

## CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

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Springtime on DX Hill is always a great time of year. Charlie and Mary thoroughly enjoy being there. Even when the days are damp, gray and cold, DX Hill is as close to heaven on earth as Charlie and Mary can imagine. In fact, neither of them would care to live anywhere but there during spring time. Winter on DX Hill is another story which was why they took the serious action that they did recently in purchasing a winter home near Ocala, Florida. Of course, they face a great deal of work with that Florida property before they can actually live there, even for a short while.

They're planning to travel back to DX Hill South, as they refer to their new winter place, but not until their spring chores are finished up north. Mary loves to garden and has elaborate flower beds planted around the small yard. It requires a great deal of work on her hands and knees to plant all of the annuals and remove the weeds that are relentless about invading her space reserved for flowers.

Charlie has his spring time chores to do as well but not in the flower beds. For many years every spring, Charlie follows a routine of preventative maintenance on his antennas and tower. Of course, in his last few years, it has been a lot more difficult to climb his tower than it once was. It takes him nearly a half hour to slowly climb to the top at 100 feet. Then, he generally takes a break and enjoys the scenery and appreciates the view that his 40 and 20 meter beams have. "Golly", Charlie was thinking, "look at the shot my antennas have into Europe and over the pole to SE Asia and to Japan and the South Pacific. It's no wonder that they hear me."

After a while, he started checking the hardware and guys for signs of rust, loosened bolts, dabbing a little galvanizing paint where rust is starting. He worked his way down the tower, tightening bolts and dabbing paint as he went down. The entire process took nearly three hours. He used to be able to do his spring tower maintenance in an hour or less. I guess he should be happy that he still can do it at all at his age. Many of Charlie's

friends cannot do many of the things that he still can do, so at any speed, he is grateful.

As much as they absolutely love their DX Hill home, Mary and Charlie realized last winter that they're now at the age where they cannot and should not deal with ice and snow any longer as they once could. The worst thing now is that they could easily fall and be seriously hurt. They both know that they must avoid that. So, for the foreseeable future, they'll spend three seasons at DX Hill North and winter at DX Hill South.

Mary spent the entire day getting her flowers planted and that made her quite satisfied. Tomorrow, she will finish her vegetable garden and then pay some attention to her craft work which has fallen behind with all of her other recent distractions. Of course, craft work is not something to be hurried. Rather, it is a relaxing occupation to be enjoyed leisurely and peacefully. So, Mary will keep up with her knitting and ceramic work as she can but without trying to rush anything.

Charlie found time to attend his regular monthly club meeting and upon arrival, learned that word had spread about his purchase of a winter home in Florida. Everyone was concerned that he was selling out and leaving DX Hill. They saw this as a serious blow to the club and its foundation. After all, Charlie was the stability that attracted most members along the way to join and without him, they feared that the club wouldn't offer the value that it does with Charlie as a prominent member. Of course, Charlie assured them that the club had its own character and would always go on, following the leadership and mission decided upon by its membership and elected leaders. Further, Charlie assured them that regardless of where he and Mary decide to live, they will always remain members and for as long as their health permits, they will spend three seasons at DX Hill North and one at DX Hill South. They also still have phones and e mail between them all. So, he will always be part of the regular DX Hill crew. The club president conducted the regular meeting and handled routine business with the 35 members present. Charlie sat toward the back of the room as he always does with his long time friends and quietly watched, sipping a cup of coffee.

He usually notices in club meetings that there seems to be a tendency, especially by the

older hams, to view their newer brethren differently than used to be the case. Charlie recognized one issue that always snags his attention. Many old timers focus on pointing out the different ways that new hams speak compared to older ones. It's not their lack of basic radio knowledge but their different ham vocabulary that catches them. It isn't simply the age thing with generational issues either. No, it's a lot more basic.

