

## Feb. 2026 ARRL DX CW CONTEST P49Y

AE6Y  
2/28/24

Monday, Feb. 16, 2026. A very late start, as my plane left SFO for CLT at 12:25 a.m. (i.e., 25 minutes after midnight). This was a longer trip than my normal leave-Tuesday, arrive-Wednesday jaunts. I have one checked suitcase at 42 pounds containing mostly clothing, some radio supplies that aren't urgent and lots of stuff for Lissette. It's the brand new TravelPro hard-sided version. No trouble going through TSA with it at SFO. I got there early and hung out for a while and got some food at the Admirals Club. Same for several hours in CLT. My plane to Aruba was delayed about half an hour, but after arrival, going through customs (no inspections, as seems typical for afternoon arrivals) and getting a Hertz Kia were quick, leading to arriving at the cottage a little after 6. Got some sleep on the plane, trying to keep warm in my new puffer jacket. This is literally the first trip to Aruba on which I haven't worn my red fleece, but this new down jacket seemed like it would be warmer for the cold flights. I hope it's not angering the travel gods.

Lisandro and Lissette picked Ed and me up a bit before 8 and drove us to Peanuts where we met John Crovelli (who had also arrived this afternoon for the contest) for a meal of local dishes. Somehow the waitress messed up our orders and brought us four of the Aruban Fish Platter, even though only one of had ordered it. But it was fine, and we all had a convivial dinner. Ed was staying in the cottage for one more night, after his WPX RTTY contest.

Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2026. A good night's sleep until about 7:30. At Ed's suggestion, we went to La Tavola, in Savaneta for breakfast. Ed and John have been going there for years. It's family run by Paul and Anna, both of whom Ed introduced me to, and we had a lovely breakfast outdoors, at a table with two friendly tourists from Cape Cod. They run a small bnb in adjacent houses. It would be a delightful place to relax – the antithesis of the hotel district.

When we got back I had an interesting experience. Feeling somewhat unfaithful to Ling and Sons, where I had been shopping for 20+ years, I drove up to CMart, a new supermarket that is much closer. It's about a half mile or so from the airport up the road to Cumana from the airport roundabout. To get there, take the exit on the right just before the large Kooyman's home improvement store, drive past that store and turn right at the edge of the CMart to drive around it (the entrance is on the other side). It's bigger than Lings' but has similar foods. As Ed noted it is disorienting to be going into a big store like that and not know where anything is, after having such finely honed knowledge of Lings.

Anyway, I got just about all I needed, then as I loaded it into the car (with three shopping bags that I had surprisingly remembered to bring from the cottage), I noticed that the left rear tire was almost flat, and the right rear looked a little low. I drove slowly a short way towards the airport to the Citgo station in Wayaca, but it turned out they didn't have an air pump. Somewhat panicking, I called Cris, who called Hertz, who sent a guy named Arnold in a repair truck about a half hour later. He was very competent, jacked up the tire, found a metal brad of some sort in it and diagnosed the leak with soapy water. He patched the leak and pumped the tire back up, and

hopefully all is well. Meanwhile Ed had arrived to take my purchases back to the cottage since they were going to heat up in the trunk.

Ed and I chatted for a while, then he left for the airport circa 2 p.m. and I turned to setting up the radios.

My K4 and the shack K3 are set up at the shack, left there by Ed, after he dismantled his SO3R CQWPX RTTY operation from last weekend, for which he was using another K3 of his own. The K4 was on the right with the KPA1500 next to it; the K3 is on the left feeding the Alpha 91B. I normally use the left radio as the main one, and the right radio as the tuning around radio, but rather than do all the rewiring, I planned to try having the k4 be the main run radio, even though it is R2 in my program. Hopefully, my brain will adapt. It turned out fine, and I rapidly got used to the new arrangement.

