



Contest Gazette

Florida Contest Group



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From the President's Corner

By Chris Plumlee W4WF



Greetings from quarantine! I hope that you're able to shelter at your home or another safe place with your family and loved ones close, but not too close, as the quarantine stretches on to an uncertain future. We were sad when Governor DeSantis ordered residents and visitors to Florida to stay at home and not drive unnecessarily during the month of April, which included the 2020 FQP, but the club leadership, with help from many club members, made the best of it and we inaugurated the virtual mobile program to help increase activity for out-of-state entrants.

As the world has progressed through quarantine, contest participation has been extremely high. State QSO Parties and national contests that used to attract casual and part-time participants saw huge increases. The FQP saw record numbers of log submissions even without the possibility for a county sweep from anyone. Evidently activity in the CQ WPX SSB contest was historic, and I've heard predictions of a similar level of participation in the next major contest, CQ WPX CW. I understand that some of the usual DXpedition destinations like PJ4 are hosting remote operations in WPX CW.

We had our first virtual FCG meeting a couple of weeks ago, with ~30 attendees on a Zoom call on a Wednesday evening, which was a great success. I'm taking suggestions for topics for future virtual meetings in the next few weeks. I'd love to have a short program to offer in addition to the roundtable. Other clubs have done sessions on remote operating, setting up logging programs, operating using digital modes, and others. Anything that you can do entirely on a computer screen can be shared via Zoom. I'd be happy to have ideas or suggestions.

We don't have final log counts or details about the 2020 FQP but rest assured that it was a great success. Thanks to all the club members from around the state and outside the state who took the time to get on and operate from rare or common counties. Special thanks to the 1x1 hosts and the virtual mobiles for sacrificing their individual score to promote additional activity for our out of state entrants. Speaking for myself, I operated as a virtual mobile from my home with a temporary vertical on 20m and 15m only and managed almost 1000 QSOs over the 20 hours of the contest, including a number of Europeans

Kudos to NX4N and K1TO for conceptualizing the virtual mobile program. I can guarantee that I made many more QSOs as a virtual mobile than I would have on my own from my compromised station, which was beneficial to everyone

The cancellation of the Dayton Hamvention was a heavy blow, as I always have a great time in Dayton and really enjoy the camaraderie. I did take the opportunity to attend the virtual Contest University, which was a great success with over 3,000 attending at various times throughout the day, and several hundred streaming on YouTube simultaneously. Similar to live Contest University, I suspect that all the presentations weren't equally interesting to everyone, but the overall experience was very enjoyable. It was great to see W0CG, W3ZZ, and K1GQ inducted into the CQ Contest Hall of Fame at the end of the presentation.

On an unrelated note, W4AS, who has served as our webmaster for three years, has asked to step aside following the 2020 FQP. Seb volunteered to help us out when KK3Q stepped down as webmaster. Join the rest of the FCG leadership in wishing Seb well and thanks for his able assistance. We do not have a new webmaster at this time; if you're conversant in Wordpress and interested in taking on the job, please reach out to me or to K5KG.

73/OJ,

Chris W4WF

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W4QM Obituary Harmon Dale Strieter

Cocoa Beach - Harmon D. Strieter passed away on January 6. Born in Unionville, Michigan in August of 1927, he was the 9th of 11 children. He graduated from Unionville High School in June 1944 and joined the US Maritime Service. He attended boot camp and a 6-month course in Radio Technology and sailed as a 3rd Radio Officer on board a vessel in the Pacific Theater during [WW2](#). He attended Michigan State College in 1947 through 1951 and received a BS in Electrical Engineering. He worked his way through college by sailing as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Marines or working in construction during the summer months as well as part time jobs during the school year. He obtained his Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering in 1954 and was a Graduate Assistant at MSU during that time.



Harmon worked in the Lansing, Michigan area as an Audio Engineer and moved to Cocoa Beach, Florida in 1958 to work as a Missile Guidance Engineer with General Electric and was the Guidance Engineer on the Mercury and Gemini manned spaced programs. After 20 years, the contract was terminated and in 1979, he returned to sea as a Radio Electronics Officer in the Merchant Marines. He retired in 2002 at the age of 75 after 23 years sailing on various vessels.

Since 1947 he was an avid amateur radio operator and served on the board of directors for Southeastern Division of the Amateur Radio Relay League for the period of 1969-1972.

He was a good neighbor and mowed 3 to 4 lawns until he gave it up at 91 1/2. He liked to stay busy picking up yards or blowing off driveways in the neighborhood and was still pruning and climbing trees at 89 much to the dismay of his kids. He was a big help to many of his neighbors after the hurricanes.

He was predeceased by his wife of 60 yrs Mildred M Strieter who passed away in January 2017. He leaves a daughter Judith K Luck, a son Jack E Strieter and grandchildren, Allen Luck, David Luck, Kayla Strieter and Ryan Strieter.

Contributors to This Edition

W4WF, K5KG, K8MFO, N9OU, KE3Q, DX News, K4EU, W4LT and N4DL.



Dale's QSL Card from his Florida QTH

Dale made over 200,000 QSOS from his Chagos Island QTH



Dale with his good friend Goose W8aAV



K4LQ, W4AI, WQ4QM at the dismantling of the W4AI towers.

A Tribute to Harmon "Dale" Strieter W4QM

One of MY Ham Radio "Heroes"

By Don Karnoven K8MFO

I truly believe that stories should be written about named "subjects", and as little as possible about the "author". However, in this case, I am going to share some of my own thoughts and perspectives, which will actually blend into the subject of this article.

No matter how you "slice it", ham radio is a lot different today than it was 60, 50, or even 30 years ago. Many of us feel very fortunate to have experienced our wonderful hobby in the "50s" and "60s" in particular. WONDER and EXCITEMENT are apt descriptions of those days, and someone who got "hooked" on radio in those decades is quite likely still active and enthused about radio today. In my case, I grew up in a rural area in the second least populated county in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. My dad, who was a WWII combat CW operator, worked in a copper mine as an electrician. Two of his working partners were hams, W8FYZ – Ensio and W8DCD – Arne. Not only were they hams, they were DXers. Much of their activity was on 10 meter AM PHONE, but they both knew how to use CW keys quite effectively. Both Ensio and Arne specialized in talking to Finland, the country of their ancestors. When they found out that Dad knew the code, they had him licensed as K8HHZ in no time at all. Since I was 11 years old, I became the next "candidate" to get a license. I learned the code from an ARRL publication while others were day dreaming during boring 6th grade classes, and in the summer of 1958 I was licensed as KN8MFO. In the meantime I could hardly put down the CQ magazines that W8FYZ gave to me. The excitement of the Danny Weil- VP2VB DXpeditions was contagious, and I could hardly wait until the next episode. Did Danny make it to the next rare country or did he wreck another boat? I decided right then and there to be a DX man! There were plenty of HEROES around, and I tried to learn as much as I could from listening to them on the air. Who didn't work Dick Spenceley – KV4AA in those days? He was my country #3. I even managed to work Danny – VP2VB from several places, as well as Gus Browning – W4BPD, as he traveled through the Indian Ocean and African continent. YES, all of these folks were HEROES to me, as I gradually built up my country count to almost 200, using radios and antennas that could be termed as "laughable". But boy was the SATISFACTION LEVEL high! Then it was time to go off to college at Michigan State, a long way from my rig in Upper Michigan.

