

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE
by Bob Beaudet, W1YRC

Many thousands of people changed their travel plans over Thanksgiving and Christmas this year for very understandable reasons. Americans won't give in to terrorists but plenty of folks who aren't very fond of flying anyway and at anytime just received a good reason not to, at least for the present. Even DX Hill felt the fear of travel. Mary and Charlie's children and their families had planned to all come out and visit. It's been a few years since everyone's schedule allowed such a reunion but they decided that air travel was just too much of a risk for their entire family to take. Not knowing when work and time off would again allow for it, the boys decided instead to drive from the mid west for Christmas on the "Hill". Actually, except for the time it took, they preferred driving so it wasn't much of a sacrifice. Mary was on the phone one evening last week with both of their sons at once. They organized a conference call so they could make plans all together for the visit. Of course, Mary was simply delighted that they all could be together again. The call lasted more than a half hour and when Mary put the phone down, she was beaming and asked Charlie somewhat rhetorically, "Gosh, do you know that we have a couple of great boys? I guess we did a pretty good job raising them after all."

Charlie had been half-listening and looked up from reading QST and saw that Mary was grinning at her understatement. "Yep," he replied, "we sure did, but it was touch and go when they were falling out of the apple tree and trying to climb my tower years ago. I didn't think they'd make it. Do you remember that tall fence I built around the tower?" Mary remembered and reminded him, "But they didn't spend as much time in the emergency room as some of their friends, being rambunctious boys and all. They're good boys." Charlie nodded his agreement and commented that one of the measures of raising boys is by how much time they spend in the emergency room, getting patched up. He then recalled his own boyhood. "You know, I spent a fair amount of time giving my parents grief. Thank heavens our boys were better than I was." Mary replied, "Aw go on, Charlie. Your mom told me you weren't as bad as all that."

Just then, the phone rang. Mary picked it up on the first ring, expecting another telemarketer to congratulate her for qualifying to receive a new platinum credit card. She was delighted to hear Brian's voice instead. "Well, hello dear. How's school? Are you coming home for Christmas?"

Brian spoke quickly and started to explain, but as soon as Mary heard how anxious he seemed, she said, "Brian, you better speak with Charlie. Of course, we'll help you any way we can." With that little hint of mystery, she handed the phone to Charlie. By now, he was very curious as to what was going on.

"Hi big guy. How're you doing?" Charlie greeted his favorite student. Brian replied, "Well, I'm fine but some of my friends need help. I called my parents and they'll help but they can't solve the entire problem alone. I told them I was calling you. They didn't want me to bother you but I thought you'd want me to. I want to help a few of my classmates, Charlie. A couple are even hams. They're from all over the country and a few from Europe. Their parents are frightened to let them fly home for Christmas. They're really scared, I guess. After some time has passed, it will be OK again but it's just too soon after the attacks and now this latest plane crash in New York cinched the deal."

Brian continued, "Well, I want to bring them home to spend Christmas with our family. There are only nine of them and they don't want to stay in Cambridge over the holidays. My mom and dad say they have room for three or four. Could you.....I mean would you be able to find room for a few? I know it's asking a lot but a couple are in my research team and one even has his Extra ticket. They won't eat much."

Charlie laughed hysterically at Brian's last comment. "You sound just like my son when he wanted to bring home a stray mongrel from the shelter. 'He won't eat much' was what he said." Brian was quick on the uptake; "Did it work? Did he bring the dog home?" Charlie laughed again. "Boy, you're quick. Are you sure you don't want to go into sales?" he asked. "Sure, He got the dog. That was Toby and he was a great dog." Brian was silent, waiting for the real answer to his question.

Charlie replied, "Brian, how can I turn you down? Sure, we'll put them up. It won't be the same as being home for them, but we'll make it a good stay. They all may not end up here, though. You see our sons and their families are coming in for ten days at Christmas and New Year's. You know our house is kind of small but we have lots of friends with bigger places. Do you remember Mike who collects classic Collins gear? He just fixed up his barn into living space. It's heated and all. But don't worry. We'll work something out and it will be a great Christmas for everyone. Here, Brian. Speak with Mary. She's better than I am at managing this kind of logistic problem." Mary had been waiting, chomping at the bit to hear what Brian was up to since Charlie's laughing uproar a few minutes earlier.

Mary had heard the essentials but asked specific questions like whether the students were all male and most important these days, how well he really knew them. Brian understood the concern and assured her that they were all guys and he knew them all very well and could vouch for them. She agreed with Charlie's earlier reply by saying, "Brian dear, you're like one of our own. It's only right that you and your friends share our home. I'll call your mom and we'll get this organized just fine."

Charlie was pleased with the arrangements and looked down at his present dog, Rufus and said, "Well, old boy. You'll have to pick your napping spots more carefully soon." As if he understood, he looked up and yawned. Then, he put his head down again, took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

Charlie headed for the shack. It was getting close to time to listen for the P5 in North Korea. Gosh, he wishes that 4L4FN were a CW operator. To him, working DX on phone is like being in traffic on the freeway with a bunch of student drivers. On CW, there's a certain finesse that operators usually have. I said usually!

He sat in his big ole chair and rocked the receiver tuning dial left and right across the P5 frequency. Nothing was there but some weak splatter from some over-deviating rag chewers, running kw's to maintain their S9+30 signals. He switched his transceiver into the dual vfo mode, leaving vfo A on the P5's frequency, 14.205 so he could listening around simultaneously with vfo B. Charlie heard the rag chewers talking about what our bombers should do to anyone who gives the US this kind of problem. One guy said he always carries a gun and will shoot first and ask questions later. Another said, "It's all those darned foreigners we let into this country that cause the trouble." Running all this power and the bands open to most of the world, Charlie shuddered at what others must think of the American philosophy they are hearing on their receivers. Many in other countries routinely listen to the short-wave bands for their news. They don't have to be hams, nor do they have any way to have what they hear explained. They take it at face value. Then we wonder why other country's citizens think we are "Ugly Americans". We should listen to what we sound like to them.

Charlie was being tempted to say something, but before he could pick up his mike, one of the group said, "These foreigners cause the trouble. Is that what you think?" The first station replied, "Yep, that's the truth!" The other replied, "Well, aren't we all foreigners? My folks came from Italy and yours came from, let's see....yours is a mix of England, Scotland, Germany, and what else?" "That's not what I mean", the first one replied, "I mean those Arabs." The other fellow calmly asked, "So, it's bad if they come from Arab countries, right." The reply was, "That's right!" The second then said to another on frequency, "Well, Aram, it looks like he doesn't trust you either with Lebanese and Egyptian parents. It doesn't matter that you were a Naval officer with Top Secret clearance and now you're a police captain. You better leave now, Aram."

Aram calmly responded, "This kind of reaction is all too typical with some folks. If they had their way, only the Native Americans would be left. We're all foreigners to this great land. We're all originally from somewhere else. That's what makes the USA the greatest country on earth." There was silence from the fellow with the narrow viewpoint. However, this illustrates how lack of perspective can alter conclusions.

Their kilowatt roundtable on a wide open twenty meter band also illustrates the danger of letting our free speech privilege wrongly paint us all as arrogant and uncaring Americans. Listen to what you're saying in any circumstance either on or off the air and try to listen as if you were on the other side of the conversation. Charlie's Whistle has reminded us several times that we are all someone's role model, whether we know it or not. What we say in public or on the air is also being listened to by some other than the one

intended. Like the party lines that were common in the earlier days of the telephone, we are speaking to a large and diverse audience. Be mindful that your comments can mean something very different than you may have intended.

The folks on DX Hill wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a very happy, healthy and safe New Year.