

Andrew L. Faber Trip notes AE6Y- P49Y WPX CW May 2023

Tuesday, May 23 – Wednesday, May 24. For no very good reason other than as a result of the chaos of air scheduling and fares, I flew on a flight from SFO to CLT, leaving a few minutes before midnight. Parked at Anza Parking, and their usual quick service got me to the check-in at Terminal 1 quickly. American Airlines has really cut back on check-in service, but the agent helped me by asking if I had filled out the Aruba ED card. I had completely forgotten that this is still required, even though no Covid testing is needed, and I had obtained the card on my last trip in March. Dohh! Anyway, she gave me the internet address and I filled it out on my iPhone while she dealt with the next few customers. Fortunately, the process had no hiccups, and the servers wherever were still awake, as I got my QR-coded reply quickly. Then through TSA Precheck, where my radio and computer caused no trouble, and on to the Admirals Club for an hour and a half or so.

I had only one suitcase to check, one of our large red ones, with the sides expanded up and weighing 46 pounds. About half of the contents were comprised of stuff for Cindy, Andy, JP, Lissette and Lisandro. Fortunately, I don't have to take a lot of clothes to Aruba. I also carried my green backpack and a small carry-on suitcase mainly full of our repaired shack K3 (#5800) and some cables cushioned by our new curtains and some spare clothing. Since I'll be bringing my K4 back in another small suitcase, I intend to put this one inside the larger one on the way back. I usually carry a K3 in my larger blue backpack, but that backpack doesn't easily accommodate a computer, water bottle, etc., so this way seemed to be more convenient.

Arrived at CLT on time at 8 a.m. after getting a few hours' sleep on the plane (though the seats in the A321 NEO were uncomfortably erect without back support, and it got pretty cold even in my customary red fleece that I have worn on every trip to Aruba for the last 20 years). Hung out at the Admirals club, which is enormous and was quite crowded, and had some breakfast there. The airport seemed full of travelers, just like pre-pandemic times. Arriving in Aruba, passport control was via the automatic readers and there was no customs control, so I was out of the airport quickly. My Hertz friend, La Bella Carolina, had heard about Ben's accident and said she had been worried it was me. The car is a Kia Picanto, a very small 4-door vehicle with barely space for my larger suitcase behind the back seats. Amazingly, it has a modern, integrated radio that is easy to use.

I unpacked and started to check out the K4, then decided to go for a run before meeting John Crovelli for dinner at 8 at the Kibaima Grill (or B55 as we still call it). Just as I was getting ready, Cris called, so I ended up going to their house first to drop off all the stuff I had brought for JP, Cindy, and Andy, then for a brief run from our roundabout up past the new bridge. It was getting dark, but of course running on the path, which is lit either by streetlights or its own lights, was very safe. There were a number of other runners and walkers, who generally smile and say "bon tardi" as you meet them. The owner of B55, Julio, was outside and greeted me effusively, apparently remembering John and me from prior visits. In fact the friendly waitress at the end of the meal asked if we had ever celebrated a birthday meal there, then showed us the owner's phone with a picture of me from a previous visit celebrating my birthday (from an October CQWW dinner, no doubt).

I started to get the K4 set up further, and even made a few Qs in the 0300Z CWT, just sending by hand. I couldn't get the interfacing with the computer to work, as my befuddled brain rebelled, so I went to bed at about 11:30, and slept soundly till 7 the next morning. I did verify that the RX beverages seemed to

work OK. John Fore had left the 10 and 15 antennas hooked up through the high-power filters from his WPX SSB operation, but I disconnected both of them and just ran the coaxes directly to the 6-pak.

