

August, 1999 Pileup

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PRESIDENTIAL PONDERINGS

Another month of summer has passed, a busy one, too. First, Bill, W4WNT, has been elected to the CDXA Vice-President position recently vacated by Cliff, W4WN. (Rumors this election was rigged-so the masthead wouldn't require lots of typing changes if Bill was elected-are totally untrue. It would have been much easier to "erase" the T, not add it... And thanks to W4SI, too, who also accepted a nomination.) Thanks for your help, Cliff; good luck in W3-land.

The CDXA dinner meeting on August 5th was a huge success. We had a great turnout and Roger, N4ZC, gave a wonderful presentation on his recent trip to Europe with slides of the many picturesque countries he visited. We got to see pictures of places and DXers we've all worked over the years with whom Roger stayed during his visit.

The dinner meeting also included the first announcement of our intra-club DX competition. CDXA will be awarding some very nice plaques and certificates to those members who produce the highest scores in the CQWW Phone and CW contests, as well as the ARRL 10 Meter Contest. Full details are included in this Pileup. I'd like to thank Ted, W4VHF, for his ideas and input, and the CW Ops of the Carolinas, for sponsoring the first place plaques, which they promise will be top notch.

In PacketCluster news, K4PC's node suffered a direct lightning hit, completely destroying it. To date, Chris, K4PC, has received \$300 in donations from his local users for rebuilding this node. Scott, K2SD, has donated a computer, and the CDXA has supplied both a 1200 baud DRSI TNC and a 2400 baud MFJ-1270B TNC for rebuilding the node. We hope Chris can get the K4PC node back on the air soon. For those of you wondering "where have all the spots gone?" we suggest the following. First, we've lost our path to

K4IUV which supplied Internet spots. K4IUV's node had to be moved from a commercial TV tower site they used to use. Secondly, "northern spots," which come from the K4JV node connection to W4MR, which has long been an unreliable connection, and it's unfortunately down at this time. Finally, we are left with, well-YOU-the local packet users. If local users don't spot DX, there will be no spots. So, I encourage everyone to be more of an interactive user if you want to see more spots. We're investigating adding Internet spots to our local cluster; please let us know what you think. We have limited funds, so let us know your thoughts and wishes.

And, finally, as I write this I'm a bit sad. The N4PQX station is temporarily off the air, having been dismantled to move to our new QTH. This location has been good to me, even with the limited size of my city lot. Special thanks to the tower crew, K4MQG and AE4PB, for their hard work getting antennas and tower down in this August heat. Thanks also to the ground crew: W4WNT, N4ZC, K4MGN, W4JWG, KT4HN, and AA4NN. These efforts are greatly appreciated. It shows that CDXA members, when called upon by other members, can be a tremendous help to one another. Thanks again! I hope to be back in the pileups from our new QTH soon.

73...Bob, N4PQX

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EDITORIAL

Recently, I've encountered several "firsts" in my life--experiences and episodes that have not only been new or different, but uniquely moving and memorable. That's one reason why this newsletter is a bit later than normal--because I took some time off from work, went to Las Vegas, where Marti and I were married while taking a hot air balloon ride across the desert. Then we came back to Charlotte, and I flew off to Texas for several days where I dressed up like a fireman and sat in a burning room, with a Betacam instead of a hose or other fire-fighting tools. More on that later. Let's get back to Vegas, first. One reason we went is that we'd never been there. Volumes have been written about the place, so I won't attempt to summarize the town or otherwise describe what it's like. It's all that, and more. As a card-carrying voyeur type of person (a trait most cameramen share, unfortunately or not), Vegas is a visual delight. As an intellectually oriented observer of the human condition, Vegas is a virtual thesis happening right in front of you, 24 hours a day. As an overworked (okay, so I haven't had a vacation in a few years) individual, Vegas is a swell escape. As a non-gambling kind of guy (no jokes about marriage, please), Vegas is a nightmare. We had, in a word, a swell time. Our life together continues to surprise and delight me. We're keeping both of our residences, for various reasons, right now.