My arrival at Michigan State in the fall of 1963 coincided exactly with the installation of new antennas and a Collins S Line, with a brand new ham shack for W8SH in the Engineering Building. I had the honor of making the last contact from the old "shack", which had a Collins 32V3 transmitter, National NC-183 receiver, and a snaggle toothed Hy Gain TH-4 tribander. Likewise, I made the first contact from the NEW W8SH station, using the 32S3, 75S3, and 30S1 combination, into a HyGain 20/40 meter beam, high on a tower atop the Engineering Building. Was this "ham radio heaven" or what? Actually it was, and there was a lively group of young DX types who spent a lot of time in that shack! More than a few classes were skipped by this group. You can always make up a class, but a 20 meter long path opening is quite important.

Some of the MSU staff members and particularly the Lansing area "town hams" were very encouraging to the young hams at W8SH. Our club advisor Tom Drake – W4IWH (W8PWZ) went more than the extra mile to defend "his club", even when some of us were found sleeping in the faculty lounge during contests! Bob Rose, a technician for the electrical engineering department, while not licensed, took care of the station and also the operators. Chuck Hutchinson – K8CH (K8UDJ) worked for MSU, and became a close friend. These friendships with Drake, Rose, and Hutchinson continue to this day. Of particular note in the Lansing area were Ben Hassell – W8VPC and Bill Chapman – W8TJQ. They could never do too much for the W8SH gang. They encouraged us, and eventually spoke highly of their mutual friend, "Harmon" – W4DQS. Did I know him, they asked? Well, anyone who was not aware of W4DQS was probably not licensed. "Dale", as he was known on the air, was a potent force in the ARRL Sweepstakes and the DX contests. The staff at MSU remembered Dale as a super CW operator during his tenure at W8SH from 1948 to 1954, and as the guy who used to "climb the smoke stack" to put up long wires! Everyone in town called him "Harmon", though, and the remaining old timers still do! Dale had been licensed in 1947 as W8DJN in Michigan's "thumb", but spent those several years in the Lansing area, while securing a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering. Dale also did some contest operating from the station of a business associate, Gordy Main – W8OCK.

Even more impressive than the W4DQS contesting and DX exploits, Dale was an established "top drawer" DXpeditioner. In 1958 he was one of the operators of the KC4AF – Navassa DXpedition, along with a number of Cincinnati area hams (W8FGX, W8EFZ, W8RSW, W4KVX), and CQ Magazine editor W2NSD. W4KVX was the well known editor of The DX Magazine, arguably the finest all time publication of its kind. W8FGX later became the Cincinnati Chief of Police. Dale will have to tell you in private about the important role that FGX played during this operation!

Dale was also an integral part of the FIRST HK0TU operation from Malpelo in 1961, and a key player in the "double DXpedition" in 1961 to HK0AB – Bajo Nuevo and KS4BF – Serrana Bank. It was well documented that Dale was not a guy who just showed up on a DX trip and occupied a chair. In connection with the KC4AF trip, he drove a station wagon from Michigan to Florida, perhaps making repairs along the way, and did much of the tough work in putting up antennas on Navassa. During the HK0TU operation, he climbed along slippery guano laden rocks, and secured long wire antennas. For the HK0AB/KS4BF trip he installed and checked out every generator, radio, antenna and other associated gear right in his Cocoa Beach backyard. Much of the success for all of these trips can be attributed to Dale.

These guys in Lansing knew Dale? WOW! That's pretty impressive stuff for a 17 year old ham to hear. In April of 1964, our W8SH club member, John Hultgren – WA8GPX (later K7EX, now SK) said we could stay at his home in Cincinnati and then attend the Dayton Hamvention! How could you say no to an offer like that? By this time Dale – W4DQS was the ARRL Director of the Southeastern Division, and he was wandering around the Dayton arena with his very impressive credentials badge. We stopped him and told him we were "new W8SH guys". That's all he had to hear, and we had a very pleasant, although short, meeting with Dale. It doesn't take long to know Dale, and that meeting alone was certainly worth the trip.

In 1965 Dale, along with some of his Cincinnati area and other buddies, organized the first DXpedition to San Felix Island as CE0XA. Our W8SH antenna system was in disrepair, but I had a Johnson Ranger and NC-300 in my dormitory room for "clandestine" operation! Tell me – how do you really hide radios of this size? We were not the only "radio active" hams in the building. One floor above us, a then unlicensed guy had a homebrew 80 meter CW transmitter in his room, with one crystal, for 3500 Kc. This was a convenient crystal calibrator for us! Of course, outside antennas were prohibited, but "magically" a 75 foot sloping wire appeared between our 3rd story dormitory window and a short light post by the cafeteria! For some reason, that antenna worked like a bandit into San Felix on 15 meters, and virtually every ham on the MSU campus scored with a CE0XA QSO! Many had to walk a few miles, or take a bus, with some classes skipped, but priorities are important for college hams! That wire even worked well enough for an 80 meter QSO!

While I was with the U S Army in Vietnam in 1969, Dale returned to Malpelo for another HK0TU operation. Later in 1969, Dale was part of a large group that again activated Navassa as K4IA/KC4. I'm certain that the success of each of those operations was largely due to the organizational, technical, and operating skills of Dale. There can be no argument with that! Incidentally, Dale had to wait longer than most for his own Navassa QSO, but that too is a story best told by Dale, sitting around a campfire, while sharing a beer with friends!

