

Feb. – Mar. 2025 ARRL DX SSB CONTEST P49Y

AE6Y

3/8/25

Tuesday, Feb. 25-Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2025. Typical AA schedule, with the plane set to leave SFO a little before midnight for MIA, then leave MIA at 10:40 and arrive at AUA at 2:30 (with an hour time change thrown in). I'm travelling very light; just one half-filled suitcase with nothing to bring down for friends, and my green backpack and fanny pack. No trouble going through TSA at SFO, which seems very unbusy. Unfortunately, due to the vagaries of AA scheduling on the way back I have to fly through CLT, with only one hour for the change. We'll see..... I got to the airport early and hung out for a while and got some food at the Admirals Club.

La Bella Carolina was at Hertz, and she gave me a brand-new Kia K3 (a small compact car) with only 306 km on the odometer. It's a pleasant car but has a few odd features: (a) I can't figure out how to set stations on the touchscreen radio, usually a simple job in new cars, (b) it has a digital speedometer and a digital tach (which reads, e.g., 1.8 for 1800 rpm). Although it is just a screen there is no adjustment to replace them with analog-appearing instruments. The speedometer is fine, but a digital tach isn't very intuitive to read, (c) Although one can change the units of temp from C to F, the speedo and odo seemingly can't be changed from km to miles.

John's K4 and the shack K3 were set up at the shack, left there by John and Ed, after using them in the CW version of this contest. John even had the kindness to shorten the 80m inv vee for the phone band for me.

Prior to the visit, I've cobbled together a system to enable the sending of self-spotting commands, which is now allowed in this contest. CQPWIN ver. 15.0 is modified to recognize the following commands:

S, SS, S1 – puts in the Windows clipboard “DX {your call} {R1 Freq.}” e.g.: DX P49Y 14310.2

S2 – same but uses R2 frequency

SP, SP1 – same but uses the call of the most recently logged station, and R1 freq.

SP2 – same but uses R2 freq.

Then one has to go to DX4Win or PuTTY, paste from the clipboard to the command line in the program, hit Enter, and the self-spot or spot of station worked is sent. Frequencies are rounded off to one decimal place. In practice this worked well, and I found I could execute a whole self-spot while the program was sending a few-seconds-long automatic CQ.

In the shack, the K4 was on the left and the K3 on the right as I prefer. I started hooking up the computer, and it's as follows:

- 1) Compaq USB expander. Plugged in the cable from the K4 USB port. This set up two serial ports. They were already numbered Com11 and Com12. Without change they hooked up with the K4 after I changed the baud rate in the K4 menu to 9600.
- 2) The K3 has a USB cable as John uses it. I left the hookup in place from K3 to P3, but John uses a Y-cable to allow further hookup to the same port on the P3. Instead I just

used a serial cable from the P4 to the USB input on the Compaq, set the P3 baud rate to 9600, and it connected perfectly.

- 3) R1/2 switching from another com port on the expander.
- 4) Haven't set up Winkey, though I did bring it. I set up the little key box to the DXD. Had some trouble getting audio, but it was mainly just settings on the two radios: they were set up for FT8 to allow Lin In and also had turned off Mic gain and compression. After renormalizing the settings. Audio seems to work fine.

Went for a run from our roundabout to the Santa Cruz one at about 5:30, then to the Taco Bell for a takeout meal. Felt a lot better than I did when I took the same run the day I arrived last fall (right after a serious medical procedure).

At around 9 p.m. got on 20 and the band was wide open across the states. Just trying out SSB using the K4 and the KPA1500.

Before being picked up by Lisandro and Lissette, I recorded the same 4 messages in each radio: CQ Contest Papa 4 9 Yankee; CQ contest P 49 Y; CQ Contest P 49 Y Papa 4 9 Yankee; CQ contest, CQ Contest Papa 4 9 Yankee, Papa 4 9 Yankee Contest. [in the contest never used the K3 macros, and I changed the F2 one in the K4 to Thanks P 4 9 Y].

Also reprogrammed PF1 (BSET button) and PF2 (CLR Button) hold features to make display span on the K4 50 khz and 100 khz.

Thursday, February 27, 2025. Slept well till almost 8, then off to Lings for my ritual shopping trip. Had breakfast and got on the air for a while working US and EU on 10 and 15 using the K4. At about 3:30, went out for a run from the parking area opposite the Do It Center at the airport up to the Coral Pyramid at the outskirts of Oranjestad. Though the car said 86 degrees, it didn't feel nearly that hot due to breeze, low humidity, and mostly not direct sunlight.

