

# May 1998 Pileup

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## Presidential Ponderings

Greetings. I trust the gusty winds haven't blown any of you away! Seriously, this is the time of year we all do tower work, and I can't stress enough the importance of small details, any one of which could contribute to a rapid change in your quality of life. I know all too well our spirits often say "can do," but I caution you to temper that attitude with an absolute attention to safety. If you drop something, let it go. Don't lose your grip on a fun tomorrow!

Solar storms, new countries on the air for many of our members, a new antenna for the repeater, continuing work to perfect the W4DXA node, and new callsigns are just a few of the club and member happenings of late. Are you part of such fun? Let K4ZA know what you're up to, and he'll include your activity in our newsletter. Who knows, you may end up with some more willing workers, or at least extra helpers.

Thanks to N5BI, Gary Branch, who is (as I write this), making another trip to Young Mountain. There's an interference problem there-in the transmitter building-that we're correcting concerning our equipment. The site was turned off for a couple of days to confirm the problem. I'm sure Gary's technical know-how will win the day for us. Thanks again, Gary, for your continuing efforts and support! If you catch him on the repeater, let him know you appreciate his work. WA4UNZ, Ken Boyd, continues to ply his computer skills on the W4DXA node computer. If you have some skills in AX-25, please contact Ken. If you don't know what AX-25 is, don't call Ken to find out. He's way too busy making those IBM printers print, keeping Charlotte bankers happy. And, congratulations to Jim Miller, K4SQR (formerly KF4HK) on his new callsign. (Pretty appropriate, don't you think?) Just a reminder to let our hard-working Editor, K4ZA, and our Secretary/Treasurer, Gary Dixon, K4MQG, know your correct mailing address, or other information changes. Ever wonder why you didn't get your newsletter on time? If we have the right info, you'll get the right output, so help us stay current with your information. By the time you read this, a new harness for our repeater antenna will have been re-installed at K4MQG's QTH. Thanks to Gary for all his work in making 147.18 work flawlessly again! And, as always, thanks to everyone who helped!

Get those QSL cards in the mail for your new ones! Hope you are IN THE LOG!

**73 Joe K4MD**

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## Editorial

It's nostalgia time. Twenty-five years ago, appropriately enough. Why this number? No special reason, other than it's typically done from time-to-time by major magazines and news services. So, return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, when QST carried such stories and articles on:

Canton Island was activated by W6BHY, better-known today as ZD8Z. Swans and Heathkits and Drake TR-22 FM rigs were all the rage (Kenwood and Yaesu gear was just become popular). W9BRD was still writing "How's DX?" (doing his usual FB job, too, contributing several solid columns this year on the concept of "Elmering"). The Alpha 77 (the ads say the "no compromise Alpha 77") was reviewed in March, and cost \$1795. Several issues of QST for the year detail the workings of the ARRL QSL Bureau system. (Of course, 'lo these many years later, guys like N4ZC are still explaining how the system works....) Southeast Asia was a hot spot in a variety of ways, not the least of which was Saigon's XV5AC, often manned by Dave, Chester, Fred, and Don-names we still associate with certain well-known DXers. This year saw the beginnings of Maxwell's series of articles: "Another Look At Reflections," which later became the now-controversial book, Reflections. The year marked only the 3rd ARRL 160M Contest, which had limited participation; people were still amazed and surprised to work a European on Top Band. (1973 would mark the start of the annual 10M Contest.) The WB4VVF "Accu-Keyer" appeared (in August QST) and, in typical cliché fashion, became just that-in use seemingly everywhere. The digital age truly was dawning, even in the hamshack. DX-contestwise, a fella with the callsign K1LPL/3 did real well, as did K7VPF operating at W7RM (he took both modes in SS, too) , while K0DQI pushed 6J9AA to the forefront of foreign scores. (Knowledgeable folks will again recognize these calls and ops, still active today.)

Ahhh, those were the days, huh? What were YOU doing in ham radio back in '73?

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### **A Few Words From The Housekeeping Department**

Yes, two pages got reversed in paper-printing last month's Pileup, for which we apologize. Sometimes, I wonder how the folks get anything done at Office Depot (they are not native English-speakers and, you have to figure this could create problems. This isn't a racist remark-but simple, basic pragmatic reasoning). On a more serious note, 34 members have fallen by the wayside (or out of the band, if you want a radio metaphor). Meaning they've been dropped from our roster. Let's each do what we can to talk up our club (uh-oh, Don's on that soapbox again) and recruit some members. Let's DO something this summer (besides installing antennas at Don's QTH) and create some reality behind the rhetoric I keep spouting on our website about this being the neatest, keenest club in the new South. We are, after all, a CLUB; we should act accordingly. Meaning, we should be DOING stuff (besides having lunch). Contact your officers today with your ideas!

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## Fasteners Revisited

The other day, at lunch, the subject of stainless steel came up. Specifically, whether stainless hardware could be used in tower projects. Having put up a few towers (in Ohio, Missouri, New York, & North Carolina-I've always been the guy one could call for that sort of work) in 35 years of hamming, I can tell you stainless hardware is worth the expense. (If you need verification from a larger source, I refer you to GTE Telephone Operations, where extensive testing (to solve problems in Hawaii) determined stainless saves money in the long run.)

Galvanized (zinc coated) steel has been the material of choice for tower and antenna hardware, as well as commercial, utility lines, for years, usually providing trouble-free service. Parts can, & do, show weather damage. This damage can make maintenance difficult, to say the least. The galvanized coating is "sacrificed" over time, so the hardware does have a finite life. Many cases of corrosion make one believe that life is indeed abrupt. The accelerated tests for GTE Telephone showed corrosion within days of exposure.

