

February 1998 Pileup

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Presidential Ponderings

If you haven't noticed the improvements and additions to our homepage, check it out. It's getting better all the time! The URL is <http://www.cdxa.org>.

For the past several weeks, I've spent all waking hours not otherwise occupied pursuing the necessities of life working on a new computer and associated TNCs, cables, and radios for our PacketCluster. This new installation will be located at K4ZA's QTH, using the CDXA call, W4DXA. This node will replace the current N4ZC node. A recent flurry of equipment failures at N4ZC have precipitated Roger's need for relief from the pressures he and I have gladly accepted in the past to bring you a reliable PacketCluster system. While not housing the node at his home, Roger will continue to serve as a remote sysop. There's none better.

The club is seeking qualified members to help take care of the PacketCluster system. An assistant for each node and digi site would help-more than you know. Roger and I will continue to provide a wide background of support, but we also need HELP. Do you have a basic hands-on familiarity with a DOS-computer? Do you have simple radio and TNC troubleshooting talent? Even if you just have a willingness to learn, we'll bring you up to speed in no time. You'll enjoy a great deal of satisfaction helping to keep the DX spots flowing. Let Roger or myself know of your interest and willingness to help. The system is simply too big for one person to maintain. If no volunteers come forward, the obvious answer is to shrink the system to a maintainable and manageable level.

Mitrek radio update: N5BI, Gary Branch, is now in possession of the Mitrek radios, and will begin the physical mods to put these 50 watt radios on our UHF user ports. As Gary hones this conversion process to a science, the others will follow shortly. The radios will then be tuned by qualified personnel to make them ready to use. I have a list of those who sent in the requested downpayments to K4MQG. Those orders will be filled first. If you still want a radio, and haven't sent a deposit to K4MQG, please e-mail me at k4md@juno.com or via the PacketCluster. We'll see if there is sufficient interest to obtain additional radios for our members.

And remember, the Charlotte Hamfest is just around the corner-March 7th and 8th. Get your tickets ahead of time for this enjoyable event, and don't miss our very own N4RF, Rick, as he brings the North Cook Island DX-pedition to life. See you at Valentino's Saturday night with all the other DXers. And, as promised last month, K4MQG (normally trusting, loyal, and able to remember this sort of stuff) has enclosed self-addressed envelopes for your 1998 CDXA dues!

Joe, K4MD

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Editorial

In a moment of reverie the other evening, I found myself comparing passion and enthusiasm.

We mostly begin life with enthusiasm, a kind of wild, untethered and rambunctious charge toward life. If we're lucky, that's tempered and tamed into passion, something a bit more focused and fruitful. If we don't fare quite so well, it's turned into a boring and fruitless existence. The sort of thing teachers talk about a lot, something they see happening to kids.

Of course, they're talking about passion as it relates to knowledge-how kids learn. And we know that enthusiasm is indeed vitally important to successful learning. It supplies the energy, the motivation if you will, making the efforts required seem easier, less difficult, and sometimes, even fun. You've witnessed it yourself, if you've ever been involved in a Volunteer Examiner class. Maybe you even remember it-the drive toward getting a ticket and getting on the air?

As we get older (and supposedly smarter), this energy changes, gets channeled into other areas, into people (family), places (careers), and things (keeping the first together, fully clothed and fed, and the second advancing, enabling the first, and so on, sometimes becoming what seems a vicious cycle). Sometimes the enthusiasm goes away, or gets forgotten, or is simply pushed down, down, down, into the dim recesses of memory.

I've been rediscovering mine lately, as I put the station together. Mostly, I find it coming back as I work on the tower. It's that part of enthusiasm in adulthood which is often characterized, as well as described, as "those boys with their toys." (Let's face it, you won't find too many women running out to buy bass boats, shotguns, motorcycles, radios towers and the like. It's a guy thing, plain and simple.) I find it easy to relate what I learned from early mentors to what I'm working on at the new QTH. I find it easy to remember my boyhood dreams. I find it easy to rediscover energy and enthusiasm for the hobby.

The passion part comes mainly from wanting to do everything right-just as I've read about, talked with the afore-mentioned mentors about, and imagined myself doing in the preceding years. It's something tangible and real. It's a mental state; it's a fantasy come-to-life. It's a driving desire to excel and do things I've never done before, even after 35 years of being licensed. Which is hard, considering everything I've done in the hobby already.

It's passion and enthusiasm, all right. It's a "boy and his toys," too, I feel just like I did in February of

1963, when WN8HJW came in the mail. Stay tuned for further adventures....

[--K4ZA](#)

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Carabiners In Tower Work

It seems everywhere you look, folks are using carabiners-those marvelous little tools for hooking, hanging, and holding things. Harrison Ford (as the US President) gets pulled out of a 747 and into a rescue C-130 in Air Force One using, naturally, a couple of carabiners. Stage hands, climbers, hang gliding folks, window cleaners, tree trimmers-everyone's using these clever gadgets.

While carabiners are not a complete substitute for knot knowledge (the possibilities are simply too vast to compare the two), carabiners are useful tools. Herewith, some thoughts on using them safely and correctly, for tower work. (And yes, no matter how many you have, you will need more.) Remember the old saying, "Every minute spent preparing on the ground saves an hour on the tower?" Make sure your ground crew knows and understands how to use your carabiners before you get a hundred feet (or more) in the air.

