

VP2EEB Contest Experience - CQ WW CW 1996 - **CQ WW CW 1997** by Bud Trench, AA3B



This is a very long summary of my experiences during the 1996 CQ WW CW contest. The following is a summary of the station, and my results:

Call: VP2EEB (Op AA3B) Country: Anguilla
Mode: CW Category: Single Operator, Low Power

BAND	QSO	QSO.PTS	PTS/QSO	ZONES	COUNTRIES
160	138	295	2.14	7	24
80	444	995	2.24	15	60
40	1218	3063	2.51	23	78
20	1094	2814	2.57	20	85
15	1349	3509	2.60	23	79
10	184	400	2.17	14	27
Totals	4427	11076	2.50	102	353

Total Score	5,039,580
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Station Location:

Rental apartment from Dorothea Evergates, VP2EE

Equipment Description:

TS940S, Super Keyer III, CT7

160M/80M/40M Inverted Dipoles @ 50'
Mosley Pro 67 @ 55'
80M 2 Element Wire Beam fixed NE @ 60'

I decided to begin warming up for the contest at about 2320Z on Friday 11/22. I picked a 40M frequency (about 7021 KHz) and got a good run going, with rates peaking at about 240/hour. I was unsure of how my low power, tribander / wires antennas would fare in CQ WW, but this run sure helped my confidence. I held this frequency right up until 2356Z, when I transitioned the computer from the DX Expedition file to the contest file. Another caribbean Station grabbed my frequency, despite several Europeans asking him to QSY!

I began the contest the contest on my 40M warm up frequency, attempting to regain it, but with no luck. I QSY to about 7031 where I am able to get a run going. The rates were not fantastic, varying between 80 and 150 / hour. I end up with 88 in the first which was very disappointing. On the bright side, things appeared to pick up during the last 15 minutes of the hour, so I decide to stay put.

The rates continue to increase during the next two hours (0100Z - 0300Z). I see the Last 10 QSO rates of 260+ / hour and Last 100 QSO rates of 190+ / hour start to feel real confident, almost amazed. My best hour of the contest occurs between 0200 and 0300Z!

My strategy for the first 24 hours was to run Europe whenever possible. I start to see a large influx of USA calls during the 0300Z hour, and decide to QSY to 80 at 0400Z (510 QSOs) to try and run Europe, using the 2 element wire beam. No luck with Europe, but I did have a nice run of W's. It was here that I first noticed the real impact of packet clusters. I apparently was spotted on both the YCCC and FRC/PVRC clusters shortly after my arrival on 80M; it was an amazing experience hearing all of the big guns calling me at once. It was also extremely productive; these packet cluster pile ups were for the most part well behaved in that only the station I responded to answered. I would typically experience Last 10 QSO rates of 350/hour immediately after being spotted.



Europe started to roll in on 80M at about 0530Z (724 QSOs). I quickly did a comparison between the Inverted Vee Dipole and 2 Element Wire Beam, and discovered that signals appeared to be louder on the Inverted Vee Dipole. I used it for the next hour with good success to Europe.

I went to 160M at about 0630Z (829 QSOs), not knowing what to expect. I had made no QSO's on 160M prior to the start of the contest, and suspected that

the antenna was much too low to do much. I was able to work about 90 stations, mostly 2 pointers, with a few Europeans. I was pleasantly surprised at the productivity on 160, but did not want to stay there too long. I decided to go back to 80M at 0720Z (923 QSOs).

I continued for the next two hours to move between 80M, 40M and 160M. Rates were generally around 110/hour during this period.

I decided to get some sleep from 0815Z (1021 QSOs) to 1045Z. In retrospect, this was probably a mistake. I could not sleep - this was probably due to the excitement of the contest and the fact that I was well rested prior to the start of the contest.

I got back on the air at 1038Z; the sun was up and 20M sounded wide open to Europe. I got a nice European pile up going. I was called by HC8N at 1154Z (1185 QSOs) and we moved from 20 to 15 to 40. This would be the first of many multiplier passes I would execute during the contest. I was very impressed the speed at which many of these passes occurred, and grateful to the many stations that moved with me.

I went to 15M at 1210Z. The band was also wide open and I started out with great rates peaking at 250/hour, with sustained rates of 170/hour.

Murphy hit me at 1458Z (1614 QSO's). I noticed that the SWR was jumping around wildly. The SWR eventually shot up to infinity and stayed there. In a flash of inspiration, I remembered being suspect of a coax switch at the bottom of the tower supporting the tribander. I quickly grabbed a double female barrel connector and bypassed the switch - problem solved!



