us the opportunity to purchase this amplifier for \$2100 so he doesn't have to bring it back to the States. If you are willing to pitch in and help purchase this amplifier for the club please send a check to Noel at his CBA with a small note that you are contributing to the amplifier fund. Also remember that these small fund drives we are having to purchase needed items for the station are NOT a requirement to belong to the CCC and are totally voluntary on your part. Thanks...

Check out the Caribbean Contesting Consortium web page at

<http://asgard.kent.edu/ccc/>



Have you wondered where the **PJ2T** QTH is located?? If you take this map and enlarge it on your computer look for PJ2T . I had to shrink this map to fit in the newsletter but if you look for the “PJ2T” on the southwest part of the island you get it..... and you have good eyes !!!

Curacao Customs Tips From KU8E

By Jeff Clarke, KU8E

On my trip down to **PJ2T** for the CQWW CW contest I was put in charge of transporting **W8TK**'s TS930S and a carry on bag from **W0CG** containing some keyers, cables and other parts. After hearing the stories about the customs difficulties in the past I was prepared for the worst and expected that I would have to pay duty for this stuff.... So I brought along an appropriate amount of travelers checks to cover this.

The trip through immigration was quick so I proceeded to the luggage area and loaded my 3 bags on a cart and then to the customs area. I just kept my mouth shut and just politely answered the questions of the customs officer. He first asked what was in the box? I explained it was an amateur radio transceiver and got a puzzled look from him. He asked me to open the box, which I proceeded to do. He next asked me if I was taking this home with me I told him “No”, I was leaving it on the island with an amateur radio group that I was a member of. He then glanced over to one of the carry on bags (The one with Geoff's stuff in it) and asked what was in it. I replied that it was also amateur radio gear... He then asked me to open it as well. Lucky for me I had put a lock on this bag because I had checked it on the way down. As I looked for the key to open it the guy says “Oh never mind... Have a nice stay” and waves me through. Wow !!! What luck and what a savings for the CCC not to have to pay duty. My first trip to Curacao was off to a great start !! Geoff was outside to greet me and I relayed this story to him and we were both pretty happy about this turn of events.

I guess the moral of this story is when you travel to Curacao be open, honest, and friendly to the customs officer and you never will know what might happen..... you might get lucky like I did. Oh, and put locks on your bags HI

CCC News

Geoff , **W0CG** , will be heading down to Signal Point on December 31st and will be staying for a couple weeks doing more repairs. There is still much to do but it's looking better every day. On the day that **KU8E** departed to go home all the weeds had been chopped away and were being burned.

We have found out after some surfing on the internet that there is a DX packet cluster , **YV1DIG**, on 145.78 . It appears that it might be connected to the internet. Geoff will be taking a 2 meter radio and a TNC on his next trip down to see if it is possible to connect to this node which is in Caracas, about 40 miles away from the **PJ2T** station. Thanks again to Tom, **W8TK**, for another generous donation of a 2 meter radio and a TNC.

The next CCC operation from Signal Point will be in the **2001 ARRL DX CW** contest. The operators so far are **W0CG, KP2L, N8BJQ, W9EFL, W9VA, and WA9S** . The plan is to do either a multi-single Or multi-two operation. **W0CG** is leading this trip. Contact Geoff if you are interested in joining up.

The only other confirmed dates for Signal Point for 2001 are the CQWW SSB contest by **KU8E** and the CQWW CW contest by **W0CG** and the CCC. Hurry up and reserve the contest of your choice before it is gone. Remember as a CCC member you get first choice of contest weekends.... After that Geoff will be offering these weekends to non – CCC members.