It took a while, but I got CQPWIN working with the radios. Here's the hookup:

- 1) Compaq USB expander. Plugged in the cable from the K4 USB port. This set up two serial ports. I renumbered them as Com 11 and 12 in Device Manager, restarted the computer, and they were recognized for rig control, setting the baud rate on the K4 at 9600. (both USB-PC1, PC2, and RS232 – not sure which is the controlling port that is required to be reset). Set CQPWIN to use the K4 on com11 as Radio 2.
- 2) K4 acc jack was siamesed by John to the filters and also to the KPA1500 AUX jack, which allows the amp to follow the radio in frequency. Left as is.
- 3) DXD set up to K4 with inputs for mike and phones (plus ptt and Key in) to back panel. Mic set to Rear Panel input with preamp on and Bias on.
- 4) The K3 has a USB cable also, and it seemed to set up a serial port, but at least initially rig control didn't work (from 2024). Instead I disconnected the PC connection from the P3 (which with this setup is siamesed from the radio jack) and connected a 9-pin cable from the P3 to one of the com ports on the 4-com port expander, and that worked fine, with a 6-foot serial to serial cable.
- 5) The 4-serial port converter opened com3 through com6. Used Com4 for R1/R2 switch. Used Com5 for K3 frequency control from the serial cable to the P3 (after setting the P3 baud rate to 9600).
- 6) Winkey set up com13 and it opened ok.
- 7) I had fortunately brought along a tiny hex key in order to be able to adjust the N0SA paddle, which seemed way out of whack.
- 8) Set display to 1280 by 960 (in System, under settings). Works best for the 4 by 3 HP monitors.
- 9) Note dxd inputs as viewed from rear are R1/R2, PTT, Key in, Key in. Labels are worn off.

Went for a run a bit before 6, from our roundabout to the Santa Cruz one, then a long wait in the drive-through line at the Taco Bell for some take-out food. Car said temp was 28. Felt very pleasant, low humidity.

Wednesday, February 18, 2026. Slept till almost 8, then a quiet day. Main event was going to the Island Asia store just past the airport to buy a new tablecloth. They had a variety, all cheap and none exactly the right size. Bought two and put one on – a green one with what seems to be a shiny, waterproof surface and a floral design. Hopefully it will be a suitable replacement for the old one that I think came with house.

I had reported to John and Ed that the K4 seemed to have erratic power behavior, and at their suggestions asked the guru N6TV. It would put out high power, but if you turned the power knob, it would sink to less than 10 watts. Then if you hit TUNE, it would put out a tone at the proper power set by the knob and then would transmit at that power unless the knob was turned. TV-Bob suggested running a TX gain calibration, which he said should be done any time there are power fluctuations or odd power setting behavior. I was hesitant but decided to try it. The process is very easy: a) set Menu: TX Gain Cal via Tune to ON, b) set power to 5.0 watts and hit Tune and wait a few seconds until power stabilizes, hit TUNE again to turn off transmitting, then repeat at 50 watts. Need to do it for each band. In the menu item TX Gain Cal, I could see large swings in the number reported after hitting TUNE on all six bands. I don't know how to interpret those numbers, but, voila, the process seemed to cure the mysterious behavior.

I participated in two of the CWTs. First, a bit in the 1300Z one that I chanced across, just using the paddle to send CW and not logging the calls. Then for the 1900Z one I was in for 45 minutes or so, using the computer and changing the CQ F1 to be CQ \$ \$ CWT and the exchange to say Andy 38. Mostly just practiced running. They really are a melee, with lots of high speed cw and cut numbers, with no one worrying (seemingly) about the actual exchange.

Went over to Cris and JP's at about 6:10 after a run and a shower, and we talked finances a bit. Then to P.F. Changs where we were joined by John Crovelli for a usual nice feast, followed by another chat at their house. Back home at 9:30 or so. We decided that on next trip, we'll go to Picanhua, the new churrascaria restaurant just south of the airport on the inland side of the road.

Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026. Spent several hours working on the SB 707 PP then a call with a client at 1 p.m. and another at 6:15. Got on the air from time to time. Took a run then met L and L at the Sushi Factory in Santa Cruz (behind Burger King across from Subway). I had an excellent Nagasaki Poke Bowl and they had sushi. Don't know how such a small place turns out such excellent food, but they do. Ran some guys on 40 at home, just trying things out.

Contest Notes, Feb. 21-22, 2026. My general activity can be seen on the rate sheet. In general,

- 1) Unlike 2024, when I had no rates over 200, due to pileups being more difficult, with everyone calling zero beat and giving their call just once, this time the first hour yielded 231 QSOs on 15. No other hours over 200.
- 2) I did SO2R but only used the second radio (actually the K3 set up in the R1 left position), to monitor bands for activity and to find a clear freq when asking a station to move. Then would do a CTRL-F9 to switch radios and call on the right K4 with its auto amp, then immediately reverse switch. Might have called directly on the K3 if it had an auto amp,

but the 91B is just too hard to quickly tune in the heat of the contest (it's not bad, actually, but just not instantaneous like the KPA 1500).

- 3) Just like in 2024, got very tired Saturday morning, then got a second wind and as usual felt fine all the way up to deciding to take a few hours off early Sunday morning. Then also like 2024, hit a hallucinatory wall (see 3830 writeup below) in the last few hours of the contest.
- 4) As in 2024, packet did produce some mults, including tracking VO2AC and VY2TT, plus noticing VY1JA spotted and getting J on 15. I also did self-spot from time to time and it seemed to help. With my software, the process is as follows: a) Enter S or S2 (for the right radio) in CQPWIN to put into the clipboard something like DX P49Y 14020.2. b) in DX4Win, hit SHIFT-INS to paste it into the sending area, c) hit Enter to send it.
- 5) Although I had the SteppIR ready to go, and occasionally listened briefly on it, it seemed to have no advantage in this contest (unlike in WPX SSB in 2024, where I used it extensively for its broader pattern), so didn't use it to transmit in the contest. Just set the yagis to 320 degrees or so and left them there. Also didn't use the Mid-Tri. Mostly used the West USA beverage for listening on 40-160, as it seemed louder than the East one.
- 6) AT 2318Z, roughly half-way with 22:03 hours of op time, totals were (10-160) 684/59; 908/61; 632/58; 393/55; 289/54; 162/41; total 3068/328 = 2,973k points.

Monday, Feb. 23, 2024. Met John at 8:15 (otherwise probably would have slept another two or three hours) for breakfast a Huchadas. Note: next time bring jam for bread and ketchup for omelet, as they serve very plain food. Wrote up and sent a 3830 report (see below), revised an office memo and sent some emails.

Then an excursion to see the new Secrets hotel development at Baby Beach. Never got in as they seem to have no accessible ungated parking and I didn't want to go through a rigmarole just to walk around. It is in a very unlikely place, except that you can walk down to the beach. Of course Baby Beach is great for children as it is so shallow and calm, but the hotel website says it is only for adults. Go figure. There is also some residential development underway at neighboring Rodgers Beach. But it is a long way from civilization, assuming that downtown San Nicholas isn't your idea of a place to stroll and shop.

Did have a nice run from their parking lot down the coast on a dirt road. There is a small, very plain cemetery by the side of the road. No headstones, just plain small wooden crosses – never noticed it before. Nice temp for running: sunny and windy and about 30 deg. C.

In late afternoon, I went into the cunucu to follow the feedline to the fan dipole installation the boys had set up, just to check it out. However, James' two nasty sounding dogs got loose and followed me. Normally I would ignore them, but they looked mean. I picked up a loose board in case I had to use it, but walked to the dirt road at the back of the cunucu. They followed, staying 50 feet away or so but barking. Then about five more loose dogs showed up on the road and started barking at me. I was getting worried, but when I yelled at the new dogs they went away. So I walked to the left on the dirt road, which I knew connected to our road about 200 yards closer on the ocean side. Whew! I think next time they will back off if yelled at.