I went back to running at 1525Z and maintained rates between 100 and 130 for the next 7 hours on 15M and 20M. During this period, I began to become concerned about my multiplier totals which seemed very low. I couldn't make up my mind as to whether it was better to run at about 130/hour or go after multipliers. I finally decided to do quick sweep of the bands, in conjunction with food breaks and nature calls. The first of these sweeps resulted in 26 multipliers in 45 minutes, and the second sweep resulted in 11 multipliers in 25 minutes.

I went to 40M at 2228Z (2405 QSOs) and found the band to be wide open to Europe and the US. I ran stations on 40M until 0310Z (2872 QSOs), including a 19 minute intervals in which I found 13 multipliers. I spent the next 50 minutes hunting multipliers on 160M, 80M and 40M, located 15 more. I went to bed at 0356Z (2889 QSOs).

My pre-contest goal was 4000 QSOS and 4M+ points, which would have beat the winning low power score in 1995. I thought I would have a pretty good shot at it, assuming that the radio, conditions and operator held up on Sunday!

I grabbed a quick shower and was back on the air at 0737Z. The first contact was an OY0 on 160M. I thought this was a good omen. I stayed on 160M until 0754 (2912 QSOs) working a good number of Western European and USA Stations. I next went to 80 and worked was called by ZL3GQ during a USA run; later the same would happen with WH6R. Next to 40, where I was able to get a good European run going. This was one of my biggest surprises during the contest - that is that Europe was still coming through so strong on 40M so late; I worked my last European on 40M at 0910Z (2991 QSOs). I also was able to pick up JA3ZOH and TF50IRA on 40 just after 1000Z.

Twenty meters again opened up nicely after sunrise. The rates seemed to be slightly down from Saturday, but still I saw Last 10 QSO rates / Last 100 QSO Rates of 200/hour and 150/hour respectively.

I went to 15M at 1142Z (3195 QSOs). This began one of the toughest parts of the contest for me. The band was very good, and I got a huge European pileup going. The pileup was so big, that I had trouble pulling the calls through. I tried everything I could think of, but was unable to get the Last 10 rate much above 170 / hour. I finally increased my keyer speed from 34 to 38 WPM, and things began to thin out. It seemed ironic that the only way I could increase the rate was to scare some slower operators off.

Conditions were so good on 15M that I thought there was a good possibility that 10M might open. I went to 10M at 1418Z (3546 QSOs) and worked HC8N, T11C, D44BC and 9J2BO all in row. Again, this was a good omen! I also worked a number of W8's, W9's and W0's.

I went back to 15M at 1447Z (3566 QSOs) and continued to run both European and USA stations on 15M and then 20M. At 1540Z (3666) I ran out of memory on my Lap Top! This was an event I never experienced before. I quickly started up a new BIN file and continued. This was something I had not counted on, and I was not prepared to deal with it. I was uneasy because I knew there were still a lot of easy multipliers I needed, and I had no easy way of differentiating between the ones I had worked and the ones I needed. I decided to quickly go back to my first BIN file and make a list of the easy multipliers I still needed

by band, particularly those from the Caribbean and South America.



Good runs continued on 20M, but I still kept thinking about 10M. I went to 10M at 1654Z (3776 QSOs) and worked TM9C and G4BUO. I decided to stay on 10M for a while, even if the rates were slow, in order to pick up the Caribbean and South American multipliers I still needed, plus any Europeans that could hear me. This strategy worked well as I worked 7 multipliers in the next 20 minutes, including several passes to other bands.

I went back to 15M at 1734Z (3816 QSOs) and continued to run. I noticed that Europe was starting to fade, as was I. I turned the beam towards Africa and was surprised by a very large run from W1. It occurred to me that I had spent so much time running Europe that I might have missed a lot of USA stations. I turned the beam toward W6 and was pleasantly surprised by a huge pile up of USA stations. The USA operators were outstanding, and this pile up really helped me recover my energy levels. I continued to run the USA until about 2000Z (4074 QSOs). I then went multiplier hunting on 20, working 8 multipliers in 18 minutes.

I spent the next several hours moving between 20M, 15M and 10M working primarily USA stations. A big thrill occurred at about 2130Z (4194 QSOs) when 10M opened up nicely to the

east coast. The Last 10 QSO Rate meter hit 316/hour with the Last 100 QSO Rate meter at 147/hour. This was a real jolt to a tired operator! The pileup ended as quickly as it started.

