

AE6Y Trip Notes Aruba May 2025 – P49Y WPX CW HP Classic

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AE6Y
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Tues., May 20 – Weds., May 21, 2025. A typical AA redeye to MIA, leaving SFO at midnight. I'm coming back through CLT, but for some inscrutable reason couldn't schedule a flight from MIA to SFO. I'm checking one suitcase with my usual complement of minimal clothes for Aruba. Not much radio stuff either, since I'm just planning to operate Classic with the shack K3 – mostly just hobby supplies for Lisette and a computer monitor stand for JP.

Passport control was a breeze, no line, and just showing a picture to the machine. No customs inspections. My Hertz friend La Bella Katerina put me into a Kia Picanto that was brand new. It's a small car, but has a very easy-to-use radio, plus power windows and locks and even a back-up camera. I was at the cottage by a little after 2:30, and everything looked spiffy. I unpacked and started to set up the radio. The wifi worked right off the bat and my laptop connected right away to Linksys. All antennas seemed to work OK.

It was hot when I picked up the car, 33 degrees Celsius, but cooled down a bit and was fairly pleasant when I went out for a run at 6 p.m. from our roundabout to the next one up the road. Then John Crovelli, W2GD, picked me up to drive to a nice dinner at the Chinese place in Santa Cruz. He now stays at an Airbnb in Savaneta, rather than at his station, which is quite an improvement. I had Singapore Noodles, with enough left over for a lunch the next day.

Over the next two days had some minor hookup issues, ultimately seemingly due to the Winkey cables being a bit loose. Eventually got it all sorted. Tried out the 0300Z CWT, and things seemed to be fine. What a strange art form the CWTs are. No one seems to copy your number (as shown by the fact that no one ever asks for repeats, unlike in WPX where repeats are frequent), and many guys send theirs at speeds of over 40 wpm, with strange varieties of cut numbers. Can be useful for call recognition, but bears little relationship to actual contesting – or even communicating.

Thurs., May 22, 2025. A nice sleep until 7:30 or so. There was no food in the house, so after checking email a trip to Ling and Sons and \$160 resolved that issue (as usual, shopping on an empty stomach means overbuying). Outside to inspect the new wall, which looks very solid. The back tower also looks good in its white paint, except that the very top section near the guy attachments points is not painted. Bands seemed punk on ten; the only signal I heard initially was 4Z5ML, who was S9 – symbolic of the band opening to the Eastern Mediterranean as we have seen before.

I talked to Lisandro and Cris and arranged dinners on Monday with JP and Cris and on Tuesday with L & L, who plan to do it at their house. I go back to the radios off and on

and run some guys on 10 and later (circa 11:30 local) on 15. EUs are mostly weak. I have the monobander on EU and the Mid-Tri on US and switch often to check propagation. The program is behaving well.

At about noon it started to rain. Rain always sounds worse than it really is due to our metal roof. For a run at 3 p.m. from the Do It Center by the airport up to the Coral Pyramid and back. About 88-90 degrees but breezy. Unlike yesterday evening when there were many walkers, runners, bikers on the trail, at midday I met only one other walker. Then couldn't resist going to the Ritz for a "coco" milkshake.

Had a weird occurrence, which has happened occasionally before, where the program will just send the callsign in run mode, without the rest of the message (e.g., skipping 599). After spending some time messing with the program, I finally concluded it is due to a Winkey error. Not sure what causes it, but possibly rf getting into the cables? It can be fixed by resetting Winkey, but I'd hate to have to do that repeatedly in the contest. It only happened three or 4 times during the contest and in each case, just hitting "/" key a second time sent the proper exchange. At least once it was due to some kind of conflict with also hitting the enter key – I actually dug into the program, CQPWIN 15.0, but saw that I had a fairly complicated way of using Winkey, and since the program had worked with Winkey for many years, it obviously would not be a good idea to mess with the barely-remembered and barely-understood code. It may just be loose cables. Should get rid of the yellow, gold-plated connector one that I've been using for years. Also, should replace the rigid Y-RCA adaptor that I use to allow the key switch to be plugged into the back of the DXD with a flexible cable adaptor (don't really need it since I have two RCA "Key In" inputs).

I've been running guys off and on all day on the radio. 10 didn't really open till about 1 p.m. local (1700Z), then weakly. In general condx are blotto. John Crovelli called in on 10 and said JP couldn't fix his old Dentron amp, so I offered to lend him one of ours. He came over and I helped him take out the Alpha 86 in our right-hand position (on the theory that if our KPA1500 fails, I can use the 91B that is right beneath it on our left position). I've been reading "Miracles and Wonder" by Elaine Pagels in between bouts on the radio.

