

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

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This year's holiday season is very different for many of us, probably more so this year than the four years since 2001 when we were still in shock from the attacks on 9/11. The current news suggests that the economy is strong, the real estate market is continuing to expand and employment looks to be robust in most fields. We're all concerned about our safety, however. The threat of terrorists, domestic criminals and deranged citizens in every day's news has us looking over our shoulders. That warm and comfortable feeling we remember enjoying as Americans seems harder to find now but we will rise to all the challenges we face. Yet, we must look forward to new opportunities and do all that we can to shape the future in a positive and productive manner for our families and ourselves.

A very successful entrepreneur once said that the way to succeed is to face every day as if you were being pursued by a gang of tigers. You must move ahead as quickly as you can without looking back, confident in the knowledge that you will achieve your goals. You must never be complacent or satisfied that you've finally "made it". You will never be able to change what has happened but certainly have something to say about what is going to happen. That is where you should always focus your energy.

Charlie has acted in this manner since he was a young boy, throughout his school years, his career as an engineer and manager and since his retirement, as a full time ham and mentor. His wife Mary is talented in many skills and is forever the optimist, even at those rare times when Charlie feels discouraged or puzzled. Together, they're a great team and are loved by everyone who has the pleasure of knowing them.

Long time readers of Charlie's Whistle know that Mary and Charlie have three grown children and several grandchildren. Circumstances have never permitted the entire family to celebrate Christmas together. Something has always kept some family members in Illinois where two of their children and five grandchildren live or Indiana where their daughter, son-in-law Don and their family of three little ones live. But, this year, somehow the stars were in alignment or possibly they all missed mom's cooking at the same time. Whatever the reasons for at least a few days, all of Charlie's and Mary's family members were able to visit DX Hill at the same time. This was surely a treat for everyone but none as great as for Mary. She was in Heaven with so many grandchildren to hug and spoil.

Of course, their small house couldn't possibly provide housing accommodations for these fourteen visitors. There was no way it would be possible. They all stayed at the family friendly hotel in the valley and coordinated their schedule so as to not all descend on DX Hill at the same time. All in all, it worked out fine.

The family stayed through Christmas and even attended the Amateur Radio club's Holiday Party during the week before Christmas weekend. The event was held at a different hotel but very near the hotel they were staying in, in fact so close that family members could walk or run as they chose, between their hotel and the party. The hotels were back to back on parallel streets and their parking lots abutted one another.

Mary put her sons and daughter to work with herself and her crafts and cooking groups helping the organizers arrange the ball room. Rev. Simpson from Mary's and Charlie's church, Father Sullivan from St. Joseph's College across the valley and Rabbi Levinson from Congregation Beth El on the other side of DX Hill all lent a hand. Oh, incidentally, all three of these religious

men are hams and close friends. In fact, two consider Charlie to be their Elmer since it was he who helped them become licensed. Father Sullivan is a DXer as well, with a simple but effective station at his college, but he became a ham while in seminary. He had planned to become a foreign missionary and thought that being a ham would be useful. They assured the club that attendees would enjoy the season with proper observance of its true meaning, recognizing both Christmas and Hanukkah. Being solid hams as they are, they were most welcome and were sure that attendees would enjoy their experience along with some wonderful food.

It was an unforgettable ten day period for Charlie and Mary, being able to see all of their family together. Since each of their crew went off to college and after graduating, starting a family of their own a thousand miles from DX Hill, this is the first time that everyone has been there at the same time, including their grandchildren. The oldest of the grandkids is now 12 and growing rapidly. He's taller than his mom already. Mary couldn't have been a happier and prouder grandmother, taking pictures steadily and making cookies, muffins, pies and all sorts of meals from early morning to late evening. Even though the family didn't stay on DX Hill, they would all come there for something to eat, at various times all day long. Mary's crafts and cooking group dropped in from time to time, picking up items or dropping them off. The quiet road leading up the hill has never been so busy and their quiet small home was more like a train station.

The Holiday Party was special. The three clergymen dressed in "civilian" clothes for the occasion and Father Sullivan invited the choral group from the college to sing for the nearly hundred club members, family and guests. The trio sang a song that Father Sullivan wrote for the occasion, "The Bands Were Open on Christmas". Rev. Simpson sang baritone and played guitar and Rabbi Levinson sang bass and played piano.

Father Sullivan has a professionally trained tenor voice that made everyone wonder where they had heard him before. Before going to Seminary, he sang and recorded with the Notre Dame choir and was on his way to a folk singing career. But he answered a higher calling along the way.

It was a marvelous evening that no one will ever forget. This year, Christmas Day is the first day of the eight days of Hanukkah and Rabbi Levinson explained the significance of the celebration which translates to "dedication" in Hebrew. It's also known as the "Festival of Lights". The Rabbi brought some traditional foods; latkes and sufganiyot that his wife made for the party. Of course, not everyone knew what these were but after a few adventurous souls tried them and declared that they were delicious potato pancakes and jelly doughnuts, many others helped to finish them.

The entire club sang Christmas Carols with the choral group. Charlie couldn't help but notice how significant it was to see everyone enjoying latkes and sufganiyot while singing Silent Night and Jingle Bells. Hearing Rabbi Levinson's deep bass voice sing "Ho Ho Ho" was extraordinary to say the least. Amateur Radio is most certainly the common denominator that minimizes differences in cultural inclinations that might otherwise divide us from our neighbors. What we share is a common love for communications by radio and that transcends all the issues that our leaders fight over.

Together, we make up a single family and it will always be that way.

May you and your family be blessed and filled with joy this holiday season and join with your fellow Amateurs in praying for a more peaceful world for our families and children to live in with more tolerance and understanding among our different cultures. We all have much more in common than we realize if only we'd give it a chance.