

Contest Gazette

Florida Contest Group



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From the President's Corner

By Chris Plumlee WF3C

Thanks to everyone for another extremely successful Orlando weekend. The 2018 Orlando Contest Dinner and the Golden Corral meeting were a great success. If I tried to thank everyone who helped out individually I'd inevitably miss someone and fill up my allotted space in the *Gazette* at the same time. However, the calendar moves inexorably onward toward the FQP at the end of April and toward Dayton after that. Those are the two events around which my spring ham radio calendar revolves.



The 2018 FQP will feature nine 1x1 stations whose suffixes spell "W D FOUR A H Z" in honor of WD4AHZ (SK). Because there will not be any duplicate letters, all nine stations will be mixed mode. K1TO and I are reaching out to prospective hosts now - look to the FQP website for information about the 1x1 hosts soon. Speaking of the FQP website, the counties on the air page should be active soon. Please post your intended operation there once the page is QRV - let's turn the whole state orange!

I expect to see a large WRTC-2018 presence at Dayton in May. Just a few weeks before the IARU contest in early July, I'm sure the competitors and organizers will be hard at work getting ready, planning, strategizing, and recruiting donors and volunteers. If you're planning to attend WRTC 2018 in Germany, this may be your last, best chance to speak to the organizers before you arrive in Germany. This would be a great time to network to find a station to operate while you're there, or plan your itinerary if you're going to stay in Europe for a while before or after the WRTC weekend.

If you have general questions about Dayton - which events are worth attending, logistics of getting around, etc., please let me know. I sincerely hope that if you're on the fence about going to Dayton for the Hamvention and the contesters' events at the Crowne Plaza that you find a way to go. It's great to have a big FCG presence at all the events, and the opportunity to ragchew with contesters from all over the world is not to be missed.

If you missed the Contest Dinner this year, the FCG was officially presented with the Medium Club gavel for the 2016 ARRL 10m Contest. Congratulations to everyone for their hard work to put together a great club score! For those of us who endured the 2017 10m contest, it's nice to have a reminder of when conditions were better on 10m.

Congratulations to K1DG, W4PA, and AD4Z for their high scores in the Orlando CW Pileup Competition. Apologies if anyone didn't get the message about the event and location - next year look for more signage and publicity. A huge thank you to W4LT for his hard work adapting the Windows XP software package from the KCDXC (who run the pileup competition at Dayton every year) to a mixed Win7/Win10 environment and making the scoreboard system work as well.

Enormous thanks as well to N3ZN, Gifts4Hams.com, and Expert Linears for their donations of prizes for the pileup contest. As published previously on the reflector, the first prize N3ZN ZN-9A paddle (with cover by Gifts4Hams) was won by K1DG. W4PA won the second prize - an Expert Linears gift certificate, and AD4Z won the third prize - a paddle cover from Gifts4Hams. Congratulations to the winners and to all participants. If you didn't win, I hope the opportunity to practice before the Dayton Pileup Contest stands you in good stead there.

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I'm coming to the end of my second year as FCG president, and I continue to be honored and humbled to be able to serve the membership as your president. The club thrives on feedback from the membership, and I'm happy to take any feedback on any club activity or event under advisement. Don't forget - we are also always soliciting nominations for the FCG Hall of Fame and the Southeast USA Contesters HOF. If you know of anyone who would be a good fit for either HOF, please send an email to the officers so that we can discuss.

Here's looking forward to the spring and summer contest season! As a reminder, if you're not going to Germany for WRTC in July please get on the bands and try to work the WRTC stations. If past editions of WRTC from Europe are any indication the WRTC stations will get more points for intercontinental QSOs than for EU QSOs, so they will be looking for North Americans where possible.

73,
Chris WF3C
President, Florida Contest Group

FCGer N4CJ has Sebring Home for Sale

June, M0BUE, and Chris, N4CJ (G4BUE) have reluctantly decided to sell their Florida home at 312 Quail Avenue, Sebring, FL 33872. June has been having health problems that have prevented them from visiting Florida for the past two winters.

The property is on a standard level urban plot and has two bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, a kitchen, a long through lounge/dining room, another small room presently used as the radio shack, a lanai (screened porch) on the rear of the property with a utility/store room off it, and an integral car port. A lock-up aluminium shed is in back yard with a two-section 40 feet crank-up tower with a two element Step-ir on.

A new A/C system was installed a few years ago and a complete replacement roof was done earlier this year. I would leave all the coax and other cable runs from the shack to the tower, etc, if a ham bought the property, which is being offered fully furnished. The price is negotiable but is likely to be under \$100,000.

Please email Chris at <chris@g4bue.com> who can provide more information."