PJ2T Preliminary Score CQ WORLD WIDE DX CONTEST -- 2000

Call: PJ2T - (W0CG, KP2L, KU8E operators)

Category: Multi Single
Power: High Power
Band: All Band
Mode: CW
Country: Netherlands Antilles
Zone: 9

BAND	QSO	QSO PTS	PTS/QSO	ZONES	CTYS
160	98	278	2.84	11	18
80	313	920	2.94	13	52
40	1001	2963	2.96	28	94
20	1242	3688	2.97	37	117
15	1519	4500	2.96	34	116
10	1786	5282	2.96	36	113
Totals	5959	17631	2.96	159	510

FINAL SCORE => 11,795,139

PJ2T (Continued from page 1)

Geoff, **W0CG** and Jim, **KP2L** had been down at the *Signal Point* QTH since the beginning of November. Noel, **W9EFL** and Doug, **K4LT** had also joined them a week before the contest. Their prime purpose was to get the QTH cleaned up and liveable. I had been warned by Geoff that the conditions at the house would be pretty primitive but when I arrived I was presently surprised by the condition of the house. These guys did an excellent job in cleaning things up and I wish I would have had the vacation left to come down earlier to help out. We all owe these guys a big thanks for doing all this “dirty work” Too bad Noel and Doug couldn’t stick around for the contest and had some fun instead of working all the time.

When we arrived at the house we were greeted by **KP2L**, who had been laboring in the hot sun laying out radials for the vertical. After a cool drink and a change into some more comfortable clothes I was out helping Jim with the radials and worked on getting the 160 meter inverted L operational. Geoff went to work setting up the stations inside. I had brought the 2:1 transformer that **N8VW** had built for my inverted L at home and after laying out about 15 radials, including one that ran over the cliff and into the ocean we were ready to give it the RF test. It ended up being resonant at 1830 and I think **W0CG** thought I was some type of low band genius or something! But really the credit should go to **N8VW** who helped me build this.

After all this hard work we headed over to *Sunset Waters* for dinner. When we got back Geoff and Jim were pretty tired after working all day but I was ready to be DX!! I fired up the radio and worked some pileups on 15 and 40 meters for awhile. When the time was right I decided to try out the 160 antenna. I called CQ and immediately had a pileup... but everyone was so weak!! When I had operated from the more northerly Caribbean locations in the past the signals from the States were much louder than this... so this was new to me. I almost felt like I was in Europe. There were some guys whose signals stood out... 160 regulars like **AA0RS** and **W3GH** were very loud. I managed to work my friend **K8ND**, back in Columbus and he told me some EU stations were calling. I stood by but heard nothing. Later on I did manage to work a couple **EA8** stations who called along with some other guys in the Caribbean. It was kind of neat to have **YV1OB** call me with a 50 over S9 signal. He has been a regular on the top band for years and rarely even S9 at the best back home. I rotated between 40/80/160 until about 3 AM local time when I had enough and headed for bed.

The Friday of the contest was a pretty leisurely day. By early afternoon we had the stations all setup and ready to go. All that was left to do was to lay out a 1000’ Northeast beverage for 160 meters. Jim did this and I worked my way through the sticky bushes and tossed some wire over the edge of the cliff into the ocean. A 450 ohm resistor was used to terminate the beverage and the wire I tossed into the ocean was used as a radial wire. We headed back to the shack and tested it. It seem to have some directivity as we listened to some YV stations on the broadcast band. Satisfied with all this we headed to *Sunset Waters* for lunch. We spend the rest of the afternoon by taking a drive to the north coast of the island and were back at the house a few hours before the start of the contest. The next few hours were spent testing out the radios before the contest started at 8:00 PM local time.

Geoff was tired from working all day so he asked me to start out and operate the first couple hours. We decided to start out on 15 meters since it was open to Japan really good. I found a frequency to hold as **PJ2/KU8E** and at 0000 Z we were off and running as **PJ2T**. I started running on 15 meters while Jim tuned 10 meters for multipliers. The first hour on 15 yielded a 166 hour. The 2nd hour was even better at 187. Geoff took over at 0200 Z and moved to 20 meters and had our best hour of the contest – a 206 hour. For the next 20 hours the rate was over a 100 an hour, with the exception of the 0800Z hour when it dropped to a 70. On the 2nd day the rate was near or above 100 an hour the whole day with the best hour being a 196 hour with **KU8E** operating on 15 meters. When it was over the contest was just a blur in our minds. We ended up with just under 6000 QSO’s. Geoff was not lying about this QTH... There is something truly magical about it.