A couple of years after returning from Vietnam, I wound up in Saginaw, Michigan, and began to have very pleasant ragchews with Dale, who in 1972 received the vanity call of W4QM. When I told Dale that my job required travel around the area, he told me that I was not far from his hometown, and he told me where his family farm was. Dale also told me to look up one of his buddies, who had the only pharmacy in town. I drove by the family property, and then went into the store and found his buddy. I said, "Dale Strieter says hello!" The pharmacist said, "Dale? We know him around here by his nickname!" I shall not mention the nickname. You're very welcome, Dale!

When General Electric reorganized their operations in and around Cape Canaveral, Dale was offered the opportunity to transfer to another GE plant location or to accept early retirement. He chose the latter, and became a Radio Officer on a ship generally anchored at VQ9 – Chagos. Easy access was provided to the island of Diego Garcia, and a potent club station was installed. Thus began another chapter in the DX career of Dale Strieter as VQ9QM. Between 1986 and 2001 Dale piled up over 200,000 QSOs from Diego Garcia, not including contest contacts! I can remember Dale telling me how much he enjoyed this assignment – 6 months on the ship, and 6 months off, and not nearly as much as stress as with GE. It should also be noted that Dale was responsible for a lot of the antenna and equipment repairs at the island ham shack, a natural role for him. That station is still active under various call signs, and I'm sure Dale's long term efforts are appreciated by those operators.

Dale has also made "contest expeditions" to various spots. In 1969 he shared 40 meter duties with K4BAI at PJ9FC – Curacao in a multi/multi effort. In 1972 he operated from the QTH of DXpedition partner HK1QQ in Colombia, and beat his good pals W4CKB, W4QVJ, and W4BJ, who operated as HK0ZU on San Andres. There were also trips in 1978 (HH2CQ) and 1979 (HH2MC) to Haiti for contest efforts with Florida friend and Vic – N4XR, who was living and operating as HH2VP at the time. There are inevitable equipment or antenna malfunctions during such operations, and it's a safe bet that Dale was right in there solving the problems.

OK, so Dale has operated from a lot of DX locations. So have many others, but it is doubtful that anyone has been more valuable or responsible for the success of the top notch operations in which he participated. If you know Dale, you also know that he is one of the most approachable people on this planet. He makes "beautiful music" on the CW bands daily, and can still "rattle the rate meter" during contests. His many friends in Florida are also aware of the kindnesses that he continues to show them, whether its equipment repair, antenna installation, advice, friendship, or whatever is needed. Dale is a member of the CQ DX Hall of Fame, but his every day activities overshadow that honor.

A long time ago Dale told me that 2 of his "Ham Radio Heroes" were Bob Baird – W9NN and Hal Brooks – W9VW. They're personal heroes of mine too, but so are YOU, Dale. Thank you for your many years of friendship, for the new countries and bands, and for the sterling example that you set for everyone. By doing "what you do", you make things more pleasant for the rest of us.

Those of us who know you all very proud of you! When I grow up, I want to be just like you!

Don K8MFO

1958 DXpedition story and photos of [Navassa Island KC4AF](#)

1962 DXpedition to [Serrana Bank KS4BF](#)

1962 DXpedition to [Bajo Nuevo HK0AB](#)

1965 1st DXpedition to [San Felix Is. CE0XA](#)

1969 DXpedition story and photos of [Malpelo Island HK0TU](#)

1969 DXpedition to [Navassa Island K4IA/KC4](#)

1991 Operation from [Chagos Archipelago VQ9QM](#)

Publisher's Note: The above article was written about 10 years ago by Don K8MFO. , and published on hamgallery.com. My thanks to Don for allowing us to reproduce it here.



K6NA, W4QM, N6TJ - October 2003
Photo courtesy of K6NA

Silent Key—In Memorium—W3AZD

By Rich Boyd KE3Q

(From DX News)

Many, many emails have been coming in, commenting on the passing of good ole Don, Donald B. Search, W3AZD, of Davie, Broward County, Florida, a friend to so many of us, a DXCC card checker, and longtime ARRL DXCC staffer, signer of our DXCC certificates for many years. His name and signature grace the walls of, no doubt, thousands of ham shacks



Don is survived by his faithful longtime partner of more than 55 years, Hope Smith, WB3ANE, who continues to reside in Florida. As I recall hearing it (subject to correction, refinement, clarification), Hope and Don met at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, a close-in northern suburb of Washington, D.C. They were among the original members of the NCDXA, National Capitol DX Association and, even after moving to Florida quite a few years ago now, they continued to drive or fly to the D.C. area for the bi-monthly NCDXA meetings, never missing a one until April, 2018, with age and challenging health issues. Amazing. Don was a “ham’s ham,” and a true blue DXer, and Hope and Don were a notable example of two people loving and depending on each other. They were hardly ever apart.

I was able to say hello to them in person at the annual W3LPL June open house. The last time I saw Don I teased him about still wearing, always wearing, that beat-up orange callsign hat, “festooned” with pins and badges. W3UR reminds me Don wore a relatively matching orange T-shirt, survivor of thousands of washings. When I mentioned his hat, Don had his signature wry smile and said “It’s not my only one.” My observation is that ham radio and Hope were the centerpieces of Don’s life.

According to Don’s nephew, Fred Reed, Don passed in hospice care between 2 and 3 AM March 26. He was in the Wilton Manors Rehab Center. His health issues apparently accelerated when he fell in a restaurant, hitting his head on a table, December 17, 2019.

Before taking the job at ARRL, Don worked as an electronic technician for Burrows Communications in Maryland. He administered the DXCC award for 15 years.

Don enjoyed reading about astronomy. He was a member of various radio clubs including the Potomac Valley Radio Club, the aforementioned NCDXA, the Gold Coast Amateur Radio Association, and the South Florida DX Association. He went to many hamfests, often spending some time checking DXCC card submissions.

Funeral/memorial arrangements are pending. KJ4VCT, Melanie Fernandez, President of the Gold Coast [Florida] Amateur Radio Association, suggests prayers for Hope, who will certainly miss Don even more than any of the rest of us will. Melanie suggests dropping Hope a card or letter, through Melanie at the following mailing **address**, who will see they get to her (as Hope’s plans are uncertain at this point)

Hope Smith
c/o Melanie Fernandez
4860 NW 3 ST, Apt D
Delray Beach, FL 33445

K9BO, Bill Oberdorfer, living in Weeki Wachee, Florida, notes the fine job Don did at DXCC in Newington. Bill recalls showing up unannounced at W1AW one day in 1980 with 275 cards to check, a first-time submission. He and Don sat together going through the cards one by one and Don, never complaining, “couldn’t have been nicer.” Bill adds, “The worst thing about having been licensed since 1958 is so many old friends and acquaintances are now passing on with more and more frequency.”