More firsts for each of us, which I'm sure, helps make things memorable. Certainly the hot air balloon flight was just that--a literal escape from the memory of earlier marriages, the tug and pull of the gravity of all those memories. At 1500 feet above the desert, at dawn, it was amazingly quiet. The ride was somber and serious and serene and silly all at once. Our vows were simple, soulful, and somehow selfless--each focused on the other.

The trip, Don, folks want to hear about the trip...so...the MGM Grand is, indeed, just that. The desert heat is...well...it's a dry heat. The temperature was in the 100s, but the humidity was 14%, a far cry from what we were used to. My lips cracked and bled the first day. George Carlin, whose show we saw, is a pretty funny guy. People will, apparently, gamble on anything, at any time. It's amazing--the stuff you see. You want to learn about selling? Go to Vegas. You want to learn something about using HUGE trans-lights (the giant transparencies in the airport alone are worth the trip) or large-scale video walls? Go to Vegas. How about seeing Paris without leaving the USA? Go to Vegas. You get the idea.

I digress...but the experience was just that. Somehow, we even managed to survive the cramped coffin-like confines of a US Airways 737 red-eye flight home. Fully booked, just what do all these people DO here in Charlotte, anyway? So, I was then off to Houston, Texas, as I say, pretending, or at least dressing like, a real-life fireman. My very own turnout gear, boots, nomex hood, gloves, and that very cool hat. My job was to document the HFD's use of their newly-adopted Scott Health and Safety "Eagle Imager," a thermal-imaging camera. So I found myself sitting in the burn room, watching flames literally lick their way up a wall, across the ceiling and out over my head. It happens quickly. It was amazing how hot, how dense the smoke was, how helpless--alone and isolated even with seven other guys in the room--I felt while all this was happening. My right hand was "free" of the heavy glove (I only had the nomex liner on) and when I felt the camera body was too hot to touch, I backed out of the room. Lots of what happened (literally, and in my mind) was new; lots of what I experienced was memorable. And quite profound, I believe, but then, maybe I've gotten a new perspective--having recently been in Vegas?

The Scott thermal imaging camera is certainly an amazing device. You can "see" in the dark, smoke-filled environment fire fighters work in routinely. It will literally change their lives. The experience of creating a video for this client seems to have changed mine. Or perhaps I'm still riding in that balloon, high above the desert?

[--K4ZA](#)

(To those CDXA members who heard of this adventure on the radio or other grapevine, and sent compliments or best wishes, a sincere "Thank you!" from Marti and me.)

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CONTEST PLAQUES TO BE AWARDED BY CDXA

The Carolina DX Association announces plaques and certificates, to be awarded in various categories of the CQ WW DX & ARRL 10-Meter Contests. Plaques and awards as follows:

The Best on Phone

1999 CQ WW SSB Contest

(October 30-31, 1999)

Plaques will be awarded to the members with the highest scores in the following categories:

1st place low power 1st place high power

(150 watts or less) (1500 watts or less)

Certificates will be also awarded to 2nd and 3rd place finishers in each category

U dah Man!

1999 CQ WW CW Contest

(November 27-28, 1999)

A plaque will be awarded to the member with the highest score in the CW competition

This award sponsored by the Carolinas CW Ops

CQ World Wide Champion

A trophy will be awarded to the CDXA member with the best combined score from the SSB and CW contests.

The Last Gunfight of the 20th-century

ARRL 10 Meter Contest

(December 11-12, 1999)

Plaques will be awarded to those Carolina DX Association members with the best score in

PHONE MIXED (phone & CW)

All contest rules & regulations established by the CQWW contest committee & ARRL are to be adhered to by all CDXA participants.

By announcing these awards, the club hopes to foster a healthy respect for contesting within the group, increase our club competition activity, and generate some real enthusiasm among all of our CDXA members. You *must* be a CDXA member to participate in this club competition.

W4VHF will collate and report the scores, so make certain you submit a copy of your logs to Ted. Deadlines for log submission will be 30 days AFTER each contest. (The 10M-Contest logs must be submitted ONE WEEK after the contest, in order to guarantee checking in time.) Award presentations will take place at the annual CDXA Christmas Dinner, later in December.

Please take some time to review the categories, talk up the program, and plan now to participate in this intra-club competition!

