

August 1998 Pileup

- [Presidential Ponderings](#)
 - [Editorial](#)
 - [Page 3](#)
 - [Review of DX4WIN](#)
 - [The Back Page](#)
-

Presidential Ponderings

Greetings to CDXA, wherever you are! Since we send The Pileups far and wide, and our web site can be accessed from anyplace on the globe, I do mean wherever you may be.

I hope you were able to join us at the Woodshed restaurant for Roger, W4MW's talk on moonbounce. All reports of the evening glow with excitement and new or renewed interest in this facet of our hobby. Thanks to Cliff, W4WN, our V-P, for arranging the evening, and to Roger for his most interesting presentation. Watch The Pileup for news of the next event sponsored by CDXA.

Young Mountain continues to be the focus of our technical challenges. We're running tests at this moment, trying to determine how we can overcome a complaint we are interfering with the site's control circuit equipment. Gary, N5BI, is our man on the scene, and continues to bring high tech ability and equipment to our aid. We hope to get a clean bill of health there soon and resume service from that site. The dual band antenna there is at approximately 200 feet, and will be back on 144.95 MHz at 1200 baud and 441.00 MHz at 1200 and 9600 baud just as soon as we possibly can.

I now have six of the new UHF radios undergoing conversion to 1200 or 9600 baud. These are synthesized GE Phoenix radios, with about 20 watts output. Those who made a deposit on the Mitrek radios will be offered these GE radios first. Then we will be making them available to other club members. The CDXA member price is \$125 for a Phoenix radio converted to one baud rate, and \$140 if the radio is converted to both 1200 and 9600 baud. We have a limit of approximately 50 of these radios, so new orders can be filled as we get them, and I can complete the conversion process. These radios are very fast at 9600 baud, and provide a less crowded band to expand into with our DX PacketCluster services. The Motorolas we originally bought are still around, but the modification process is going slowly. If your heart is still set on a Mitrek, let me know. I'm sure we can work out something for you--our membership.

Solar storms are in the news as I'm sure you may have noticed, but don't forget, someone is still out there hoping to talk to you. Don't forget in this high tech environment of tools to spot DX that nothing will ever replace the feel and thrill of tuning across the band and being the first QSO of the rare one.

Good luck!

73 Joe K4MD

[Back to the Top](#)

Editorial

One of the more interesting aspects of my work (meaning what I do for a living--film and video production, and not putting The Pileup together) is the simple fact that the process is so simple. Orson Welles once described making a movie as the best electric train set a boy could ever have. He also is reputed to have said one could learn everything needed to make a film in about 15 minutes. On occasion, I have subscribed to such notions myself. The process is indeed simple; it's just not easy. Most everyone assumes (again, I don't know why, and I'd dearly love to figure out the answer to this one) that the whole is less than the sum of the relevant parts. Most everyone will have an opinion on how or why or when you ought to do something in the production process--from the written word (the script) to the shooting (camera work, my primary focus, if you'll pardon the pun) to the finished product (what you actually see when the process is done). It sure seems effortless, sitting there on your sofa watching a video, or in the cool comfort of the neighborhood movie theater. It sure looks easy. Programs like Entertainment Tonight do little to ease this notion. Indeed, they popularize the process even more. (I really love folks who insist on having a clapboard used on video shoots, for instance....) Those of us inside the business know how strange and unique it is. We take heart from someone like Akira Kurosawa, who said, upon receiving a lifetime achievement award, he did not understand, yet, how to really make movies. As a longtime Kurosawa fan, this is a fascinating take on the process. As part of Japanese culture, it's understandable. As inspiration, it's an awesome remark.

I've been thinking a lot about inspiration lately. I've been stressed a lot lately. And I react to stress with some spark or creative urge, for lack of a better word. We've been working on selling a new TV show, meaning my company has been creating the marketing piece, designing and shooting the video for the show, and the hours have been long and the scope of things to consider and remember and try to accomplish have been staggering. In the midst of this maelstrom of work, I've been overtaken with other ideas and urges. I've been bombarded with them. I know it's my own personal response to the stress. The bad thing about this is, of course, the lack of time, the lack of funds, the inability to do much more than jot them down in the inevitable notebook--where they're simply bets hedged against an onslaught of creative drought. The danger, of course, is to judge myself against the success of those with the time and resources to create such shows. Or who've already done so. To assume that, having done such, their lives are more meaningful, or better. Something other than simply different. Which is, finally, all that matters.