Lisandro and Lissette picked me up at 7:30 and we went to our usual sushi place in Santa Cruz, but, like last fall, ordered poke bowls. They both have lot weight and are doing well.

Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. Slept in till 8:30. Had breakfast and checked the 86. It was much more sensitive to swr than the KPA1500 and wouldn't put out over a kw on 80 or 160, where I mainly plan to use it. Condx don't seem very good, though I ran some EUs on 15. DX Summit says A=32, K=4. They say A=32 is a "major storm". Note after the contest that condx were better than this. Most people said Sunday was better than Saturday, but I didn't really see this effect.

Contest notes. Took my little Sony recorder to dictate some progress notes as I went along. Before the contest it seemed that 15 was barely open, though once the contest started it turned out that both 15 and 20 were great, and some other Carib stations started on 10. At 0126Z (2126 local), I've been on 20 the whole time: 492 by 56 only missing NM, ND and PE of the normal 59 mults. First hour was 348 QSOs. Now it's 0300Z and I'm at 432 by 52 on 15 averaging 311 for the last 3 hours. I'm going to have to try 160, though on the K3 I hear virtually nothing there, so not sure what will happen. Its 0327Z and I've been on 160 for 27 minutes, for 50 contacts and 22 mults. Note for future reference that I should have spent more time on 160 on Friday night, as it seems that there is much less activity there on Saturday, unless for some reason conditions are bad on Friday and good on Saturday. But it is very hard to abandon the higher bands with rates

over 300 to slow to a crawl on 160. All contacts on 160 are Midwestern and East Coast and only VE3 in Canada.

Now will head for 40. At 0444Z, have been on 40 for the last hour and 16 minutes with 379/52 contacts. Seeing VE9CF spotted on 80, I work him then QSY to 80 to start running there. Now at 160: 50/22. It's 0757Z, things have really come to a halt, at 40: 598/54, 80: 215/45, 160: 71/26. I've had some unsuccessful moves to 160 but a few that have worked to 80. So I'm going to have some food and take a break. At 1131Z, totals are 2026/242 after 10:55 of on time, for 1.45M points.

It's finally daylight at 0740 local time. 20 is now open though it was dead about an hour and a half ago. On 20 through 160: 503/57, 747/58, 271/48, 71/26. I think this is a good time to take an hour and a half or so sleep break before the high bands really open up. I woke up naturally after about one hour of a nap. After a half an hour on 10 I have 118 contacts but only 22 mults, as it seems to be open only up and down the East Coast. So will go to 15 for a while and wait for 10 to evolve. Later, I've been on 10 for almost 3 hours and am dying. Have 667 by 54 mults there, just missing DC and NV of the US and some VEs. Haven't heard a PEI anywhere. Have worked VO1KVT and VO2AC after seeing them spotted on the internet. Will take a short break for some food.

[Note for future reference: DX4WIN wasn't showing these calls as "alarm" calls in red. They should be set up specially. Seeming setting, e.g., VO2*, didn't work. Maybe need VO2** or don't use wildcards and enter all the VO1, VO2, and VE9 calls from the .cq2 file.]

I get knocked off 10 due to dupes. Someone says I was spotted as VP9Y or some such. It's amazing how many guys who should know better just click blindly on spots without listening. So I go to 15, which is not as good. It's 1850Z I've been on for 17 hours. Now at 10;1082/60; 15:51/60; 20:511/58. A very satisfying move of VY2GF from 10 to 15 to 20 (the same guy that I had messed up a move on two years ago.) PE is one of the "normal" 59 mults that one expects to work. Moves are simple, look for a clear spot on the K3, then hit CTRL-F9 to swap radios and then call on the K4 with the amp with no delay [Note: of course, always look at the second radio to make sure both frequencies got updated so the two radios aren't on the same band by error]. Now at 2057Z, have been on the air 19 hours and 14 min. total is 3815 by 313 mults for 3.516M points. The mults are 60 each on 10, 15, and 20, 58 on 40, 48 on 80 and 27 on 160. I've moved some guys to get mults and also watch the internet window, so when I see VO1KVT in NB or VO2AC in LB spotted, I can work them easily.