I reluctantly went to 40M at 2200Z (4263 QSOs); I figured that 40M might be more of a challenge than I could handle in my fatigued state. I stayed on 40 until 2308Z (4392 QSOs) when I lost my run frequency. I decided to spend the balance of the contest searching for multipliers. I had a schedule to with OT6T at 2335Z on 160M which did not work because he couldn't hear me, but I did pick up several other multipliers on 160M. I then went to 80M. I noticed that the signals were very loud, so I decided to try one last run. I picked up 5 additional multipliers on 80M in the last 20 minutes of the contest as a result of this run!

Post Contest Reflections

I am extremely grateful to my wife for giving me this trip. It was one of the highlights of my life.

I also would like to thank Dorothea Evergates for all of her help with arranging the trip, rental car, licenses, etc. Dorothea is an outstanding Hostess!

I was very impressed with the overall caliber of the operators in this Contest. Maybe I'm an optimist, but I really found only one operator during the whole contest that I considered to be a lid.

I felt that I was called out much more often on the YCCC Packet Cluster than on our FRC/PVRC Packet Cluster, which I thought was odd. This was re-enforced by the post contest FRC/PVRC Packet Cluster stats which did not VP2EEB as one of the top 25 spots.

I sent my callsign after every QSO; maybe this is why I could not get my Last 100 QSO rate above 170/hour. I still think I would continue this practice if I had another chance to operate from the caribbean.

I hate the 2 point rule from Zone 8 to NA!

My choice of callsign was a disaster. In retrospect, it is probably almost impossible to copy any callsign with two E's in a row!

I'd go back to the Dorothea's QTH in a heartbeat!



VP2EEB Contest Experience - CQ WW CW 1997 - **cq ww cw 1996** by Bud Trench, AA3B

My 1996 CQ WW contest expedition to Anguilla resulted in a score of 4.9M points. This score was enough to place me second overall in the single operator, low power, unassisted category, behind the outstanding effort by DL2HBX at 3V8BB. Uli's 1996 score of 5.4M points set a new world record in the Single Operator, Low Power category.

I had not really given much thought about going back to Anguilla until about July, 1997. Once we decided to go back, I decided that I was going to do a much better job of preparing and planning for the contest. My goal was to break 3V8BB's world record for the single operator low power category, which would require a significant increase in QSOs to overcome the QSO point disadvantage from VP2E to the USA and Canada.



I started out by carefully reviewing my notes from my 1996 expedition and identifying everything that went wrong or could have gone wrong. Murphy struck me in 1996, resulting in several hours chasing poor mechanical connections and resolving thermal problems. I developed risk mitigation plans for each of these areas, plus the near misses I had in 1996. I began working these plans off during the fall, and had everything in place to avoid these problems when I arrived in VP2E.

I also spent time reviewing articles on other contest expeditions. An article that I found particularly useful was a membership profile on P40W / W2GD in the July 1997 Frankford Radio Club newsletter in which John discussed his to pre-contest planning, and his approach to managing sleep and other biological issues during the contest. Another article that was very helpful was The Contest Traveler in the September/October 1997 issue of NCJ; this article was an excellent source for developing a packing list of things to bring with me.

I believe that the most beneficial tool that I developed before the contest was an hour by hour operating plan. I developed this plan by carefully reviewing my 1996 logs and tabulating the rates, multipliers, bands and operating strategy during each hour. I then developed hour by hour goals for 1997. I developed a table that I used to track my progress during

the 1997 contest containing the following data: Time; Hourly QSO Goal, Hourly Operating Strategy (i.e., band, area of the world to focus on, run or search / pounce, sleep, etc.), and comparison of 1996 vs. 1997 QSOs, Zones, Multipliers and score. I entered the 1997 QSOs, Zones, Multipliers and score in this table each hour and was able to easily track my progress. I found this to be extremely helpful in measuring how I was doing in real-time, as well as giving me a measurable objective for each hour.

My objective was 5.73M points, to be achieved by working 4700 QSOs, 109 Zones and 376 Countries. I decided that QSOs were more important than multipliers and that I would focus on maximizing QSO rates. I also decided to place a greater emphasis on working North America than I did in 1996.

