

## A Message from the Editor

One highlight of my childhood was definitely Halloween night. In the days when it was considered normal for kids to simply wander the neighborhoods, we had a ball hanging out with our best friends in scary costumes and collecting huge sacks of candy. It was an event we all looked forward to. It was so much fun, in fact, that during one listless July day, a group of us decided to create a summer version of Halloween. We donned our costumes and went door to door, calling “trick or treat.”

It didn't exactly work out. After getting blank looks from a few houses and one piece of overripe fruit, we packed it in. Halloween remained special and many months away. Maybe if we had the Internet back then, we could have marketed our idea.

Flashing forward to today, the little kid who still lives inside of me looks forward to another special event, and that is the CW Sprint. When this contest was inaugurated in 1977, it couldn't have been more different, with an intensity and speed that added up to a big adrenaline rush. That mania peaked about 10 years ago, when operators like W4AN (SK) and N6TR were making more than 400 QSOs in a 4 hour period — an amazing feat for an operating event that doesn't let you simply run QSOs.

In fact, the contests turned out to be so much fun that people started to think, “Why wait 6 months for the next one?” A late spring Sprint was tried and failed, but a variant — the weekly half-hour Sprints on weeknights — has survived. These days, if you want a Sprint experience, you don't have to wait until February or September roll around. Just flip the rig on and go.

Having fun is what it's all about, of course, and fun is definitely being had.

But along the way we are losing a bit of the specialness that made the original Sprints so enjoyable. It's as if the Super Bowl were on TV every weekend or you remarried your spouse every week. The weeks of anticipation and afterglow on both sides of these special events would be diminished. In fact there'd be nothing special about them at all.

With top QSO totals down 20 percent from their heyday of the last decade, that's a little bit of what's happening to the CW Sprint. Reversing that slide will be a challenge.

### The Changing Face of Contesting Hardware

Towers and Yagis. Radios and amps. Contesting stations are full of them, of course, and always will be, but down the road they will be different in all likelihood. You can already see the beginning of change today, because it has happened before.

Take a look at an outdoor picture of a big contest station from, say, the 1960s. Towers and Yagis, of course. But, look a little more closely. Is that a quad on that tower? And why are the elements on those Yagis so evenly spaced? And where are the stacks? The computer-designed station of today looks different on the outside, just as the boxes have changed on the inside.

Change may again be in the air. There is new thinking on everything from Yagi design to software radios. You'll see some of that in this issue's conversation with antenna design guru Justin Jones, GØKSC. Who says Yagi elements have to be straight? Justin's antennas have bends and loops and even squares. Those new wrinkles are there for a reason, as we learn from his conversation with *ARRL Antenna Book* Editor Ward Silver, NØAX. As those

innovations become more widely understood, I think you'll be seeing a lot more of those funny-looking antennas.

What's going on elsewhere with hardware may be even more revolutionary. Amplifiers with tubes may soon be things of the past. Copper wires to control your switches and rotors may be as well. And instead of having knobs and meters, the SO2R-ready radio in your near future might be a plain looking black box.

### Salute to an NCJ Iron Man

It would be hard to find a person who has done more to support *NCJ* than Carl Leutzelschwab, K9LA. He was the editor of *NCJ* for five years, 2002 until 2007, the longest serving editor in our publication's history. Even more amazing has been his 17 years of service as author of the *NCJ*'s influential and informative “Propagation” column. This issue marks Carl's last column, and it's another good read. From all of us at *NCJ*, thanks Carl!

### A Familiar Call Sign Goes Silent

It's a pity that Alan Brubaker, KO7X, won't be with us to experience that future when it arrives. As CW NAQP Manager KL9A noted, “Sortly after NAQP CW, on August 15, Alan became a Silent Key. A regular in all NAQP contests, Alan was a favorite multiplier of many and an all-around great guy. Wyoming is mostly a low-band multiplier in the West, but Alan was great at making sure he tried hard when the high-band scatter paths were open for the close-in stations. Alan had a great signal on the low bands and made Wyoming an almost guaranteed multiplier for many. We will miss his sense of humor and booming signal.” RIP OM.