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CONTEST SCORES & STORIES FROM CDXA MEMBERS

The 1999 IARU HF Championship contest of July 11/12 was different than the one in 1998; I had to work harder just to keep even with last year's score. The contest runs from 8 AM EDT on Saturday, to 8 AM on Sunday, and I can handle 24 hours of continuous operation. In 1998, I had 206 contacts in the first 2 hours on 15 meters, this year, I had 103. The K-factor was between 1 and 2, no wasn't a big hindrance. Fifteen meters just did not "feel right," and it was the only good band. Where were all the little guys in Europe? After 60 contacts the first hour, I concentrated on the Far East. I can't really run that area with only a tribander at 60 ft, but I struggled to get 43 intermixed with an occasional US station.

Europe was just not producing on 15 meters, even by 10 AM, so I went to 20 meters. Thirty minutes there produced 30 contacts, but D-layer absorption was setting and Europe was fading out. So, after picking up W1AW/9 on 10 meters for a multiplier, it was back to 15 meters, the only active band.

By 11:00 AM, 10 meters began to open to South America. So, for 40 minutes, i picked up about 30 stations and seven multipliers. CQing, along with searching and pouncing, had cleaned the band. In other years, sporadic-E had helped with US points, but even that was denied me. So, back again to 15 meters, as that was the only band with consistent signals.

It wasn't until 7 PM that I was able to exceed my 1998 QSO rate because 15 meters was "red hot" until 8:30, when it slacked off, and 20 meters came into its own for an hour. Actually, my rates even then were very modest, running from 82 to 55 contacts per hour. But it was better than last year. Then, at 9:40 PM, I went to 40 meters. This contest isn't like the big ones, and the main stations on are the headquarters stations of the various IARU member countries. Working down from 7100 kHz, I worked all these stations quickly, but then what? All I could do was call CQ in the US phone band. Even so, I managed to work the three zones in our country plus HC2EE, who came up and gave me a break. A half hour was enough for me on 40 meters, so up to 80 meters I went. This static level was S9+, but an hour's work provided 40 contacts with stations in Europe, all headquarters stations, along with Canada and the US.

Then, back to 20 meters for an hour, picking up 65 contacts; it was the hot band from 11:30 PM until 12:30 AM. I picked up some more US stations on 80, got my Alaskan multiplier on 15 with a 15-minute jaunt there, then went back to 20 at 1:20 for 45 minutes, getting 41 more Qs. I paralle my TH-7 pointed West with the rhombic, which is centered on Europe, so while CQing, I pick up Europe and an occasional Pacific station. At 2:30, I was back on 40 meters in the US phone band CQing. Europe was gone, so I was using my quarter wave vertical. In 40 minutes on that band, I worked 30 stations, including several from Hawaii, Australia, and Central and South America, with the rest Canadian and US stations.

Around 3:30, I was back on 20 meters for almost an hour, managing to snag 60 contacts, all Europeans, except for an occasional West Coast W/VE. Then, a quick look at 80 meters for the last time. Another look at 40 meters gave me an Alaskan contact, plus some more KH6/VK and locals. Then, from 5:30 until 7:30 AM, it was strictly 20 meters. That two hours

produced 60 QSOs--slow going, but an eye-opener. In past contests, I'd always gone to bed around 3 AM, and gotten up for a 7 AM start. So, I was surprised at the stations coming back to me: VK/ZL, of course, but also KH6, JA, ZS on long path, 9M6, DU, KL7, BV, V73. What have I been missing all these years?

I decided to spend the last 30 minutes of the contest on 15 meters. That netted 20 contacts, with the last one at 7:57 being VP9ID for a final multiplier. Last year, I ended up with 1184 Qs, and 154 multipliers. This year, I ended up with 1080 Qs, and 159 multipliers. My final score was 14,000 points better than last year! Was it worth it? At 8:30 AM, after breakfast, I went to bed, having been up for 25 1/2-hours. I certainly felt it was worth it. At 10:30 AM, I woke up in a cold sweat, with high anxiety feelings, with cramps throughout my arms and legs. I got up, had a glass of orange juice, which my wife said was good for me. I drank a Coca-Cola to put some sugar into my system, and read a book until my XYL came back home from church. I decided to stay up, and did so until 11 PM because I wanted to see "The Practice" on TV. I awoke Monday morning after a delightful sleep, and have been fine ever since.