Thursday, May 25, 2023. I had arranged to stop off at Lisandro and Lissette's house at 9:30, so I brewed some coffee (about all the food there is other than what's in the freezer) and tackled the K4 interface. Got everything working after a bit of trial and error. I have CQPWIN running, with an HP old-fashioned monitor attached with an adaptor to the HDMI port on the computer. It didn't seem to want to work in parallel with the laptop display, but works fine as a sole display, without changing resolution on the laptop. The Compaq 4-port USB expander is plugged into a USB port. One cable runs to the Square USB Port on the back of the K4 and one to the square USB port on the Winkeyer. Since I'm only using one radio, I don't need an R1/R2 serial port. The K-Pod goes from a square USB port on its back to a USB-A port on the back of the K4.

Originally Device Manager showed two ports as 14 and 15, plus 7 for the Winkeyer. After renumbering in Device Manager to 3 and 4 and restarting the computer, the link with the radio worked fine. I had set the computer for 9600 baud and set the USB ports on the radio for the same, using the menu. Meanwhile, John had a remote Logitech mouse with a dongle plugged into the front USB port on the radio, which seems to work fine for using the mouse with the radio display. I'm using my own Logitech remote mouse and keyboard on the computer.

To Lisandro's at 9:30 and stayed to chat for a half hour or so, also delivering some stuff that he and Lissette had ordered. He was running automated FT8 and setting up a second radio to do so simultaneously on two bands. Then to Ling and Sons for a major over-purchase, including a new \$70 bottle of my nighttime elixir, Frangelico, as the existing bottle over the fridge is almost out. Had some brunch when I got back and played some more with the radios, then off to the Aurora Funeral Home (just north of Kooymans on the main highway from the airport to Cumana) for the service for Ben, DL6RAI, tragically killed in a tower accident last week.

It was a very warm service attended by maybe 25-30 participants, including JP, Cris and kids, Lisandro, Jackie (P43P), Martin (DL5RMH), who had been with him at the time, and his wife Luise and daughter Nikola. It was actually a viewing, and Ben looked very peaceful in an open casket. There were also several local hams who attended, three representatives of the DTZ, and three Americans who apparently have a timeshare on the island. A montage of pictures ran on a large TV screen, and remarks were made by Martin, JP, myself and John Crovelli. It was quite moving, and I think the family was buoyed by the support and love shown by all. Including chatting in the foyer at the end, the event lasted a bit more than 2 hours.

Afterwards, I got on the radio a bit, and 15 was wide open to EU. Then for a run from our roundabout up to the next one, and a delightful dinner on the deck at Marina Pirata hosted by Cris, JP, Cindy and Andy.

By the way, temp today per the car thermometer, was about 32-33. The water level seemed high at Frenchman's Pass.

Friday, May 26, 2023. Up at about 7 then breakfast of a frosted flakes imitation and some more radio setup, this time checking out the 91B. It seemed to work fine on 80-10, but generally was only putting out 1000-1100 watts, and barely 900 on 40. That should be plenty, but is also probably a sign of fading tubes. Talked to John Fore on the phone, and then John Crovelli came over to borrow our clock radio,

which he wants to make sure he has a reliable alarm. He's planning a 36-hour low power entry and wants to be able to wake up periodically to check for mults.

Cris and JP came over to return the grinder (over the fridge) and to suggest we drive out and look at a property they had seen advertised in Tamarijn. It's 7000 sq. meters, billed as eigendom (property land, though the guy there said it's leased not owned land – our house is leased, but Ben's place in Montana is "property" land). Got there by taking the road past Santa Cruz then turning right on a main street a little after the turnoff marked for Arrikok Park, then driving maybe 2 miles. It's on the right. Was indeed pretty large, and relatively high up as well, but the house and the two smaller buildings ("apartments") were pretty awful. A guy who was living there, not the owner, let us walk around. The house would need to be completely rebuilt, or more likely demoed and rebuilt.

They didn't have a price. I told JP it might be a good Carl Cook project but would be much too much work for me.

Back in the house made some QSOs on 10, then a run from the airport to the Coral Pyramid in 32 deg wx, a drive-through dinner at the Taco Bell, and waiting out the start of the contest.

