

From the Editor

Happy Labor Day! According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “some records show that in 1882, Peter J. McGuire, general secretary of the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and a co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, suggested setting aside a day for a ‘general holiday for the laboring classes’ to honor those ‘who from rude nature have delved and carved all the grandeur we behold.’ ” Back then, “labor” meant mostly taking physical inputs and transforming them into a physical product that someone would pay for.

Flash forward 142 years and in ham radio, we buy a lot of hardware like transceivers, keys, microphones, antennas/rotors, cables, etc. Hams, and especially contesters, spend a lot of money on high-quality equipment. But since FlexRadio came out with PowerSDR in 2003, “software-defined radios” have become the norm for high-end contesting.

We also rely on sophisticated software that we usually don’t pay for at all. There has been free ham software since the Apple II and the TRS-80 home computers first came out. But I date the modern era to Ken, K1EA, and the CT logging software in the mid-1980s and Dick, AK1A, coming out with PacketCluster software shortly after and turning them into free offerings. Those two programs and others like N6TR’s TR LOG, led to radical changes in contesting and 40 years later, Logger+ by Tom, N1MM, and team, and WSJT-X by Joe, K1JT, and team have done the same with SO2R and digital modes – and are still free.

It is no coincidence that all CQ WW CW SOAB records have been set in 2003 or later over a 20-year period when the overall global ham

population available to work in a contest has gone down. N6MJ (@ZF1A) owns the all-time single op record score with 11,840 QSOs – an amazing 247 average rate across 48 hours. In 1994, by contrast, OH2MM (@EA8EA) was the top single op with 6404 Qs, just over half of N6MJ’s current record.

The software powering the global Telnet cluster, SO2R and streamlined logging enabled skilled operators to increase mult and Q counts and overall score. The software fun doesn’t end there - for many more casual ops, the online contest scoreboards and immediate recognition after the contest on 3830scores have increased butt in chair time and QSOs per entrant.

Most of the software we rely on continues to be free. Today, the list of talented hams writing and giving away very cool software is too long to list. In some cases, such as in spotting software, the original developer does not or cannot support the soft-

ware any longer. Also, as more and more software runs in the cloud and stores data in the cloud, availability goes up but so does cost.

We know from other software-impacted industries, such as newspapers and television, that there are only two ways to keep free products “free” and supported: advertising or donations. I think most of us would agree that pop-up ads hawking Cayman Island vacations every time you work ZF1A would not increase rate, let alone fun...

Individual or contest club donations to key software and “ham radio as a service” cloud-service authors are a great way to keep the rate of innovation going. The World Wide Radio Operators Foundation (<https://wwrof.org/>) has long list of donors and is doing great job of keeping the CQ WW contests going after the demise of CQ magazine. Look for and press that donate button if you see one the next time you download the latest version of your favorite!

TANSTA AFL

..... stands for

**There Ain't No Such Thing
As A Free Lunch**



Abbreviations.com

There Ain't No Such Thing as a Free Lunch