Greetings for 2020! I trust your holiday season and the early winter contest season went well. Band conditions remain where we typically would expect at the bottom of the sunspot cycle, but there are surprises. Work and a lot of media interviews in November kept me off the air for much of the month. I arrived home from New York late on Saturday afternoon of the CQ World Wide CW. I got on the air for a couple of hours around 9 PM and was very surprised at the excellent propagation on 40 – 160 meters. Those were some of the most enjoyable hours I have spent contesting recently. My experience demonstrates that the bands are often open, and especially so during contests. So, if you missed the CQ WW CW, give the ARRL International DX and NCJ's NAQPs a try. You may be surprised.

Fred, AB1OC, and Anita AB1QB, Kemmerer — in association with the Nashua Area Radio Society (NARS) in New Hampshire — were featured on “Ham Nation” last November. NARS was the 2019 Hamvention Club of the Year. Check out their interview with Bob Heil, K9EID, and colleagues. It is simply amazing! They have trained and recruited more than 200 new club members and created opportunities for a large number of new under-18-year-old new hams.

One such operator, Abby Finchum, AB1BY, has developed into quite a good contester. Take a look at her awards on QRZ.com. Fred mentioned on the show that she was able to do SO3R FT8 during ARRL Field Day in June 2019. Wow! Abby and her fellow teen operators were nearly able to match QSO for QSO the numbers made during ARRL Field Day by the CW and SSB stations combined.

In a related vein, Fred and Anita are planning a new contest in 2020 — a Student/Teacher contest. Stay tuned for more information. NCJ gladly supports this effort and others aimed at promoting contesting among newcomers.

Propagation. Will it improve in 2020? Perhaps a little, but you can read the predictions of Carl Luetzelschwab, K9LA, in this issue. Regardless, our state-of-the-art technology in HF receivers, antennas, and noise mitigation will make contesting viable and fun during 2020. Make an effort to try a new contest — whether it's the CW Sprint, the NAQPs, the ARRL DX contests, or the CQ WPX contests this year. Set some goals, write them down, and see how close you come.

Looking Ahead

This issue is our largest ever, but even so, we had to push several articles into the March/April issue, as we ran out of space. Looking ahead, we will see an article by Peter Chadwick, G3RZP, a well-known RF engineer and past ITU official, whose article calls improving spectral purity in our transmitters. This parallels the November 2019 QST article by Rob Sherwood, NCCOB. The need for cleaner transmitters to reduce problems — mainly for other operators — during contests is of high importance. Speak with the manufacturers' representatives about this long-standing issue this year at Visalia, Dayton, and other venues. “Product Review” articles on transmitters in QST report measured signal purity statistics.

Year Three

This starts my third year as NCJ Editor. Thank you for staying with us during these years and for reading the articles and columns we publish. I also want to thank Fred Regennitter, K4IU, for his work as Deputy Editor. We are happy to continue serving you and NCJ.

I also want to thank all who volunteered to serve on a new task force I'm organizing to promote urban and portable contests. Opportunities remain, if you want to join our effort.

A Sad Note

Ron Stailey, K5DJ, a well-known RTTY contesteer, died on November 25 at age 75. He created the CQ WW RTTY WPX and the NAQP RTTY. We also lost Paul Newberry, N4PN, right after the ARRL November Sweepstakes CW, at age 68. He was a well-known contesteer and ambassador for ham radio and a past president of the Georgia Contest Group. Our condolences to the families of these exemplary hams and contesteurs.