I reprogrammed a few buttons on the K-Pod. The up/down buttons are not reliable for some reason (software, I assume). On the right I moved the RX Ant toggle to F6-Tap, and made F7-Tap RIT toggle, and F8-Tap RIT Clear.

#### Contest Reflections, Saturday, May 27 – Sunday, May 28, 2023.

I've decided to enter the high power all band category with the "Classic" overlay: 24 hours, one radio, no internet. I did this in 2021 and ended up second only KP2M (KT3Y) – spoiler alert, the same result seems to have happened this year, per the posted 3830 scores.

The goal is always to start this contest on 40 and to maximize time on 40 and 80 to get as many 6-point QSOs as possible. I start out on 7037 with an excellent 137 first hour (my best of the contest except for next day on 15: 138 in the 1200 hour). I stay on 40 till 0552, at which point I have 617 Qs on that band. After a bit more than an hour off, I get back on 40 to look for JAs, but don't really hear any. However, 20 and 15 are wide open (and even 10 has signals – bear in mind that this is now 3 in the morning local time!). I stay on 20 for almost two hours, working 58 JAs, then take an hour off and come back in the 1100 hour on 15, which is wide open to NA, EU and even some to JA. In this time span, I end up with 58 JAs on 20 and 12 on 15, 38 JA prefixes in all, and only one on 40 (unlike 2021, when they were all worked on 40 in the 900-1000 hours).

The next few hours are on 10, 15 and 20 in the late afternoon, with off hours sprinkled in. 10 is disappointing, with only 130 QSOs, about 90% of which, however, are EU. There seems to be no late afternoon NA binge on 10, probably because it's open to EU for NA stations also. I note later that in the 3830 reports, everyone worldwide complains that 10 was sort of open but not nearly as much as they had hoped.

I have a decent hour on 40 in the 0200 hour (84 Qs) but it's not as good as Friday night. As I say in my 3830 report below, in retrospect, it would have been better strategy for this weekend literally to work the first 24 hours of the contest for my allowed 24, as conditions definitely deteriorated after Friday night and Saturday morning. When I quit on Saturday night there were 2179 contacts in the log and

about 4 hours and 50 minutes left in the contest for me. The strategy, of course, is to get high rates on 15 and 20 in the afternoon, and then try to hit 40 again for the last two hours.

Saturday night, I went to bed at about 11:30 and woke up at about 7 after a very comfortable sleep. I felt logy, but made breakfast of a raisin roll and coffee, and that perked me up. There was no radio to do for quite a while as I wanted to wait for the high-rate afternoon hours.

A small project was to hang John's curtains in the two bedrooms, the two large ones in the MBR and the shorter pair in the 2d BR. The windows in the MBR are of different sizes, but the room looks good with both windows sporting the same size curtains. The effect is nice.

Then went for a run at about 11:30, to my old stamping grounds starting at Marina Pirata and running along the coast to La Granja, 45 minutes in 33-degree sunshine. Saw not another mad dog nor Englishman, as is typical for midday runs in Aruba, though there were a number of families enjoying the warm, calm ocean waters along Spanns Lagoenweg. A pack of eight middle-aged folks on big Harleys rumbled past at slow speed. I've always wondered about the big motorcycles, sports cars, and luxury vehicles that one sees here – how can you enjoy them fully on such a small island?

Finally got on at about 1750, starting out on 10 but without good rate thought the band seemed open. Then a solid two hours or so on 15 with very good rates (for wpx), using both the 5 el at 045 or so and the Mid-Tri at 330 using the Stackmatch, for a good mix of NA and EU callers. Interestingly, in the whole contest I almost never used the SteppIR – just once or twice for SA contacts. Called it quits after 375 QSOs at 2052 with about an hour and 50 minutes left on the clock. I'm waiting to start at 2200 or so and hope 40 is open. If it's not then I'll do 20 and hopefully get equivalent rates. It's hard to leave such nice pileups, though.