Radio hookup:

As a favor to me, John had the DXDoublers set up for the two K3s, but I don't really need it for using only one. This time:

- 1) I disconnected the Siamesed serial cable that is attached to the P3 and connected a normal serial 9-pin cable to the P3 connection labelled computer and hooked that up to the computer serial port. The P3 connects to the K3 with the 9-pin connector on the P3 labelled transceiver to the RJ45 on K3 back. The USB on the K3 back wasn't used (John would use that one for rig control). Note for next time: bring a convertor from RCA female to 1/4 inch mono male to allow Winkey to be plugged into the key input on K3/K4 without using DXD. Also bring

1/8 inch stereo female to 1/4 inch stereo male to allow the paddle to be plugged directly into the paddle input on the K3/K4 in case of emergency.

- 2) Compaq USB expander in computer. 4-port serial cable into that, with one port used for rig control.
- 3) USB into Compaq for the Winkey. Winkey output to back of DXD (or could be direct into Key input on radio).
- 4) Note that John had the K3 hooked up to the KPA-1500 for auto band switching. I disconnected that in the interest of simplicity, but experimented with it after the contest and think it would be smarter (i.e., less risk to the amp) to use it in the future, as it seemed to work solidly.
- 5) Logitech wireless mouse and keyboard. Bring PS2 adaptor as a spare.

Dinner was just a little browsing on the Ling's salads.

Fri., May 23, 2025. A quiet day. Up around 7, breakfast of an English muffin. Read for a while then off to Kooyman, near the airport to see if I could find a replacement shower head, as the one John had installed to replace the one that came with the water heater was too heavy and didn't fit properly in the holder that rides on the vertical bar. Ended up for \$66 buying a smaller head that came with its own hose but actually used a different hose that I had bought that seemed to fit the holder better. The new parts worked fine.

Contest Notes.

Start out on 40 but it's noisy and difficult going. [I have 117 Qs in the first hour on 40. The SOABHP winner, CQ9A (KL9A), also had 117 on 40 – but using 2BSIQ he also had another 123 on 20 in that hour!!]. At 0621Z, at 755 by 466 for 1.579M points, with 401 on 20 and 347 on 40. 20 is much easier going, though of course the points per hour are less. There are not nearly as many repeats needed on 20 as on 40. The 0300Z clock hour is my best of the contest: 147 QSOs, all on 20.

A first-time problem: I notice that the Log window on CQQWIN is red, meaning it is set to use the second radio, which of course is not in use. But in the log it means that contacts 1074-1090 are logged on 20. Later I change them to 15 but will need to insert the frequency of 21043 in the submitted log. It might be a good idea to put in a menu item for "Select Active Radios" to lock out radio two if not in use.

At the midway point of the Classic category, with 12 hours operating time elapsed, the totals are 1453 Qs by 703 multipliers for 3.799 M points: 133/436/517/367 for 10-40. This is at 1744Z, or 1:44 p.m. local time.

I break for dinner at 2311Z (7:11 p.m. local) at 2002 by 841 for 5.909 M points. On time is now 16:23. Have had a very nice run of three and a half hours on 15, where the total is now 880 contacts. I decide to put in another effort on 40 Saturday evening and have a good run on 7006 from 0020Z to 0248Z, 274 contacts. Strangely the East US beverage has extremely strong noise levels, rendering it temporarily useless, though the others are normal. [When I check this later on Monday and Tuesday, it seems to be back to normal. Very strange.]

I quit for the night at 0249Z with 5:09 of my 24 hours remaining. At 2275 by 889 for 7.688M points, including 646 on 40.

On Sunday, do some running on 10, mostly NA, much less EU. There's some kind of solar flare at 1630Z, as I suddenly notice that signals all over 15 are dying (and I check the other bands with the same result). So I decide to take off time and go out for a run from our roundabout to the next one, followed by another (my third!) chocolate milkshake at the Ritz. When I come, back, I finish out the contest on 10, 15 and 20. Had been intending to take more time off and come back at the end of the contest, but runs are going well, so I end up on 20 with my 24 hours done at 2200Z, two hours before the end of the contest.

For most of my runs, I'm using one antenna to the NE and one NW. Depending on which seems to be the more important direction, I use the monobander (e.g., when trying to scare up Jas), in the preferred direction (e.g. at 325 or so for JA), and point the Mid-Tri in the other direction (e.g., NE). In general I use the Mid-Tri quite a bit more in this contest than usual. The SteppIR I leave pointed south and bring it into play if necessary. Sometimes I split power on the two antennas. Generally if I'm on the monobander pointed NE, I can't hear the US stations at all, and somewhat vice versa if using the Mid-Tri pointing NW. But if there are good pileups in both directions, it can get to be hard to decipher all the signals – then it seems to be better to use one antenna at a time, switching every few minutes to reactivate the other group of callers. Power splitting also can be harmful to overall rate if one direction is noisier and the pileup is mainly in the other direction.