I don’t want to bore everyone with all the details of the contest but here is a list of observations from **KU8E** on the **PJ2T** location.

- 1) *We must have been loud. We had continuous pileups the whole time we were on. Maybe this was because we were the only PJ2 that was on ?? I have never had pileups this big from any of the Caribbean locations I have operated at in the past.*
- 2) *40 meters is much better than in the Northern Caribbean. We were just using a delta loop for an antenna but we were able to run JA’s in the morning as well as we did EU or the USA earlier in the night. Some of the JA stations were louder than those in the USA!*
- 3) *15 and 10 meters had a bottomless pit of stations to work. 20 was open very late into the night as well. You have to not make the mistake of staying on these bands too late and ignoring the lower bands. We did that the first night and by the time we made it to 80 meters it was past the EU sunrise. We had to make up for this the 2nd night and I am sure that’s why our multiplier count was low on 80 meters*

PJ2T (Continued from page 6)

- 4) 80 meters seemed better to EU late in the opening when it was about to close to the USA. We were beat out in pileups earlier in the evening by stations in the USA all the time. Maybe we need a better antenna for this band ? The sloping dipole worked OK but maybe we need something better.
- 5) 160 meter was a disappointment. Signals from the USA were weak, except for the big gun 160 meter regulars. Did not hear one EU station. Only countries we worked across the Atlantic were CN8 and EA8. KH6CC was very loud from the Pacific. We need to improve the receive antenna. The beverage did not work that well. Could the small hill north of the station be the cause of this ???
- 6) At times the big pileups slowed up the rate. **W0CG** even moved a few times to make the pileup smaller.

In the end , Geoff, Jim , Jim and myself were very pleased with our effort. As I write this we are 3rd in the world in the M/S high claimed scores which is phenomenal considering the simple antennas we were using. It is truly scary how well we are going to do when we get the real antennas in the air. The future for PJ2T looks very bright. 73's

Jeff KU8E

BREAKDOWN	QSO/mults	PJ2T	CQ	WORLD	WIDE	DX	CONTEST	Multi	Single	HR	TOT	CUM	TOT
HOUR	160	80	40	20	15	10	10	10	10	HR	TOT	CUM	TOT
0	153/19	13/17	166/36	166/36					
1	.	.	16/23	81/18	90/7	.	187/48	353/84					
2	.	.	14/17	192/14	.	.	206/31	559/115					
3	.	.	3/4	173/7	.	7/11	183/22	742/137					
4	.	.	.	166/14	10/15	1/1	177/30	919/167					
5	.	2/4	92/7	5/9	1/1	.	100/21	1019/188					
6	.	6/9	138/13	1/2	.	.	145/24	1164/212					
7	.	108/16	46/5	.	.	.	154/21	1318/233					
8	4/7	38/4	28/13	.....	.....	.....	70/24	1388/257					
9	41/8	17/1	49/4	.	.	.	107/13	1495/270					
10	.	22/1	70/3	3/3	5/8	.	100/15	1595/285					
11	.	.	39/4	.	19/18	107/33	165/55	1760/340					
12	54/13	69/7	123/20	1883/360					
13	122/16	3/3	125/19	2008/379					
14	44/1	80/8	124/9	2132/388					
15	142/6	142/6	2274/394					
16	157/3	157/3	2431/397					
17	33/0	125/8	158/8	2589/405					
18	128/8	41/2	169/10	2758/415					
19	5/5	170/2	175/7	2933/422					
20	.	.	.	13/17	5/7	151/1	169/25	3102/447					
21	.	.	.	3/4	3/3	142/3	148/10	3250/457					
22	.	.	.	9/10	.	93/3	102/13	3352/470					
23	.	.	.	3/4	79/5	37/2	119/11	3471/481					
0	21/0	3/4	51/1	.....	75/5	3546/486					
1	.	2/2	33/4	64/5	.	.	99/11	3645/497					
2	.	.	.	113/4	.	.	113/4	3758/501					
3	.	9/9	.	96/9	.	.	105/18	3863/519					
4	.	6/7	2/2	87/2	.	.	95/11	3958/530					
5	25/4	.	77/3	.	.	.	102/7	4060/537					
6	28/10	52/3	.	.	.	.	80/13	4140/550					
7	.	49/5	35/0	.	.	.	84/5	4224/555					
8	1/2	66/2	.....	.....	.....	67/4	4291/559					
9	.	.	79/1	.	.	.	79/1	4370/560					
10	.	.	96/6	2/2	.	.	98/8	4468/568					
11	.	.	57/3	3/3	4/3	5/7	69/16	4537/584					
12	.	.	.	4/4	110/2	4/6	118/12	4655/596					
13	73/1	13/13	86/14	4741/610					
14	115/1	4/4	119/5	4860/615					
15	28/5	77/1	105/6	4965/621					
16	1/1	4/4	64/0	69/5	5034/626					
17	103/1	103/1	5137/627					
18	.	.	.	4/4	2/2	155/0	161/6	5298/633					
19	.	.	.	1/1	131/4	16/1	148/6	5446/639					
20	.	.	.	3/4	193/1	.	196/5	5642/644					
21	.	.	.	70/2	57/0	2/2	129/4	5771/648					
22	.	.	.	126/6	.	.	126/6	5897/654					
23	.	1/2	40/8	16/1	.	5/4	62/15	5959/669					
DAY1	45/15	193/35	495/93	649/102	751/126	1338/110	.....	3471/481					
DAY2	53/14	120/30	506/29	593/52	768/24	448/39	.	2488/188					
TOT	98/29	313/65	1001/122	1242/154	1519/150	1786/149	.	5959/669					