OK, it's the halfway point, exactly 0000Z, I have put in 21:51 of operating time in the first 24 hours. I've been on 20 for the last hour and a half, now at 895 by 60 on that band. I have 60 mults on 10-40 only missing NT, YT, and NU on each. Total is 4477 by 315 mults for 4.158M points. The real problem is lacking mults on 80 and 160, so will try to work on those.

Well, I'm going to give up for the night. It's 1:16 in the morning, a little early. I just worked VO2AC on 80. I could barely, barely hear him. Now have 55 mults on 80 and 29 on 160. Total is 5393 by 324 mults for 5.168M points. Am feeling really tired and need to take time off, though the bands are still open. I sleep for about 5 hours and wake up naturally, have breakfast and get back on the air. Tried to move NE and MO from 40 to 160 but couldn't hear a thing. I don't think I'll be able to get more mults on 160 – which is kind of depressing. 40 is very slow,

just a few callers here and there. I think Tom (8P5A) and Levi (ZF1A) have ben up all night because I hear them.

At about 0700 local, it seems 20 is about to open. [End of recording.] I spend the rest of the time on the high bands, except for a brief excursion to 80 at 2345 to keep a sked with KE3X in DC on 80. I take off too much time, as you can see below. I want to get past 7,000 QSOs, which I do, finishing with 7261, including about 130 dupes.

Recap of moves during the contest. A number of tries to 160 were unsuccessful; condx just made it very hard to work beyond the Midwest. Pretty much all others did work. Here were the successful moves:

- 1) KC4TEO 40 to 80 AL
- 2) K2RD 40 to 80 NV
- 3) WA7TT 40 to 80 ID
- 4) NA8V 80 to 160 MI
- 5) W0EWD 40 to 160 IA
- 6) WN6W 40 to 80 ND
- 7) VE9CF 10 to 15 NB
- 8) VY2GF 10 to 15 to 20 PE
- 9) N0GC 10 to 20 ND
- 10) K2RD 10 to 15 to 20 NV (his request)
- 11) VY2LI 15 to 40 PE
- 12) VO1GO 15 to 40 NF
- 13) VA1AVR 80 to 160 NS
- 14) WD0BGZ 40 to 80 NE
- 15) KE3X 15 to 10 DC (his request)
- 16) KE3X 80 DC (sked)

Off-times. Clearly, the score is reduced due to taking breaks in high-rate times. E.g.:

- 1) 1200 49 min then got on 10 and made 57 Qs in remainder of the hour. So should have gotten on earlier.
- 2) 1600 15 min in 173 hour on 15
- 3) 2100 22 min in 210 hour on 15
- 4) 0100 34 min in 69 hour
- 5) 1400 24 min in 87 hour on 15
- 6) 1600 20 min in 117 hour 10
- 7) 2000 20 min in 163 hour on 10/15

Got lots of “big signal” and a few: “excellent audio” reports. For reference here are some K4 settings:

- 1) TX EQ: -16, -16, -4, +16 (times 5). The -4 is the 400 Hz slider. Previous experience shows that is the critical one.
- 2) Mic inp rear, bias on preamp 14db, using Heil headset mic about an inch away from mouth.
- 3) RX EQ: -16, -16, then flat for the next 6, starting at 400.
- 4) Mic 20, comp 27

- 5) Filter settings generally on RX, Hi at 2.3 or 2.4, low at .3
- 6) USB PC Baud rate 9600 (for rig control)
- 7) I set the PF1 and PF2 buttons to control display span. Span 100 is #SPN100; for 50 it is #SPN50; I left PF3 as Spkr +phones toggle as set.

Monday, Mar. 3, 2025. Slept till 8:30 then some coffee tasted very good. Removed DXD and computer control cables to put the station back as before.

At about 12:30 went for a run in 89 degree wx. Started at the Canashito roundabout (the last one before hitting the airport). There the path runs south along the road for a short way then goes inland up a long but not steep hill and comes back down to join the road again (I turned around there and went back, just to avoid running along the road (which is what happens if you park at the SC Roundabout and go north, as I have done in the past. 38 minutes. Only saw one other mad dog or Englishman (in this case a woman); saw none on Friday. Then drove to the Ritz ice cream shop (3.2 km south of our roundabout on the ocean side of the road) for a delicious coffee milkshake, made in their usual way just with ice cream and milk and no syrup.

