



Second Century

Moving On

After almost 30 years at ARRL, this is my last issue as the Editor of QST magazine. In a few weeks, I'll be turning in my office keys and strolling across the Headquarters parking lot for the final time. They say your retirement years can be among the happiest, and I'm looking forward to finding out if that is true.

I'm leaving the ARRL publications department, and *QST*, in the skilled hands of Becky Schoenfeld, W1BXY. Her career already spans nearly 30 years and includes employment with some of the giants of publishing, such as McGraw-Hill. We've functioned as an editorial management team for nearly a decade, and it has been a delightful partnership.

Becky has assembled a crew of talented media professionals, some of whom are relatively new to Headquarters, and others who are seasoned veterans. They have ideas and creativity in abundance, and they'll accelerate the modernization process that Becky and I began a few years ago.

That's why it is important for me to take my leave. I'm old school and ARRL urgently needs new school, especially when it comes to media. As a manager, I'm a firm believer in the necessity of stepping aside and making room for fresh perspectives. The tricky part is recognizing when that moment has arrived. I've seen too many people my age who cling to their careers, perhaps hoping for one more flash of glory before winter closes in.

Thanks, but I'll pass. My time is at an end; their time is just beginning. I'll take great pleasure in watching their progress from the sidelines.

I welcome returning to amateur radio as a "civilian," even though the hobby is facing perhaps the most crucial time in its history. Late last year, International Amateur Radio Union President Tim Ellam, VE6SH/G4HUA, poignantly observed that amateur radio had reached "an inflection point." That may be an understatement.

My chosen metaphor to describe the situation is a *perfect storm*. It is a maelstrom of poor HF band conditions, onerous antenna restrictions, escalating threats to our spectrum, indifference and sometimes even hostility from various regulatory bodies, and an aging and increasingly inactive ham population. Add the long-term social and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and the outlook becomes forbidding, to say the least.

Even so, I'm confident ham radio will endure, although it may depart significantly from ham radio as we've known it. This doesn't mean we'll be forced to abandon our rich history, but we will need to accept that the "good old days" are dwindling in our rear-view mirrors. Besides, as Billy Joel sang in "Keeping the Faith" — "The good old days weren't always good and tomorrow ain't as bad as it seems."

My faith in the future of the hobby was reinforced by an amateur I corresponded with recently. He is 86 years old and just purchased a Raspberry Pi microcomputer that he intends to use to explore HF digital operating. He even signed up for an online course to improve his knowledge of the Linux operating system. This gentleman has no experience with digital modes or computer programming, and he doesn't care — he remains open to change and he is eager for a new challenge. Amateur radio requires many more forward-looking individuals like him, regardless of age.

In whatever way the future unfolds, amateurs can always count on having the ARRL Headquarters staff at their backs. Most of the people at 225 Main Street are invisible to the membership, rarely turning up in the pages of *QST*, yet they create publications and online media, answer telephone calls and emails, process awards, collaborate with industry and the FCC, promote amateur radio to the public, provide ongoing education, and perform countless other tasks to help keep our avocation alive. Some have spent the majority of their working lives at Headquarters even though they could enjoy higher incomes — not to mention milder winters! — elsewhere. They persist because they genuinely believe in ARRL's mission. I count myself lucky to have worked alongside such dedicated individuals. I will miss them all.

73,
Steve Ford, WB8IMY
Editor, QST