

An Experience of a Lifetime by John Gagen W2YR (HS0ZDJ)

As many of you know, I spent several months this past winter in Thailand. While there I had an invitation to operate with a group of Thai amateur radio operators in the CQ world wide CW contest. There were about 11 of us operating including two YL Thai operators. My good friend and fellow US Foreign Service (retired) colleague, Fred (K3ZO), was also part of this operation. The call and station we used was the HSOAC club station of the Radio Amateur Society of Thailand. Located about 20 miles north of Bangkok on the campus of The Asian Institute of Technology. The antennas there consist of multi element single band beams on 10, 15 and 20 meters. For 40, 80 and 160 meters wire antennas were used.

I arrived on campus and stayed at the motel/guest house on Thursday evening. All day Friday was used for preparation and the Thai operators asked me to LAN their computers for the contest. I drew up the diagrams and then asked for some connectors that were unavailable. One of the Thai operators took my diagram and then proceeded to hard wire a system. We connected it and it didn't work! Now thinking what could cause this problem, I narrowed it to software driver setups. After some minor tinkering, we had it running.



The contest started on Saturday morning 7 AM in Thailand (other side of the earth) whereas it starts Friday evening in NJ. We were raring to go and at 7 AM I was on 10 meter CW working a BANZAI attack of JA stations all intent on contacting us. I have experienced many pileups but thousands of JA's on a single frequency calling is a sound to behold! Fred (K3ZO) was on 15 meters and said that I was being heard on the US east coast. I then asked the JA's to QRX and every one courteously did so. Unfortunately, all I heard from North America were a couple of W7 s. Then just two hours into the contest all the electrical power went DEAD! Some fast telephone calls gave us the sad



news that a scheduled power outage was in progress for the next eight hours. Both Fred and I went back to our rooms for some rest before the power came back on.



Later that afternoon the electric power did indeed come back on. We were now at an extreme competitive disadvantage with the other multi multi class stations, competing in our contest category. All of us changed positions throughout the contest giving each of us a chance on the various bands. Later that night I went on 80 meters and was immediately greeted by another hoard of JA's. Propagation was changing and the Europeans started coming in. Both 80 and 160 meters are not normally authorized for amateur radio operation in Thailand. However, for contests the Thai ministry of posts and telegraphs authorized us two each, 2 khz segments on both bands for the contest. You can well imagine the rarity this causes when other countries hear a Thai call sign on those bands. Fred (K3ZO) put it in appropriate words when he described the JA pileup on 160 meters. He said AWESOME.

The next evening 20 meters opened up to North America over the polar path. We were also experiencing a magnetic storm in the polar latitudes that distorted signals significantly. Despite this I

kept calling CQ test de HSOAC and managed to work several stations over the polar path. One of these stations was fellow FRC member N3BNA (Dale).

During this contest we had a great time making international friends and working together for a common goal. Our final score was about 5 million five hundred thousand points and was the highest contest score ever achieved from HSOAC. We did this even with the extended power outage, quite an accomplishment!

