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THE RADIO AMATEUR'S JOURNAL

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The Radio Amateur's Journal



ON THE COVER: The Canadian sunset silhouettes VE3BMV's stacked razor beams as he seeks to work the rare ones.

JULY, 1980

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A DXpedition to Curacao captures the record for the 1978 CQ World-Wide DX Phone Multi-Operator, Multi-Transmitter Category.

A DXpedition To Curacao By PJ9JR

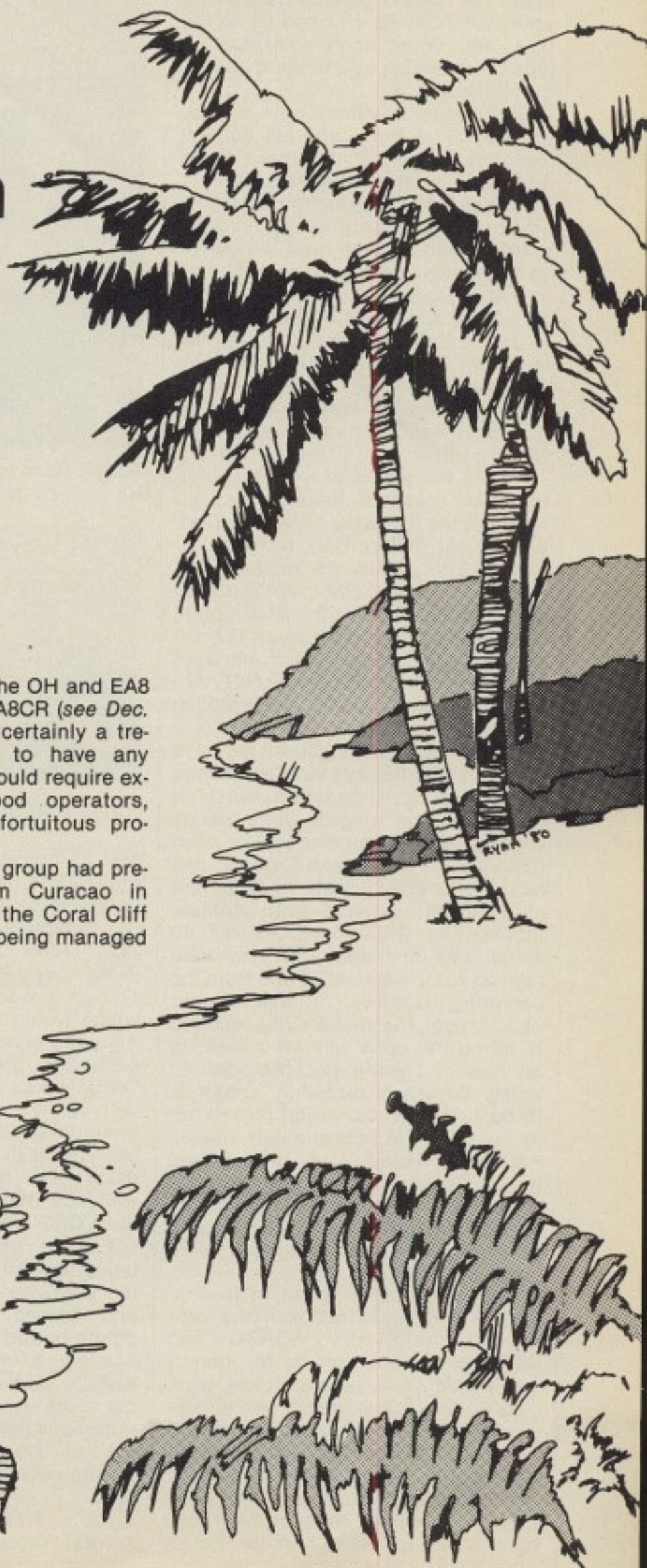
BY LEW GORDON*, K4VX

During the summer of 1978 a small group of Potomac Valley Radio Club members met at the QTH of N4RV to discuss the possibility of making an assault upon the newly established world record for the CQ World Wide DX Contest in the multi-multi phone category. The record of 21,351,898

points set in 1977 by the OH and EA8 gang under the call EA8CR (see Dec. 78, CQ, page 60) was certainly a tremendous effort, and to have any chance of beating it would require extensive planning, good operators, good antennas, and fortuitous propagation.

Since several of the group had previously operated from Curacao in years past, and since the Coral Cliff Hotel was once again being managed

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by Chet, 9J9EE, it was quickly agreed by all that Curacao was possibly the best QTH for any successful assault upon the EA8CR record. Curacao is about as close as you can be to the USA and count three-point QSO's, plus Curacao has an excellent shot to Europe and Asia.

Since some antennas were already on the island from previous contest activities, it was decided that only 40 meter and 15 meter beams needed to be shipped. Anticipating the good possibility of losing the antennas enroute, a 402BA and a home brew 4-element 15 meter yagi were boxed and shipped in early August for the October contest. After six weeks of being unable to locate the whereabouts of the antenna box, it was finally traced to Kennedy Airport in New York. Fortunately, the "lost" box eventually arrived in good shape at Curacao one week prior to the contest.