Contributors to This Edition

WF3C, K5KG, W4LT, W4EE, W4OZK, K1DG, W1YL, K9VV/NP2X, N4CJ, Contest Update, Mike Schinkel

Welcome Aboard



K4EDO - Eldridge Outen Jr., 823E8 Alderman Road, Melrose FL 32666 e-mail: tendave@yahoo.com

KB0SDQ - Douglas Caruso Jr., 305 Lee Street, Oldsmar FL 34677 e-mail: drcaruso@verizon.net

N2JF - Jeff Jayson, 235 Palmetto Dunes Circle, Naples FL 34113 e-mail: n2jf@aol.com

N4ESI - David Allen, 778 Badger Drive NE, Palm Bay FL 32905 e-mail: dave@n4esi.com

AC4WO - Brian Bullard, 2627 Skipton Ct., Jacksonville FL 32225 e-mail: Brian2@yahoo.com

AF3K - John Howell, 723 Willowwood Lane, Naples FL 34108 e-mail: jhowell@howell.com

N7RCS - Jim Smallwood, 1848 Ardmore St. NE, Palm Bay FL 32907 e-mail: n7rcs@arrl.net

K2SG - Tony Debiasi, 533 NW Cherry Oak Way, Jensen Beach FL 34957 e-mail: k2sg@comcast.net

Events Calendar

Florida QSO Party 1600Z, Apr 28 to 0159Z, Apr 29 and 1200Z-2159Z, Apr 29

New England QSO Party 2000Z, May 5 to 0500Z, May 6 and 1300Z-2400Z, May 6

CQ WW WPX Contest, CW 0000Z, May 26 to 2359Z, May 27

ARRL June VHF Contest 1800Z, Jun 9 to 0300Z, Jun 11

All Asian DX Contest, CW 0000Z, Jun 16 to 2400Z, Jun 17

ARRL Field Day 1800Z, Jun 23 to 2100Z, Jun 24

RAC Canada Day Contest 0000Z-2359Z, Jul 1

IARU HF World Championship 1200Z, Jul 14 to 1200Z, Jul 15

NAQP RTTY 1800Z, Jul 21 to 0600Z, Jul 22

NAQP RTTY 1800Z, Jul 21 to 0600Z, Jul 22

North American QSO Party, CW 1800Z, Aug 4 to 0600Z, Aug 5

WAE DX Contest, CW 0600Z Aug 11 to 2359Z Aug 12

Orlando Activities Summary

Contest Dinner

Charlie K1XX handled ticket selling and distribution with help from Sebastian W4AS keeping a list of tickets sold on the FCG website.

Kay Wagner handled the food layout and distribution with the help of W4LIS and KI4GDL and possibly others. That operation went well. We enjoyed great barbeque from 4 Rivers Smokehouse. Thanks to Kay, Lisa, and Michele, as well as Jennifer from the American Legion for the assistance setting up the food and beer distribution. A big thanks as well to N4GI for his help facilitating the dinner from setup to cleanup and for providing two kegs of N4GI Brewery's finest 8877 amber ale that was enjoyed enthusiastically by many participants.

Dan K1TO opened the after dinner activities and introduced featured speaker John K1AR. John talked about his life in contesting and touched on contesting ethics as well

ARRL SE Division Director Greg W4OZK presented Chris WF3C with a gavel. It was won by the FCG for the top club score in the 2016 10 Meter Contest Medium Category.

K1TO introduced Yaesu Rep Teddy HI3T who was here to present the Yaesu FTDX-3000 to the winner of the ticket lottery. Teddy picked the ticket from the ticket drum, and it was set aside during the drawing of intermediate prizes. The winner of the grand prize was Lisa W4LIS. Thanks again to K7BV and all the folks at Yaesu for their continued and growing support of the Orlando Contest Dinner. It's no exaggeration to say that we couldn't do this dinner without them, and their support of the FCG really helped this event take off way back in 2010.

Pileup Contest

Lu W4LT set up and managed the pileup contest. He took Windows XP software from the KCDXC and somehow made it work on a mix of Windows 7 and Windows 7 computers at the American Legion after spending countless hours troubleshooting it at home.

Approximately 22 attendees attempted the contest. The winner was YCCC visitor Doug K1DG, no stranger to pileups or the KCDXC pileup competition with 57 correct calls. Doug was followed closely by Scott W4PA. Mr. Vibroplex was able to correctly log 52 correct calls out of the cacophony. Third was Julio AD4Z with 43 correct calls. Close behind Julio was Jim K8MR with 40 and Fred K9VV (masquerading as KP2RUM) with 39. Following were WP2B, N4KM, KU8E, NN7CW, N4FP and NF4A scoring 38, 36, 36, 35 and 32 respectively.

N3ZN of n3znkeys.com donated the grand prize for the competition, a ZN-9 iambic paddle. Jerry and Tom from Gifts4Hams tagged on to Tony's donation and threw in a certificate for a free laser-engraved paddle cover to fit the ZN-9 for the winner. Doug K1DG was quite pleased with the paddle. He and the other ops at VP2MSS made extensive use of it during their M/S entry in the ARRL DXCW contest.

Expert Linears donated a second coupon of the show price of one of their amplifiers to serve as the second prize, which was won by Scott W4PA.

Julio AD4Z took home the third prize, which was a certificate good for a laser-engraved paddle cover from Gifts4hams.