Cris and JP picked me up at 6:30 in Cindy's new car, a small Toyota SUV. As we have done recently, Cris drove us to PF Chang's for a last dinner. We now have a routine there, ordering dynamite shrimp, edamame and steamed pork rolls then a main dish for each of us and a shared dessert of Cheesecake and banana rolls (small slices of fried banana served with vanilla-coconut ice cream. It was all delicious, and Cris ended up with a substantial doggie bag.

Tuesday, Mar. 4, 2025. Up at 7:15 for a last run from our roundabout north to the SC one. Temp was only 77, so it was very pleasant. Cleaned up the place, turned off the internet and was ready to go the airport, stopping at the Citgo right opposite the airport for \$21 worth of gas. Flights were uneventful and my checked suitcase even got transferred OK in CLT during a short (1:20 hour) connection, so I was home by 10 p.m.

Writeup for 3830

ARRL DX Contest, SSB - 2025

Call: P49Y

Operator(s): AE6Y

Station: P49Y

Class: SOUAB HP

QTH: Aruba

Operating Time (hrs): 38:30

OpMode: SO2R

Summary:

Band QSOs Mults

160: 81 29
80: 423 56
40: 984 60
20: 1706 60

15: 1623 61
10: 2310 60

Total: 7127 326 Total Score = 6,970,206

Club: Northern California Contest Club

Comments:

My last similar effort in this contest was in 2013, when the QSO total was about 550 higher. However, in comparing the rate sheets, the main difference was the operator. This time I seem to have picked up a stomach bug and also felt the need to take more, short breaks to stay awake and relieve the physical discomfort of sitting and concentrating for hour after hour.

In fact, my overall rate this year was 188 QSOs per hour, and only 177 in 2013. The difference was that this year I operated about 38 1/2 hours (measured by counting any interval without a QSO logged log in excess of 15 minutes as an off time). Oh well, it was still a fun contest with lots of high points.

One improvement since then has been the acquisition of a KPA1500 amp. This amp has some great features and is a pleasure to use in a contest from here, including: (1) antenna tuner that allows, e.g., our 40m 2 el. JK yagi to be used in the whole 40m band, (2) instant on/off and tuning, (3) great fault protection for those occasions when the tired op switches bands and ends up trying to transmit, e.g., on 40 into our 10-20m SteppIR.

In that regard, I tried to make a number of moves. I never transmitted on the second radio, our K3, but used it to monitor band activity and find a clear frequency for moves. Once found, a keystroke loaded the freq into the K4 and with the auto amp I could instantly transmit at high power. Thanks to many guys for the moves, and also to those who tried unsuccessfully. In the latter category, most of my tries to 160 failed. In the former, special thanks to VY2GF for a double move and to KE3X for keeping a sked near the end of the contest on 80.

Although I still have a negative view of self-spotting, undoubtedly due to the decades of contesting in which we all believed it was unethical, I did decide to get into the modern world. My software, CQPWIN, doesn't connect to the internet, but I kluged together a method to do so by which entering the text message "S" would write the spotting information to the Windows clipboard. Then clicking on DX4WIN, my normal logging program, would send it out. It worked well, and the benefits when moving to a new band or new frequency were apparent.

I decided as long as I was keeping the internet window open, I might as well go

Unlimited. As a dx station, the main attraction was trying to see where some of the rare Canadian mults were working. For example, I ended up seeing and calling VO2AC on several bands, and also VY1AAA when he showed up on 15. Surprisingly, I couldn't hear AAA at all when he was spotted on 14147, though I could hear EUs working him. Casually watching the spots also gives one a feeling for how the contest is going. And I admire seeing the guys who spot themselves on two bands, thinking of how they are trying to run two pileups at the same time. I have no urge to do so (though I admit that in slow times, doing alternate CQing, probably would have been marginally useful).

Thanks as always to all the station and house work done by recent occupants, co-owner John, W6LD, and frequent user Ed, W0YK. They have done a great job of antenna switching, so either radio can use any antenna. In that regard, when running it turns out that our little two element SteppIR at 35 feet is very handy to have, with its broader pattern than the monobanders.

Thanks to everyone for Qs, the moves, and the unsolicited supportive comments during the contest. Back for WPX CW in a few months.

73, Andy, AE6Y, P49Y