W2CQ, Bill, says Don “was always available, on the repeater, for help, for meetings and for anyone who asked for help with something. For a tower party, Don was there, most of the time with Hope. Years ago, in the eighties and nineties, Don would be there for us to pick someone up at the airport for the Miami Hamfest, to run an errand or pick up some materials. If we needed someone at the table, Don was the one who always volunteered. He was there for setting up the [club’s] booth and then he was there when we needed someone to man it. He checked cards for hours. He held the club banner for safekeeping, ready to bring it anywhere, to hamfests, flea markets and field day. We used his DXCC cards for the display at our booth, always, because he had the largest collection. Don was always one of the last ones standing at the Dayton DX dinner, the ‘sit down roll call’ of highest total number of countries confirmed. He knew everyone and everyone knew Don.”

K3ZO, Fred Laun, President of NCDXA, notes Don’s 60-plus years as an amateur radio licensee and his contesting and DXing contributions. Fred reminds us that for some years Don was an operator at one of the biggest multi-multi contest stations of the era, W3MSK/W3AU (Ed Bissell), a station whose antennas were clearly visible above the trees from George Washington’s historic Mount Vernon, just across the Potomac River. “Beat ‘MSK’ was an iconic “saying,” due to the station’s contest dominance. W3AU, too, retired to Florida, as so many do.

In Florida in retirement, Don was the QSL bureau sorter for the A suffix for the US third call area and L and V suffixes for the two-letter prefix fourth call area. At Dayton, Don checked cards for DXCC in the ARRL booth. In Florida he participated in hurricane **nets**.

H. Alan Harp K4PB SK

Hugh "Alan" Harp, 85, of Jupiter, Florida, died peacefully at home on March 18, 2020. He was born in Springfield, Ohio on October 28, 1934 to Hugh and Bess Harp.



Alan enjoyed Ham Radio and Deep-Sea Fishing. He was a long time member of the Florida Contest Group. He was part of the 2004 W1AW/4 operation. He was an active participator in the Florida QSO Party, submitting logs from 2002 through 2011 totaling nearly 5000 QSOs. He set three Palm Beach County category records during that period that remain records today. His personal best score was in 2006 when he made almost 800 QSOs.

He is survived by his wife Jeanette, son Philip, stepchildren Jill, Mark and Robin, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Published in the Palm Beach Post.

Notes from ARRL Contest Update

[The DailyDX](#) reported in its April 6 issue that the US Postal Service stopped accepting outgoing mail to many other countries on April 3, "for the duration of the coronavirus issues." This effectively stops QSLing via paper QSL cards to these countries, unless the DX station has a US-based QSL manager. More and more stations are using LoTW every day...

The Atlantic hurricane season officially starts on June 1. and predictions are that 2020 will have a larger than usual number of named storms. If there are significant human impacts due to a storm, please be respectful of any amateur frequencies used in emergency or relief efforts.

The 2020 Contest University had over THREE THOUSAND attendees at various parts of the day on May 14. If you missed any of it, you can watch the 10 hour event on YouTube. Check the YouTube comments for the start times for the various sessions, and don't forget that YouTube lets you stream at up to 3X the original speed via the playback options menu.

According to an article in the [May 2020 PVRC Newsletter](#) by Frank, W3LPL, "The Solar Minimum Likely Occurred Christmas Eve 2019," "Some of us have noticed a slight uptick in solar activity since Christmas Eve when two Cycle 25 spots -- AR 2753 and AR 2754 -- appeared simultaneously after 40 consecutive spotless days, the longest such stretch of Cycle 24. Only one of the five subsequent sunspots -- AR 2757 -- has been from old Cycle 24. Every sunspot over the last 12 months has been relatively weak and has had little effect on propagation. Although the date of solar minimum and the beginning of Cycle 25 won't be official until later this year, its highly likely that it occurred on Christmas Eve 2019. The next important event to look for is an energetic long-lasting Cycle 25 sunspot, hopefully this year. (from the Potomac Valley Radio Club *PVRC Newsletter*, May 2020)

[Version 2.5.2 of TQSL in support of ARRL LoTW has been rolled out.](#) Contest rovers will find better support for multiple operating locations determined on a per-QSO basis from uploaded logs containing grid square information. Other features include enhanced error checking when used with logging programs that have been updated to support version 2.5.2.

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic is being felt everywhere. While our hobby can provide a distraction from real-world events, it's still not "contesting as usual." The D4C team [canceled their multiop for the CQ WW WPX SSB Contest](#), and via Twitter was discouraging travel for any reason. Now with government-imposed restrictions on mobility in large parts of the world, it's no longer discretionary. Intra-country travel in many countries is possible as this is written, but that is changing. It's more prudent to stick to the single-operator category for the next few weeks or longer. [Many near and medium term in-person amateur radio and contesting events are being canceled or postponed](#), including the [2020 Dayton Hamvention](#), [Contest University](#), [Contest Dinner Top Band Dinner](#), various DXpeditions, [DX conventions](#), [ARRL HQ guest visits](#), and so on. The [ARRL website also has a page showing the list of hamfest cancellations](#).

PJ4 Bonaire 2020 Pictures

By George Wagner K5KG



PJ4G QTH



Nathan K4NHW



Marty W1MD



PJ4G Towers



PJ4G Equipment

PJ4G Winning Score for 2020 ARRL DX Phone



Noah K2NG on the tower.

SSB TEMPO=100%

Summary					
BAND	QSO	S/P	DUP	POINTS	AVG
160	388	54	3	1164	3.00
80	1013	61	25	3024	2.99
40	2382	61	68	7119	2.99
20	2887	62	144	8637	2.99
15	2532	59	91	7587	3.00
10	20	6	0	60	3.00
TOTAL	9222	303	331	27591	2.99
				FINAL SCORE:	8 360 073

nap List



Left Steve PJ4DX, right George K5KG



Eurikson and Friend



Noah K2NG



Eurikson and Marty W1MD



**W4AC
2020 FQP
Tamiami Amateur Radio Club
Venice, Sarasota County, Florida
Submitted by
Steve Hawley, K4EU**

In February, we began planning our club's operation for the 2020 Florida QSO Party. We had entered the 2018 and 2019 editions of the FQP as a multi-single entry using our club's callsign, W4AC. Those operations took place at "The Cottage" courtesy of FCG member and station owner Al, K0AL. Those operations served as "elmer" opportunities for some of our newer members and provided an opportunity to air a big signal and run pile-ups courtesy of Al's outstanding station and antenna farm. Our plan for 2020 was to operate a multi-single operation from Al's very fine station using the club's callsign, W4AC, and improve upon what we had accomplished in 2018 and 2019.