Saturday Luncheon Meeting

We had 29 attendees. They included K1AR, K1DG, K1KNQ, K1TO, K4JC, K5KG, K8MR, K9ES, KD4BRJ, KE1F, KE4TRE, KI4YGT, KI4GDL, KU8E, KX4TT, N3ND, N4EK, N4FP, N4KM, N4LZ, N4TB, N4TUU, N4UU, N4WO, NW4DX, NX4N, W4EE, WB2VYK, and WF3C.

Chris WF3C opened the meeting, and reviewed briefly plans for upcoming contests, including the ARRL DX CW taking place the following weekend. High among the plans for all attendees was the Florida QSO Party. Chris also discussed the new ARRL process to validate the club roster for the purposes of determining the club score in ARRL contests.

To summarize...if K4LQ or WF3C reaches out to you with questions about how many ops at a multi-op were FCG members, or where exactly you operated from if you didn't operate from home, please don't be alarmed. There is a new process to audit club participation against a roster submitted by K4LQ. Per ARRL rules, > 50% of multi-op operators must be FCG members in order for the score to count for FCG..

Our station location must also be within a 150 mile circle around a defined center (defined as a six character Maidenhead grid square). Our circle center remains in the same place, and unfortunately our panhandle members are still outside the circle for ARRL contests, though many of them are now within the circle for CQ contests thanks to CQ adopting a larger 175 mile circle. This new process was implemented as a result of some protests filed by and against other clubs, and we don't anticipate a lot of post-contest litigation and protests.

To wrap up the meeting, Dan K1TO gave out the plaques to those winners in last year's FQP who were present at the luncheon. They included Chris NX4N, Kevin N4KM, Terry N4TB, Jack K1KNQ and George K5KG.



FCGer KH6QI circa 1948 when she was station engineer at KPOA in Honolulu, Hawaii. Who is KH6QI you say? None other than our own Ellen White, W1YL ! Great picture Ellen, thanks for sharing.



The World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC) — <http://www.wrtc2018.de/en> — will be held in Wittenberg, Germany on July 12-16, 2018. The FCG donated two tents for the WRTC, one of which is in the memory of **Ron Wetjen, WD4AHZ**. Ron with his German heritage had a special fondness for the German contesters and their contests, and was looking forward to WRTC being in Germany. Unfortunately Ron became a Silent Key in May 2016.

Several FCG members will be participating in WRTC 2018. Fred, **K9VV/NP2X** and Julio, **AD4Z/HI3A** will be competitors, and Charlie, **NF4A** and Rich, **K1CC** will be referees. Dan, **K1TO**, and many contesters will be going to Germany in July to be a part of the event as visitors or volunteers to enjoy the camaraderie and excitement of it all. (My XYL and I will be going as visitors.)

There is a three-day trip to Wroclaw, Poland following WRTC that is being arranged by Rich, **K1CC**. My XYL and I plan on going, and others who have expressed interest in the Wroclaw visit are Fred **K1VR & XYL**, Ralph **K9ZO & XYL**, Luc **PY8AZT & XYL**, Dennis, **W1UE**, and Gerry, **W1VE**. Everyone is welcome to join the trip, so if you would like more details, please let Rich, **K1CC** or me know.

I am also interested in knowing other FCG members who are planning on going to WRTC, so if you are going, please let me know. Again, if you would like more details on the Wroclaw side-trip, please let us know.

73, George **K5KG**
giwagner@k5kg.com

Orlando Contest Dinner Pictures



Left: Fred K9VV / NP2X gets his ticket from Treasurer Charlie K1XX



Two attendees sample N4GI's 8877 Amber Ale



Above: Kay Wagner, Michele KJ4GDL and Lisa W4LIS preparing to dispense the food



Chris WF3C and friend sample the free drinks



Chow Line in action !



L-R Bob WA4AOB, Fred WW4LL and Gerry WA6POZ



Above L-R: Jim K5AUP and XYL



Above L-R Wayne N4FP and Marcia, WB2VYK



Above L-R: Blake N4GI and Fred K9VV



Above: Vince K4JC



Above: Chris NX4N



Above R-L: Rich NQ4I, Jim KM4HI and NQ4I's XYL Georgeanne



Above: Colorful visitors Phil WA1ZAM / N2HX and XYL



Above L-R: Martin N4UU, Pete N8PR



Above: L-R Fred WW4LL and Charlie AA4CF

Right: Four views of the banquet room while Dan K1TO was speaking.





Passionate Speaker John Dorr K1AR in action



Above: Teddy holds up the ticket box in preparation for picking out the winning ticket for the Yaesu FTDX-3000 Grand Prize.



Above: ARRL SE Division Director Greg W4OZK presented Chris WF3C with a gavel for an FCG win of the 2016 10 Meter Contest, Medium Category,



Who will win the Grand Prize? Waiting.....Waiting.....



Dan K1TO introduces Yaesu Rep Teddy HI3T, who was here to present the grand raffle prize.