A Greatly Abbreviated Story of the Acquisition of Signal Point

By Geoff Howard, W0CG and Cindy Howard

Foiled! Our 1997 **VP5FXB** effort to win the ARRL CW contest as a Multi/Multi ended in frustration. Over a year of crew coordination, planning, acquisition of gear, a drive to Florida to ship tower parts via Arawak Shipping Lines, creation of a pretty decent web site, and an all out effort in front of the radios ended when we lost to **V26B**. How come? They had 10 meters and we did not. We almost matched or beat them band-for-band everywhere but on 10, where we were badly waxed. Stations in the States reported that they were 20 over 9 from their location several hundred miles south of us, while we were barely audible. In our post-mortems of that contest we decided there could be only one solution: Move south!

After that VP5 experience, I had been in touch off and on with **W1BIH** about possibly renting his famous Curacao QTH for a future contest. Our thinking was that this would provide a super opportunity to find out first hand if "further south" really would make a difference. But John was not amenable to renting at that time, so we decided to give VP5 one more try. The result? Another second place finish as **VP5CW**, once again to a station further south.

At about that time Goose told me that there were suddenly rumors flying about that **W1BIH** was about to put the Curacao QTH up for sale. We discussed trying to find out more, and envisioned ourselves beating it to John's door to be the first with an offer. But talk is easier than action, and nothing happened. Indeed, at the next Dayton Hamvention, the walls of the hotel and arena were peppered with the "For Sale" ads for **PJ9JT**'s Curacao QTH. We *knew* it would be rapidly snapped up by some lucky ham or contest group.

But nothing happened -- no takers. Thus, the idea hatched in my mind that CCC might actually realistically be able to get the place. As a first step, we asked Tom, **W8TK**, who coincidentally had a vacation trip scheduled to Curacao, to go have a look at the QTH. He reported back that the island was very agreeable, but that the house, which he had visited with a realtor, was in such poor condition that in his opinion no quantity of Lysol and renovation work would ever recover the place to serviceability. Being dense, I decided to press a bit farther anyway, and planned a vacation trip for myself, Cindy, and her friend Jan in July of 1999, partly to get away from civilization, but mainly to check out John's QTH first hand.