Next year, I'll be one year older. Maybe at 81, I won't put in the full 24 hours. Maybe I'll just get on and have some fun.

Henry G. Elwell N4UH

(If Uncle Henry's story doesn't inspire you, I don't know what will. I hope I'm still doing stuff like this when I'm 81 years young! --K4ZA)

WA8WV also operated in the IARU contest, sent something to Cliff, which he forwarded to me, but it was gibberish as I received it. Efforts to get an updated score or info have gone unanswered

W4VHF operated the Rover Class in the ARRL June VHF Contest W4VHF/R was QRV from five different grid squares across Virginia The final tally was 506 QSOs with 101 multipliers

TOTAL SCORE is 60,701

As of this writing, on July 1, 1999, (according to the VHF reflector) this score puts W4VHF in third place in the USA

Six meters opened very briefly on Saturday only, alas Operators were Ted, W4VHF, and Gary, K4MQG

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BVQ BBQ

Frank, K4BVQ, has graciously announced the date for what's become an annual CDXA tradition--the BVQ BBQ. This year, October 16th is the chosen date. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. Full details on the PacketCluster and in next month's newsletter.

SHELBY HAMFEST INFO

Fall is fast approaching, and it's time to think about "the grand-daddy of them all.". It's time once again for the Shelby Hamfest. It will be September 4-5, at the usual location, the Cleveland County Fairgrounds, with talk-in on 146.28/88. Shelby is an official ARRL sanctioned hamfest, meaning you can check your QSL cards for DXCC, take an exam and so forth. Gates open at 0600; buildings open at 0800. Tickets can be obtained from:

SARC
PO Box 2206
Shelby, NC 28151

Shelby Hamfest Forums
Saturday, September 4th @ 2:00 PM Tom Harrell, N4XP "Another Day in Paradise, V7 Kwajalien Atoll DXpedition"

Sunday, September 5th @ 10:00 AM Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH of the Federal Communications Commission "FCC Enforcement" If the "FCC Enforcement" *Forum is full, a second Forum will be held with K4ZDH NC4NC*

FLEA MARKET LEXICON

Phrase-book for CDXA members wandering the aisles of local ham radio flea markets
Caveat Emptor!

The signal quality of this rig was instantly recognizable in its day. (Distortion, bad audio, or chirps were abundant.)

This rig has wide frequency coverage. (It drifts.)

The tubes used in this rig alone are worth the asking price. (This rig uses a rare 7360 beam deflection tube in a balanced mixer circuit. It's blown, so you'll have to spend \$80 for a new one.)

This is a really good CW rig. (Don't even think about using it on SSB.)
This is a really good SSB rig. (Don't even think about using it on CW.)
This is a really good rig. (It doesn't work on CW or SSB.)
The transmitter is outstanding. (It doesn't receive.)
The receiver is really hot. (It doesn't transmit.)
Frequency stability is great. (The VFO doesn't work. Or only the crystal oscillator works.)
I just re-tubed it. (Mostly with used tubes from my neighbor--who was a TV repairman in the 60s.)
This is the rig of my dreams. I really wanted one as a kid, but now I've got to let it go. (Having matured, gone to college, and finally learned something about radio, I now know how horrible it is.)
This rig was really popular in its day. (It's a Heathkit. Put together by someone who didn't know how to solder.)
I don't know if it works. (It doesn't work.)
It might need a bit of tweaking. (It needs alignment.)
This rig was used in government service. (The rig saw wartime use--in some foreign theater. Or it was stored outside, on a pallet, unprotected, for a couple of years.)
It doesn't chirp. (Probably because it doesn't transmit.)
The audio sounds great. (Probably meaning that 60-cycle hum out of the speaker is clean.)
I'm selling it because I have two of them. (You may be buying a "parts" radio.)
This is a collector's item today. (Meaning no one else has one for sale in the flea market.)
It came from an estate sale. (If you have any problems, take them up with the previous owner.)
I had it on the air just last night. (I didn't work anyone, but I was on....)
I just had it serviced. (I opened the lid and moved a couple of wires.)

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