I'm not rich (at least in fiscal terms), nor am I famous (leastwise on a grand scale). I'm not a guy who's likely to end up on the cover of Time or Newsweek or even QST. I am someone who can work meaningfully in a highly stressful environment (that's one reason I'm a good tower worker). I am someone who can solve problems, in creative ways. I know the time will arrive (sometimes I worry it's here already) when memory will help me measure what I am and what I've done. The fact I've never worked on anything like Citizen Kane (Welles was 28 when he made it!) may depress me, but it won't destroy me. The potential for success in my life is still great. Indeed, it may be greater than it has ever

been, considering what's happened in my personal life of late. I know I am finding the words for this process, and I like to believe I am finding the story within it. I know I'm going to make some wrong moves, and some right ones, and I know I'm going to create something of lasting value. There's some art in there, somewhere. Part of which gets me through those days when the client is suggesting that maybe everything would be better if we just moved the camera over there...just a little bit to the left....

That's my life of late. Stay tuned. There's likely to be tape at 11, to use the old cliché.

--[K4ZA](#)

[Back to the Top](#)

Page 3

One of the reasons I just love my work, which entails carrying a 28-lb marvel of electronics & optics around on my shoulder, is that I can walk up to people & ask them anything. I think the camera makes me not only invisible, but somehow invincible. (Hey, it's not only those primitive natives who have to worry about the sanctity of their souls around photographic mumbo-jumbo, ya know?) Sometimes, I encounter really neat folks. Meeting & chatting with K1VR (an annual Dayton rite) remains one such moment. Herewith, some of Fred's remarks on contesting. Keenly observed, presented with wit & wisdom, & a flair for the dramatic. -K4ZA

Where you stand depends on where you sit. The great ops complain that they didn't get enough time in the chair. The computer jocks complain that you really need a Pentium 200 MHz, in order to run CT really well, a DOS program which, even for Version 9, was originally built for the 386 machine. The systems engineers complain that you have too many switches. The New Yorkers and Europeans complain that you aren't running enough power. The entrepreneurs who have made money complain that you haven't spent enough of yours on the station. The lawyers complain that the wine at Sunday night's post-contest steak dinner wasn't good enough.

Taking the blame. If you are going to have guest ops, they are going to complain. You must accept the blame for everything. Conditions were lousy? Concede that if they'd gone to W3LPL, conditions would have been better. Bad weather driving in? Concede that you should have asked them to come in a day earlier. Amplifier sputtered when asked to work someone on 160 while the bandswitch was still on 20? Concede that you really must spend \$5K on an auto-switching amp. Someone broke a rotor by bashing a side-mounted boom into the tower? Concede that you should have labelled it better, and hope to install a Ring-Rotor next year.

Catching the nuggets. Thresh the complaints and grab the kernels of golden advice. Visitors sometimes see things that you don't. Example: I never thought I was weak into the Caribbean on 80. W2XX spotted that one. We erected a dipole at 60 feet N/S and now wait 20 nanoseconds instead of the previous 40 to work P40V or PJ9J.

Enjoying the crowd. Some guys come to multi-multi just to get out of the house. So what if they don't really do much? Let 'em eat, watch TV and chat. But put them to work building a coax stub that will help on 10 on Sunday. Some guys come to operate. If they are really good, let them. Some past operators at K1VR: KM3T, AD1C, K1EA, W2XX. They can have the seat whenever they want it.

Everyone else is scheduled. But mostly, don't invite anyone you don't like. This is a hobby and it is supposed to be fun. Hams -- I love 'em. BTW, tell everyone to park so that your wife can still get in and out.

Fred Hopengarten K1VR

And finally, this brief, but official, notice. Once, I fantasized about going on a DX-pedition, & ended up at XF4DX in 1987, on Revillagigedo. Pretty neat stuff. Once, I fantasized about going on a CONTEST DX-pedition. Unless something traumatic happens, this October's CQ WW SSB contest will see K4ZA in the Netherland Antilles, hopefully signing PJ8ZA. Again, this should be pretty neat stuff. (But, regardless of the callsign I get to use, please make a concerted effort to work me on all six HF bands. This will be, I hope, more fun than the XF4 trip. Details in future issues.)

[Back to the Top](#)

A Review of DX4WIN

My first contact with DX4WIN was on the DX-reflector in the weeks after Dayton. Apparently, everyone had been waiting for Dayton to see the long-awaited Windows version of some well established logging software vendors. One of the messages said, "Why don't you guys give DX4WIN a try? It has everything you want, including perfect service, N6TR-style." That same night I was playing around with the demo version I'd downloaded from . I was impressed. I played with it a few nights, but still had some questions, which I sent to Steve, N4JF, by e-mail () and I got an answer the same day. Some service!