Well, 40 was very noisy (atmospheric, not local man-made noise; in fact, during the whole contest I was blessed with a lack of the kind of local noise that has bedeviled us from time to time). After a dozen difficult contacts requiring many repeats, I retreat to 20 to run out my 24 hours.

On the K4, the pileups were clearer with AGC slope 14 and threshold 5. I had started out with a lower slope and higher threshold to use the AF gain control to simulate using the RF gain control on the K3, but that seemed to cause mushier pileups. Turning off Pre1 also helped. Then the AF control was only needed occasionally to be turned up for very weak stations, then turned down so as not to be blasted by a very loud caller. Overall, I prefer riding the RF gain on the K3.

Monday, May 29, 2023. The alarm woke me at 6:50 and a cuppa joe was very refreshing. I wanted to check email, the Mercury News, and 3830 before heading off to breakfast at Linda's Pancake house at 8:30. Ultimately there were seven of us: John, Martin, Luise, Nikola and Ben's cousins (Sonya and Wolfgang). The place was a little hard to reach due to construction, but they still had my classic gouda, walnuts, and honey pancake. (For future reference, as you approach from Noord, it is on the right just before the Citgo station). For the time being, they are planning to try to sell the house as a radio site.

Then back to the house to finish and post my own 3830 report and catch up on some work emails. Out for a run at about one p.m. – a 50-minute run from the SC roundabout up the road and up and down the hills till it met the road again. It was hot and sunny, 33 degrees, and I was definitely sweating when I got back. Fortunately there was a breeze, and the car's a/c works well, as does the house's. I had to be careful getting out of the car as I was temporarily light-headed due to the heat.

To Cris's at 6 to discuss finances, then she drove us to P.F. Chang's, where we were joined by John C. A very good meal. Tasty food, not too expensive, and Cris had lots of leftovers.

Tuesday, May 30, 2023. A very quiet day. Went for a run and then a ritual swim at Spanns Lagoenweg at midday, a bit cooler with less intense sun than yesterday. Then spent much of the day reading. Unhooked the K4 and set up the shack K3 to make sure it worked. Ran a very unruly pileup of EUs on 15 in the late afternoon, with many reports of strong signals and very clear audio, which was good to hear.

In setting up the K3 and P3, for some reason using the USB square port on the K3 and connecting to the computer didn't work for rig control though Device Mgr did show a port being opened (and that did work for the K4). Instead, disconnecting the siamesed serial cable that is attached to the P3 and connecting a normal serial 9-pin cable to the P3 and hooking that up to the computer serial port converter worked fine (which is exactly what I do at home).

Lisandro and Lissette took me to a very pleasant meal at the Fish House, the same place shown on the website in a picture of John, Ed, JP, Cris and me from our rebuild party right before the covid lockdown in 2020. I had barracuda fillet, Lisandro swordfish and Lissette a whole red-snapper, head, bones and all. For reference, you get there by taking the road just east of the main highway (the same one I get at our roundabout to go to SPL and following it toward O'Stad all the way to its end at the yacht harbor.

Wednesday, May 31, 2023. A bunch of work in the morning, then a pleasant run at the airport all the way to the statue of Queen Wilhelmina at the Renaissance. Conditions were better, temp only 31 and overcast so no sun but a constant breeze. Back at the house had a zoom call and packed up the K4. Then over to L and L's at 5:30 for an hour and a half of admiring their orchids and palms, then a McDonalds drive-through meal and filling up the car next door at the Citgo (\$29 for 240 km of travel).

At the house got on 20 at about 2020 and had a pileup of US and some EU for about an hour. Had checked condx earlier in the day and generally not very good. This was all on phone. Got many reports of S9 +10 signal and great audio, just using the K3 barefoot.