The Corona Virus pandemic put an end to all that. We put our heads together and wondered if it would be possible to operate W4AC as a club from our respective stations. We knew it would be impractical to mingle with each other due to 'social distancing' guidelines, therefore could we air a "distributed" multi-multi W4AC operation from our home stations scattered across Sarasota County? We asked our members if they would actually participate in such an operation. The answer was yes with 14 members eager to operate.

Next step was to run this plan past the FCG/FQP gurus, K5KG, NX4N and K1TO. Much to our delight, they agreed and rewrote the rules for the 2020 FQP to allow such operation. We are thankful that in a time of uncharted waters, we were able to be part of FCG/FQP 'outside the box' thinking and interject a little innovation. Let's hope we never have to do anything like this ever again for obvious reasons!

The W4AC distributed multi-multi operation:

As mentioned, 14 members were eager to operate. Most of us are constrained by HOA rules and have stealth wire and/or flagpole antenna systems and run less than optimum power. Nevertheless, our team was provided with an operational plan and a 2-hour-shift rotational schedule. Operation was mapped out for CW and SSB on 40 and 20 meters only. We carefully coordinated amongst ourselves to scan 15 and 10 meters as appropriate so to not air two signals on any one band/mode at a time. Cellphones and 2 meters were sufficient to accomplish this coordination. In the end, 15 and 10 meters were essentially closed during the FQP so our plan to concentrate on 40 and 20 meters proved to be the correct action.

Logging. What do we use for logging? Our preferred logger was N1MM+. We helped some members install and configure N1MM+ and trained them on this logger which they had never before used. In the end, three members chose to stay with their preferred N3FJP logger while the rest of us were using N1MM+.

Tom, W4IEE, with assistance from Steve/NS4P, Tom/W8QJF and Frank/W2XYZ came up with the idea of creating a virtual privacy mesh network to link together all our N1MM+ users for real-time logging. Hamachi was used to accomplish this. Days were spent tweaking and testing to get our network to work. It should be noted the developers of N1MM+, and N1MM himself, were releasing updates on a frequent basis to perfect the mesh networking capability over VPN. This Hamachi/N1MM+ VPN was new to all of us including N1MM. It's safe to say we were pioneers!

All our planning came together well and after a Saturday morning video teleconference call between our ops to sort out any last minute questions, we were QRV FQP with our W4AC distributed multi-multi operation. We could all visually see who was working what mode and frequency amongst those in our network courtesy of the "Network Status" window in N1MM+. Each of us could actually see the toggle of F-keys when individual CW stations were making QSOs. And, we could see our consolidated rolling log, mults and score as we racked up QSO after QSO. Some of us who have operated in a multi-op environment know what it's like to see the log rolling by as team members across the room make QSOs. In this case, we were real-time viewing our network of stations scattered across Sarasota County.

How did we do? 2842 QSOs ((1491-SSB, 1351-CW)) in all 50 states, most Canadian Provinces and 35 DXCC!

Some comments from our W4AC operators:

KJ4NDO/Jim – I can report that on Sunday afternoon on 20 meters at K0AL's station we could not keep up with the contacts.

W4IEE/Tom – In the battle of CW, my paddle DITs stopped working. Found dirty contacts and sliding paper between them cleared the problem, but why now??? ((Murphy Strikes!!!))

NS4P/Steve – Great event! First time I participated in the club FQP. I felt like I was on Bouvet Island! Large pile-ups and stations from all over the US answering my CQ. The Q's and multipliers filled the screen. It was amazing!

W2XYZ/Frank – It was a great party, no hangovers. Truly the most fun we've had since being incarcerated!

Our W4AC Team:

K0AL – AL – SSB W2XYZ – Frank - CW
KB1HIP – Andy – SSB AA4TI – Steve - CW
N2UD – Tom – SSB K4EU – Steve - CW
KJ4NDO – Jim – SSB W4IEE – Tom - CW
KN4BAR – Paul – SSB W5GJ – Bob - CW
KN4ONE – Tom – SSB
NS4P – Steve – SSB
W4JS – Jack – SSB
W8QJF – Tom – SSB

W4AC Photos



K0AL



NS4P



K4EU



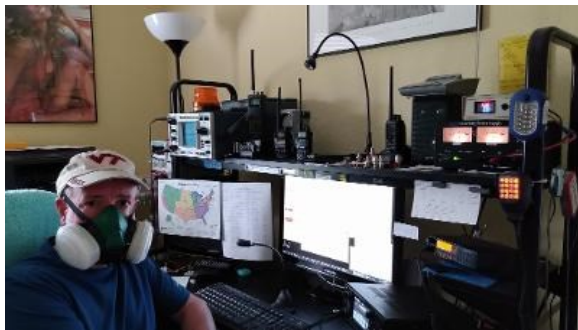
KJ4NDO



W2XYZ



W4LEE



KN4ONE



N2UD



W4JS



W8QJF



KN4BAR



W5GJ

How's My Audio?



By George Wagner K5KG (left)
and
Lu Romero W4LT (right)



This article is for the new ham who likes to work phone but is uncertain of how to set up a radio's audio controls, and the seasoned operator who may be unaware of the quality of his transmitted audio. This piece addresses the problem of poor audio and what to do about it.

Let's focus on stations with distorted audio. SSB transmitters whose audio controls not properly set may contribute to these conditions: splatter, blasting audio, distorted audio, or even weak, feeble audio.

I usually avoid phone contests, but I recently worked the ARRL DX PHONE contest at PJ4G and the 2020 Florida QSO Party as a Mixed Phone & CW entry. I find phone contests to be a mixed bag of both fun and frustration. What makes them fun are exciting, fast runs and being able to give a quick hello to friends who call in. Although I much prefer CW contests, I do find phone contests to be more 'personable' than CW contests. On the downside, what makes phone contests agonizing and tiring is splatter from adjacent stations, distorted or blasting audio, stations with weak audio, stations calling off frequency, stations not using phonetics properly and, occasionally, accents that are difficult to understand. The bottom line for me is there are many things that contribute to making phone contests hard to work and very fatiguing!