I arrived in Anguilla on Tuesday, 11/25/97. I had been to VP2E twice before, with absolutely no problems clearing customs. However, this trip there was talk of impounding the equipment; fortunately my Hostess, Dorothea Evergates VP2EE, was able to talk them out of it. It was interesting that VP2EST was also on the island while I was there, and had no problems whatsoever with customs.

The station and antennas were very similar to the set up I had in 1996. I used my trusty TS 940S, into a Mosely PR0-67B at 50 , 160/80/40M inverted vees at 45 and a two element 80M inverted vee beam at 60 . I used CT9 hosted in a 100MHz Toshiba lap top, which was a real pleasure to operate.

I spent most of Wednesday 11/26/97 working on antennas. Everything was pretty much ready to go by Wednesday evening, although I think I may have pushed myself too hard on Wednesday because I was hurting by the end of the day. I spent Thursday (Thanksgiving) relaxing. I had an outstanding Thanksgiving Dinner with Dorothea VP2EE, Tom VP2EST and his XYL Spring, although I had Red Snapper instead of Turkey! Debbie arrived late Thursday evening, and had no problems at customs, particularly since American Airlines lost her luggage!

We spent Friday driving around the island looking at the beautiful beaches and checking out the restaurants. I rested for about 2 hours before the contest, but was unable to fall asleep.

After a tough fight to find a clear frequency, I started the contest on 40M. I spent most of the first five hours of the contest sitting on 7.034 MHz running Europe and North America, resulting in 648 QSOs. I was within one QSO of my pre-contest projections when I went to 80M at 0449Z. I thought 80M was tougher than I expected; I had good runs to North America, but I felt very weak to Europe and would often hear European stations calling CQ underneath me. I went to 160M for the first time at 0637Z (854 QSOs) and got a run going to the USA, but no DX. It was back to 40M at 0712Z (905 QSOs) where I found excellent conditions to Europe at their sunrise. I also found that the PRO-67B 40M element was hearing better than the 40M dipole I put up, and I decided to use the PRO-67B for the balance of my 40M efforts. I went back to 80M at 0810Z (1015 QSOs) to hopefully pick up some European multipliers. I took my first break at 0835 (1067 QSOs), in accordance with my operating plan. At this point, I was ahead of my 1996 effort by 33 QSOs, 6 Zones, 9 Countries and 52K points. My general feeling was that 40M had been great, but I felt that I was in the hole on both 80M and 160M.

After 100 minutes of sleep and a quick shower, I was back on the air at 1025Z. I went to 20M which was wide open and I started a run to Europe. I was almost immediately called by 5V7A who moved me to 15M where I also heard loud signals from Europe. I went back to 20M and stayed there until 1120Z (1194 QSOs) and then I went to 15M. Fifteen was outstanding. I had an great run to Europe that lasted until 1639Z (2051 QSOs). I tried 10M until 1714Z (2160 QSOs), working mostly the USA.



I decided next to try to get a European run going on 20M, which started out so strong that it was difficult to pull call signs out of the pileup. The pileup seemed to fade very quickly at around 1758Z (2245 QSOs), which was a real disappointment. I was somewhat perplexed as to where to go now; I was hoping for a nice long run of 3 pointers on 20, but it just wasn't there. I decided to try a North America run on 15M; this resulted in a 212 QSO hour which is the highest rate I've ever had. The North American operators were outstanding during this run, which lasted until 1903Z (2469 QSOs). I spent the next several hours moving between 10M, 15M and 20M. The highlight of this period was a nice JA run on 15M at around 2200Z. I also had some nice runs to the USA during this period.



At the half way point and my general assessment was that my results were mixed. I had 3007 QSOs which was 450 QSOs ahead of my 1996 effort thanks primarily to some outstanding North American runs. I had 84 zones and 236 countries which put my combined multiplier count 25 ahead of 1996. My score was also ahead of 1996 by almost 600K points. However, I was very concerned about my 160M and 80M results - multipliers were low on both bands and my 80M QSO total seemed low as well. Both 40M and 15M had been excellent and 10M had been what I had expected. Twenty worried me in that I felt that my 10M QSO total was low, and I had been unable to sustain a

long run into Europe. The big question was whether or not I could sustain the margin I could had over my 1996 score during the second half of the contest. If so, I d break the record!

