

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE
by
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My, Oh My! No one in this country will ever forget September, 2001. That is very safe to say, indeed! Thousands of lives and billions of dollars worth of property were destroyed in less time than I'm taking to write this story. Why anyone would deliberately perpetrate these terrible acts will be determined by the tens of thousands of people from dozens of countries seeking an answer. By the time you read this, our country and its allies may well have taken some sort of military action in retaliation for the New York and Washington attacks.

We lost something more on September 11th as well. As a nation, we lost a great deal of naiveté. "These kinds of things could never happen here", we believed. "After all, we're the strongest country in the world. Only a complete fool would dare to take us on", we thought. Guess what? Exactly that has happened and we've been shaken into a new sense of reality. We and our free way of life have been solidly attacked by a fool who thinks he and his followers have actually begun to dismantle our "infidel" land.

As readers of this column know, Charlie always tells his students that the best way to know the future is to know history. As he has often said, "If you don't learn from history, you will be doomed to repeating it." Charlie and others of his generation remember another day of infamy in 1941, when other foolish and vicious people attacked our Navy base in Hawaii. Their intelligence indicated that the U.S.A. was vulnerable and had a concentration of assets closely gathered at anchor in Pearl Harbor. "A swift attack will completely destroy their Pacific fleet as well as their morale and it will weaken their ability to retaliate", they thought. It is believed that they then intended to invade our mainland and overthrow our government.

In fact, however, the effect was just the opposite. Within weeks, the great manufacturing capability of our country was retooled into producing material for the war effort. So many people volunteered to serve in the military that it overwhelmed our training facilities. Yes, it's true that the attack on Pearl Harbor brought us to our knees, but only for prayer and guidance while we prepared ourselves to defend our great nation. Once more, we have knelt in prayer searching for guidance. And once more, our U.S. resolve will support us as we recover from these dark days and become stronger and wiser in the experience.

On DX Hill, Charlie and Mary followed the news reports concerning the attacks very carefully and were as appalled as any of us to realize what had happened to so many innocent people. They each also spent as much or even more time in their hobbies. Mary's crafts provide wonderful distraction from the news and naturally, Charlie's interest in DX provides the same. Of course, being a DXer requires real time knowledge of world situations as they cause radio events to be rescheduled or canceled. DXers have been called fools to operate from places like Spratley during the Vietnam conflict or in the path of a hurricane to make a few more Q's. Indeed, we DXers are a different but deserving breed of ham.

Of course, now that Charlie's forty meter beam is working perfectly again since it lost its resident ant colony in the feed system, he is once again scouring the low end of forty every morning for gray line openings. The solar flux index is running well above 200 and the A and K indexes have been behaving, so overall conditions have been fairly robust. Of course, high numbers here signify new energy radiating from the sun, causing some unwelcome geomagnetic upsets. Despite this, band conditions have been much better than most amateurs expected on the downslope of Cycle 23. With the shorter daylight hours in this hemisphere, dawn is later and as the southern hemisphere's days are lengthening, resulting in some most interesting and unusual conditions on 20, 17, 15, 12, and even 10 meters. Charlie and his fellow gray line propagation DXers have had no complaints at all. The current sunspot cycle is decaying very slowly and we should see decent bands through mid 2002.

Charlie's most recent mentee, Brian, was hard at work at college on September 11th. But, when he and many of his classmates heard of the huge call for volunteer hams to help, he called the club president the following morning after his classes. The president told him about the group that was assembling to head down to New York City over the coming weekend to help out. Brian told him to count him in as well as a

couple of his New Yorker classmates who feel the need to be there. Their professor agreed after Brian explained what was happening and he gave them some assignments they could work on through the on-line study platform they have for emergency use.

Brian joined several others from all over the state on Sunday evening and made the short trip to "Ground Zero". Communications in the city was stretched to its limits by this tragedy. Hams played a vital role in serving logistic issues as well as relieving the time delay problems relaying requests to and from supply headquarters. After two weeks, the local NYC hams could handle the requirements without all the outside help so they were allowed to head home with great thanks and appreciation.

A Chinese philosopher once advised westerners that when we think we have finally understood the oriental mind, we have committed our first mistake. Terrorists have started a battle that has brought out the best in people around the world. They think they have weakened us. If they knew the history of Pearl Harbor and what it did to Americans, many lives needlessly lost recently might have been saved and they and we would not be forced into reliving history. Their attacks on New York and Washington only firmed and unified American resolve. That is indeed their first mistake.