### 3830 Report

*Call: P49Y*

*Operator(s): AE6Y*

*Station: P49Y*

*Class: SOAB HP*

*Class Overlay: Classic*

*QTH: Aruba*

*Operating Time (hrs): 24*

*Band QSOs*

*160:*

*80:*

*40: 747*

*20: 778*

*15: 1089*

*10: 130*

*Total: 2744 Prefixes 936 Total Score 9,734,400*

*Club: Northern California Contest Club*

*This contest operation is dedicated to the memory of Ben DL6RAI, who sadly passed away the week before the contest in a tower-climbing accident at his house on Aruba, the station originally set up by Carl Cook, AI6V (who also set up our P40L/P49Y station as P40V in the late 90s). There was a very moving ceremony here attended by many in the local ham community, some visiting American hams, and including three representatives from the DTZ (Aruba's FCC). I am sure that this genuine outpouring of friendship and respect meant a lot to his wife and daughter. RIP Ben.*

*I decided I would do another high power Classic category entry, as I had done two years ago (last year in this contest I did a single band 15). This category forces lots of choices on the operator to try to maximize score, but has many advantages, including the ability to take an hour off at any time if the contest gets to be tedious or starts to drive you nuts. Eating and sleeping are much more normal, and you aren't turned into a zombie for a few days after it ends. In retrospect this weekend the best 24-hour operating plan from here would have been just to work the first 24 hours of the contest, as 40 was much quieter Friday night than Saturday or at the end on Sunday.*

*My score is down somewhat from 2021, but that was mainly due to higher noise levels on 40 Saturday evening and at the end of the contest on Sunday, and a seeming lack of interest in 80; whenever I checked that band it seemed nearly deserted, so I never actually operated there. 15 and 20 were in great shape. I particularly noted a strong JA opening on 20 in the 0800Z hour (i.e., 4 in the morning local time!) Saturday morning, uncharacteristically right in the midst of EU and NA openings, with more JAs worked on 15 a few hours later. Wow, that was fun! A single band 15- or 20-meter entrant here could easily have spent the full allowed 36 hours on one band this time, which was not even close to true a few years ago.*

*I was using my newish K4 along with our trusty (but getting weaker with age) 91B. Our new JK antennas put up just immediately prior to the pandemic lock-down played very well. The 6-element 10 and 5-element 15 are very directional, so at times I was splitting power on the Stackmatch with the Mid-Tri aiming to northwest to the US and the 10/15 aimed northeast to EU. And many thanks to co-owner John, W6LD, for his work keeping up our beverages in the cunucu (thorny, cactus-filled public open space land) behind our house, as they were very necessary and helpful on 40.*

*Thanks as usual to JP (P43A) and Cris (P43C) for their efforts to maintain the property, and for a lovely dinner with their kids on the deck at Marina Pirata (where you can throw food to the fish in the ocean but have to be careful when sliding your chair back from the table not to fall in). Improvements made by W6LD to the house including a new, modern a/c in the shack and all new bedding and curtains are much appreciated. The usual Aruba social calendar also included John (W2GD, P40W), Martin (DL5RMH), Luise (DL2MLU), Lisandro (P43L) and XYL Lissette.*

*Rig: K4, Alpha 91B*

*Ant: JK 4 el 20/2 el 40 at 65 ft, JK Mid-Tri at 45 ft, JK 5 el 15/6 el 10 at 55 ft, beverages*

*Software: CQPWIN, ver. 14*

*A full write-up and rate sheet will be posted at [www.arubaqth.com](http://www.arubaqth.com)*

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

Thursday, June 1, 2023. My return flights to CLT and SFO were right on time, and I ended up arriving at SFO at about 11 p.m. local time after leaving AUA at 3 p.m. local time. The only issue of note was that the airport at Aruba was more crowded than I had ever seen it. I had left the house at noon, turned in the car, which didn't even require going into the Hertz office (and La Bella Carolina wasn't there anyway, but Glen promised to give her my regards). I was glad I had left this much time, as there were extensive lines everywhere: getting into the immigration control at the start, then Aruba TSA, U.S. Customs, U.S. TSA. Whew!