On the receiving end, trying to copy transmissions from a mal-adjusted SSB rig greatly contributes to operator frustration and fatigue, especially during a lengthy phone contest. So, what to do about it? First of all, my suggestion is for phone ops to occasionally ask, "how's my audio?" Responses will vary, such as "it sounds terrific", or maybe "it's too hot", "terrible", "distorted", etc. Any negative responses need to be investigated.

Whether it's in a contest, or casual on-the-air operating, if I hear a station with unsatisfactory audio, I will not hesitate to tell the operator about it and make a few suggestions about how to deal with the problem. Most of the time, I get a 'thank you', since they may have not realized they had a problem. If I get a positive response, and I usually do, I'll suggest they reduce their mic gain and/or compression if their audio is "too hot". In the FQP, I was able to have nice chats with two ops about their audio, even asking them to contact me after the contest so I could help them. I found that these ops did not have a good idea how to adjust their mic gain and compression settings. They seemed to be some belief that turning up the mic gain would make them louder when it would only make them more difficult to copy.

In a subsequent phone call that I had with one of the ops, I learned that he was a relatively new ham with an Icom IC7300 and did not have a good grasp of how to adjust the transmit audio. Since, I am not familiar with the IC7300, I suggested he read the manual. He did just that and discovered that a TBW (transmit bandwidth) control was set to "narrow". Setting TBW to "wide" and making a few slight on-the-air adjustments with him made that little IC7300 sound like a Collins S-Line! To his credit, he had checked with Heil Sound to get a recommendation for his Heil headset with the IC7300. He went away a happy camper.

In summary, when Elmering someone about their audio, I suggest that they first study their radio's manual with regard to mic settings (bias/no bias), and proper adjustment of mic gain and compression using the radio's ALC and Compression meter displays. They should also check the transmit equalization settings in the radio's menu. I recommend they get on the air with a local who can give them feedback on the quality of their audio as mic gain, compression and equalization adjustments are made. Additionally, I suggest they keep a record of all of their radio's menu settings (along with the date) in a station logbook (or a SD card which the IC7300 has).

ADDENDUM

My friend Lu, W4LT is a very accomplished engineer, so I asked him to critique my article. In response, he offered the following information about audio that is far more technical and instructive than what I had to offer.

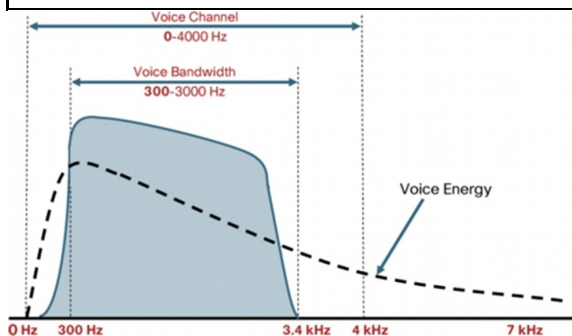
Lu told me, "the key to good audio is to make minor incremental improvements and, once you reach a level that you are comfortable with, DON'T FIX IT!" Lu graciously offered the following:

DYNAMIC RANGE

- In amateur radio, we are transmitting into a very noisy medium, and the S/N gets even worse in contesting, which raises the noise floor to ungodly levels. So Dynamic range is your enemy.
- Why? Dynamic range is the ratio of the softest sound to the loudest sound in a signal. Wide dynamic range is nice in a quiet medium like FM broadcasting of classical music, but is your enemy in a SSB contest

HUMAN VOICE AND BANDWIDTH

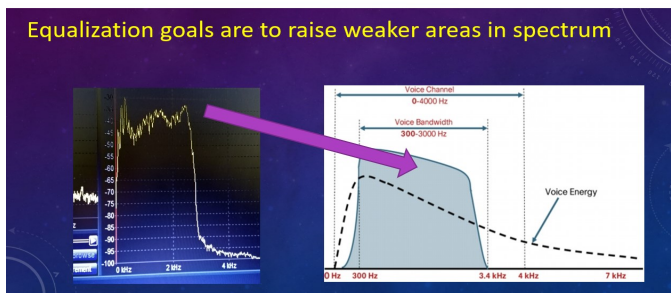
- The idea in SSB contesting is to use every watt God gave you to move the exchange from your lips to the ear of the guy you are working. Since the 30's, An engineer by the name of C. E. Shannon (you might find the name familiar) who worked for Ma Bell did multiple experiments on dynamic range and intelligibility and found that **in human voice, most of the intelligibility is found in the 1200 Hz to 2500 Hz range with consonants. Consonants are rich in harmonics, which is good.**



- **Vowels, on the other hand, have the most energy of any part of human speech and they carry most of the “information”** of a language (the sounds that determine what you are “trying to say” to the receiver). These are found in Human speech from 350 Hz to 2000 Hz.
- This is where the 300 Hz to 3000 Hz bandwidth of telephone quality” SSB comes from! Anything below 300 Hz is wasted and anything above 3000 Hz is wasted in a “telephone quality” circuit.
- Unfortunately, the low frequency part of the equation has more power and the power decreases as frequency increases. How do we fix that?

COMPRESSION AND EQUALIZATION

- You Equalize your signal to remove any frequency below 300 Hz and any frequency above 3000 Hz. Then, tailor the equalization to flatten the spectrum so as to maximize audio power, placing rising emphasis on the areas that carry the most intelligibility, e.g. 1200Hz to 2500Hz.
- After equalization, apply compression to essentially raise the lower power parts of the content and lower the high-power parts of the content, thus reducing the dynamic range of the signal. This will allow you to utilize as much of your transmitter power as possible to move intelligible information as efficiently as possible for a given transmitter power output level.



ALC

- Another issue is misunderstanding Automatic Level Control, or ALC. ALC was not meant to be used as an audio or RF compressor, but a lot of people think it is.

- They increase mic gain and push the ALC reading past its designed optimum level. ALC was designed to keep the Final Power Amplifier supplied with enough current to not clip the signal due to running out of current when the transmitter tries to transmit a “peak” in general speech. It’s too slow to be used as a compressor for RF waveforms. I don’t recommend feeding exciter ALC to an amp, because there is no standard ALC control voltage curve. Every manufacturer seems to have a different opinion of how ALC should work since it became a DeFacto “standard” after Collins included it in its transmitter circuits in the late ‘50’s. The more you push ALC to compress a signal, the less available current is in the PA capacitors and the more chance to run out of current and clip the PEAKS, causing distortion. Clipping a sine wave makes it into a square wave. And, as we know from basic AC electronics, square waves are rich in harmonics. Those harmonics are then transmitted and widen your occupied bandwidth, making you a “bad neighbor” to those above and below you on the band.