The prize was won by Lisa W4LIS. above seen tuning the radio.

CW both as a Competitive Sport and an IT Challenge Behind the scenes at the CW Competition at the Contest Dinner

By Lu Romero W4LT



It all started innocently enough...

I get a call from Chris WF3C, El Presidente... "Hey Lu! You're my IT go to guy!" He says. "Ever hear of the CW Competition that is held at Crown Plaza during Hamvention?" he asks. Why, yes. We tried that here one year, but it was a little difficult to manage and score manually, I told him. "Well, here is an opportunity for you to make it easy" Chris continued... So I listened.

I didn't hang up.

I listened intently.

Chris goes on to explain that K0VXU, the guy who usually runs this competition, has had a personal family issue that precludes him from bringing his road show to Hamcation. "But he has all the software" Chris says... "All we need is to supply some computers and load the software and away we go!" Chris excitedly proclaims. "I figure it will be Plug and Play and with your computer skill, it should be a breeze!"

Plug and Play. Famous last words that resemble "The check is in the mail" and "It's only a few lines of code"...

But I was interested. I mean, how hard can running this software be? It was written by a ham, same guy that wrote CQ/X. It's just a network of laptops hooked together to run this contest simulation from an audio file, and the players log the calls when they hear them on the computers. Then the software displays a "race" on a separate Scoreboard screen that dynamically shows who is copying better than the next guy. Really cool idea!

It's an automated version of what I came up with a few years ago with a paper log, an audio player, a headset mixer and two headsets... But so much better, with instant scoring and instant gratification of winners and losers with no waiting for me to manually score each log! And the computers do all the heavy lifting for the scoring, as computers are supposed to do!

And a non IT oriented guy, K0VXU, makes it go...

How hard can it be?

So I accepted the challenge. Then the "fun" began

Russ, K0VXU, a very wonderful, helpful and solid person, was terrific on the telephone. "I have 8 computers on a network, and they all run the software just fine. I will even send you the configuration files, so all you have to do is install the Host and Player and Race Display computers, throw in the Init files, plug in the IP addresses and it will just come right up" he says. I ask what the computer hardware requirements are... "Mine run on old Dell 620 machines under Windows XP"... Well, it runs on humble hardware under XP... "How hard should this be to set up?", I say to myself... "OK, send me the stuff, and I will gather some hardware to run it on"

I tell Russ. "Thanks for the help!"

I only have 3 laptops and a couple of stick HDMI computers available for this effort, so I ask Chris to abscond with some additional hardware. Chris comes up with three more computers, two desktops swiped from N4WW's shack and his backup logger laptop.

Awesome! I have hardware! Then, in an email, I get a zip file from Russ with the software and initialization files. I rip the Wireless router and 8 port switch out of the TARC Repeater system's internet connectivity rack that I'm building, add a couple of Ethernet cables from Amazon, swipe my Local VE7CC spot node and the bedroom Netflix stick computers, then meet Chris at the TARC Clubhouse and get the rest of the equipment from him, and we are off to the races!

Bringing all of the gear home, I find I don't have enough room for all this stuff on my bench in the shack. Well, my son is away at Gainesville Gatorland University, so I clean off the top of his dresser and move the stuff off his desk and create a nice little Computer Lab in his bedroom, much to the chagrin of my wife who warns me not to get too used to using this room for "my junk".

I get all the hardware installed... But, since I have a mixture of Windows 7 and Windows 10 machines, and not XP, things don't look quite right. Lots of error codes... Stuff doesn't communicate right. I call Russ and he tells me that no, they have never tried to run this software under 7 and 10, but it should run OK, there is nothing special about it. We talk to Chuck, N05W, and he agrees there should be no problem.

I swallow hard after this call...

So I go ahead and re-install the software into my fully operational Windows 7/Windows 10 network.... AND THE SOFTWARE AGAIN FAILS WITH MULTIPLE ERRORS!

But, how can this be? I have a fully functioning Windows networking environment!... I can move files from machine to machine just fine! I can play music on all the machines, except the server, that doesn't have a sound card, just fine!

A couple of frustrating days later, I again call Russ and Chuck. We discuss. Maybe I need to be in "XP Compatibility Mode". I try that... No go! Chuck says the error messages mean that the modules are not communicating over the LAN.... But I have a fully functioning LAN environment! Maybe it's the Windows Firewalls... I had opened the ports that the software required, but maybe... So I turn them ALL OFF... Still nothing! Could be the virus scanners... So I disable them on every machine... And still nothing! Maybe it's that it doesn't like the LAN speed (I had a GigE switch), so I replace the switch with an old Netgear 100 Base T switch... Still nothing! Maybe it is that I have an older version of the player software... Chuck sends me the latest one... Nothing!

I think about giving up... To admit defeat by the mysterious dark side of Bill Gates' infernal invention... I call Chris and warn him I may not be able to make this fly...

And he says "But I believe in you"...

Well, with that kind of faith, how could I let him down? One more time, with feeling!

