

From the Editor

The Holiday season is upon us and I hope you have a joyous season planned with family and time to reflect on 2019 and plan for 2020. I am looking forward to some time off and the typical contests of these months — the CQ World Wide CW, The ARRL 10 Meter and ARRL 160 Meter contests. Dare I mention the ARRL November Sweepstakes?

2019 saw continued evolution at my contest station with the addition of high-powered band-pass filters for 160 – 10 to reduce cross-station interference. I also substantially decluttered my shack, making my wife happy and the shack a neater place to operate and demonstrate ham radio. Did I accomplish all of my ham radio goals in 2019? Unfortunately, no, as work, family, and life got in the way. Thankfully, I can carry nearly all of the unfinished goals forward into 2020. What about you? What are your goals for 2020? Spend a couple of hours dreaming and planning before the calendar rolls over into 2020. Write them down as a first step to ensuring you complete them. If you need ideas, contact me, and I can share some of mine.

2019 — The Year of Technology Explosion

We have a lot to be grateful for in the world of radiosport. 2019 struck me as a banner year for new technology. Flex and Elecraft ramped up production of their solid-state high-power amplifiers that allow SO2R operation. FlexRadio introduced new software that enhances remote and multioperator operation from home.

Elecraft announced a new line of HF contest-grade transceivers — the K4 lineup at Dayton. They immediately had a best seller.

Yaesu brought out a new HF transceiver series — the FTDX101D/MP, which topped the Sherwood charts for RMDR and close-in dynamic range.

Kenwood brought out a new rig, the TS-890S, which has the highest RMDR measured by the Sherwood lab to date. Early reports are that it is a superb contest and DX rig.

Icom had a banner year with technology. Despite having two top-selling SDR radios — the IC-7300 and IC-7610 — they continued their SDR revolution. Icom displayed the new IC-9700 at Dayton, which will transform VHF and UHF contesting as the first stand-alone SDR for those bands. Several months later at the Tokyo Hamfest, Icom announced a new solid state amplifier the PW-2, a 1 kW SO2R solid-state amp for HF and 6 meters, and the IC-705, a new QRP SDR HF/50/144/430 MHz all-mode transceiver designed as a portable rig for everyday operation as well as for contesting on the go. The IC-705 is a SDR with a

4.3-inch touchscreen color display similar to that of the IC-7300.

Suffice it to say that the contest community has a broad set of new offerings to take its contesting experience to the next level. Will one of these new tools appear in your shack after the December holiday season? I sure hope so.

What Direction is NCJ Heading in 2020?

You will notice a little change in *NCJ* as we go forward into 2020. The font type will change due to some technical issues with printing, and the paper may change a bit. ARRL Publications Manager Steve Ford, WB8IMY, approved more pages for us to print in 2020, so the contest articles will have complete line scores with call signs and stories. We will continue to post results to the web as soon as they are available for those who want to know the results as soon as possible.

NCJ will continue to focus on station building and contest-skills enhancement as well as on recruitment and development of new contesters of all ages. We will intentionally devote pages and stories to Next-Gen Contesters through the superb column of that name by Neil Rapp, WB9VPG, and the efforts by our amazing contest clubs across the US to recruit and mentor young contesters.

NCJ will work to offer more content on VHF and UHF contesting. Fred, K4IU, our Deputy Editor, did an informal poll at the Huntsville Hamfest and discovered the increased content on VHF contesting was popular and those surveyed desired more. We are looking for more articles on VHF contesting, so please send us your ideas and suggestions, along with names of potential authors.

What Will 2020 Bring for Contesting?

I find it challenging to predict what amazing and unexpected changes contesting may see in 2020. But, I believe the FT4 and FT8 digital modes will continue to grow in popularity and become part of the contesting mainstream. I also think the Elecraft K4 lineup (K4, K4D, and K4HD) will have a big impact on further acceptance of SDR architecture into the contesting mainstream. Flex and Icom deserve a lot of credit for bringing SDR into the contesting mainstream with the FLEX 6000 series selling more than 10,000 worldwide, and the reports that Icom has sold more than 40,000 IC-7300s worldwide. Will the Kenwood and Yaesu hybrid superhet-SDR approach gain more traction and change the trajectory of radio development? Time will tell.

We are going to run an article by Peter Chadwick, G3RZP, on the need for cleaner contest transmitters in the January/February

2020 *NCJ* issue. His article will complement the one written by Rob Sherwood, NC0B, in the November 2019 edition of *QST*. Both point out that all of the advances in receiver technology, filtering, and selectivity are being offset by transmitter impurities. Will the major manufacturers respond to this challenge? I bet they will, especially if we highlight it and ask for it.

Finally, we are looking to promote more contesting activity in the urban areas of North America. Most urban hams cannot install Yagis and low-band arrays or run high power. Some use remote set ups to contest. *NCJ* would like to create more contest opportunities for those who have limited antennas, run low power or QRP, and/or like to operate portable or mobile. We are looking for contesters who have an interest in this to join a working group for long-range planning and contest creation.

If you are interested, please drop me a note so we can add you to the group. The working group will not be a debating society; it will focus on short and intermediate-term results with a goal of increasing activity in 2020 as described. Want to make a difference in the hobby? Give us a hand on this task!

Closing Thoughts

I want to thank all who work with us to make *NCJ* happen each issue. To all who wrote articles, did interviews, or worked to contribute to articles published, thank you! Our readers enjoy the content and learn from it. Together we have raised the standard for radiosport by the dissemination of knowledge. I want to thank Deputy Editor Fred Regennitter, K4IU, who serves alongside me and helps keep the publication on track and on schedule. He has also traveled at his own expense to several large ham conventions to promote contesting and *NCJ*. I am also grateful to the contributing editors and contest managers who selflessly write and serve the greater contest community. Thank you for making *NCJ* the top contest publication available in the world! All have agreed to continue in 2020. I also want to thank Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, for his continued stewardship of the *Journal* as the Managing Editor. Rick handles a wide portfolio for ARRL but manages to make *NCJ* one of his top priorities each issue. Finally, thanks to Publications Manager Steve Ford, WB8IMY, at ARRL Headquarters for his support, guidance, and mentoring.

I am grateful to the readers of *NCJ* for the comments, notes and encouragement you sent along. Please keep them coming. And to our readers, our best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season and Happy New Year from *NCJ*.