



**Next up: Club meets
at 2 p.m. Saturday,
Jan. 12, at Keaau
Community Center**

Big Island Amateur Radio Club Newsletter

January 2019

Members, guests celebrate holidays, look toward 2019

The club celebrated the holidays in style on Dec. 8, with a scrumptious buffet and election of officers.

Among the tasty contributions to our annual Christmas

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on next page**



Above: Board members are sworn in: From left, Jim Huntley, William Polhemus, Tony Kitchen, Pascal Nelson, Hank Kaul and Mel Uchida. (Not pictured: Les Hittner, Peggy Gentle, Gary Schwiter.) Below: Members enjoy holiday potluck.

At right: Santina Telio shares Turkish delight puffs and baklava she baked from her Grandma Paraskiva's recipe.



Photos by Linda Quarberg and Pascal Nelson





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potluck dinner were delightful Greek pastries by Santina Telio and "the most delicious turkey ever" (praise repeated throughout the meal) baked by Paul Ducasse.

Pascal Nelson agreed to continue as BIARC president, with the caveat that he and Debbie plan to relocate to the mainland. Our new vice president, William Polhemus, will take over for Pascal if the Nelsons leave before the end of 2019.

Les Hittner will continue as secretary, and Tony Kitchen is our new treasurer. Also elected to the BIARC Board are Peggy Gentle, Gary Schwiter, Mel Uchida, Jim Huntley and Hank Kaul.

Barbara Darling contributed door prizes: jars of her prized lilikoi jelly for the lucky winners.

Our next meeting will be at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 12, at the Keaau Community Center.



Big Island Amateur Radio Club Meeting Minutes

Saturday, December 8, 2018

The meeting was called to order within the annual Christmas party by President, Pascal Nelson, AC7N, at 1456.

There was a drawing for jars of Lilikoi jelly made by Barbara Darling. Winners were KH6HAK, WH6DVI, WH6FKT, KH6EKD, and KH7DQ Paul, WH7BR: Treasurer's Report (As of this date.):

Bank and cash on hand: \$2093.06 – final report.

Election of Officers and Directors

Pascal, AC7N, acknowledged the following incoming officer candidates: President: Pascal Nelson, AC7N (year 2) Vice President: William Polhemus, NH6ET (self-nominated) Secretary: Leslie Hittner, K0BAD (year 2) Treasurer: Tony Kitchen, WH6DVI (self-nominated)

The following members were nominated to positions on the board from the floor: Mel Uchida, KH6EKD James Huntley, WH6FQI Hank Kaul, KH6HAK, Peggy Gentle, KE6TIS.

Officers and Directors were approved by acclamation as directed at the November meeting.

Officer and Director Summary

At the request of the President, Pascal Nelson, Leslie Hittner and Leigh Critchlow assigned term lengths to all Directors in order to achieve a 50% turnover of directors every year. The following is the result of that action:

Office	Name and Call	This Year	Term Expires
President	Pascal Nelson, AC7N	Year 2	November 2019
Vice-President	William Polhemus, NH6ET	NEW-Year 1	November 2019
Secretary	Leslie Hittner, K0BAD	Year 2	November 2019
Treasurer	Tony Kitchen, WH6DVI	NEW-Year 1	November 2019
Director	Gary Schwiter, WH6EPS	Year 2	November 2019
Director	Mel Uchida, KH6EKD	NEW-Year 1	November 2020
Director	James Huntley, WH6FQI	NEW-Year 1	November 2020
Director	Hank Kaul, KH6HAK	NEW-Year 1	November 2020
Director	Peggy Gentle, KE6TIS	NEW-Year 1	November 2020

After a brief repeater report presented by Gary, WH6EPS, the new officer and director induction took place.

The meeting was adjourned at 1515 and those present returned to party activities.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie D. Hittner, Secretary



A toast to a great new year!

It's a new year - 2019 in our way of reckoning. Of course everyone is wishing everyone else a "Happy New Year". We humans love new beginnings, and when we are healthy thinking we realize the secret of life is to keep moving forward.

