

From the Editor



This marks my 18th and final “From the Editor.” It has been a privilege to serve the contesting community in this role. I want to thank Fred Regennitter, K4IU, and Rick Lindquist, WW1ME, as well as the ARRL Headquarters staff who worked along with me to produce *NCJ* over the last 3 years. Their dedication and tireless work have made all of our ramblings and ideas mature into something that readers wanted to read. Thank you.

Erratum

We want to apologize to Jack Reed, WA7LNW. His photo was inadvertently omitted from “*NCJ Profiles*” in our last issue. We have included it in this editorial so our readers can put his face together with his call sign and not confuse him with David Pruett, K8CC, whose picture appeared in his place.

Final Thoughts

The role of *NCJ* editor grants one a unique and interesting perch within the contesting community. Doors are opened to meet contesters and manufacturers that normally are not open to all. One receives a number of complaints about contesting in general, and one reader wrote early this year to tell me that I had ruined *NCJ*, as far as he was concerned. I wrote back to this Tennessee contestester to ask what specifically I had

ruined, but so far he has not replied. Apparently, I had more influence on contesting than I ever realized. Many more of you have written, some of recent, to express gratitude, kudos and appreciation for what we have done with the journal. Thank you for the encouragement and feedback. It has been appreciated and at times sustaining.

Change

I want to take the opportunity in my final editorial to discuss four trends that have made or will soon make huge impacts on how we enjoy radiosport.

Change is inevitable and is accelerating. One of my early goals as a new editor was to feature new technology and trends that were likely to impact contesting over the next 10 years. Readers will likely recall several articles on software defined radios (SDRs) that appeared in the first few editions of *NCJ* under my editorship. Three years ago, I would not have predicted that nearly every amateur radio shack would have a SDR as its main contesting and/or operating rig by 2020. Now, SDR technology is the backbone of nearly all new, advanced HF receivers from Flex, Icom, Yaesu, Kenwood and Elecraft. Flex and Elecraft only produce SDR HF rigs as of this date. Icom’s lineup is all SDR’s except its flagship IC-7851, which has many SDR like properties. Rumor on the web abounds that Kenwood will soon have a flagship SDR to add to the TS-890s — to be called the TS-995. Finally, Yaesu has two top-ranked SDR rigs — the FTdx101d and -101MP. There are plenty of SDR receiver-only options too, such as the UK SDR Play series. All of this is to say that the influence Gerald Youngblood, K5SDR, has extended a long way since he published the first paper in *QEX* on a kit to build a SDR transceiver. My shack has two SDR

and two non-SDR rigs. Truth be told, I prefer to operate the SDR rigs when I can. I imagine you are the same.

Mobile and Portable Contesting

The exponential growth in state QSO parties and portable contesting activities such as SOTA, POTA, and SPOTA events are a positive for contesting. Few of us own enough land and resources to build competitive HF stations for the major DX contests. A growing number of hams live in urban housing or covenant-restricted areas each year, and this limits how many home stations with towers and Yagis the contesting community can utilize. The shorter events, such as state QSO parties and POTA events, are giving more hams with limited budgets the chance to get on the air and compete. I especially enjoy reading *NCJ* articles about these events. I predict this will continue to be a growth area for contesting.

It was a goal of the *NCJ* leadership team to see a portable operating contesting this year involving urban areas. We envisioned an “All Boroughs” contest from NYC or something similar, to allow those of living in high-rise buildings the opportunities to get out and compete. COVID-19 interrupted those plans, but Frank Howell, K4FMH, and an international committee have organized the Portable Operators Challenge (POC), which allows portable and non-permanent station operators to compete globally. I predict more events tied to physical activity and portable operating over the next few years. This will be a healthy trend for contesting and for amateur radio.

Remote Operating

We have seen an exponential growth in remote operating over the past 3 years. Many hams, including incoming *NCJ* Editor Lee Finkel, KY7M, maintain and use remote

operating setups. A few in the hobby have made a business out of this, offering access to strategically placed remote operating sites for a fee.

Many contesters oppose this growth in remote operating. I understand those concerns. Regardless of what we might personally think or believe, this trend is growing and cannot be reversed. More contesters over time will rely on remote operating options to stay viable in radiosport. Nonetheless, the contesting community, through the ARRL Contest Advisory Committee (CAC) and other mechanisms, needs to discuss the impact of commercially funded stations on this emerging trend. Is it appropriate to allow a commercially funded station maintained by commercial revenue streams from “renters” to compete in the same category as “privately, personally” funded stations, such as the one co-owned by Lee? Should there be separate categories for these stations? All of these issues will require careful thought to guide the contesting community.

Social Media and Ham Radio

I don't know what you think, but I'm surprised by the amount of ham radio-related content on YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter these days. Much of it enhances understanding and raises awareness of new issues, ideas, and equipment. Four large amateur radio vendors — two in the US and two in the UK — have exceptional programs, in my opinion. Three equipment manufacturers also have turned YouTube and Facebook livestreams to their advantage for promoting new products, describing product features, and interacting with customers. Kudos to them. It is clear to me that social media messaging and content creation will eventually overtake print media for amateur radio. Its growth over the past 3 years has eclipsed what any of us would have predicted. It will be fascinating to watch the contesting community grapple with the natural tensions

these media create when juxtaposed with contesting activities. How long until livestreaming of contests accompanies live scoring efforts? Will some clever contest station owners create ways for beginning contesters to watch, learn, and ask questions of contest operators in real time? I don't know, but I recognize that these trends will continue to shape contesting in the future.

The Big Knob

Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, spoke at Dayton Hamvention the year he took over amateur radio enforcement in the late 1990s. His contention was (and still is) that operators can resolve most contentious on-the-air issues by simply turning the VFO knob. He recommended a little more courtesy and a willingness to share the spectrum rather than let something that irritates you result in an ugly on-the-air fracas.

Similar same issues exist today with contesting. No single contest or event has an exclusive claim on every kilohertz of the bands. Operate the ARRL International DX SSB around 14.230 MHz, and indignant slow-scanners will attempt to transmit on top of you. I have experienced it while contesting from the Caribbean; I got the message and moved. Contesters should do so enthusiastically and exuberantly. We often believe, right or wrong, that our needs and buying tendencies shape HF radio and antenna development. Even though we are a minority group within the larger ham community, we consistently “compete above our weight class” — or so we seem to tell one another. Regardless, we share the spectrum and the timing of contests with lots of others who may have differing levels of enthusiasm about our being on the air. Sharing of weekends and frequencies is a requirement of the amateur service. Please consider being more courteous to one another and to those planning events that happen to fall on your big contest weekend. Amateur spectrum is shared. Time is shared, too, and they're not making any more

of it. Most weekends now have five or more events globally. Contesting may be our favorite thing within the ham radio hobby, but it's only one of many aspects of amateur radio.

Recently, Hank Garretson, W6SX, wrote to offer some kind comments about my term as editor and ended the note with this phrase, which I will leave with you: “See you in the contests, exuberantly!”

Erratum



WA7LNW

We regret that a photo of Dave, K8CC was inserted into an article about Jack Reed, WA7LNW in the September/October *NCJ Profiles* story. We are running this photo to correctly identify Jack Reed, whom many readers identified was not correctly pictured in the article.

We appreciate Jack's understanding.