Two days later I decided to buy my own copy of DX4WIN. How? Via e-mail, of course. I sent him my credit card number, and within an hour, he sent me a ZIP file containing the program. Two hours after having decided I wanted this software, it was mine! And the price was right--just \$69, roughly half of what you pay for the long awaited Windows-version of one of the major logging software vendors.

The first thing I did was import 130,000 QSO's from my old log program. DX4WIN has provisions to import from just about any available logging program. It has the standard conversion keys, but you can change them as you like. I noticed that, while my old DOS-style logging program had just one REMARK field, DX4WIN has two very distinct REMARK fields. One is linked to the call, the other to that particular QSO. In the first one, you might want to write the name of the operator, and his QTH. This information is then shown in that REMARK field for all QSO's with that station. The second REMARK field should be used to store data related to that particular QSO. I use it to store info about contest QSO's (eg: "CQ WW CW as OT7T"). When importing the data from DX-Base, you should set the import filters of the DX4WIN program in such a way that the REMARK data is imported into the QSO-related REMARK field (this is NOT the standard). Later, you can move some of the data from one field to the other (names), but this will have to be done manually. The two distinct REMARK fields inside the same (QSO) window are very helpful. While importing my 130,000 QSO's, DX4WIN checks the data from the original log (country, zone etc.) and compares it to what it

thinks it should be. Any discrepancy is logged in the QSO-related REMARK field. Smart. You can then investigate and make changes if necessary.

Next came my first surprise. My log file was 39 MBs in my old DOS logging program, but was just over 9 MBs with DX4WIN! Some logging programs write every QSO or change to disk after each QSO or change. DX4WIN does not. It saves your file, while working, at regular intervals (which you can specify). In DX4WIN, all log data is loaded into RAM memory. In my 130,000 QSO log, over 9 MB of RAM was used to store the log, which means you need a bit of RAM! But it also means access to the data is virtually instantaneous. On the other hand, it takes about 30-seconds to load the data (130,000 QSOs) into RAM when starting up the program (depending on the speed of the hard disk and the clock frequency of the computer). DX4WIN saves the the complete log and country database every few minutes. This takes only a second or so, even though the complete log and country database are written out. Obviously, there's a risk: if you lose AC power, you will lose those QSOs since the last auto-save. (This is true for most Windows-based programs, like Word, of course.) In the main menu, you'll find PREFERENCES. Here, you'll enter your name and registration number. This is where you set up packet, communication with your transceiver, and even RTTY. Yes, you can do RTTY right from inside DX4WIN!

DX4WIN is a Windows program. It runs well under Windows 95 (and NT, according to the author), but also under Windows 3.0. (It's written in 16-bit code, which allows it to run under the older version.) One of the newest logging programs on the market is written in 32-bit code, and runs only under Windows 95 and NT. The choice of using 16-bit code was intentional, according to the author. Although this version of DX4WIN is an order of magnitude faster than one of its latest competitors, it's likely the authors will market a 32-bit version in the future, which should be 3-5 times faster than this 16-bit version.

You can have over a dozen windows open at the same time under DX4WIN. I would not recommend you do that unless you have a large screen monitor. The main window holds the main data: Call, Country prefix, Country name, Date, Time, Band, Mode, including the two REMARK fields. In total, there are some 44 fields, too many to list. But you don't have to worry about these 44 fields. You can reduce the size of the main window (in steps) and show only the main fields. Another feature allows you to activate each field individually. The only field you cannot de-activate is the call field (obviously). If you like to operate "contest-style," just activate the REMARK field, where you type the name of the operator. The cursor will now only go to the call field and to the REMARK field. If you have a radio link between the computer and your transceiver, the frequency will be entered automatically, just like the time. The program will log your default RS(T). Neat! Again, all this is fully customizable. Changing it takes only seconds, no complicated set-up files to handle, it's all done right inside the program. The number two window is the Log Window. It lists the log in tabular form. Listing can be in any imaginable order (by time, by call, by country or whatever), and you can include whatever fields from the main window you want. Flexibility is unlimited! The "Same Call" window is a nice feature. When you type a call in the main window call field, this window will immediately show all QSO's you have had with this station before. Also, if you noted his name in the (call-related) remark field, his name will pop up in the main window as soon as the call is typed, as well as the state, county grid and IOTA information. It's nice to be able to greet a guy by his first name--that's how you build a reputation of having a good memory for names. Other windows are: Country Window (showing the bands/modes where you've worked the country you're logging), a Sunrise/Sunset Window, an IOTA Window, a State Window, A Zone Window, a Grid Window, and last but not least, a CW window. The latest beta-version of DX4WIN has added another window: the Master Lookup Window. It's very similar to the Super Check partial feature from CT, and it can use the