Finally, about 80 hours into this project, having tried everything, before I raise the white flag of surrender and admit that a lowly machine has defeated me, I decide to completely open up every machine's network connectivity completely! Against my better IT judgment, ignoring all that I have practiced and learned in the past 25 years of safe computing, I disable every file security setting on each computer, giving the Network System user complete and full control of every file in each machine, thus leaving them totally naked to the world!

AND IT WORKS! EVERYTHING WORKS! NO MORE ERRORS! I CAN PLAY AND LOG AND SEE THE FAKE CALLS I ENTER WINNING AND LOSING AND THE BUGLE PLAYS AT THE START AND THE PLAYER POSITIONS ARE RANKED AND EVERYTHING!!!

I'm elated! I show my wife my victorious achievement! She yawns and rolls her eyes! I run the contest over and over – 13 times! I then think that 13 is an unlucky number, so why tempt fate? I run it 14 times! Everything works!

I tear everything apart, carefully label things, create a very nice layout diagram, collect and print the instructions and layout operational settings and pack it all up in a box that once contained two Icom IC7300's just for the ironic flavor of it.

And off we go to Hamcation and the American Legion.

I arrive one day early. I contact the lovely Jennifer at the Legion and she lets me set up early. I run my wires, build my network and test, test, test... And everything works except the wireless connection to a TV set that was supposed to be set up downstairs. The issue is probably that the Legion windows use metal film for heat abatement... And I can't get the puny wireless signal to travel from the second floor to the ground floor. After fighting this for about an hour, I surrender to the laws of Murphy and go without the downstairs display. The single one upstairs will have to do.

People begin streaming in to the upstairs conference room. I can do three competitors at a time... And everything hangs together for the entire competition! I get no errors! I show the racing display in the little lounge I set up outside the conference room. I watch with envy as the cream of the crop of FCG CW Contest ops come up and try their hands at the contest. Everybody loves the thing... Everybody has fun! Everybody leaves with big smiles on their faces!

And Chris says “This worked great! Let’s do it again next year!”

It looked so easy! It was lots of fun! It was all Plug and Play!

Just remember to pay no attention to that man behind the curtain... You know, the one with the gray hair and the bags under his eyes...



Above: Lu W4LT, the man behind the curtain!

(Some of the) Competitors



Above: Wolf NN7CW

2018 Hamcation CW Pileup Scores – Final Results

<u>Contestant</u>	<u>Correct Calls</u>	<u>Characters</u>
K1DG	57	268
W4PA	52	241
AD4Z	43	199
K8MR	40	191
KP2RUM	39	183
HI3A	38	177
WP2B	38	176
N4KM	36	172
KU8E	36	168
NN7CW	36	167
N4FP1	35	163
NF4A	32	160
NX4N	28	127
W5SJ	27	133
K5KG	27	130
AA4CF	22	105
N4KS	18	84
NP4G	13	62



