

From the Editor

2018 is rolling to a close, and the solar flux is waning as well. Hopefully, you won't allow the decline in propagation to temper your enthusiasm about contesting in the winter season, especially in the ARRL November Sweepstakes, CQ World Wide CW, and the ARRL 10-Meter contests. Winter brings us the annual low-band contests also — the ARRL and CQ 160 meter contests. We designed this issue to focus on some tips and tricks for low-band contesting, with articles about tactics for winning on 160 and 80 meters. Glenn Johnson, WØGJ, has won a significant number of ARRL 160 meter contests running QRP. He shares his insights, tactics, and rationale for operating one of the toughest contests of the year as a QRP station. Glenn has a magnificent location in northeastern Iowa. I have visited it many times, and it is worth a visit if you are in that region of the US. He has a neat and well-thought-out antenna farm. He even installed solar power, so that he could operate uninterrupted if the grid goes down. He is a true renaissance person, practicing orthopedic surgery by day and having a number of hobbies by night, including ham radio.

Ken Claerbout, K4ZW, who works for the Voice of America and travels as much globally as any ham I know, shares with us his personal strategies for success on 80 meters as a contester. Ken has operated the low bands from a number of zones around the world (Africa, Asia, Europe) and has won or placed high in a number of single-operator, single-band efforts using 80 meters as his contest preference. Ken has built a competitive 80 meter contest station in Northern Virginia, and, in this issue, shares his secrets for success. One of the secrets is that he fell in love with 80 meters as a young ham and has never lost that passion. I predict this is true for many of you who consistently win specific types of contests. If you have such a passion that stems from your days as a young ham operator, contact me to see if we can assist you in turning your experience into an article to help the contest community.

In his "Contest Tips, Tricks and Techniques" column, Gary Sutcliffe, W9XT, shares his contributors' tips for low-band success for modest stations — Part 1 of 2 — with the focus this time on transmit antenna systems.

This is the last issue of 2018. The *NCJ* Team has labored tirelessly to bring you the *Journal* for another year. Let me thank our

Managing Editor Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, for his superb work, Deputy Editor Fred Regennitter K4IU, for his strong support and travels to promote contesting in 2018, and all of our contributors, from those who are new to those who have done this for a number of years. From all of us in the contesting community, a big Thank You!

Are you looking for holiday gift ideas to suggest to your family? Let me recommend two books for your consideration. First, *Contact Sport*, by Jim George, N3BB. This narrative highlights the efforts of the 2014 World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC) from a series of perspectives that offer insight into the event and into radiosport as a global activity. It remains a hot-seller, and if you don't have it on your bookshelf already, consider it. Second, I am intrigued by the new six-volume 2019 *ARRL Handbook*. ARRL decided to publish the *Handbook* in a multi-volume set. I have mine on order, and it will make a great stocking stuffer for a ham in your family.

I want to apologize to two of our contributors — John Thompson, K3MD, and Mark Aaker K6UFO. Their contributions inadvertently were omitted from the September/October *NCJ*. You will find their articles in this issue, and I hope you will let them know what you think and like about their articles.

2019 will start another year of *NCJ*. We have most of the January/February issue ready. It will focus on the Solar Eclipse QSO Party as well as on propagation forecasts for 2019, the nadir of the Sunspot Cycle. Let's hope our forecasters have updated their predictions to more flux and fewer doldrums.

Sprinting to a New Look?

We are starting something new with the *NCJ* Sprints in this issue. Jim George, N3BB, has taken over the reporting role on the CW Sprint for the Boring Amateur Radio Club. You will see a fresh look, with comments and photos from the participants. Tree has also recruited Ward Silver, NØAX, and past *NCJ* Editor Pat Barkey, N9RV, to assist in the management and marketing of the activity respectively. Recent participants likely received a special "Sprint Button" from Pat acknowledging their participation. Our Deputy Editor Fred, K4IU and Webmaster Kirk, K4RO, are also working with the "Sprint Team" to guide the promotion of the contest and its new look on the official *NCJ* website, www.ncjweb.com. Take a look.

We will try to publish official results one issue following each of the contests in 2019. We will also have more detailed write-ups and photos on the web. Later in 2019, I want to engage the readership about potential changes to publication of the Sprint results.