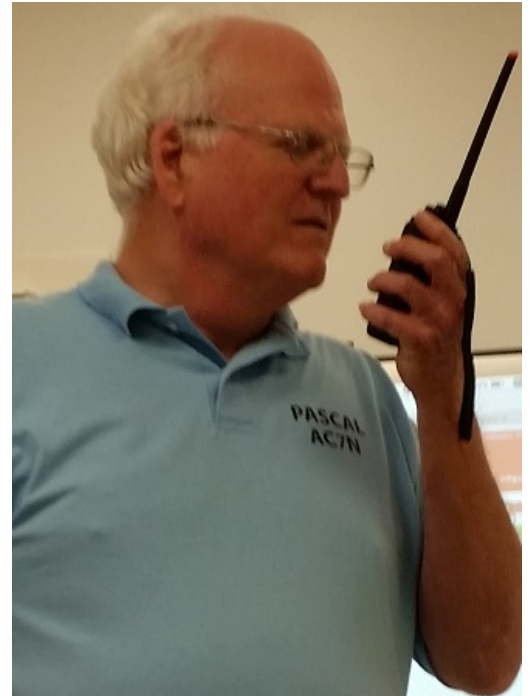
As a club, BIARC is the sum of what we, its members, make it. As we begin the new year, let's lift our sights for ourselves and our ham radio activities so that we keep moving forward. Forward means continuing to learn, continuing to develop skills, and welcoming new opportunities as they arrive. So, here's to a great new year - for BIARC, for our hobby, and for all of us who make up this wonderful gathering of fellow hams.

To start the year of programs we are going to be delving into computers and software for ham radio. We will start by getting familiar with some of the new tools which we now have, beginning with the cute and very useful Raspberry Pi. We also will tackle some technical material, such as looking at waves: the nature and behavior of waves and why that is important to the art and science of radio (and just about everything else!).

What are you interested in? Do you have a topic you would like to see presented? Or to present it yourself? Please let me know what is interesting and helpful to you. Happy 2019 to all.

Aloha,
Pascal ac7n

President's paragraphs



**President
Pascal Nelson, AC7N**

The next CW class of the CW Academy set for January, February

This is an on-line video chat meeting twice a week for eight weeks, most likely Monday and Thursday at 6pm HST for an hour each. Exact days and time could change depending on student availability.

Since this is an internet based virtual classroom, no commute is needed. You can do this from home.

Students must practice on line with MorseTrainer to learn characters and numbers for an hour a day, then put them to use in an actual CW QSO.

No prior CW experience is required for Level 1. Levels 2 and 3 classes improve CW proficiency.

More information here: <https://cwops.org/cw-academy-2/>

**ARRL Pacific Section
Section Manager Joseph Speroni, AH0A,
ah0a@arrl.org**

Radio operators needed for Big Island International Marathon in March

Every spring, the Puna Emergency Radio Club provides communications for the annual Big Island International Marathon in Hilo.

All licensed radio amateurs are invited to volunteer for the fun community event set for Sunday, March 17, 2019.

It's a prime opportunity to practice in-the-field radio skills, learn new operating techniques and network with fellow hams and others who help with the marathon. Setup begins at about 5 a.m.

Interested? Contact comms coordinator Sean Fendt, KH6SF, at 430-1884, email sean@sfendt.net.

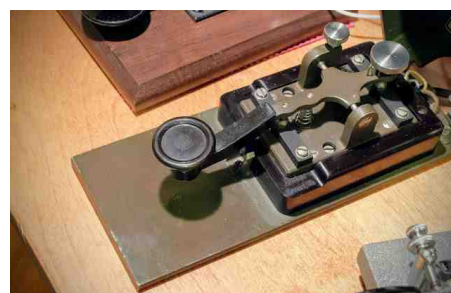
Polish the brass: Straight Key Night is just ahead

Every day is a good day to operate on CW, but set some time aside on New Year's Eve and into New Year's Day to enjoy Straight Key Night (SKN). The annual event begins at 0000 UTC on Jan. 1, (New Year's Eve in US time zones). The 24-hour event is not a contest, but a day dedicated to celebrating our CW heritage.

Participants are encouraged to get on the air and simply enjoy conversational CW contacts, preferably using a straight key (hand key) or a semi-automatic key (bug). Activity traditionally centers on CW segments in the HF bands. There are no points or obligatory exchange -- the only requirement is to have fun.

Send your SKN list of stations contacted and your votes for "Best Fist" and "Most Interesting QSO" by January 31.

