November 1998 Pileup

Web Wanderings

All this talk of the Internet & the World Wide Web brings us to the following sites, which you may find of interest. AA4R discovered the NG3K site (mentioned here last year) & says:

"It has one of the best cross section of links for the DXer and Contester.... It certainly is a great site for someone who does not have the time to 'surf around' and look for sites on his own.…" It's divided into five sections, says Bill. Check out http://www.his.com/~wfedit/

Section 1, entitled "Resources" provides access to DX Bulletins from various sources, as well as an extensive listing of all currently-announced DX Operations, details of operations for upcoming contests, & so on.

Section 2, entitled "PacketClusters" provides easy & quick access to DX Summit, Juliet Alpha Cluster (JA spots), TELNET access to DX PacketClusters, & an extensive PacketCluster information resource.

Section 3, entitled "Call Books & QSL Info" lists Callbooks from all over the world.

Section 4, entitled "Other QSL Info", contains QSL manager databases maintained by different individuals & groups, plus a listing of stations accepting E-mail QSL requests.

Section 5, entitled "Links to Other DX-Related Sites", contains an assortment of Useful info: the International Beacon Network, info on licensing abroad, USAF/NOAA propagation reports, WWV, W1RT radio propagation prediction charts, a near real-time grayline/MUFmap, as well as several other links.

Section 6, entitled "Other Miscellaneous Resources", contains an Airwaves/FCC AM/FM Station Search Engine (allowing you to search by callsign, frequency, or location), a "How far is it" (to figure distance between two places) calculator, & a Commercial Airline Flight Locator (real time), & an Open Ham Radio Repeater Page, plus many, many others.

http://home6.swipnet.se/%7Ew-68234/front.htm This is an interesting site dedicated to DXing & DXers (including some fascinating reminisces).

http://www.geocities.com/~k2cd/ This is an English language only version of the above, with a bit more general amateur interest material.

http://www.nostalgiaair.org/NostalgiaAir/index.htm A site providing lots of info on old rigs, tubes, pilot lamps, even some schematics, etc.

http://www.mnsinc.com/bry/hamlynx/hamhomeb.htm This is a homebrew or building site-with 280 links to other homebrew, building sites. QRP seems to be on the rise, & several of these links look like they'd be quite interesting, especially some of the parts supplier ones.

http://www.cpcug.org/user/wfeidt/Cluster/index.html A newly-created PacketCluster command reference site. It's very simple to use-just click on the command you're interested in. Sub-commands are indented under their parent commands. The pages are derived from the actual PacketCluster help screens, with the permission of Dick Newell, AK1A. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

http://www.ac6v.com/pageas.html This is the "alphabetical Index"

http://www.ac6v.com/ & this is the Home Page for AC6V, whose index to DX & ham radio features 86 pages & 2500 links, several of which look worthwhile.

Presidential Ponderings

Hey Gang! Wow, what fun lots of us had during the CQWW SSB Contest. If you operated, even for a little while, your score can help CDXA. Members submitting logs add to the total credit for our club, so if you would care to submit, but don't know how, contact our Vice-President (Cliff W4WN). Our Editor, K4ZA, made a very serious entry into the CQWW SSB Contest, so be sure to see his epistle elsewhere within this issue. I'm looking forward to Don giving a program to the club.

I'd be remiss not to thank Frank and Ann Dowd again for their annual hosting of the CDXA's fall social event-the BVQ BBQ. It was a treat for all who came to enjoy the delicious meal and libations, scenery out of a five-star movie, and genuine Southern hospitality second-to-none. This year we even had great weather! Who could ask for anything more? Thanks again for opening your home to CDXA!

As a result of a request mentioned last issue with regard to some heliax to put up at the future node site at Young Mountain, a very gracious offer was made by Dave Rawley, N4XO, of High Point. After discussing the details over dinner at the Dowd's, Dave not only offered to donate the heliax, but to have it delivered to us from his home in High Point! It doesn't get any better than that, friends, so say your own thanks to Dave next time you see or talk to him. We are indeed blessed with many generous friends in CDXA! Thank you, Dave, for your donation, and literally going "the extra miles!"