Above: Chris NX4N



Above: Fred K9VV / NP2X



Above L-R Julio AD4Z, George K5KG, Jeff KU8E
 Below: Jeff KU8E



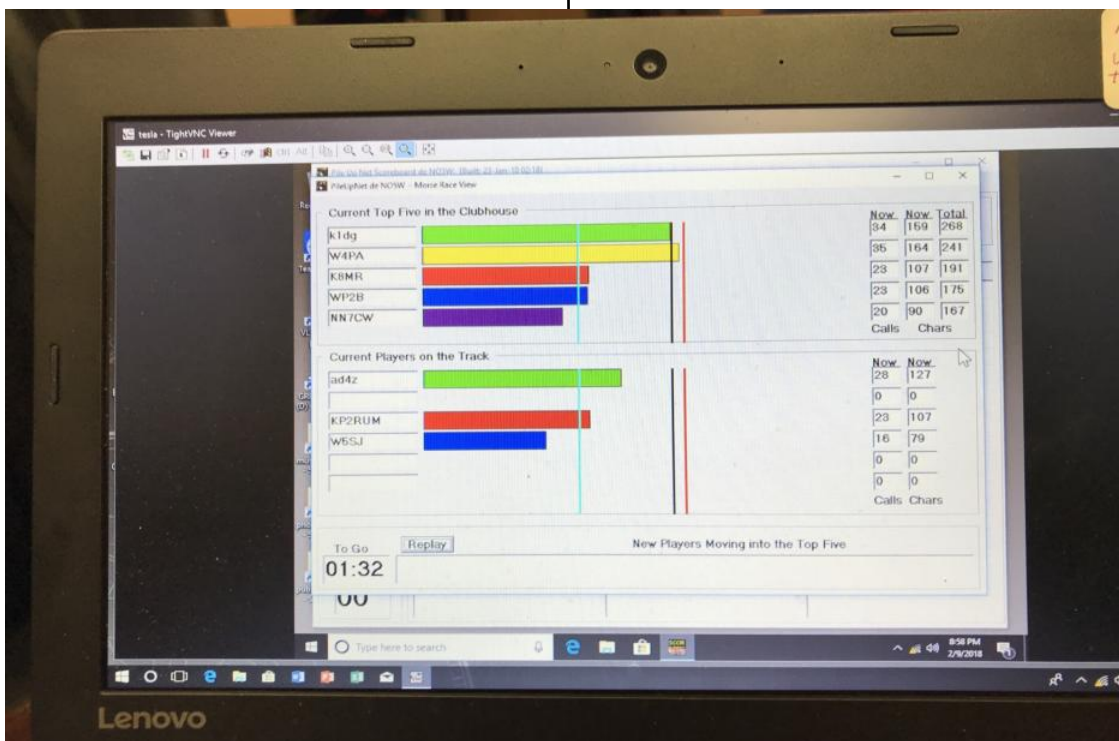
Above: Wayne N4FP



Above Jose NP4G



Above: Julio AD4Z



The Scoreboard

Orlando Luncheon Meeting Pictures



Above: Chris WF3C conducts the Meeting
Below: Attendees shown from different positions



K1TO Gives Out Plaques Earned during the 2017 FQP at Orlando FCG Meeting Recipients Shown Below



Above Middle - Right : Chris NX4N, Kevin N4KM



Above Right: George K5KG



Above Right: Terry N4TB



Above Right: Jack K1KNQ

Notes from The ARRL Contest Update

Attention *CW Skimmer 2.0* software users! You'll want to download and update your configuration with a new 'patt3ch.lst' file to recognize the Z6 (Kosovo) prefix. *VE3NEA Skimmer Server* users are also getting the update - *Skimmer Server 1.6* and *RTTY Skimmer Server 1.3* have been released, both including the capability to spot non-ITU-assigned prefixes. Visit the [VE3NEA website](http://VE3NEA.com) for the updates.

OPERATING TIP

Always include a Space at the end of your RTTY messages

It's accepted practice of put a space at the beginning of RTTY messages to separate valid characters from any spurious decodes preceding them, and to take advantage of the Unshift on Space (USOS) features of many modern RFTTY decoders. It's also wise to put a space AFTER each message, so that any subsequent spurious decodes are separated from the messages. This improves readability and makes copying message text by mouse movement or clicking easier for the receiving operator. Bonus: Don't use too many linefeeds, which can cause the other operator to chase the text around the screen. (Inspired by Dave K2YG and others on the RTTY e-mail reflector).

The VP2MKG Story

By George Wagner K5KG



Montserrat is a beautiful Caribbean island, but unique in that it is the only Caribbean island to have suffered from volcanic eruptions in recent history. Montserrat's capital city, Plymouth, was completely destroyed and two-thirds of the island's population forced to flee after July 1995 when the previously dormant Soufriere Hills volcano erupted. In subsequent years, eruptions have continued, leaving over half of the island — the south end's "exclusion zone" — uninhabitable. In all, nineteen persons lost their lives in these eruptions. In a 1997 eruption, farmers tending their fields on the side of the volcano were unable to escape the rapid pyroclastic flows that were said to have been in excess of 100 mph.

The city of Plymouth has been slowly buried by ash flows over the years. Only the top floors of many of its multi-story buildings are visible, and many other lesser buildings are totally covered with ash, boulders and debris. Our group was fortunate to have arranged a police-escorted visit to the exclusion zone, during which we were given permission to walk among several of the restricted areas — an experience we surely will always remember. Many years ago, my family and I toured Pompeii, the ancient Roman town near Naples that was destroyed by an eruption from Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79. It would be an interesting study to research the comparisons between Pompeii and Plymouth in terms of populations, areas of destruction, lives lost, etc., but in the interest of completing this article, I will leave that exercise to someone else. What I do recall about Pompeii, however, was that the bodies — their shapes at least — of those killed are clearly visible in the walks about the town. There is nothing like this when touring the ruins of Plymouth. Today, walking around Plymouth is a trip back to the day this all happened. Ledger pages are lying around the office in the destroyed resort hotel; rusty shopping carts remain in the abandoned market, disintegrating fan motors are lying about, etc. An obvious photo op was to take our pictures standing next to a huge boulder that could have only been tossed there from Mt. Soufriere so many miles away.

Today, Montserrat is a vibrant island, with the total of its commerce, residents, and visitors on the north end of the island. We were told that prior to the eruptions; few would have considered living in the north. However, with the total destruction in the south, there were only two choices: leave the island or move north. Residents did both. Many moved to the UK or other places, or relocated to the north if they were fortunate enough find shelter or acquire land on which to build a home. Many businesses, of course, did not recover, but some did. Angelo's grocery where we saw the old rusty shopping carts is now a vibrant market in the north. And today's popular breakfast/lunch place, the Attic, was once on the top floor of a building in Plymouth. There is some tourism in Montserrat, but with lack of a large airport to accommodate larger aircraft from Antigua or other places, tourism will be limited. A puddle jumper flight from Antigua is only fifteen minutes, but with the gusty mountain winds on approach to Montserrat's small strip, landing can be a nail biter.