Master.DTA file from CT. There is a command to convert this file or any other file containing callsigns. The Master Calls window shows all calls in a Master log based on the characters entered in the callsign field of the QSO Window. For example, when the callsign field contains 'KK', all callsigns in the Master log starting with 'KK' will be shown. The use of a '?' is allowed, for example, 'W?L' will find calls such as W3LPL, W9LZ, etc. When the callsign fields starts with a question mark, the letter combination can appear anywhere in the callsign. For example, '?KK' will find calls such as 'KK4HD' as well as 'AB4KK'. This is an excellent feature that will be appreciated by anyone who likes to operate "contest style," something DX4WIN is ideally suited for.

You can do CW using the keyboard from inside DX4WIN, and use a parallel (printer) port, or the DTR line on the radio (serial) port just like with CT, NA, and many other contest programs. Five messages can be programmed into F1-F5, and any text can be typed in the CW window. Not that I think real CW ops will use this feature a lot, but F1-F5 can be used like any memory keyer, with the advantage that the call of the station you work (logged in the main window "Call" field) can be part of any stored message (as well as the received report and serial number). You also see the text scrolling in the CW window while it's being transmitted. Letter spacing and weight control are fully adjustable.

The DX-Cluster feature has all the bells and whistles one could imagine, and more. The best I have seen so far. There are two windows. One (split) window shows all the incoming data at the top (good for monitoring), and whatever you typed (commands, etc.) in the bottom part. Once the DX-Cluster is up and running, you can hide this window and pay attention to the separate window showing DX-spots. You can listen to the DX announcements via your sound-blaster system. The latest Beta version now also has CW announcements. By double clicking with the Mouse on a given announcement in the DX-spot window, your transceiver will automatically be switched to the correct frequency and mode, and the station's call will be entered in the log. All you need to do is work the station, and press enter, and the QSO will be logged. You can also specify certain messages be sent to a special window (the "Announcements and talk messages", which will show up on top of any program you run at any time while DX4WIN is running. You can specify up to 4 warning patterns (certain strings of words) which will be sent to that window, such as "ON4UN DE *:*", or YOU HAVE NEW MAIL, or WWV*. With these examples the announcement window will pop up immediately when a new mail message has been sent to you, or when someone is "talking" to you via the DX cluster or when a new WWV report has been sent.

The search facilities in DX4WIN are unlimited. If you want to see all the QSO's you made on 160M, in CW and for which you have not received a QSL, just press F8 from the main window, type 160 in the band window, CW in the mode window and N in the Cnfm window, and press enter. Within a fraction of a second, the log window will now only list the selected QSO's. If you look for a given call you can define an "exact" match, a "substring match" (when I enter K2UO I will also get K2UOP), or a fuzzy match where I will get anything having some resemblance to K2UO. It's a nice feature when you get a QSL card and the exact call isn't in your log. If you logged anything even close to the right call, this "fuzzy" match option will find it for you.

DX4WIN will generate reports for DXCC, WAS, WAZ, IOTA, WPX, US Counties, TenTen, VUCC, etc. Reports can be generated for all bands, single band, with or without deleted countries, and lists can be made for "needed" countries as well. The report generator is very complete. But a report is only accurate if the data base containing the basic reference data is OK. This is where DX4WIN really excels. DX4WIN contains a country reference file that takes into account dates. You can access the file from the opening window and make changes in full window style. Complete lists of aliases are shown. The feature I like best is that this reference data base is updated whenever you log something

different from what the reference database contains. Assume you log VK0IR. DX4WIN will tell you (as soon as you enter the call that it's Heard Island). But the guy you work says he is on Macquarie Island. You just change the country to Macquarie in the relevant field in the main window, and log the QSO. At this time the reference database will now register that starting this date VK0IR is Macquarie Island. You don't have to manually change the database, it's done each time you tell the program something different from what the current database says. If you make an error, you can easily access the database and correct it.

The QSL label generator can create labels with a single QSO or with multiple QSOs. The software contains an impressive database of commercially available labels of all sorts of dimensions. You can also design your own label, or even export the label data to an ASCII file and use it with your own QSL label program. In short, it's very complete, and well done. DX4WIN also contains a data base with 4,854 QSL managers. This data base can very easily be viewed and altered. When you type a call in the QSL manager field when entering a QSO, this call will automatically be added to the database, with the date. A given call can have various QSL managers depending on the date of the QSO. The supplied database is comprehensive, but not without errors. It can easily be changed. With a CD-ROM drive, you can also access various callbook files, such as Buckmaster. And, if you're one of the fortunate guys who have a rotator with a PC interface and a free computer port, DX4WIN will handle that as well. Really, all you have to do is make the QSO. DX4WIN will virtually automate your entire station.