JP and Cris came by at 7:30. JP brought the repaired Acom 2000, which he had fixed by replacing the bias resistors (47 ohms) with larger 2 or 3 watt units that I had brought at his request. He also replaced a tube. He says it now works, I left it on the extra table in the living room for John to play with. By the way, he said that Andrew, the son of James, the neighbor, whom I had met a few years ago and who I think lives in their second unit, had his car in the shop so he would see him tomorrow to warn him that the dogs had gotten loose. Hopefully it will again be safe to go in the cunucu.

Tuesday, February 25, 2026. Took a run and cleaned up the place a bit. John Crovelli arrived at about 11 or so, to stay for three days, as his flight to Newark, also set for this day, was postponed due to the big Northeast blizzard that closed the airport. I left a bit after noon for my 3:40 p.m. flights to MIA and SFO, and arrived home at 1 a.m. the next morning, tired but actually a little earlier than expected.

Writeup for 3830

Call: [P49Y](#)

Operator(s): [AE6Y](#)

Station: P49Y

Class: **SOUAB HP**

QTH: Aruba

Operating Time (hrs): 41

Location: South America

OpMode: SO2R

Band	QSOs	Mults
------	------	-------

160:	217	45
------	-----	----

80:	416	56
-----	-----	----

40:	750	58
-----	-----	----

20:	1229	60
-----	------	----

15:	1315	62
-----	------	----

10:	1084	60
-----	------	----

Total: **5011 341** Total Score **5,126,253**

Club: Northern California Contest Club

Comments:

*This contest was like my last one, in 2024, but with noisier bands, resulting in a 5% or so reduction in QSOs. In particular, there was some nasty (but hopefully unusual) noise locally that cropped up from time to time on 10. Mostly I could cope with it by using the Noise Reduction in the K4, but sometimes it forced a band change.*

*Mults were down by 10 from 2024's record (for me) of 351, mainly due to fewer on the low bands. I think that is attributable mostly to luck, though the low bands were a bit noisier than two years ago. Thanks to a few guys who did move on request (particularly including K5KU for a double move from 40 to 80 and 160) but mostly move requests seemed to draw a blank response.*

*OTOH, working 62 mults on one band (15) was a record for me in this contest, thanks to VY0BRR in NU who called in and VY1JA in YT whom I saw spotted. Now if only a VE8 had been active it could have been a first ever clean sweep!*

*Apologies for a number of QLF moments in the last three hours, when I had a nice steady rate going mostly on 20 (154, 146, and 138) while trying to reach 5M points, but was very tired and hallucinating. I thought callers were contributing to a GoFundMe page set up in my honor (not clear if was pre- or post-mortem) and that I was acknowledging their donation by sending their contest exchange. I was touched by the outpouring of affection, including from some friends and club members, as well as many known testers! However, I also was losing the ability to concentrate, so muffed many exchanges, fell asleep momentarily at the keyboard, etc. There's always something weird going on in my mind at that stage in the contest!*

*On the local front, Jean-Pierre, P43A has been very involved on 160 lately, mostly FT8. But he says he intends to participate in contesting on 160 SSB also. Lisandro, P43L, has caught the same spirit and has also put up a 160 antenna. Both hopefully will also be on in WPX SSB.*

*Thanks as always to co-owner John Fore, W6LD, and frequent user Ed, W0YK, for keeping the house and station so ship-shape. Look for John as a multi in ARRL DX SSB as P40L. Also, Cris, P43C, and JP do a fantastic job of running the house for us.*

*Full details will be posted at [www.arubaqth.com](http://www.arubaqth.com).*

*73 and thanks for all the Qs, Andy, AE6Y, P49Y*