I fell for the place immediately. The house is located in a small, quiet group of about 10 seaside homes, at the end of a dead end road, and all within the grounds of the *Coral Cliff Hotel*. There's a lot of ham history there, dating to Chet Brandon's ownership of the resort, and including the Radioteam Finland operations of 1990 and many other noted ham activities. John's place "felt right" to me -- a safe haven in a safe spot at the end of a quiet country road, with 100 feet of magnificent oceanfront and a world-beater view across the Caribbean toward Venezuela, only 35 miles away. By then the price had dropped some, and the dream seemed a bit more attainable. The house itself was indeed a fixer-upper. John and Mary had left the island rather abruptly because of a health scare, so food was left in the cabinets, and the rats and iguanas had helped themselves to the goodies and pretty much taken up permanent residence. There had been almost zero maintenance since.

In connection with that July trip, I had hauled down **W8TK**'s IC-765, a small desktop computer, an A-3S tribander, and some wire antennas. I operated **PJ9/W0CG** from West Point and had good luck on the air. The propagation was indeed amazing. I managed to find a place to buy a used monitor, set up a one-month Internet account, and enjoyed great connectivity from that exotic, far away place. Lots of swimming and sunning, and some radio, and several trips back to John's house -- it kept drawing me back.

Not all of our experiences were positive on that July trip. Our Avis rental car was stripped right under our kitchen window in the middle of the night. One new car and two nights later, we were hit again. Avis charged almost \$1000 of repair costs for two cars to my Visa, but after a few months of patient haggling with the insurance company, we managed to get all of that reimbursed by the Visa Gold card carrier.

While still on Curacao I did my arithmetic and determined that if we could convince each of 10 CCC members to flip in about 20 grand, we could buy the place as a ham clubhouse and be on the top of the DX world. Should be a piece of cake! I excitedly e-mailed the group for reactions, while still on the island, but then reality set in. Yes, everybody thinks it sounds like a lot of fun, and no, sorry, nobody was interested in a piece of a very distant and risky investment. Understandable.

Oh well. I obtained permission from **W1BIH** via e-mail to store the radio gear in his house for awhile, offered a rent payment which he kindly declined, and stashed the stuff above the kitchen cabinets. As the next tactic, I decided to try to put together a CCC operation from Curacao with the reasoning that if some of the group could actually see the QTH and experience the good propagation conditions, they would be more enthusiastic and might be willing to become part-owners.

Signal Point (continued on page 9)

Signal Point (continued from page 8)

Hence, we put on **PJ2C**, a Multi/Single operation for the CQWW SSB contest in October of 1999. I had made prior arrangements with the manager of the *Kadushi Cliffs Resort* to allow us to rent two villas and erect the antennas, and so we hauled MUCH more gear to Curacao, set up the operation in a frantic three days, and did only a fair job in the contest, losing out to the superior NA-Eur conditions, to stations with non-Field Day antennas, and suffering a gigantic score reduction for busted calls. (Maybe we had better stick to CW.) While there, Noel and **K8RF** and I went to **PJ9JT**. Dan and Noel were both very impressed with the place, but agreed that it was still overpriced, based on its condition and on the "down" real estate market on Curacao. I tried again to interest members of the group in shared ownership but again the realities and risks of foreign real estate ownership took their toll. We set up a contract with a secure commercial storage firm, stashed our now much larger pile of radio goodies in the storage, put the IC-765 at **PJ2MI**'s shack, and flew back home, discouraged with the poor score and the overall situation. Additionally, I left with a bad feeling about the "bond."

In order to get all of the equipment into the country for the **PJ2C** operation, I had been required to pre-post a \$5000 bond with customs. I did so out of my own pocket, and the deal was that I'd receive the money back after we departed, verifying that we removed all of the gear from the country. We carefully demonstrated to customs on departure that every single item, by serial number, was being removed. Not surprisingly, though, weeks and then months went by and no bond. Phone calls to the island did nothing. Finally, in desperation, I contacted a law firm. Also, I asked Korra Juliana, who had been our booking agent for our July 1999 stay, if she had any ideas on how we might proceed. Korra jumped on the project as if it were her own, embarrassed for her nation about the poor treatment we had received, and finally after nearly six months of haggling I received most of the bond back, posted to my account by wire transfer. I sent Korra a percentage of it in appreciation. Thus far, Curacao had NOT been very good to us.