Lets look at some of the most common uses for carabiners. First, consider anything which needs to be temporarily "tied off" to either your belt or the tower. The first thing to look for here is the size of the gate opening. The wider the gate opening, the more useful a tool the carabiner will be when you clip it to the tower or your belt. (Fortunately for most hams, the more common, smaller-sized carabiners fit Rohn 25 nicely. If you're lucky enough to have Rohn 45, AB-105, or something else larger, you'll probably find larger, more expensive, carabiners are required.) A nice feature to look for is the notchless gate receptor. They're available from a few manufacturers, and usually cost considerably more, but are quite handy.

I usually carry about 12 carabiners anytime I climb a tower, so weight is something I always consider. Don't overlook the new wire gate carabiners gaining popularity. They're usually lighter, stronger, and some of them have a larger gate opening than even bent-gate versions of the same model.

Another use is as a "rigging" carabiner, to secure something transferred up and down a tower. Try to use a locking carabiner to prevent trouble partway up the tower. Almost all carbiners are designed for live loads, but if you're going to use one in a fall arrest, positioning, or suspension system, it needs to lock automatically and take two deliberate actions to open. (Never take anything you're using for fall arrest work for granted. Don't just "listen for the click," for instance, of your lanyard as you "snap in" on the tower. ALWAYS LOOK to make sure you're securely belted to the tower! The same goes for carabiners.)

In conclusion, here's a short list of carabiner "DOs" and "DON'Ts" to remember:

1. Avoid loading carabiners with the gate open

2. Never load placed over an edge
3. Never subject carabiners to twisting loads
4. Always inspect for cracks, bent rivets, or any damage before use
5. Always destroy worn or damaged carabiners
6. Avoid running lines through carabiners
7. Know each carabiner's rating. Always rig with a workload lower than the rated breaking strength.
8. Keep your carabiners clean. (Clean them with a non-corrosive solvent.)
9. Lubricate the carabiner's gate with graphite

Carabiners are available from mountain climbing, climbing/hiking-type sporting good stores. A number are here in Charlotte. And catalogs are available on the Internet. (Petzl makes particularly good gear; their rescue pulley, for instance, is invaluable in tower work. Try <http://www.infosphere.com/petzl>)

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POTPOURRI

1)The next issue of The Pileup will, of course, be the annual Charlotte Hamfest issue. We always sign up new members during the hamfest, so publication of the official CDXA roster will follow that event. In preparation of this publication, we need telephone numbers for the following members: AA4ZZ, AB4ON, KB4LN, KD4RH, N4TC, N4XMA, N4XO, NA4LU, NC4US, W4FHI, W4IRE, W4WIT, WA4AFE, WB4LMI, & KC8FS. Take a moment to let me know your number, or, if you prefer NOT to have your telephone listed, do that as well. Space restrictions prevent the inclusion of e-mail addresses in this roster. We're working on that. I continue to "discover" e-mail addresses for members. Please, if you have Internet access, let K4ZA know.

2)Speaking of hamfests, once again it's time to plan, purchase tickets, & prepare for the greatest hamfest in America-the annual Dayton Hamvention. If you have never attended, it is, quite simply, an event NOT TO BE MISSED. No matter what you are looking for in ham radio terms, chances are good you can find it (or a suitable substitute) at Dayton. Take a moment to read the ads in QST or CQ, then (if a full page ad alone doesn't convince you), ask someone who's been there (K4ZA made his first foray there in 1964) or who attends regularly why you should go. Their enthusiasm will convince you. N4ZC & I will be traveling to the Buckeye State for this blessed event once again this year. It's not too late (well, we hope it's not too late) for you to plan on going, as well.

3)The CDXA homepage is well underway. We continue to make changes & improvements. We've had well over 100 visitors in the month we've had the site operational. The site's even been mentioned in the Italian DX journal. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Anthony & I thank you for your kind words. However, we need to expand our "Gallery" section (which is photographs of member's stations, if you have not yet visited the site). To do this most easily, WE NEED PICTURES OF YOU IN YOUR SHACK. Color prints, preferably. We'll scan them, then return them to you. Please try sending me something suitable as soon as possible.

4) While on the subject of photographs, here's another pitch or plea-this time relating to the CDXA booth at the Charlotte Hamfest. Last year, we had a continuously-running slide projector in that booth, showing members & their stations. This was, in a word, particularly successful. Lines formed, as folks stopped, looked, & stayed through a complete cycle. We'd like to do this again this year. So we need a SLIDE of your & your station for the Hamfest. (We cannot scan slides free-of-charge for the website, or we'd use slides for everything. We can, however, scan prints free-of-charge, which is why we're using them, in case you're wondering.) Time is running out, so please do try to get some pictures made & delivered to K4ZA as soon as possible. Help make the CDXA display visually interesting, & show off a bit at the same time.

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Here in "the free world," we often forget that colonialism is still alive and well. For instance, Britain still has 13 territories left, after the return of Hong Kong to China last June. These are to be renamed, in order to make them sound more modern, as part of a Foreign Office review of policy. Currently called "dependent territories," the new name "British overseas territories" will take effect next month. "Colony," implying subservience, was discontinued in 1956. Citizenship, which is also common to the 11 territories under review, is part of the review process as well. Gibraltar and the Falklands-disputed territories with Spain and Argentina-are not under review. Here are the territories and their populations:

Anguilla	10,000
Bermuda	61,000
British Antarctic Territory	uninhabited
British Indian Ocean Territory	uninhabited
British Virgin Islands	19,3000
Cayman Islands	33,6000
Falkland Islands	2,500
Gibraltar	31,000
Montserrat	12,000
Pitcairn, Oeno Islands	58
St. Helena	6,000
South Georgia, South Sandwich Islands	uninhabited
Turks and Caicos Islands	13,000

--N4UH

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