AMSAT will dedicate its third annual CW Activity Day to the memory of past AMSAT President Bill Tynan, W3XO, January 1, 2019,



Straight Key Night (SKN) begins at 0000 UTC on Jan. 1.

0001 - 2400 UTC. No rules; just operate CW through any Amateur Radio satellite. Straight keys and "bugs" are encouraged, but not required. -- ***Thanks to Ray Soifer, W2RS***

ARRL's Logbook of The World tops 1 billion QSO records

As of Dec. 19, more than 1 billion contact records have been entered into ARRL's Logbook of The World (LoTW) system. And, while 1 billion QSO records represents a significant milestone, a more important statistic may be the nearly 187 million contacts confirmed via LoTW over its 15-year history.

LoTW debuted in 2003 after a lot of behind-the-scenes planning and development. Initially, LoTW got off to a slow start. While user numbers gradually grew to about 5,000, a lot of hams didn't fully understand what LoTW was or how it worked, and opening an

account could be cumbersome.

LoTW continued with few major changes until October 2011, when a perfect storm struck -- a large ingestion of logs after the CQ World Wide DX Contest and a freak snowstorm that knocked out power for more than a week in most places.

Field Services and Radiosport Department Manager Norm Fusaro, W3IZ, said uninterruptible power source (UPS) backup power quickly depleted in the days-long power outage. "When the system came back online, it was overwhelmed with the amount of data coming in and could not keep

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up," Fusaro said. "The water was coming in faster than the pumps could pump it out. Crash!"

The disaster was a blessing in disguise, though, because it revealed weaknesses in the LoTW software and hardware.

Today, LoTW boasts some 112,000 users in all 340 DXCC entities, and 75% of all DXCC applications are filed via LoTW.

Fusaro said the League spent tens of thousands of dollars for new hardware. IT Manager Mike Keane, K1MK, implemented code changes to expedite log processing by giving priority to small- to medium-sized logs and inserting mega-files as openings occurred. Fusaro said a lot of the large files contained duplicate data, bogging down the process so much that users were resending logs already in the queue. Through all of this, not one QSO record was lost, because LoTW uses a redundant backup process, Fusaro said.

A LoTW users' group reflector and a queue-processing status page were set up. With better communication, Fusaro said, the system attracted additional numbers. Today,



LoTW boasts some 112,000 users in all 340 DXCC entities, and 75% of all DXCC applications are filed via LoTW, which accounts for 86% of confirmations applied.

Now, ARRL is looking at the development of LoTW 2.0, Fusaro said. "Over the years, we have added more awards that can be applied for using LoTW QSL credits: VUCC, Triple Play, and two CQ awards -- WPX and WAZ."

"The service still has room for a lot of improvement, but it continues to grow and is the preferred method of confirming QSOs because it strives to protect the integrity of DXCC and all awards," Fusaro said.

2018 QST Antenna Design Competition winners announced

ARRL has announced the winners of the 2018 QST Antenna Design Competition.

"Dozens of entries were received, but only three could win," said QST Editor Steve Ford, WB8IMY.

The first-prize winner was a 160/80-meter loop antenna design (***at right***) by Steve Adler, VK5SFA.

Requirements included an antenna for one or more bands between 2200 meters and 10 meters that could fit within a 30 × 50 foot area and be no taller than 30 feet above ground at any point.

"In other words, we were seeking designs for LF, MF, or HF antennas for limited-space applications," Ford explained.

"We wanted to see innovative antennas that would allow amateurs to get on the air without the need for towering supports and acres of property.



Our winners not only met this challenge, they exceeded it."

Second place went to Michael Sapp, WA3TTS, and third place to Joe Reisert, W1JR.

Next: The 2019 QST Key Design Competition

Hams have been building their own Morse keys since the dawn of Amateur Radio, and some creations have become legend. In 2019, QST is inviting participants to submit their best Morse key/paddle designs in the QST Key Competition. Design styles can include straight key, semiautomatic key (bug), paddle, or sideswiper. The winner in each category will receive \$250. Only one entry may be accepted per person or team, and the deadline to submit is June 1, 2019.

Entries must include the actual key (it will be returned following judging), as well as detailed drawings, photos, and a written narrative. Winners will be chosen based on ingenuity of design, ergonomics of operation, and overall craftsmanship. The judges' decisions are final.