LINEARITY

- Most modern rigs, with solid state finals, are very linear... There are few adjustments available to operators to make them less linear. Now, with the proliferation of broadband tuned solid-state amplifiers, if the exciter is linear, the PA will be as well. Adding another variable, ALC voltage feedback that you can’t control, to the equation, sometimes making a bad problem worse.
- While solid state amplifiers are rapidly gaining popularity, there are still a lot of tube amplifiers on the air today. Contest and DX ops who run “legal limit” are slowly migrating to solid state; but legal limit solid state amps are still more expensive than ones using tubes. Since amplifiers are usually the last thing an amateur purchases and the last thing he replaces, they will continue to be with us well into the future.
- One of the most popular Amateur amplifier configurations is the Grounded Grid amplifier. In Grounded Grid tube amps, keeping an eye on the grid current and not letting it go past its design limit on peaks will result in a clean signal. A 50,000 foot explanation on how these amps work is that the grid superimposes the exciter’s signal on the PA’s power supply current flowing across the grid from the cathode to the plate of the tube. If you overdrive the grid by turning the exciter power higher than the grid’s ability to accept it, then the waveform is clipped and distorted. This is one of the most common causes of splatter in SSB! The result is a wider signal due to the added harmonics from the clipping (the exciter signal is no longer a sine wave, its peaks are clipped by the overload condition. And, as we know, clipping a peak is distorting a signal).

Now, how’s your audio?
 George Wagner, K5KG
 Lu Romero, W4LT

Orlando Contest Dinner 2020 Pictures

As in past banquets. Dan K1TO emceed the dinner and ticket awarding.

Dave K1ZZ, former CEO of ARRL was the featured speaker. Dave spoke about IARU history, highlighting a number of influential folks and events.

Claudio I4VEQ spoke on the upcoming WRTC 2022 and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from FCG.

Approximately 200 people attended the banquet, a new record for this event.



Dave, K1ZZ speaks to the group about IARU.



Dan K1TO emceed the event



Dave Sumner K1ZZ receives a Plaque thanking him for being guest speaker.

George K5KG and Dan coordinate part of the presentation



Claudio I4VEQ talks about WRTC-2022



Chris W4WF addresses the group



WRTC 2022 Committeeman Claudio I4VEQ receives a lifetime achievement award from FCG from Dan K1TO



AG4W, AA4TI and K8MR



K9RA and K3USC



WB5ZGA and K9ES



K4EAZ and K4SBZ



KN4KJC and NN2T



W1YL and W4LT's XYL Linda



NU4Y and WB4KSP



WA4ZXV, not-ided, K4BAI and W4KLY



K1MM and K4UU



KW1K and NX4N man the ticket machine



KE4EA, KS4VJ and K4IQ



K4FB and ARRL WCF Section Mgr KT4WX



K1KNQ and KE1LI



W4LT and KD5M



N4FP and N4GL



TI2JCC



VE3CZI and VA3OBO



K7DX and N1DXA



W4EE, K4BAI, K1KNQ and K7DX



KC4HW and K1KNQ

Chow Line in Action



Important N1MM+ Features for CW Operation

By George Wagner K5KG



N1MM Logger Plus (N1MM+) is an excellent logging program. This article addresses three key features of N1MM+ that are especially important for CW operators, especially those who are contesters and DXpeditioners.

- **Programmed Keys – Function Keys, Semicolon (;) and Apostrophe (')**
- **ESM Enter-Sends-Message**
- **Call Correction**

This article explains the use of these features and tells how to implement them. If you are an accomplished CW operator who routinely uses N1MM+, this article may not be for you. However, if you are a CW operator and know the basics of using N1MM+, but want to know more, please read on.

Programmed Keys – Function Keys, SEMICOLON (;) and APOSTROPHE (') keys

The F3 “TU” key, SEMICOLON (:), and APOSTROPHE (') keys are “program defaults” and, therefore, can be reprogrammed by the user.

SEMICOLON (:), and APOSTROPHE (') are two important keys to know and use, especially for speed and efficiency when operating CW.

- The SEMICOLON and INSERT keys have identical functions; they send the Call followed by the Exchange.
- The APOSTROPHE key is the F3 key and ENTER key combined into one. Pressing the APOSTROPHE key sends the TU message and logs the QSO.
- If you prefer to use the INSERT, F3, and ENTER keys instead of the SEMICOLON and APOSTROPHE keys, the result will be the same — the corrected call will be sent as part of the F3 TU message.
- Many operators prefer to use the SEMICOLON and APOSTROPHE keys since they require less finger movement. They are adjacent to each other on the keyboard. Other operators prefer ESM mode because only the ENTER key is used. Which method to use is a personal preference.

ESM Enter-Sends-Message

When running stations, Enter-Send-Message (ESM) mode simplifies the above basic procedures even more by requiring only the use of the ENTER key. ESM reduces operator functions and/or workload and simplifies operating a CW contest (or DX-pedition), especially for operators who are tired after sitting for hours.

To activate ESM, hit Ctrl+M to toggle ESM mode or simply check ESM mode under the Config tab. ESM does require a degree of practice to become proficient with its use.

The function key "convention" used by N1MM logger is:

- F1=CQ
- F2=exchange
- F3=TU (callsign)
- F4=your call
- F5=his call

ESM RUN Procedure:

- ENTER sends F1, "CQ"
- type call, ENTER sends F5 (his call) + F2 (exchange)
- type his exchange, ENTER sends F3 (TU) and logs QSO

Here is a link to the ESM How-To video by K8UT that nicely describes how to use ESM: <https://n1mmwp.hamdocs.com/support/how-to-videos/>

ESM is very slick and simple. Whether you use F-keys, INSERT, (:), (') or ESM, whatever your style might be, it is hoped these basic techniques will be helpful and you will give ESM a try

Call Correction

Call Correction in N1MM+ is a feature that allows a CW or SSB operator to correct a miscopied call during a QSO and then have that corrected call sent automatically at the end of the QSO.

Sending fully corrected callsigns or partially corrected callsigns are program options. With “full call correction”, the corrected call will be sent in its entirety. In “partial call correction”, either the prefix of the call or the suffix will be sent.

First, some basics:

- Call Correction is a feature for both CW and SSB
 - In SSB it works with N1MM+ Audio
- It works only in the RUN mode
- It does NOT work in S&P mode

In S&P the operator does not send the other station’s callsign, therefore there is no need for Call Correction.