After a few weeks of recruiting plus the usual dropouts, the crew evolved finally to the following operators: Don, W3AZD (40 meter); Bob, K3RT (20/10 meter); Eric, K3NA (15 meter); Bob, K3EST (20 meter); Paul, WA3ZAS (80 meter); Jack, N4RV (20 meter); John, N4MM (15 meter); and Lew, K4VX (10 meter). Once on the island we were greatly supported by Chet, PJ9EE; Ari, PJ2ARI; John, PJ2AAX; and Freddie, PJ2FR.

Several of us arrived about ten days before the contest to start the antenna erection effort. Curacao is not your stereotype palm fringed, white, sandy beach island—seen one you've seen them all. In many areas Curacao can be a highly inhospitable volcanic and coral desert covered with cactus, thorns, and wild goats! As our 40 meter and 80 meter antennas were high on a ridge about 500 feet from the operating position, a machete-cut path through the stickers was required to string the open wire feed lines. In addition, someone got the idea to string Beverage receiving antennas through the cactus, which proved not to be easy nor operationally useful. For some reason the higher land where we strung the Beverages is more like a huge, porous, ceramic insulator than the more desirable lossy soil areas, so the Beverages were useless.

After the usual amount of frustrations and endless trips back and forth to Willemstad by W3AZD and WB3ANE to obtain (or try to obtain!) overlooked items such as fuses, wire, u-bolts, and other items, we finally saw Eric, K3NA, climb down the 15 meter pole at noon on Friday, about eight hours before the contest! All antennas were up and operational!

Our PJ9JR operational strategy was simple: Talk as fast as possible; log as



PJ9JR Back row, left to right, K4VX, N4RV, K3EST, K3NA, WB3ANE; front row, left to right: WA3ZAS, W3AZD, and N4MM. Not pictured: K3RT.

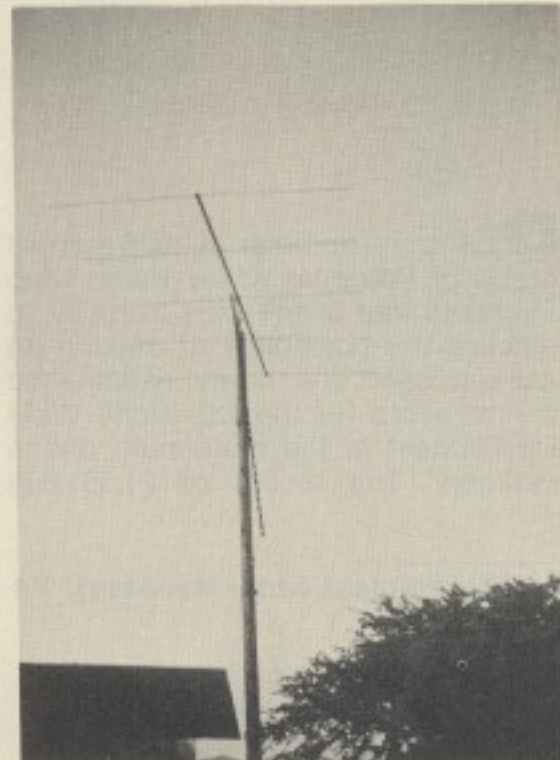


Chet, PJ9EE, with K4VX and N4RV.

fast as possible; and, pass as many multipliers as possible between bands. Prior to the contest several of us practiced saying "W1XYZ Fie - Nien - Oh - Nine" and "Thanks, Pea - Jay - Nine - Jay - Rrr" as fast as we could. The idea was to develop a rhythm which would become second nature. Also, the style of signing PJ9JR after each QSO practically eliminated the "What's your call?" QRM so prevalent with many contest DXpeditions and operations. Since we had a peak of 360 QSO's in one hour on 10 meters using this technique, there is no evidence that signing your call after each QSO slows you down.

Forty-eight hours, countless bologna sandwiches and cups of coffee later, we quickly tallied our logs and arrived at almost 32,000,000 points before dupes. It was over, and barring a surprising effort from KH6XX, we had the new record. Later our score reduced to 29,211,300 as we removed 7 percent duplicates from the log. At 300 plus/hr rates, no dupe sheets could be kept during the contest.