The key must be an independent mechanical device, not an integral part of another device, such as an electronic keyer. Keys must be the sole creations of the



Straight key originally designed and built by Hiram Percy Maxim, W1AW, ARRL's first president and cofounder. The key was provided courtesy of the Antique Wireless Association.

entrants and not available for sale.

Complete details and entry requirements appear in the January 2019 edition of QST. The digital edition is now available, as well.

Inaugural "Green Keys Night" set for Jan. 1

"Green Keys Night" -- an event aimed at promoting the restoration and use of vintage mechanical teleprinters -- will take place on Jan. 1 (UTC), concurrent with Straight Key Night (SKN). As with SKN, GKN is an operating event and not a contest. "Green keys" refers to the color of the keys on Teletype Corporation machines. Participants are encouraged to get on the air and enjoy making casual contacts on RTTY. Call "CQ GKN."

"The use of mechanical teleprinters is preferred, or simply get on the air with the oldest equipment you can scrape together," said Jeff Stai, WK6I. "Real heavy-metal teletypes to be sure, but if that isn't available, analog hardware modems, VT100 terminals, pre-Windows computers, etc. And vacuum tubes. And maybe fire up that boatanchor rig that never gets enough air time."

Sponsors request no pre-recorded messages or "brag tapes," just "a real conversation by hand typing it keyboard to keyboard." Even those who do not own or have access to any old RTTY gear are



invited to get on the air too, doing RTTY "the old-fashioned way," keyboard to keyboard.

Stai asks participants to let him know if they were active in the event and to share a favorite or most interesting QSO (worked or heard), a log, and equipment operated (including photos).

The SARTG New Year RTTY Contest runs from 0800 to 1100 UTC on January 1. Stai suggested operating in that event as well.

ARRL petitions FCC to incorporate Parity Act Provisions into its Amateur Radio Rules

The ARRL has filed a Petition for Rulemaking (PRM) asking the FCC to amend its Part 97 Amateur Service rules to incorporate the provisions of the Amateur Radio Parity Act. The petition has not yet been assigned a rule-making (RM) number and is not yet open for public comment. In the past, the FCC has said that it would not take such action without guidance from the US Congress, but, as ARRL's Petition notes, Congress "has overwhelmingly and consistently" offered bipartisan support for the Amateur Radio Parity Act.

"Private land use regulations which either prohibit or which do not accommodate the installation and maintenance of an effective outdoor antenna in residences of Amateur Service licensees are unquestionably the most significant and damaging impediments to Amateur Radio Service communications that exist now," ARRL said in its petition. "They are already precluding opportunities for young people to become active in the avocation and to conduct technical self-training and participate in STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] learning activities inherent in an active, experiential learning environment. Without the relief in this petition, the future of Amateur Radio is bleak indeed." The proposed amendments would have no effect on the FCC's limited preemption policy in §97.15(b), which pertains to state and municipal governing bodies, ARRL said.

Specifically, ARRL is proposing that the FCC amend Part 97 by adding a new subsection under §97.15 that prohibits and ceases the enforcement of "any private land use restriction, including restrictive covenants and regulations imposed by a community association," that either fails to permit a licensee to install and maintain an effective outdoor antenna capable of operation on all



Amateur Radio frequency bands; on property under the exclusive use or control of the licensee; precludes or fails to permit Amateur Service communications, or which does not constitute the minimum practicable restriction on such communications to accomplish the lawful purposes specifically articulated in the declaration of covenants of a community association seeking to enforce such restriction. ARRL's proposed rule would not affect any existing antenna approved or installed before the effective date of a Report and Order resulting from ARRL's petition.

The proposed provisions reflect the accommodation reached in the ultimate version of the Parity Act bill at the urging of federal lawmakers between ARRL and the Community Associations Institute (CAI), the only organization representing homeowners' associations. "That legislation was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives four separate times and has the support of the Senate Commerce Committee and the current Administration," ARRL stressed.

"Private land use regulations are not 'contracts' in the sense that there is any meeting of the minds between the buyer and seller of land," ARRL said. "Rather, they are simply restrictions on the use of owned land, imposed by the developer of a subdivision... They bind all lots in the subdivision." ARRL noted in its Petition that an increasing number of homes available for purchase today are already subject to restrictive covenants prohibiting outdoor antennas.