DX4WIN is not limited to a single log file. If you operate from different places with different calls, you can create different log files, just like you create different files in a word processor program. In addition, you can specify group numbers. Group numbers can be used to divide your log in different logical sections, allowing you to indicate changes in operating conditions such as change of QTH, callsign, a specific contest, etc. When you open a log, the program will use the default Selection, covering all QSOs in the log. When you specify a Selection, DX4WIN will only show the QSOs matching the Selection.

If you want to play around in a contest without being too serious and don't feel like starting up N6TR or CT or NA, then DX4WIN can act just like a non-sophisticated contest program. In contest mode you will need to specify the start and ending time of the contest. The program will generate sequential numbers in CW when asked, and will alert you if you're working a "dupe." Together with the Master Lookup Window, this is very nice feature for entering a contest for a few hours.

Service is another area where DX4WIN excels. If you have a problem, a question or simply a suggestion, send an e-mail to either Steve Bookout , NJ4F, (sbookout@mnsinc.com) or Paul van der Eijk, KK4HD, (pvander@erols.com). You are guaranteed an answer within 24 hours, as well as action. For instance: when I asked Paul if he could integrate a "super check partial" system using CT's MASTER.DTA file, he answered within 24 hours by sending me a Beta-version which did just that! Not promises, but action!

In conclusion, if you're considering switching to a high performance logging software under Windows, at a reasonable price, this is your product. I'm impressed with DX4WIN, and especially by the service and responsiveness of both Steve and Paul .

John Devoldere, ON4UN

[Back to the Top](#)

The Back Page

Fall is fast approaching, and it's time to think about "the grand-daddy of them all," to use their own phrase. In other words, friends 'n neighbors, it's time for the annual Shelby Hamfest. This year, the big event falls on September 5-6, at the usual spot, the Cleveland County Fairgrounds. Talk-in will be on 146.28/88, as usual. This is an official ARRL sanctioned hamfest, meaning you can do all sorts of neat stuff, like check your QSL cards and take an examination to upgrade, and so forth. The gates open at 0600 and the buildings all open at 0800. Tickets (\$4.00 each) and information can be obtained from:
SARC PO Box 2206 Shelby, NC 28151

You'll save a \$1.00 by sending for tickets by mail. SASE, please. C U there!

Frank, K4BVQ, has graciously announced the date for what's become an annual CDXA tradition--the BVQ BBQ. This year, October 17th is the chosen day. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. Details on the PacketCluster & in next month's newsletter.

In what appears to be a contest first, the ARRL has acknowledged serious errors in the recently-published 10M Contest results. Several logs (accepted electronically) were omitted from the results, and a total re-do of the contest is underway. The League assures contesters the problem (for future score submissions) has been corrected. Most contest folk remain suspicious.

If you consider yourself a top band DXer, you may want to pick up the latest anthology from the Western Washington DX Club, called Top Band Anthology, Volume 1. Here's the index:

- "On Propagation & DX on the 160M Band," by Bob Brown, NM7M
- "On Propagation Indicators: Their Physical Origins & Roles in Propagation," by Bob Brown, NM7M
- "Polarization Response of Three Common 160M Antennas," by Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA
- "The SCV on 160M: A Guide to Single & Double Rectangles," by L. B. Cebik, W4RNL
- "Signal Strength Recording as an aid to Propagation Studies," by Nick Hall-Patch, VE7DXR
- "Long Path & Skewed Path Propagation on the Lower Shortwave Frequencies," by Bill Tippett, W4ZV (asute readers will recall an earlier version of this appearing in The Pileup)
- "A Directional Antenna Array for 160M," by Bill Hohnstein, K0HA
- "Getting Serious on 160M," by Ken Keeler, N6RO

Well-known folks writing on serious subjects. Worth your attention, if you're serious about 160M.

Copies (\$15, plus \$2 postage) are available from the editor:
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Got an interesting anecdote, story, or antenna hint or kink? Send it to K4ZA for inclusion in this newsletter. Nothing's too basic or simple or obvious. Nothing's too complex or complicated or crazy. (Okay, some editorial judgment will have to be taken, most of us know how to install a PL-259 by now, don't we...? Or should that go in the next issue?) SEND SOMETHING TO K4ZA AT ONCE. This is your last chance. He's at the bottom of the page for Pete's sake, (who's Pete?) typing away.....

[Back to the Top](#)

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