During January - May of 2000, I was on research leave from my university job and Cindy and I moved to St John, U.S. Virgin islands, to work on my project and sample Caribbean living. We went there because we lucked into a long-term rental house on good terms and with short-notice availability. The island living agreed with us, and Cindy became increasingly convinced that that style of life could work, at least for part of the year. While there, we received word from the Curacao realtor that **PJ9JT** had been sold to a Dutch couple, who planned to bulldoze the house and put up an improved residence. Darn -- it had apparently been settled at a lower price, and we were very disappointed that we had not had a chance at that much lower price. But gone is gone, and that was that.

One day in March I was absent-mindedly scanning e-mails on St John when I came upon a message from **W1BIH** that knocked me off my chair. There was a good chance that the Dutch buyers might not make good on their offer, and would we be interested in the place at a new and even lower price?! Cindy agreed immediately that it was now definitely worth pursuing. I excitedly phoned the realty office on Curacao, and was told that the broker was in France, that the Dutch couple had been given until that Friday to make good on their offer or withdraw, and that I was to phone the broker at his cell phone number the following Monday. The following week that call did indeed go through, and I reached Geert while he was sailing down a highway in south-central France. He reported that no, the Dutch couple had NOT come up with the money, and that yes, the place was once again on the open market, but that he had a hot lead from a lawyer on Curacao who had been to look at it twice recently.

I then swung into high gear, trying once again to interest some of the CCC guys in a joint-ownership arrangement. Several indicated an interest, with Noel being the most interested. Based on those positive outcomes, I went to work very aggressively, finding and retaining a law firm on Curacao that could advise us on the mechanics of the sale, drafting the language of an initial offer to purchase, and trying to set up an inspection trip to go look again at the property. **W1BIH** was quite happy that he might be able to sell to hams, and was very patient with us as we worked on the deal. I invested something like four hours per day for several weeks in April and May on the project, setting up paperwork, making calls and sending FAXes and e-mails, researching insurance and tax laws, and looking for sources of money. It was clear early on that mortgage money was absolutely not available to purchase real estate on Curacao. No stateside bank would loan money for the purchase, and I dug VERY deep looking for it. Even worse, local Curacao banks had suspended real estate loans, even for local purchases by local citizens, because the economy on the island was so slow. Bottom line: no way to get mortgage money. We had the income to carry a loan, but we did not have the ready cash to buy outright, and could not get a mortgage.

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Finally, the best (and only) solution was a home equity loan from a stateside lender. Cindy and I had paid off our mortgage on our home in Ohio the year before, so we made application to re-mortgage our place to get the funds to purchase what was by then looking like about a 50% interest in **PJ9JT**, with others in the CCC group making up the other 50%. The loan process was long and complex, especially given that we were working from the Virgin Islands. In the meantime, we had been working with the Curacao attorneys on the terms necessary to set up an offshore corporation that would be based on Tortola. This corporation would actually own **PJ9JT**, and CCC members would be able to buy and sell proportional shares. During this period, we did some careful and patient negotiations back and forth through the realtor, and finally obtained a written agreement from WIBIH to sell at what we considered a fair price.

By July, we were back living in the States, and Noel and I went back to Curacao to have another look at the property. The poor condition of the place was even MORE shocking, and we both felt at that point like we had flipped out for even considering it at any price. We then made an even lower offer, based on the deterioration of the place since we had last visited it. WIBIH reacted negatively and declined to budge in response to our counter, given that we already had made an agreement to buy at a higher price. Soon afterward, for good and justifiable business and personal reasons, Noel elected to withdraw from the deal at the higher price, and Cindy and I found ourselves alone again.