You must have enjoyed Ned Stearns' and Ed Muns' piece on FT8 as a contest mode in the last issue. I have heard from a large number of you about FT8 as a contest mode, and one reader even wrote with a new contest idea. The ARRL Contest Advisory Committee is also discussing what to recommend to the Program Services Committee about a new digital contest for the ARRL DX contest series and whether it should include FT8. If you have strong opinions and feelings, contact your ARRL Division Director or your Division's CAC member. You can also write a letter to the *NCJ* Editor, if you so choose, and we will publish it.

This issue includes an article by George Wallner, AA7JV, about low-band activities from Baker Island and how much FT8 added to the success of low-band DXCC contacts. I have heard rumors from some DXpedition leaders that FT8 will likely be the digital mode of choice for future DXpeditions. I have set a goal of learning to operate FT8 in 2019. How about you?

We continue to promote Next-Gen Contester development. The North American Collegiate Championship (NACC) is about to happen again in January during the NAQP SSB. Why not get on and try to work all of the colleges and universities that field a team? If you are able, reach out to a college or university in your community and offer to help its radio club to get going with the contest, or offer to assist with any club station issues they might have. Amateur Radio and radiosport remain hobbies that are largely relational in nature. All of us have friends around the US and Canada as well as around the world because of ham radio. Let's try to extend our connection to our alma mater or a local college or university. If we don't grow more hobbyists, radiosport as we know it will die off slowly. Let me thank the Society of Midwest Contesters and Craig Thompson, K9CT, for starting and managing the NACC. I also want to thank Icom America, which has stepped forward to sponsor awards for 2019.

Speaking of the SMC, let me congratulate them on their repeat win in the NAQP

as a club. It is clear that club challenges can promote more activity in the NAQP and all contests. Is your radio club actively recruiting operators for the upcoming contests? If not, why not? My own club, the Minnesota Wireless Association, has an intra-club competition annually. The sub-group team winner gets a subsidized pizza dinner courtesy of the rest of the membership. It is not a huge prize, but it drives contest participation. Little things matter and, to testers, competition drives activity.

What Else is in This Issue?

Former *NCJ* Editor Al Dewey, KØAD, writes about his transformation from superheterodyne to SDR tester. He discusses his new FLEX-6600M as a contest radio. His article is insightful and offers a new way to do SO2R operation.

Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, features a column on guest operating by 2017 *Newsline* Young Ham of the Year Marty Sullaway, KC1CWF, a dyed-in-the-wool tester. He has started a contest club near Boston for younger hams and frequently guest ops at stations in the Boston region.

I also want to congratulate Bryant Rascoll, KG5HVO, on his selection as the 2018 Young Ham of the Year. He will be featured in an upcoming column by Neil and also was a participant at WRTC 2018. With young testers like Marty and Bryant, the future is bright. But, if we networked among colleges and universities, including our own alma maters, I suspect we could have a larger number of next-gen testers like Marty and Bryant.

Speaking of alma mater testers, I want to bring your attention to David Smith, ND4Y, who is featured in *NCJ* Profiles by John Miller, K6MM. David and I both attended the University of Kentucky and have become friends via testing. I always enjoy working David at his mountain contest station in Harlan, Kentucky. In fact, I enjoy working all of the Kentucky Contest Group members when I come across them during SS or the NAQP events. David has built a great SO2R station in Eastern Kentucky, and I think you will be inspired by his story.

Editorial Travels

I want to thank David Anderson, K4SV, and the team of organizers at the W4DX-CC/SEDCO meeting who invited me to attend and promote testing. Their meeting focuses on DXing and testing. I enjoyed hearing Scott Robbins, W4PA, talk about WRTC 2018 and all that happened among many of the speakers. This is a great fall meeting in the Great Smokey Mountains National Park region for any HF tester to attend. It reminded me of a smaller version of the Visalia International DX Convention with vendors, workshops and a banquet. Consider attending in 2019.

That is all for now. Thanks for reading along and subscribing to *NCJ*. Please promote *NCJ* to your contest friends and fellow team members. We have one of the lowest subscription rates of any ARRL publication. We need to improve that and move up our score! Holiday wishes to you and your family. As always, write us with your ideas or questions. Any criticisms can go to the Deputy Editor!