Now to our story. Charlie Carroll, K1XX, and his wife, Martha, had gone to Montserrat for the past four years for Charlie to work the ARRL DX SSB contest. In recent years, Charlie has invited me to go along, but for this or that reason, I declined. This year, however, my personal planets aligned, so I accepted. Charlie also extended the invitation to a group of friends to work the ARRL DX CW contest on the weekend prior to the ARRL DX SSB contest. So, we signed up for the challenge: Doug Grant, K1DG, Craig Clark, K1QX, Marty Durham, W1MD and me. Travel arrangements were made, and after much discussion among us, equipment and antenna plans were finalized for the CW contest

Two stations would be configured for Multi-Two operation:

Two Elecraft K3's, one Elecraft KPA500/KAT500, and one SPE Expert 1.3K-FA. Dunestar and ICE bandpass filters

Antennas

- TH-6 triband yagi
- 40 m phased Inverted Vees
- 80 m Inverted L with folded counterpoise
- 160 m Inverted L with folded counterpoise
- Two phased K9AY receiving loops

The original plan for amplifiers was to have two B26 RF2K kits that Charlie was constructing. The testing of these amps, however, turned out to be problematic, making them unavailable for prime time. This left us short one amp only days before the trip. George, K2DM, came to our rescue with the offer of his SPE Expert amp. Fortunately, this was a unit that George wanted to have at Gingerbread Hill, so in return for us taking the amp down for him, we were able to use the amp for our operation. It performed beautifully, with one minor exception; we could not figure out to activate its internal antenna tuner. Reading the manual did not reveal the secret, but after a few phone calls to SPE rep, Bill, W5SJ, it was finally revealed that one had to put the amp in standby to cause the tuner to activate. (Whoda thunk it?)

My plan was to arrive in Montserrat on Tuesday prior to the contest. However, due to long lines at Antigua immigration, I missed my flight to Montserrat by a few minutes, and had to fly over the next day. When I arrived the team had completed nearly all of the equipment and antenna preparations. Work was still going on to tune the 80m inverted L, and set up the two stations. Once the stations were ready, we tested them for interstation interference that we quickly discovered. Curing the extensive interference, however, turned out to be a challenge. Completely eliminating this interference was absolutely necessary, as any degree of it would hamper a multi-two operation. The better part of Thursday and Friday was spent addressing the problem, but to no avail. Numerous combinations of ferrites and stubs were tried, but we were unable to find a solution. Strangely enough, our CW note on the interference has a strangely rough sound, the cause of which we could not identify or explain. After much deliberation, we decided to change our category to be multi-single

Our QTH was the ever-popular Gingerbread Hill location owned by David and Clover Lea, an American couple who immigrated to Montserrat many years ago. David and Clover have become a fixture on the island, and have reared their children and grandchildren there. Their Gingerbread Hill property consists of their homes as well as a beautiful three-story home and smaller “mango cottage” that they rent out to visitors. George, K2DM, has worked with David since 2006 to equip the three-story home for ham radio operations. Since then hams from around the world have operated from it, both for contests and casual operating. A 60 foot crank-up tower and a TH-6 yagi, rotor, and a supply of coax and antenna hardware are available for the hams to use. <http://gingerbreadhill.com/>

A day or two after the ARRL DX CW contest, Craig, Doug and Marty returned home, and I stayed for another week to work some DX and the following weekend’s CQ 160 SSB contest. When I go off shore to work a contest, I always like to stay a few days more to “run the pileups”. It’s a fun thing to do and satisfies the need to feel “rare”. In addition, it helps others improve their band-country counts, especially on the WARC bands.

During the week I had to move my station location twice due to some lodging complications, but nothing serious. Charlie helped me put up an OCF dipole to work the WARC bands, and I still had access to antennas we had used in the contest. I managed to put in twenty-six hours of operation, and the rest of the time was devoted to improving the tuning on the 160m meter inverted L, reading, relaxing, and going out for some wonderful island meals with Charlie and Martha.

My daily VP2MKG operation netted 1,562 QSOs, the majority of which were on CW, although I did have two goods SSB runs totaling 204 QSOs on 20m. Best DX (distance) worked were 160m – 6 European Russians, 80m – JA8EAT, 60m – OM3EY & SP9RPW, 30m – several VKs, 20m – HS, KH2, RW0, and several JAs, and 17m – A62E.

160m running 500w and 160m Inv L— Outside of the CQ 160 SSB contest that Charlie and worked, my best night on 160m meters was the evening of February 22/23, during which I made 116 contacts: 79 in NA, 34 in EU and 3 in SA. Best DX by distance were 6 Eastern Russians and four Ukrainians. My only other 160m night was February 26, and I worked only 17 stateside stations. Total: 96 NA, 34 EU, 3 SA.