In addition, ARRL pointed out that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 gives the FCC jurisdiction "to preempt private land use regulations that conflict with federal policy..."

"It is now time for actual and functional parity in the Commission's regulations in order to protect the strong federal interest in Amateur Radio communications," ARRL said.

US radio amateurs help to make YOTA Month happen in Ethiopia

Two US radio amateurs helped to make Youngsters on the Air Month (YOTA Month) a success in Ethiopia.

YOTA Month takes place each December, and several participating stations obtain permission to use YOTA suffix call signs for the occasion. Ken Claerbout, K4ZW, and Bob Johnson, W9XY, traveled to Addis Ababa to assist the young members of the Ethiopian Amateur Radio Society (EARS) as they transformed ET3AA at Addis Ababa University Institute of Technology into ET3YOTA, making their country available on the air during YOTA Month.

A check of spots on DX Summit shows that ET3YOTA has mostly been active on 20-meter SSB, with some operation on 160 and 40 meters.

"The operators use SSB and FT8, although some would like to learn CW," Claerbout told ARRL. "They all do quite well actually on SSB. Bob, W9XY, worked with them a bit, to give them some pointers, but they have no problem turning on the radio, calling CQ, and facing the masses."

Several students at the university hold US Amateur Radio licenses because the Ethiopian government has not issued any licenses in some years, Claerbout explained.

In a narrative he shared with The Daily DX, Claerbout said the goal for the visit was to spend a lot of time on the air. "It was a chance for us to work with them, to refine operator skills, and jointly work on some station projects," he said. "This is a very enthusiastic group. They love to get on the air and operate!"

Claerbout, Johnson, and the Ethiopian operators obtained permission to stay at the university for three nights to activate 80 and 160 meters. They erected an inverted-L antenna supported with an 18-meter fiberglass pole.



Ken Claerbout, K4ZW (seated), and Ephrem Mebratu, KB3WWT, at ET3AA.

"It is one of the ugliest antennas I've ever built but, boy, did it work, far beyond my expectations," Claerbout said. The antenna's location above a university building's metal roof provided an excellent RF ground, but manmade noise did turn out to be a major issue -- a steady S-9 +20 dB on 160 meters, and a mere S-9 on 80 meters. Unfortunately, using a noise-cancelling device didn't help.

"My goal for the 3 nights, along with working as many people as we could, was to see if operating [the] low bands from the club station would be feasible for future visits," Claerbout said. "I believe the noise can be dealt with to some degree, making future low-band operations a real possibility. On top band, many signals were right at the noise. Bob and I both agree that even knocking down the noise an S-unit or two would [open up another layer] of signals."

Claerbout conceded that FT8 would be "very effective" in this sort of situation, but he said FT8 holds no interest for him. "I like the challenge this situation provides and developing solutions to overcome it, with the young engineers at the club station," he said.

Claerbout said, "[M]y involvement with the club is one of the coolest things I have done in Amateur Radio. I think W9XY would agree." He thanks DX Engineering and those who have helped foster the ham community in Ethiopia. "Youth and Amateur Radio in Ethiopia is flourishing," he concluded.

Fox-1Cliff/AO-95 suffers apparent receiver failure

The receiver on the newly launched Fox-1Cliff/AO-95 CubeSat seems to have suffered a receiver failure that could render the satellite unusable, AMSAT said. Efforts continue by AMSAT Engineering to establish the cause of the problem and determine if a fix is possible. AMSAT Vice President-Engineering Jerry Buxton, N0JY, reported that the issue cropped up during efforts to commission Fox-1Cliff/AO-95.

"After a few days of tests, analysis, and discussion, it appears that Fox-1Cliff/AO-95 will not be commissioned as our fourth Fox-1 Amateur Radio satellite," Buxton said. Commissioning began on Dec. 4, right after the CubeSat's successful launch a day earlier.

"AMSAT Engineering will continue to evaluate and test Fox-1Cliff/AO-95 for solutions to the anomaly, and your continued help in providing telemetry is appreciated so that we can have data throughout her daily orbits, rather than limited data over our US stations," Buxton said. "The data, analysis, and testing could lead to a positive solution, but at the very least will be important to AMSAT's satellite programs in providing information that would help us and others avoid similar situations with future missions."