I've spent hours breaking bolts & hardware high in the air, of the rusted, galvanized kind. Some of that hardware broke. Some of that hardware made disassembly difficult. I've spent time working with stainless, some of which also broke (You have to lubricate stainless, to prevent "galling," if you want to tighten or untighten it without problems. I like to use LUBE-GEL.). But overall, stainless hardware will make your work easier. And, I've never encountered a single problem using it-in terms of its strength.

The next obvious question becomes one of availability. Stainless hardware isn't always found down at your local hardware store. The big "warehouse" chains carry it, but, it's expensive. The large wholesale distributors (like McMaster-Carr) carry a wide variety of hardware, relatively inexpensively. I've recently purchased a large quantity of stainless material (to rebuild antennas) from a newly-discovered source, TEK Supply. (Their catalog will surprise you & provide you with several ideas. Call: 1-800-835-7877) I am, in a word, amazed at their prices. The hardware is probably Chinese in origin, but shows no signs of poor workmanship or shoddy materials. So far, no corrosion is visible on these 304 stainless parts left outside.

Finally, the question of fine thread (NF) versus coarse thread (NC) comes up. Rohn specifies NF threads for its tower bolts. I've used both, but the fine threads do seem to have more holding power. It's tangible; it feels "right" to me. On my own towers, I use NF thread hardware. I recommend the fine thread to others. The NC threads work fine for antennas, but I'll use locking nuts where needed (the nut with the nylon insert). So, having put up & taken down a wide variety of antennas & towers over the years, I tell anyone never to use ordinary hardware, especially those bright & shiny bolts you can purchase for literal pennies at the hardware store. (This includes U-bolts, eyebolts, thimbles & clamps & so on; they'll rust up right before your eyes. If you don't believe me, make the same test I did: Leave an assortment out in the weather for some time, & watch what happens.) Invest in stainless; use it correctly. It's solid insurance that will make your life better.

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# Web Wanderings

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- **Interested in gray line maps running under a Windows 95 platform?**  
<http://www.clark.net/pub/bblake/geoclock/>
  - **How about shareware versions of gray line maps?** <http://www.starfishsoftware.com>
  - **Worried about the demise of the CDXA PacketCluster? Ever wondered what's going on elsewhere around the world, radio-propagation-wise? Check out DX Monitor.**  
<http://www.benlo.com/dxmon.html>
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**Hey!** Read this far? That means **YOU'RE** interested/knowledgable/whatever regarding the Internet and the World Wide Web. CDXA **NEEDS** your e-mail address! We currently have 40 members reading this newsletter electronically. They get access to it sooner, and benefit in other ways-like having access to the archives. Even more readers will save the club more money-funds which can go to upgrade nodes, etc. I know there are **MORE OF YOU** out there with Internet access. Please reply with your e-mail address! In fact, once again, I request-hey, let's call it what it is, begging and pleading-**YOUR** input. What sort of things would you like to see in this newsletter? What sort of things would you like the CDXA to do, or be involved with, or moving toward? It's **YOUR** club. Send those replies in today!

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### Member Profile

#### Carl Smith N4AA

Carl was born in St. Joseph, MO, in 1940, but his family moved shortly to Kansas City, KS. He was first licensed as WN0YFT in 1954. Carl even worked part-time for Burstein-Applebee while still in high school. (Old-timers will recall this Kansas City, MO electronics store.) He spent eight years in the Air Force, never leaving the USA. Returning to Asheville (his wife's hometown), in 1966, Carl became W4NQA, eventually working for Hammarlund (at their Mars Hill plant) and later IBM. This wasn't quite what Carl wanted to do, so he accepted a position with ARRL, becoming W1ETU. (I've read and re-read the amplifier construction treatise, prepared with Doug Blakeslee, from December 1970 QST several hundred times, Carl. I learned a lot from it...ed.) Moving to Virginia Power Company in 1970, Carl regained W4NQA. He stayed with them until 1973, when he returned to Asheville, to work for Carolina Power & Light Company. On Christmas Eve of 1976, Carl found his present callsign in the mail; he was surprised to work several new "N" calls that evening. After trying his hand at a ham/model railroad store, Carl settled in with a local Motorola Service Shop, where he remained for the next 15 years. Down-sized in 1994, Carl decided he no longer wanted to "work for someone else." So, he purchased the DX newsletter, QRZ DX, and became a publisher. When The DX Magazine

became available later in 1996, he purchased that, incorporating his venture as DX Publishing.

Carl has always operated in contests, as well as chasing DX. In December of 1997, he finally submitted the last cards to put N4AA on the Honor Roll. He needs five more countries to have them all. Carl lives on a little over four acres outside Asheville, on a ridge in Buncombe County. Two towers and a 60-foot wooden pole support monobanders for 40-10, as well as the usual wires for the low bands. Two FT-990s and a Titan and L4B complete his station. His favorite mode remains CW, although he works a little SSB, and has tried RTTY, Packet, etc. He doesn't contest as seriously as he used to, but still enjoys the fun and excitement, as well as chasing DX.

Carl's publishing venture keeps him busy, although he says he's seriously considering a trip to the Caribbean (maybe this year) to try his hand at being DX "just once in my lifetime." If you're not familiar with either of his publications, I can recommend them without any reservations. There's still a lot to be said for "the written word," even in this day and age-when the Internet's all the rage. In-depth articles, with copious research, historical facts and documentation, as well as their portability, make his newsletter and magazine well worth any DXer's attention.

Contact Carl at:

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