In April, I had written the inviolable condition into the purchase contract that we could withdraw from the deal without penalty or prejudice if we were unable to obtain construction permits for two new towers (100 ft and 80 ft) as well as a retroactive permit for the existing tower, which had never been permitted. In July, I prepared a 30 page engineering specifications document for the building agency, and sent all of the paperwork to Korra, who had agreed to handle its submission to the permits agency. Noel and I made the application in July while still on Curacao, pecking out the form in Dutch on Korra's office typewriter with assistance from an English version of the form for which I had paid a stateside translator. In early August, Korra reported that the agency was asking for full size, to-scale blueprints and drawings, which **K8RF** heroically prepared using a CAD CAM system accessible through a friend of his in Cincinnati. (Would you believe that Rohn claimed not to have ANY blueprints of Rohn 55 tower components.) Dan FedExed the drawings to Curacao, and the waiting began.

Meanwhile, Cindy and I did and redid our math, swallowed hard, and decided that we would (barely) be able to handle the whole purchase on our own, as all other potential CCC partners had decided they could not get involved financially. I phoned the insurance company that was processing our home equity loan application and asked to double the requested loan amount. To my surprise, they not only did not laugh, but processed the request fairly quickly. (I won't bore you with the gory details of the reams of papers, FAXes, e-mails, and inspections needed to make the loan happen.) We made a 10% cash down payment and were on our way to having a QTH for CCC!

Then we waited... and waited, and waited for the permits to be issued. Korra sent frequent progress reports, and in that interim period we did much paperwork with the lawyers and came up with a functional CCC plan for how to operate the QTH. Doug, **K4LT**, who is a professional accountant, agreed to serve gratis as CCC accountant and he and I met several times to figure out the best tax and business arrangement for the group and the property. Based on his advice, I opened a checking account for a business we decided to call the "CG/Curacao Group" and started running all of the finances related to that house through this new account.

By early September, the loan was approved and the lender insisted that either they disburse the proceeds or the loan would be cancelled. So I accepted the six figure transfer into the CG/Curacao account and we began making payments on that loan three months before we even knew if we were going to actually buy the place or get the tower permits. No choice. Swallow hard and do it. I took advantage of the lull to build the CCC web site, trying to make it inviting, functional, and fully informative. Soon after the site was ready, I made up packets of invitation to membership, and they went out in the mail. **K4LT** was by far the quickest to sign on and provide a check, so Doug's check should by rights be framed and on the wall at the QTH. The concept of operation was that CCC members would pay the equivalent of \$25/month dues toward the cost of operating (but not purchasing) the place and would receive all dues back as rebates if they chose to rent it in the future. We quickly found ourselves with 19 members, and I designed our golf shirt using Anita Klein's CCC logo and had them made up by an Indiana embroidery contractor

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August-October found us making hundreds of communications back and forth trying to set up utility billing. I paid Korra for her help in doing this, just as we had done for her help in filing and monitoring the tower permit applications. Because we are not citizens, the utility companies initially said "no way" to providing us service. Korra worked relentlessly, making many trips to the offices of Kodela and Setel and finally, after threatening harsh actions, got them to agree to provide service if we would make large cash deposits up front and would agree to automatic billing to be drawn from a bank account that we would have to establish at a Curacao bank. We finally accomplished all of this and the billing was all transferred to our name. I kept a record of the e-mails, FAXes, Powers of Attorney, and FedEx document packs that went back and forth during this period of time. You simply would NOT believe it.

Finally, in late October, everything happened at once. The utilities were all granted, Korra picked up the approved tower permits from DROV and the Aviation Department, and we quickly set up the closing, with our Curacao lawyers representing us in absentia. On October 30 I wired six figures of cash to the escrow agent, and on 1 November the deed was executed at Willemstad, placing the QTH in ham radio hands for what we hope will be many years to some. None too soon, as I was ticketed to arrive on 9 November to begin trying to make the place habitable. That's ANOTHER story, and we'll chronicle the renovations in another newsletter.



The Curacao realtor Geert , W0CG, W9EFL, Geert's girlfriend, K4LT

K4LT cranking up the tower for the first time in many years



Jim, KP2L and W0CG working on plumbing.



Noel, W9EFL and some of the staff at Sunset Waters.