Speaking of Young Mountain, we should have it on the air soon. We first have to get the antenna up, and feedline installed to the commercial standards used there. Then the node, W4DXA, which is sitting on my kitchen table as of this writing, will be installed. Thanks are due Ken Boyd, K4DXA, for all the time and effort he has put into making W4DXA work properly. (Ed. Note: The 144.93 node is up and running, but the 440 MHz side has some problems, as of 11/15.)

In view of the fact that this is the final issue of the PILEUP for 1998, I'd like to tell each of you what an honor it has been to serve as your President this year. All in all, it's been pretty easy given that your Vice- President, Cliff Wagoner, your Secretary/Treasurer, Gary Dixon, and your PILEUP Editor, Don

Daso, have done all the work. I'm very grateful to these men for their work and dedication to all things good for our club. Would you like to serve next year? Would you like to see the club do anything differently next year? Well, right here, right now is your chance. Please let your officers know of your interest. We will nominate and elect 1999 officers at our December meeting, so plan to attend and cast your vote.

To all our members who have given of their time and expertise this year, I say an extra-special thanks! It's been said before, but certainly bears repeating: The CDXA will be what YOU make of it!

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

While not an official CDXA member, many of us knew him personally, bought gear at his store in Rock Hill/Charlotte (GISMO), or interacted socially with Rudy, **N9CC**, who became a Silent Key earlier this month. Condolences to Rudy's family address: 508 Windridge Lane, Morristown, TN 37890, or via their e-mail: aredl@juno.com

AA4S also ran up a nice CQ WW score, but submitted for SEDXC. **WA4UNZ** has become **K4DXA**, in case you didn't know. **K4MQG** & crew were disappointed to discover a new balun did NOT fix the erratic 80M beam troubles. However, the recent rains solved the problem long enough for Gary to work BQ9P on 75M. Maybe it really IS the weather-even **N4ZC**'s 40M beam is working again. Anyway, 11 CDXA members gathered THIS past weekend at **K4MQG**'s QTH to fix the big Create beam once and for all. On the ground, a carbon arc path was found, fixed, and the beam's working DX again. **AA4ZZ** let us know that **W4MW** just completed a two-way with Vermont via EME-giving Roger WAS on 2M! And **W4ZV** writes: Charlanne and I just returned from three weeks in Athens and the Greek Isles, but no radio activity at all. Got a nice note from Ross, **9M2AX**, who enjoyed his recent visit to a CDXA luncheon. Looking forward to the new season on 160 with lower QRN now that the WX is cooler. **AE4PB** fixed his 2M mobile & can be heard on 147.18 again. **K4ZA** continues to get 10-40 QSLs each day in the mail, & he only went to St. Maarten!

The MFJ 259 Antenna Analyzer-A Report After One Year's Use

The MFJ 259 isn't a new idea-a similar unit was described in CQ way back in the early 70s. Of course, you had to build it yourself, then calibrate it, & remember how it worked, & check the accuracy of the little vernier dials (this was pre-digital readout, remember). So, first off, you think how neat the unit is, & what it can do. I had the earlier model (without any readout) & upgraded after W3LPL commented favorably on his new model.

We all know that the point of measurement compounds lots of antenna problems-it's simply easier to measure something down on the ground, at the end of that handy coax cable. But it's more accurate to make a measurement right at the feedpoint. Until instruments like that homebrew box or the 259, it was hard dragging your S-line or even your new Japanese transceiver up that 50, 70, 100, or 150-foot

tower. You get the idea. An instrument that does all of what the 259 does is, indeed, quite handy. Remember how hard it was to plot out an SWR Vs FREQ chart in the old days? Or how about providing complex Z-measurement accuracy? This can be accomplished with the 259 by making two SWR measurements-one the typical way, and one with a series resistor soldered into a coax connector. A short cable & a dummy load will allow you check cables, as well as the quality of your connector's installation, too. (The math formulas are in the manual, by the way.)

Several people have commented (on various reflectors) about the unit's susceptibility to stray RF, but I haven't encountered this problem.