Mon., May 26, 2024. Up at 7:30 and checked posted scores on 3830, etc. Met John at Huchada's for breakfast then back home. I reinstalled the 86 and sent off my own 3830 report. At about noon, I decided to go for a hike at Arikok National Park, something I hadn't done in at least 5 years. I got lost trying to find it and ended up on various back roads, but ultimately did find the Visitor's Center Entrance. They now charge \$22 per person (used to be free). Here's the easy route: Turn right (East) at Mundo Nobo in Santa Cruz. In 9/10 of a kilometer there is an odd 20-foot tall golden ship's anchor set vertically on the left side of the road. Make a 90-degree right turn at that point. In .5 km you come to Urataka pizza restaurant, and in another 2 km is the park entrance, all on nice, paved roads. Alternatively, just drive to Urataka and continue on for 2 km.

Visited with Cris and JP, and Andy, who had literally just arrived from Holland. He is changing his major from Architecture to International Business. He seemed to be very

happy and enthusiastic. I left some cash with Cris and picked up her accounting for 2025. Then to dinner with Cris and JP at Barefoot. We sat on the deck, not on the beach, and the food was better than I remembered. I had a main dish of three kinds of fish, snapper, grouper, and mahi mahi. Interestingly, I much preferred the grouper, mainly because of its better mouth feel. Salad was “watermelon and feta”, an excellent combination, along with prosciutto and other salad-y ingredients. Then a very nice key lime pie.

Tuesday, May 27, 2025. Had breakfast and did some shack cleanup. Later drove north just to sightsee and pick up some wine at Lings for tonight’s dinner with Lisandro and Lissette. Midafternoon I fulfilled a promise to myself to actually go into the ocean at one of the water entrances near Marina Pirata, just so I could say I did it – after a run at my old stomping grounds on Spanns Lagoenweg. Both there and mainly in the hotel area, I am amazed at the amount of new housing being constructed, including many that look expensive. It’s clear that the new modern style is to have heavy walls and rely on air conditioning. Gone are the days of building “cunucu” houses open to the prevailing breezes. Without a/c these new houses would be a mess.

Threw out my sandals when I got home – Andy’s repair using glue last night after I noticed the delamination of the sole on the left one at their house did not hold. Perhaps with more determined clamping it might have. This isn’t the first time I have had sandals or running shoes sole delamination – must be something on the streets here.

Dinner was very pleasant. Lisandro had ordered sushi from our favorite local sushi place, and it was very good, washed down with a Washington State Riesling I had brought. They proudly showed off their former patio, which they have converted into an extension of the house with a new radio shack for Lisandro and a hobby room for Lissette. She showed me her dotting supplies, some of which John Fore had brought on his last trip and some of which I had brought this time. She has a large variety of tools, molds and acrylic paints. She is also starting to take up sewing classes. She and Robin will have a lot to talk about the next time Robin is there. Lisandro’s shack is also a thing of radio beauty, as expected. He even promises that he is studying Morse code!

3830 Report

Call: P49Y

Operator(s): AE6Y

Station: P49Y

Class: SOAB HP

Class Overlay: Classic

QTH: Aruba

Operating Time (hrs): 24

Location: South America

Summary: Compare Scores

Band QSOs

160:

80:

40: 640

20: 653

15: 1185

10: 448

Total: 2926 Prefixes 980 Total Score 10,376,240

Club: Northern California Contest Club

Comments:

Fifteen was definitely the money band here; for many hours there were manageable joint NA/EU pileups. (Overall, by the way, roughly 50% of my QSOs were US/VE and 41% EU.) OTOH, 10 was mainly NA, with many fewer EUs. Forty was noisy Friday night, but more enjoyable on Saturday, when I managed to hold 7006 for several hours without a serious frequency fight. A nice feature of the Classic category was that when the bands suddenly went dead at 1630Z or so on Sunday afternoon it was easy to just decide to take some time off and go outside for a run.

I find it takes a lot of concentration to manage a pileup in this contest with many requests for repeats of the numbers on both sides. My hat is off to those who are able to control two pileups!

As usual, it is pleasant to socialize with friends on Aruba, including Lisandro (P43L) and XYL Lissette, John (W2GD, P44W), and Cris (P43C) and JP (P43A) who do a great job of taking care of the house. And as always, thanks to co-owner John, W6LD/P40L, and frequent visitor Ed, W0YK/P49X, for their devotion to keeping everything shipshape here.

Rig: K3/P3; KPA-1500

Ant: 6 el 10, 5 el 15, 4 el 20, 2 el 40,

2el SteppIR fixed N-S, JK Mid-Tri, beverages.

Software: CQPWIN ver. 15.0

Full write-up will be posted at www.arubaqth.com.

*73 and thanks to everyone who participated in this contest,
Andy, AE6Y/P49Y*

Weds., May 28, 2025. Got up at 6:30 to take a quick run from our roundabout, then packed up, etc. John Crovelli had sent an email from the Aruba website promising possible long delays at the airport due to gate reconstruction, so I turned in the car (with what may be a record 275 km on the Trip Odo) at 9:30 for my 12:29 flight to CLT. No delays at all at the airport, including zero line at US Customs, probably all due to the early hour.

To do: new sandals. Send Jay's book to Andy.