

The “C”s of the Season

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Autumn is prime time for contesting (one “C”), with the CQ World Wide DX Contest’s SSB weekend just past at the end of October and the CW weekend (second “C”) coming up at the end of this month. Then, as we move into colder weather and start to hibernate in our ham shacks and workshops, it’s a perfect time to build stuff, making “construction” our third “C” of the season. The software side of our hobby also gets in on the alphabet action, with much programming for microcontrollers being written in the “C” computer language. This issue touches on all four of them.

Contesting is front-and-center this month, from our cover to the CW results of this year’s CQ WPX Contest, the announcement of next year’s CQWW 160-Meter Contest and our lead feature story from South America about a group that takes contesting to new heights ... literally! “Contesting With Wolves” (p. 8) is kind of a cross between Summits on the Air and competitive contesting. Plus, Contesting Editor N3QE analyzes the most — and least — active CQ zones in the CQWW and WPX Contests. N2NT brings us the rules for our first big contest of 2023, the CQWW 160-Meter Contest on January 27-29 (CW) and February 24-26 (SSB). Finally, as contest DXpeditions start making a comeback after the “Covid pause,” DX Editor N2OO brings us an update on a concept that likely will shape the face of DXpeditions moving forward, the Northern California DX Foundation’s “Rig in a Box” program that will allow DXpeditions to ecologically fragile locations to set up equipment with a minimal footprint on the desired location and then operate the gear remotely from a boat anchored offshore.

Also in the competitive sphere, KØOV reports in his “Homing In” column on the 2022 world championships of amateur radio direction finding, also known as ARDF or “foxhunting.”

CW is our second “C” ... which loops us back to our cover and the WPX CW Contest results. “Cover dude” DJ5MO tells us (p. 18) that Morse code gives him higher contest scores from his location in Europe, running low power with a triband beam and wire antennas for the low bands. The strategy seems to work well for him, since he placed second worldwide in the WPX Contest’s tribander / wires overlay category. Overall participation in this year’s event was down compared with 2021 for several reasons, but there were still enough stations on the air to account for nearly 2 million verified QSOs ... all in CW! (So much for the death of Morse code...)

As colder weather settles in here in the Northern Hemisphere and most of us cut back on our outdoor activities, construction season informally gets under way, and we’ve got the nuts and bolts (resistors and capacitors?) in several articles this month. In “The Almost Heathkit,” former Heathkit technician Bob Sumption, N8RS, tells the story of the ill-fated Heath SS-8000 transceiver, how he came to build the only one (of the original three) still in existence, and his role in building the prototype of its succes-

sor, the SS-9000. We follow Bob’s story with a CQ Classic review of the SS-9000 from back in 1984.

One of the things hams love to build is antennas, and CP6CL tells us how he got an HF Windom antenna to also “play well” on 6 meters. “Ham Notebook” editor KH6WZ shares some of his space this month with Devon Day, KF6KEE, who reports on a high school radio club whose members constructed handheld Yagi antennas with built-in attenuators for foxhunting fun, and got transmitter-hunting tutorials from some of the top people in the field, including our own “Homing In” editor KØOV. Plus, Kit-Building Editor KØNEB offers some holiday gift ideas for builders, including a combination soldering iron and hot air tool for working with surface-mount components.

Our fourth “C” is the computer language of the same name, and Microcontrollers Editor W8TEE continues his series on C-language “pointers” and other tips on successful coding for microcontrollers, which have become an integral part of many ham projects. On a similar theme, Digital Editor N2IRZ reports on his recent trip to the ARRL / TAPR Digital Communications Conference and some of the software and hardware projects that were presented there. (And speaking of projects, be sure to check out our new 2023-24 Ham Shack Project Calendar — yet another “C” — as well as our traditional Amateur Radio Calendar, both of which are available now. Check out our ads in this issue and order on our website. Speaking of ads, please support our advertisers and encourage those companies you don’t see here to share their products in our pages.)

Back to the “C”s, it’s amazing just how versatile a single letter of the alphabet can be! Oh ... let’s add one more: Cranberry sauce, to go with your Thanksgiving turkey! We wish all of our U.S. readers a Happy Thanksgiving and remind you that if family time gets a little overwhelming, the CQWW DX CW Contest can offer you a respite during the long weekend, as well as an opportunity to introduce interested family members to contesting, CW and construction (perhaps with a dash of “C” programming) in your ham shack.

— 73, Rich, W2VU