For the last few decades, a substantial number of new hams have found the hobby after spending some time in CB radio. To their credit, they realized the shortcomings of CB and escaped to Amateur radio. Unavoidably perhaps, the vocabulary of CB came along with them. That apparently is annoying to some pre-CB era hams. Hearing General and Extra class hams asking if someone "has a copy" or states that he "threw his call out" or refers to his contacts as "talking to" rather than working someone wrinkles the nose of many older hams and they refuse to accept these newbie manner of talking.

Older folks remember that the FCC took away one of their ham bands in order to give HF space to the rapidly growing number of private and untested citizens so that they could engage in short range business communications. They painfully remember the total chaos that followed in creating a bandit trucker culture that to this day, the public still relates to what hams do with their on air activity. In the eyes of the public, those good buddy trucker bandits made a mockery out of what ham radio was to thousands of early radio pioneers. The constant reminder that these hams are working or sitting next to them in the club meeting can be difficult. But, it is necessary to overcome if we are to continue to grow.

The average age of a licensed ham today is about 60 or more. Of course, we cannot know the average age for certain because for many years, we haven't been allowed to ask for date of birth on the FCC form 605 or even list it if we knew it.

Unfortunately, despite knowing better and seeing the bigger picture, hams who came up through the ranks without any detours through CB are undeniably different and they can't help but see the newer ranks of their ham radio brethren differently. When they hear someone tell them "you're giving me S 20 on my meter" rather than "your signal

report is S9 plus 20 db“, refer to their name as their “personal” or give a report of 5-9 and then didn’t copy the call or name, it annoys them.

Charlie realizes that this evolution is not only inevitable, in the short term it provides opportunities for the Elmers of the world to get busy and help CBers make the transition to Amateur radio more smoothly and with less aggravation. But teaching behavior, unlike basic knowledge regarding antennas, transmission lines, propagation or any of a dozen other things, can be difficult. We have found that new hams do not seem to grasp fundamental radio information very well, mostly because they don’t need to learn it to obtain a license. But what we have in these other issues regarding terms is a concern with social values and paradigms. Charlie isn’t at all sure of himself in social issues. After all, he was an engineer for his entire working career and a manager for most of that time, not a social worker. However, he had to manage people and negotiate technical matters with customers who were people as well. So he shouldn’t be dissuaded by converting a few CB trained hams, or should he?

Fortunately, Charlie is old enough that he can remember how his generation was regarded by his elders back when he was starting in ham radio. The traditionalists that served as role models for Charlie’s generation would often simply shake their heads when looking at what the young hams were up to. In fact, many of the reigning experts in the post war 1940s and 50s era when Charlie and his contemporaries were starting out, had little hope that their newly found hobby would ever survive in the hands of these crazy kids.

But survive and thrive it certainly did. Learning from historical facts, I would wager that our hobby of ham radio in the future will be different for sure but will just as surely survive and thrive. The expressions and dialect that new hams bring forward will continue to wrinkle the noses of old timers, I suppose, and wrangle them to their last days on earth. But, what these older hams must realize is that decision making has been passed on to the new generation. The older hams are no longer deciding what is right or wrong. That’s not something that comes easily to long time credentialed hams. But old timers who are comfortable with themselves, like Charlie, can fall back to what they learned through life and can reason with the present issues. Those who refuse to accept

the inevitable, find themselves being regarded by the majority simply as silly old curmudgeons and will be disregarded.

Moving on is an essential ingredient in the formula that defines Amateur radio. Looking back and criticizing what the FCC did or how someone refers differently to how strong he or she reports a signal will not benefit our hobby nor will it advance our knowledge of how to understand our ever changing technology. Doing so is nothing more than a waste of your time as well that of the new ham. We must all work with and help one another as we march along. So, whether you prefer to "throw your call out" or transmit (or send) your call, the other ham listening to you will know what your saying and as communicators, that is the goal that we all strive to achieve. Look forward and be ready for the peak of Cycle 24, scheduled for early 2013. Good DXing to all.

(Preview of future Charlie's Whistle: Charlie has received inquiries from a group of contesters in the area of DX Hill South. They want to convince Charlie to build a multi operator super station on his property near Ocala. Charlie, a contestester? Can that happen?)