As a matter of fact, there were several "records" set by PJ9JR:

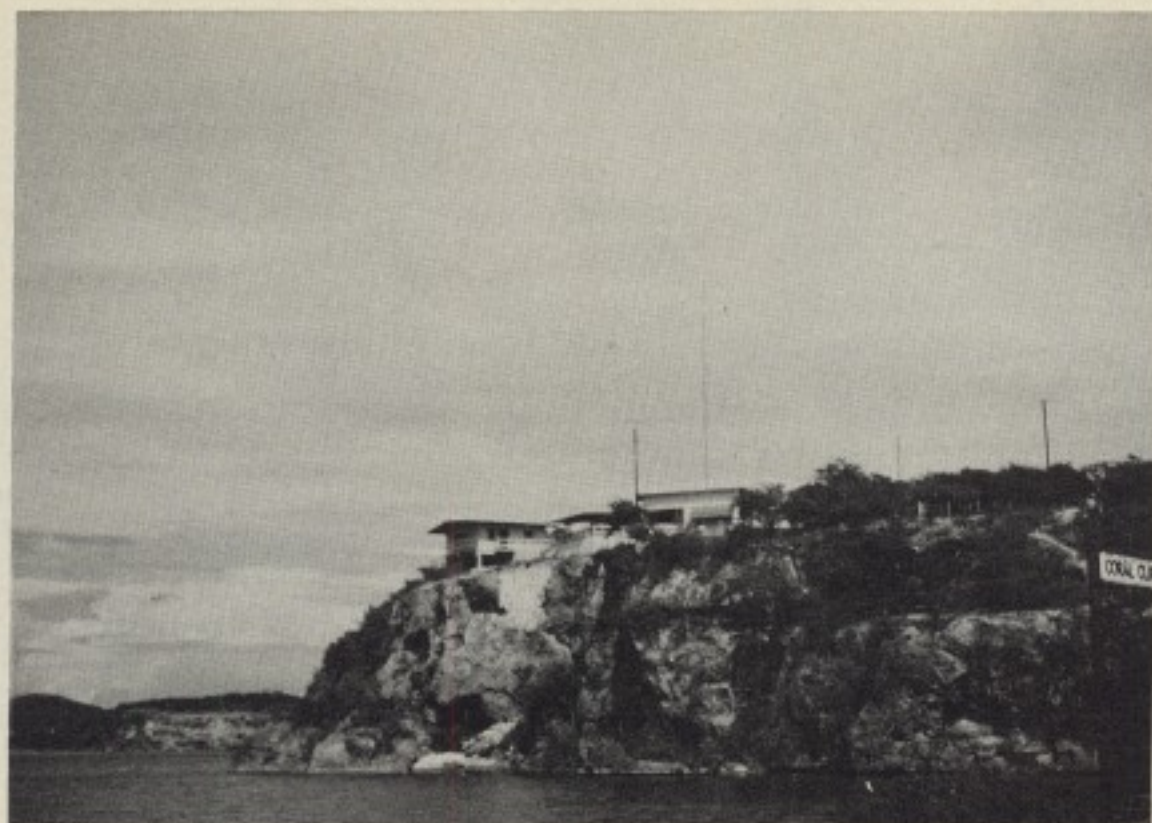


The 10 meter antenna at PJ9JR.

1. Highest score ever made in any major DX contest (29,211,300).
2. Most valid QSO's ever made under one call sign in a 48-hour period (14,598).
3. Most QSO's ever made on a single band in a 48-hour period (4616 on 10 meters).
4. Most QSO's ever made on a single band in one hour (360 on 10 meters).
5. Most bologna sandwiches ever consumed by ten people in a 48-hour period (we are not able to document this record, however!).

Summary

In the event that other groups might be "unbalanced" enough to seriously consider a contest DXpedition in the



The tall pole is the 4-element 15 meter yagi at 110 feet. Just to the left is the 5-element 10 meter antenna. The other antennas are backups.



The black dot on the 110-foot pole is K3NA 8 hours prior to the start of the contest. We coaxed (pun) him down in plenty of time to get us fired up on 15 meters.



The 2-element 40 meter beam in the background was about 500 feet through the "jungle" of thorns and cacti. Note the open wire feed lines going up the hill.

multi-multi category, the following "do's" and "don'ts" might be of some use.

- Do plan as early as possible. Six months in advance is not too early.
- Don't rely on the local economy to purchase anything electronic.
- Do obtain backup emergency a.c. power if possible. Don't take for granted it works; try it out!
- Do construct high and low pass filters to reduce desensing adjacent receivers.
- Do take sufficient coaxial fittings, barrels, PL-259's, adapters, and plugs.
- Do remember the first law of DX-peditions—"There is never enough coaxial cable!"
- Don't sacrifice logging accuracy during the contest for speed. Busted call signs and omitting received zones costs your score later.
- Do take proof of ownership on all gear to avoid a hassle with U.S. Customs.

• Don't attempt to keep a dupe sheet during the contest; you can sort out the dupes later.

Do keep a multiplier check-off sheet for each band.

- Do have fun!

Contest operation from a DX location gets in your blood. By the time this article appears in print, several of us from the PVRC, joined by several from the Connecticut Wireless Association, and others will have made an attempt in November 1979 at recapturing the CQ World Wide CW multi-multi record set in 1978 by that same intrepid gang, EA8CR. Our call will have been PJ2CC.

We have heard through the grapevine that the OH boys may have tried to recapture our phone record in the 1979 contest. If they managed to do it, we'll be back to PJ in 1980! Some year we must form a team with our European counterparts and put the record out of reach!

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