What are some bad points? I've gotten tired of changing batteries. The 8-AAA cells are all inside the unit, in two holders, & the case must come apart to replace them. I've gone to a large "wall wart" transformer, or a gel-cell, for portable work. A battery "test" button would be handy, but the 170 MHz oscillator serves as well. (Just check to see if the unit's working on the highest frequency range before you start climbing.)

Why MFJ provides a part list, but no schematic, is a mystery. I would like to have a switch to allow use with 75-ohm systems. I'd also like to see a strap, or at least attachment points for such a strap. (The carrying case is a good idea, but it's pretty useless 100-feet in the air. Naturally, you don't want to drop even a $200 piece of test gear from that height, so you're always worried about losing it. At least I am, & that's no way to make any kind of measurement.)

Sometimes, it's hard (okay, very hard) to see the dip-it goes by that quickly. A vernier dial (like the old homebrew unit) would help.

The resistance meter is only really accurate at resonance. This is not a problem-provided you know that.

The dip meter function isn't that great an option. I'll take my stand-alone GDO any day.

The fact remains, however, that this is a useful tool-one that's capable of solving far more problems or troubles than these simple inconveniences cause. For instance, I wouldn't leave home without it (it's packed right next to the 850, for instance, on its way to PJ8).

--K4ZA

Editorial

The sheer joy of being DX, and operating in the CQWW, is slowly fading. Melancholy, like an aura of thoughtful sadness, overtakes me sometimes. As I think about the recent trip to PJ8 and the contest, the whole process leads me further back, into memory and bits of reverie and remembrance. But, I digress, and pull myself back, into the ever-demanding present, and go on about my work, even thinking about the future. Sometimes, just for a moment, I tell myself I'm going to go back, to do it

again, knowing what I know now, doing it better.

For those of you who may not have heard, read, or otherwise gathered such data from hamming's jungle drums, the PJ8Z effort resulted in 9.47M points-6th place in the world, right now. I will be pleased as punch to remain in the Top Ten (SOABHP) in the final standings.

I'm somewhat reluctant to talk about the trip or the contest, in order to somehow save or preserve the topic for a club meeting. Then I recall that CDXA doesn't HAVE meetings. Only occasionally do we gather or meet, so, some highlights, for your reading pleasure:

1) Pileups are a great deal of fun. This is so simple, so basic, and yet so unfamiliar to many of us, who haven't had the opportunity to be on the receiving end. The adrenaline rush kept me going for 42 hours-enabling me to make over 7000 QSOs, with very little CQing, or even calling QRZ? I simply said PJ8Z, and the fun would start-with me grinning maniacally most of the time.
2) You've heard it said; you've read about it. And I'm here to tell you-even order or proclaim it, if you will. NEVER, EVER give partial callsigns in a pileup. Full calls, always, now and forever. It's just that simple.
3) US operators are clearly good operators. Followed by JA ops. Bringing up the rear, alas, are some ops from Southern Europe. I hate to say this, but it's true. (Hey, I'm not the first one to make this observation.)
4) Never leave home on anything like this radio expedition without the following: fuses, tape, tools, spare coax connectors, solder and tools, manuals for gear and software, and some sort of LC network or transmatch allowing you to tune a random wire-especially something which will work on 160M. I had everything but the latter, which cost me points on Top Band, I'm sure.
5) If you plan on competing in something like the CQ WW in a serious manner, and it's your first time (my previous 20-odd years of contesting were merely "warming up" for something like this), having a plan is a good idea. Having the plan in hand before you leave home is probably an even better idea. Be flexible, because you probably won't know propagation, and so on, before the contest. So having an outline or plan to guide you will no doubt help.
6) Be aware of what you're doing. This sounds pretty simple-a ludicrous note, perhaps. But at certain points within those 42 hours, I found this gentle reminder, written on a post-it note, very valuable: Rate is great, but not at the expense of accuracy. I believe this contest log to be the very best logging I've ever done. I truly made a point of logging accurately, and correcting (even saying I was making a correction) any callsign errors.
7) Identify often. I said my call at the end of each exchange. And still people hollered out: What's your call? I found this, and the oft-repeated request, QSL information? especially distracting and disturbing. But, hey, it's only a hobby, right? Mostly, I was going "too fast" for those operators. One guy argued adamantly that I hadn't given my callsign for over 10 minutes!
8) And yes, I admit to being seduced by rate on at least two separate occasions-each a 350/hour. I've never had so much ham radio fun in my life, pure and simple.

