

Editorial

You Can't Work 'em If You Can't Hear 'em!

Several months ago I was doing some work in the back yard. I had a couple of trees to cut down, and they were small enough that I could handle them with my chainsaw. With a freshly sharpened chain, I set about to do the deed. I dropped the trees and began cutting fireplace-size pieces to split and burn in the winter. At one point the wind shifted, and the sound from the chainsaw was somehow directed right into my left ear. The sound was so loud that it literally dropped me to my knees. I had a pain in my head and a loud ringing/rushing sound in my ears.

I'd made a big mistake that day: I forgot to wear hearing protection. I now hear that ringing and rushing every night while trying to sleep and every morning when I wake up. I also hear it every time I place a set of headphones on my ears. Tinnitus can really put a cramp in the contesteer's style.

If this story scares you, it should. Don't make the mistake that I made. Use hearing protection at all times when working with any kind of power tool. Be careful around live public address systems at concerts and outdoor gatherings — or at NASCAR races, for example. Carry ear plugs with you, if there's a possibility that you could wind up at a loud night club or noisy industrial setting. Be aware of the loudness levels (technically, "sound pressure" or "acoustic pressure") around you, and be especially careful playing loud music through headphones and ear buds.

Most, if not all, successful contesters wear some kind of headset when operating. It's very important to keep the audio levels as low as possible throughout the contest. If you have to crank up the gain to drag out a weak one, turn it back down as soon as you complete the contact. Use

AGC or other means to prevent harmful transient peaks from ever reaching your ears.

I highly recommend the excellent, two-part article "Can I Hear You Now? Adjusting the Receive Audio Chain," by Eric L. Scace, K3NA. It appeared in the November/December 2006 (www.ncjweb.com/novdec06scace1.pdf) and January/February 2007 (www.ncjweb.com/jan-feb07scace2.pdf) issues of *NCJ*.

You only have one set of ears, and it's worth doing whatever you can to prevent hearing loss.

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in the contesteer's style.*

Fair Play

We received a few unsolicited e-mails following the North American QSO parties. These expressed concern that some stations may have ignored the 100 W power limitation. It turns out that some operators were simply unaware of the "no amplifier" rule in the NAQPs, while others just chose to run an amplifier anyway and submitted a check log. The bottom line is that the NAQP, like any other contest, has specific rules that define the competition. Operating outside of those rules and then submitting a competitive log ruins the game for everyone.

Even if you get away with violating the rules, you can bet that your competitors will quickly lose respect for you. The respect of your fellow competitors is the most valuable thing that you can win in a contest. It matters more than your score and more than your rank in the final standings. Once that

respect is lost, it's awfully hard to earn it back. The other thing lost when not playing by the rules is the opportunity to discover just how competitive you really are. Fair play matters to all of us. Operate within the rules, and earn the respect of your peers. Let's encourage fair play in our clubs, and teach the value and pride in "doing it right."

NCJ Web Site Updated

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Bruce Horn, WA7BNM, the NCJ Web site, www.ncjweb.com, has been brought up to date. Bruce is responsible for tools that many contesters use frequently and probably take for granted. Examples include the "WA7BNM Contest Calendar" the 3830 online score reporting forms (along with Dink N7WA) and the Cabrillo log entry forms used to submit logs to several contests. Take a look at the site, and you will find feature articles from past issues as well as bonus content that is not available anywhere else.

In this Issue

We have a selection of operator stories and technical articles for you this month. NØAX and KX9X tell their tale of traveling to Puerto Rico for the ARRL November Sweepstakes CW to operate as NP4DX. Ward and Sean show that it's not as difficult as some might think to experience the receiving side of the pileups. K1TO gives us a detailed update of the WRTC-2014 team leader selection process, and the current standings. WØYK and N6XI tell us about single-radio/two-operator contesting. On the technical side, ZS6EZ shares some of his reflections on RTTY contesting. K1KP and WS7I offer some helpful tips for use while up on the tower, and K6MM shows us how to "put the gorilla in our cabrilla." We hope you'll enjoy this issue!

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