80m running 500w and 80m Inv L— Worked a total of 96 stations, with my best night being February 20th when I worked 66 stations. Best DX by distance were 6 Eastern Russians and four Ukrainians, similar to 160m. Total: 46 NA, 18 EU, 2 AF

60m — I was encouraged by W8GEX and SP9RPW to work 60m, a band for which I was not familiar. Using the 80m Inv L, I was able to work 10 stations, with the best DX being SP9RPW and OM3EY. I did not hear or work W8GEX. The other eight stations were stateside.

40m running 500w and 40m inv V or OCF dipole— Worked at total of 328 stations, with my best DX being JA8EAT, 3D2EU and UN9L, followed by a couple dozen Eastern Russians. 215 NA, 91 EU, 17 SA, 1 OC, AS 2, AF 1.

30m running 500w and OCF dipole — Worked 63 stations, which was disappointing that there were not more. I was hoping for more activity on the WARC bands, but it just wasn’t there. Best DX by distance was 3 VKs, 3D2EU, OM3EY and SM6CUK. Total: 46 NA, 9 EU, 4 SA and 4 OC. My VP2M license specified a 1kw power limit for all amateur bands, so I ran the full 500w of my KPA500, not the 200w limit we have in the U.S.

20m running 500w and TH6 fixed north — Made 865 Qsos. Best DX was HS3LSE, KH2TJ and a string of JAs. Totals: 417 NA, 379 EU, 43 AS, 19 SA, 6 AF and 1 OC.

17m running 500w on the OCF dipole — Like 30m, there was not much activity on this band. Best DX was A62E. Totals: 43 NA, 25 EU, 1 AS, and 1 SA.

15m running 500w on TH6 pointing north. Made a crushing 34 Qsos; 30 Stateside, and 4 VEs. What more can I say?

In summary, it was an outstanding trip with a wonderful group of friends, all of whom are excellent operators with a wide range of technical skills and knowledge of contesting. And a special thanks goes to Charlie who provided all of my transportation [and antennas] and, along with Martha saw to it that I was welcome in joining them at a variety of local restaurants. The owners of Gingerbread Hill were incredibly courteous and helpful to us in every way, and accommodating the special needs that only a bunch of hams would have! And it would not be complete without mentioning the friendliness and welcome we received everywhere we went from the Montserratians. They couldn't have been nicer.

VP2MSS ARRL DX CW Report by Doug, K1DG

We had hoped to start the contest on 20, but it was dead at 00z and we started on 40. 20 came back to life in the 01z hour, and we spent most of the second hour there. The first 4 hours were 175, 196, 186, and 195. The CBS program reports that our best hour was 247 (Saturday, 15z on 15M), and the worst was 13z on Sunday with a measly 15 Qs. It's interesting to note that the same operator was in the chair for both of those hours. 20M was so packed Sunday morning that we were forced way up to 14115 (and V47T was above us). It was surprising to us that 40M stayed usable several hours after sunrise (1020z), with some Qs in the 13z hour on Sunday.

The 5652 QSOs were made with 2634 different stations. 89 guys worked us on all 6 bands, getting lucky during the brief 10-meter openings. No W6 or W7 stations were worked on 10. ND and SD were the most elusive of the states, worked on 3 bands each. We didn't work NT, YT, and NU on any band, and LB only worked on 20.

The log was uploaded to LoTW 10 days after the contest, and produced over 3600 confirmations (about 63%). If you want a paper card, send an SASE to K1QX.



Doug K1DG standing by the boulder that was blasted from the Soufriere Hills volcano many miles away.



Left: A photo of the actual eruption of the volcano that destroyed Plymouth as it was happening in July 1995.

Photo Credit: Mike Schinkel on Flickr.com, Mike Schinkel.com



The Soufriere Hills Volcano as it looks today



Left: Marty, WIMD, with Montserrat map that shows the RESTRICTED AREA in the South, as defined by the red line across the map. Photo by K1DG



Right: Resort before and after the volcano blew



Gingerbread Hill



ARRL DX CW Contest Station



Marty W1MD dreaming of rare DX



Craig K1QX running the pileups



Enjoying another island meal:
L-R Martha, Charlie, Doug, Marty, Craig and Judy



VP2MKG Station



The 60 ft tower and TH-6 at the Gingerbread Hill house.



The beautiful shoreline at Little Bay



Sunset over VP2M



Above: L-R Our team: Marty, W1MD, Craig, K1QX, Doug, K1DG, Charlie, K1XX, George, K5KG

Florida Contest Group

Chris Plumblee WF3C
President
4719 Fontana Street
Orlando FL 32807
Chris.plumblee@gmail.com

George Wagner, K5KG
V.P. Operations
5113 Higel Avenue
Sarasota FL 34242
k5kg@k5kgcom

Dan Street, K1TO,
V.P. Florida QSO Party
9993 289th Street East
Myakka City, FL 34251
k1to@aol.com

Charles Carroll, K1XX
Treasurer
P O Box 428
Grant FL 32949
k1xx@k1xx.com

Fred Perkins, K4LQ
Secretary/Newsletter Editor
3437 Lake Josephine Drive
Sebring FL 33875
fperkins@centurylink.net