- It works with ESM
- It requires the “TU” Function Key — typically the F3 Key — to be used as “thank you” message sent at the end of a QSO.

Note that although F3 is a user programmable key, it is the default “TU” key in N1MM+

Examples of Call Correction:

- **CALL IS NOT MISCOPIED:** You call CQ and W1AW answers, so you enter “W1AW” then press SEMICOLON (;) to send “W1AW 599 OP GEORGE QTH FL”. At the end of the QSO, you press APOSTROPHE (‘) to send the F3 message “TU 73 K5KG” and log the QSO.
- **CALL IS MISCOPIED:** You call CQ and W1AW answers, you (mistakenly) enter “W1AWW” and press SEMICOLON (;) to send “W1AWW 599 OP GEORGE QTH FL”. During the QSO you realize you have mistyped the Call, so you correct the Call to be “W1AW”. At the end of the QSO, you press APOSTROPHE (‘) to send the F3 message “W1AW TU K5KG” and log the QSO.

If the “send partial calls” option has been selected only the corrected suffix, “AW TU K5KG” will be sent.

Note: Once APOSTROPHE (‘) or F5 have been pressed to send the corrected call, the software will not send it again.

- **In this example, Call Correction has sent the corrected call along with the TU message, and the QSO has been logged. . You have now satisfied the W1AW operator that you have logged his call correctly.**

In the examples above, the F3, SEMICOLON (:), and APOSTROPHE (‘) keys are “program defaults” and, therefore, can be reprogrammed by the user. Generally, however, a user will not have a need to reprogram these keys but rather will use them as they come “out of the box” when N1MM+ is installed.

Implementing Call Correction

Simply go to **CONFIG / FUNCTION KEYS**

- Click the check the box for “**Send corrected call before end of QSO**”. This will cause the fully corrected call to be sent before the end of the QSO.
- There is also a “**Send partial calls**” option. Checking this box will send only the corrected portion of the call, the prefix or suffix. Leaving this unchecked will cause the fully corrected call to be sent.

Things to watch for:

- If Call Correction has been activated, but is not working, be sure you are in the RUN mode. Remember, in S&P there is no need for call correction!
- If something seems out of whack, be sure that the F3 function key has been properly programmed as the “TU” message
- Use partial call correction at your discretion. Many operators prefer to send a full call correction. Others prefer to send only the corrected portion of a call (prefix or suffix). The recommendation here is to try both and see which best fits your operating style.

Credits:

A final word. This article was written by K5KG in collaboration with Steve, K4EU and Ed, K8DSS. Steve and Ed’s suggestions were incredibly helpful. However, I did not feel this piece would be complete without passing it by the N1MM+ developers. So, it was sent to Steve, N2IC, a member of the N1MM+ development team for his review. Steve, in turn forwarded it to the other developers. From that, extremely helpful and constructive input was received from Larry, K8UT and John, K3CT. Their corrections, clarifications and suggestions were tremendously helpful in allowing me to finish a more accurate and complete piece.

A result of this review by the N1MM+ developers, I learned that K8UT had developed a rich collection of How-To Videos for N1MM+ users. Larry’s videos provide easy-to-understand explanations of the logger’s many functions, and practical ways of using them. I highly recommend viewing these videos. Here is a link to K8UT’s video collection:

<https://n1mmwp.hamdocs.com/mmfiles/categories/howtovideos/>

All the procedures discussed in this article are included in the N1MM+ documentation. I am hopeful that this article has been helpful in consolidating these CW features into an easy-to-understand reference. We would be pleased to receive your comments.

May 24, 2020

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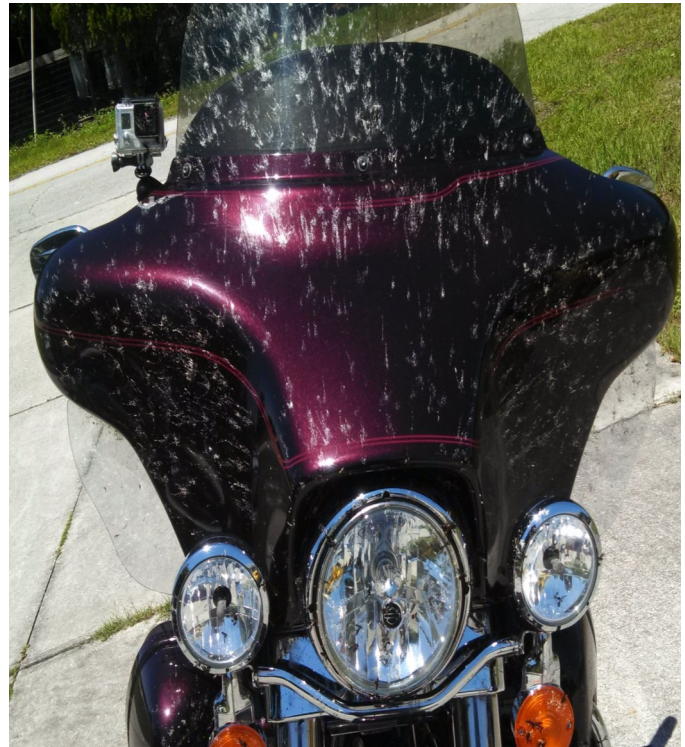
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Events Calendar

- CQWW WPX Contest, C W 0000Z May 30 to 2359Z May 31
- All Asian DX Contest, CW 1400Z Jun 20 to 1400Z Jun 21
- RAC Canada Day Contest 000Z—2359Z Jul 1
- IARU HF World Championship 1200Z Jul 11 to 1200Z Jul 12
- NAQP—RTTY 1800Z Jul 18 to 0559Z Jul 19
- CQWW VHF Contest 000Z Jul 19 to 2100Z Jul 10
- NAQP CW 1800Z Aug 1 to 0600Z Aug 2
- WAE DX Contest, CW 0000Z Aug 8 to 2359 Aug 9
- SARTG WW RTTY Contest 0000z AUG 15 50 1000z Aug 16
- NAQP SSB 1800Z Aug 15 50 0600Z Aug 16
- WW Digi DX Contest 1200Z Aug 29 to 1200Z Aug 30
- All Asian DX Contest, Phone 0000Z sep 5 tp 2400Z Sep 6
- ARRL Sep VHF Contest 1800Z Sep 12 to 0300Z Sep 14

FQP Lovebug Photo



“ You have to Keep your mouth closed “ Gary N4DL

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