In a post to AMSAT-BB, Buxton mentioned one suggestion of employing a high-power station to see if AO-95 could hear its signal, but he added that AMSAT Engineering would not be offering a blow-by-blow narrative of its efforts to restore the satellite to operating condition, "unless it is something of merit or actionable."

Buxton noted that AMSAT's resources are limited, and all involved are volunteers. "Most -- if not all -- of our remaining Fox-1 engineers are also involved in the GOLF-TEE project, so I have asked them to give that first priority with their available volunteer time in order to keep the schedule," Buxton said. "AO-95 is in orbit now, and we can vary the amount of attention on her as resources allow in order to achieve both goals. If the results of our investigation point to a possibility of recovery, be it partial, full, or some workaround method, we would all like to see her working as much as the rest of you, and that is a driver for this investigation."

Buxton said he anticipates that AMSAT Engineering



AMSAT Vice President-Engineering Jerry Buxton, N0JY, with a model of the Fox-1D CubeSat.

will continue to seek the cause of the apparent receiver failure, "until we have results or reach a dead end, because of the inability to take the lid off and look inside AO-95."

"I will certainly be keeping everyone posted when we have something new to report," Buxton said.

Satellite enthusiasts were excited they were to have another "bird" to use after the CubeSat was successfully launched and placed into orbit Dec. 3. A SpaceX Falcon 9 vehicle carried Fox-1Cliff and several other satellites -- including other Amateur Radio payloads from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

AMSAT said early on Dec. 4 (UTC), several stations in Brazil reported hearing the voice beacon "Fox-1Cliff Safe Mode," confirming that the satellite was alive.

"Just before 0040 UTC, AMSAT Fox-1 Team Member Burns Fisher, WB1FJ, was the first to submit and upload telemetry to the AMSAT servers," AMSAT reported on its website. "Initial telemetry values show the satellite to be in good health. Thanks to the 29 stations that contributed telemetry during Fox-1Cliff's initial orbits."

First FT8 Roundup is a huge hit

The first FT8 Roundup over the Dec. 1-2 weekend attracted some 1,300 logs from those taking advantage of the ever-more-popular digital protocol. This, despite its having been announced on fairly short notice and with other events such as the ARRL 160-Meter Contest on the same weekend. More than 400 of the logs were from US radio amateurs in the 48 contiguous states, plus the District of Columbia. Overall, some 131,200 contacts were recorded. Participants from 91 countries submitted logs, testifying to the fact that FT8 is not just a US phenomenon.

JOTA Reports 36% growth in Scout participation for 2018

Scouting's Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) 2018 reports that total Scout participation in the annual fall event jumped by 36% from 2017. Each year, more than 1 million Scouts and Guides get together over the airwaves for JOTA, which takes place on the third weekend of October. Since the first JOTA in 1958, millions of Scouts have become acquainted via Amateur Radio, and contacts sometimes result in relationships that extend for many years.

This year, 10,703 Scouts took part in the event, compared with 7,872 last year. Participating Amateur Radio operators topped 1,000 for the first time since 2016. At 610, the number of registered JOTA locations was way up, as was the number of JOTA stations registered, with 314. Participating JOTA stations reported contacts with stations in 99 countries, also up over 2017.

JOTA Coordinator Jim Wilson, K5ND, said he was pleased with this year's numbers and hopes that 2019's event will show a continued increase, despite a lack of sunspots.

"Looking over the numbers, a big part of the increase in JOTA Scout participation came from the World JOTA-JOTI (Jamboree on the Internet) Team's registration and reporting system," Wilson told ARRL. "We had 233 stations report results on the US system, which is comparable to last year's 226. In addition to that, 90 stations reported their results on the World system. After eliminating duplicates, this added 33 to our total of 266 station reports. That, chiefly, accounts for the increase in total Scout participation. In summary, perhaps this nice increase is due primarily to more accurate reporting."

Wilson said he's also looking forward to the final tally on US participation in JOTI. "Location registration in the US jumped from 274 last year to 610 this year," he said. "Several Amateur Radio operations reported using JOTI chat and Skype to greatly improve their ability to generate Scout-to-Scout conversations between the US and the rest of the world. Of course, VoIP modes

like D-STAR, DMR, and EchoLink also helped in our solar minimum."