The trip to PJ8 was a good thing. Marti and I enjoyed it, learned more about each other, and I think she understands something of what this radio passion means now. It's certainly not just a hobby. Oh, by the way, thanks for the QSOs!

--**K4ZA**

CDXA scores from CQWW SSB Contest

PJ8Z 9.47M	**N4ZC 2.4M**
W4UFO 122,100	**K4MD 427,504**
AA4R 1.5M	**W4WNT 206,088**
K2SD 42,000	**K4PC 232,260**
N4PQX 927,388	**K4DXA 48,510**

Others who will submit logs, but haven't sent us their scores yet include: KT4JN, KB4WPL, WA4UUP, AA4ZZ, W4NZC, W4VHF, AE4PB, W4SI, & KA8FSM. Remember, if you need help submitting the proper paperwork, contact W4WN.

A Few Words About Rotators

Sometimes we think of rotators as "necessary evils," especially if you've priced them lately. A quick tour of some sites on the WWW provided the following facts on the CDE/Hy-Gain rotators. The first model was the original Ham-M. It was designed primarily for lightweight tribanders. The Ham-IV is currently being sold today.

The old Ham-M had a simple on-off switch for the brake. Again, for a lightweight beam, not such a big problem. Older ARRL Antenna Handbooks carry a suitable "delayed braking" circuit, which is a worthwhile addition.

The Ham-M rotator was released in 1957; the last model in the series was produced in 1973. A Ham-M rotator would have the series number, 1 - 5, followed by three digits, to indicate the week and year of manufacture. For example, a rotator with the #5 322 would be a Ham-M, series 5, manufactured in the twenty-second week (the '22' in '322') of 1973 (the '3' in '322'). In 1973, the mold for making the Ham-M control unit was destroyed in a fire. Rather than replacing the mold, the Ham-II was born. The rotator was the same as the Ham-M, but the control box was replaced with a three-switch unit with a continuous meter reading.

In 1977, the Ham-III model was released, having a new motor with an internal brake, as well as a brass motor gear. The brake wedge was redesigned, along with the brake housing, improving the wind surface area of the rotator. And, the control unit for the Ham-III used a new PC-board-mounted meter. In 1978, the Ham-IV was released. This rotator had a new steel ring gear and a reinforced upper mast support. Changes to the control box included a new faceplate, plastic top and bottom covers, and a new meter with reversible scales. The T2X, known as "The TailTwister," was also introduced in 1978. The T2X is a Ham-IV with an even heavier upper mast support, a heavier brake

wedge and brake housing, and 40 additional ball bearings. The control box has three additional LEDs.

Of course, for the most part, control boxes can be inter-changed. To be sure, check to see the motor start capacitor is across terminals 4 and 8. And verify that the 500-ohm pot resistor appears across terminals 3 and 7. If your rotator and control unit pass these inspections, they are interchangeable.

If your rotator doesn't run at all, or is hard to start, especially during cold weather, the motor start/run capacitor is probably at fault. Most of these capacitors are 108-155 MFD bipolar (AC) capacitors. When checking a capacitor, it should be within 20% of its rating and show no signs of corrosion or burning. Do NOT use a DC capacitor as a motor start/run capacitor. If you suspect a bad capacitor, most electric motor shops carry them. Simply disconnect the wires from terminals 4 and 8 on your control box and clip lead the new capacitor in place to test.

The bottom line is this: don't rule out the older models-they can easily be converted to current standards.

The Rotor Doctor (Craig, N8DJB), or Norm's (W3NRS) Rotor Service, can supply you with parts or service. Their respective web sites:

http://www.rotordoc.com

http://www.tiac.net/users/shiacawn/rotors/
