

From the Editor

My profound thanks to Ward Silver, NØAX, who stepped up to edit this issue of *NCJ* due to my work issues related to the COVID pandemic. Ward is a master writer and editor. You will enjoy this issue, as it brings a rich diversity of contesting articles and content. Ward continues to do so much for amateur radio and contesting. He is a true leader in our field.

In this issue, you'll find some contest reports, an article on the demographics of contesters and how aging may impact our vitality by Frank Howell, K4FMH, a sociologist and demographer, and an exciting contest report about operating from TI7W by Lee Finkel, KY7M.

Later this year, *NCJ* will be a sponsor of the Portable Ops Challenge (POC), <https://foxmikehotel.com/challenge/>, a contest-like event designed to encourage activity by operators who are real-estate limited (compared to a full-blown contest station). This also should provide an opportunity for all of us to dust off our portable HF gear and antennas and get them ready to go. The rules and promotional material are still under development, but Frank, K4FMH, and a group of active HF contesters on his advisory committee are planning for the big event later this year. Events like this stimulate more interest in contesting by those who may not be equipped to do a major 48-hour event. The POC will have an international component, so it could provide a chance to snare some new DXCC entities from a summit or hilltop near you.

COVID-19 has changed nearly everything with ham radio and our society, it seems. Long-promised new equipment, such as the K4d, has been further postponed due to COVID. Icom announced a delay in delivery of its IC-705, due to issues from COVID and has not updated us on the new PW-2 amplifier. DX Engineering also announced a delay in the new rotator for a few more months. The International DX Convention (Visalia), Dayton Hamvention,[®] and Ham Radio in Friedrichshafen, Germany, all were cancelled, along with a plethora of popular regional events. In addition, the 2020 IARU Region 2 YOTA event and the Team Exuberance youth events were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is there an end in sight? Yes of course the pandemic will end but I honestly don't know when it will be. It will not be as quickly as any of us would like. Likely, COVID-19 will forever impact how we organize meetings and travel. The pandemic has forced some innovation in our hobby, with more HF nets on the air and more HF activity in general as home-bound hams want to get on and operate. I have participated in some state-wide and district-wide club meetings via *Zoom*; they are efficient and personal, and remind me of the old days with 75 meter SSB state nets, except possibly better because of no QRN or QRM, and we can see one another and get FM-like sound quality. Last week, Contest University was live-streamed on *Zoom*. I enjoyed it more than I did the 2019 in-person event in Dayton. I had a more comfortable chair, I could get a snack or beverage anytime

I wanted, and I could hear the speakers better and see the slides more clearly with my desk's 28-inch monitor. Tim Duffy, K3LR, reported more than 2,000 attendees via *Zoom* and the YouTube presentation. This represents at least a five-fold increase in attendance for the meeting. Imagine how much better CTU will be in the future, if it can be simulcast on *Zoom* as it occurs live in Dayton. I see a strong future for *Zoom*-type meetings to train and help new contesters learn more advanced skills and for ham organizations to stay better connected. I live in the Dakota region, and it is a several-hour commute to our monthly HF club meeting, the TCDXA. *Zoom* or similar would allow more members to join meetings without the long drive. Isn't it nice to see ham radio adapting 21st-century technologies to advance our learning and socialization?

I hope to see you in the IARU and NAQP events this summer. Remember to work on your station improvements and antenna arrays, as the fall contest season will be upon us sooner than we realize. I have my own plans as I'm sure you do as well. DX Engineering has announced some new products that you may want to check out, and hopefully Elecraft will be able to ship the K4d, which was displayed at Dayton 2019, in time for the fall contest season.

Continue to share your thoughts on contesting.