I started my Saturday evening run on 40M by working 5A2A followed shortly by OD5NJ and JY9QJ which I thought was a good omen. I stayed on 40M until 0312Z (3320 QSOs); I then did a sweep of the bands resulting in 12 multipliers. I went to 160M at 0350Z (3330 QSOs) and spent the next several hours moving between 80M, 40M, 160M and 20M generating short lived runs and hunting for multipliers. I took my second break starting at 0628Z (3560 QSOs); I was 600 QSOS, 20 Zones, 24 Countries and 900K ahead of my 1996 effort when I went to bed. Things were looking up!

I slept for 3 hours and woke up to the realization that I would break the record if I didn t self destruct. I started with a quick stint on 80M and 40M to pick Pacific multipliers and then went to 20M at 1048Z (3593 QSOs). I had a decent European run which lasted until 1207Z (3755 QSOs). I then went to 10M and picked up 6 multipliers; the band was open but not runnable, so it was off to the races on 15M. I had a nice European run on 15M that lasted until 1418Z (4024 QSOs), and then it was back to 10M. Conditions on 10M had improved, and there were many European signals that resulted in a bunch of sorely needed multipliers. I was finally able to get a run European run going on 10M at 1523Z (4063 QSOs), which lasted until 1556Z (4124 QSOs). I did a quick multiplier sweep between 1556Z and 1617Z (4133 QSOs) resulting in 8 new multipliers.

I spent the next several hours running on 15M; first Europe and then the USA. I was amazed that 15M remained so productive throughout the contest. I spent most of Sunday afternoon moving between 15M, 20M and 10M generating short lived runs and hunting multipliers. At 2125Z (4721 QSOs), I got a very productive run going on 20M to the USA, followed by a big JA pileup. This JA pileup was the toughest part of the contest for me. The signals were so loud that they were drowning out North America, but there was so much flutter that it made it very difficult to pull out calls. At around 2200Z, I broke 3V8BB s single operator, low power worlds record of 5.4M. I continued the JA run until about 2307Z (4950 QSOs), at which point I decided to give 80M and 160M one last try. This was a disaster in that I wasted 10 minutes on these bands without making a single contact. I went back to 20M for a short stint, and finished the contest on 40M. The last hour of the contest is the only hour that I wish I had to do over again; I should have definitely gone to 40M at around 2310Z.

The following is a comparison of my pre-contest goal versus actual performance:

QSOs	Zones	Cty	Score	
4720	109	376	5,728,742	Pre-contest Goal
4989	115	345	5,732,060	Actual
+269	+ 6	- 31	+ 3,318	Delta

I m real happy with my QSO total and believe that the reason I beat my goal was because of better than expected North American runs. I m very disappointed with my country total, especially given that I spent more time hunting multipliers than I originally planned. I think the main factors behind my poor country total were my weak signals on 80M and 160M, and the fact that VP2EST was also active during the contest which reduced the demand for the VP2E multiplier.

My operating technique during the contest included sending my call sign after each contact. I generally ran my keying speeds between 32 and 36 WPM. I started out sending an accelerated exchange, but I found it to be unnatural from a timing point of view and went back to sending the exchange at the nominal operating speed. I generally ran the pileups simplex; when things got hectic I would listen up 200 to 400 Hz. I normally looked for open frequencies around 20 to 60 KHz up from the bottom of the band. I tried to pull out full callsigns from the pileups and would always resend a callsign if I made a correction to it.

I virtually lived on bread and water during the contest. I sipped on water almost continually, to replace the fluid I was sweating away. I limited my food intake to one half of a whole wheat roll whenever I started to have hunger pangs. I m convinced that this was one of the reasons that I experienced less fatigue this year as compared to 1996; I believe that digesting a lot of food makes your body work very hard; its better to expend this energy working QSOs! I also avoided coffee and caffeine; I did have one cup of coffee on Saturday morning, but it made my head swim.

As I look back on it now, I believe that 6M to 7M is achievable in the single op, low power category from the Caribbean, especially once 10M gets hot. If and when I go again, I plan to spend additional energy on antennas for the low bands.

My hostess, Dorothea Evergates VP2EE, was wonderful as always, and I want to thank her for all her help with the apartment, license, rental car and customs!

BAND	QSO	QSO.PTS	PTS/QSO	ZONES	COUNTRIES
160	169	343	2.03	8	17
80	301	656	2.18	14	45
40	1264	3148	2.49	23	78
20	1012	2505	2.48	28	77
15	1979	5211	2.63	25	91
10	264	598	2.27	17	37
Totals	4989	12461	2.50	115	345

Total Score	5,732,060
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