World JOTA-JOTI numbers are not expected until early 2019, as each country reports its results by mid-December followed by number crunching and compiling of the report, Wilson explained.

"Thanks to everyone who set up a JOTA station and helped Scouts experience the technology, fun, and magic of Amateur Radio. Let's do it again next year," he concluded.

North American Collegiate Championship adds NAQP RTTY for 2019

In something new for 2019, the Society of Midwest Contesters (SMC) has announced an expansion of the North American Collegiate Championship (NACC), which takes place in conjunction with the North American QSO Party (NAQP). The inaugural event this past January only covered the NAQP SSB event. In 2019, the NACC will also cover the NAQP RTTY event. NCJ (National Contest Journal) sponsors the NAQP. The NAQP SSB runs from 1800 UTC on Jan. 19 to 0600 UTC on Jan. 20, 2019. The NAQP RTTY runs 1800 UTC on Feb. 23 to 0600 UTC on Feb. 24. The NACC format is generally the same as those for the NAQP, but there are some differences.

"This is an opportunity for your college club station to compete with any college and university in North America," the SMC said in announcing the 2019 running of the NACC. "You can take on your state or conference rivals. With planning and practice, it is possible to win a national championship." NACC stations can follow the action on a real-time online scoreboard. Participants must register college/university and call sign. Once registered, stations will receive instructions on how to set up, which includes inserting and activating a link in the participating stations contest logging software.

FCC tells LED sign marketers to abide by statutes and rules

The FCC Enforcement Bureau has called on marketers of light-emitting diode (LED) signs to ensure that these lights comply with FCC rules. Since March, the agency has entered into 21 settlement agreements with companies that marketed noncompliant LED signs in violation of the Communications Act and FCC rules. The settlements yielded approximately \$850,000 in penalties, and commitments to ensure compliance with the law going forward. Adherence to the FCC's equipment authorization and marketing rules is critical because radio frequency emissions from the signs may cause harmful interference to licensed communications, such as wireless services, the FCC said.

"In light of these recent settlements, we remind LED sign marketers of their obligations under the law," said Enforcement Bureau Chief Rosemary Harold. "The FCC takes seriously its responsibility in ensuring that energy-emitting devices like LED lights do not interfere with authorized transmissions."

LED lights are often used in digital billboards and other commercial and industrial applications, including billboards and large video displays in sports arenas. Given the electrical design of these lights, they may emit RF energy.

Prior to being marketed in the US, LED sign models must be tested and comply with FCC technical standards and must include the proper labeling, identification, and user information disclosures. The FCC Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) oversees the equipment authorization process for RF devices, including LED signs.

The Enforcement Bureau investigated hundreds of indoor and outdoor LED sign models and discovered repeated FCC rule violations concerning the failure to market the models with the required equipment authorizations, labeling, and user information disclosures.

Canada to celebrate its national parks

The Canadian National Parks on the Air event (CNPOTA) will begin on Jan. 1 and continue until year's end. A volunteer group of a half-dozen hams in Nova Scotia, working with a zero budget, came up with the notion of attempting to replicate the success of ARRL's National Parks on the Air (NPOTA) event in 2016, first created to mark the centennial of the National Park Service.

Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) has announced its support for CNPOTA, in cooperation with Parks Canada. All radio amateurs are invited to activate any of Park Canada's 48 national parks and 171 national historic sites, while "chasers" attempt to land a contact.

Activity for activators and chasers will be tracked on a dedicated website and a real-time leader board, and operators may compete for online awards and certificates. For updates on the program's progress, visit the CNPOTA website.

The 2018 ARRL International Grid Chase (IGC) certificates page is now live

As IGC competitions are monthly, people can start generating monthly certificates to display. At year's end, IGC will have the option to generate a certificate based on year-end tallies. For now, participants can select a month, then select up to 16 band/mode certificates they'd like to create.

Participants with more than 16 band/mode activities can choose to generate two certificates to encompass the excess (i.e., more than 16 lines), or can just generate certain band certificates, or just certain mode certificates -- even just one band/mode if desired.

This is a work in progress. Give it a try! Feedback is welcome.

-- Thanks to ARRL Contest Branch Manager Bart Jahnke, W9JJ