

## CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

Bob Beudet, W1YRC

During these quiet times when the DX bands are relatively quiet during large segments of many days, Charlie will often leave a 2 meter transceiver running, listening to one of the local repeaters while working in his shack or driving about in his truck. He almost never picks up the mike unless one of his DX pals is on looking for someone to chat with. However, he often finds that by listening to what is interesting to the locals, he is better able to relate with current things newer hams talk about at club meetings. Of course, it's easy to understand why most repeater chatter concerns whether this FM radio or another one is better than an HT. More than half of our hams today do not have HF privileges and must practically consider repeaters as the total content of ham radio open to them. So, it's easy to understand the scope of conversation. When asked about upgrading their license, repeater users sometimes claim that they just can't get the code but that they might some day. At five words per minute, Charlie is not the least bit sympathetic to those who claim that they can't seem to get it. Passing twenty words per minute required some skill but not five. That's merely memorization of a few dozen code characters.

Charlie half listens to the repeater chatter as he does other work such as soldering some connectors, trouble shooting something on the bench, reading QST or simply driving while on his errands. Now that he has become a senior citizen, he has learned to deal with the new generation's style of speaking and can understand the majority of what someone is trying to say. He is able to listen through the mandatory "ya know" and "like" that appears in nearly every sentence. It's like QRM or QRN that he's trained himself to hear weak signals through. He still finds the CB style talk that finds its way onto the ham frequencies annoying, however. It's just because he's getting older and less tolerant, Charlie figures.

Charlie and his Collins equipment collector friend Mike each were out a few weeks ago making routine trips to the cleaners, hardware and post office and chatting on the repeater when a new ham broke in on their chat and informed them that his personal was John. Mike replied that his personal stuff was in the bank but most friends call him Mike. Charlie replied, still chuckling, that his friends call him Charlie and that he was happy to meet John. The newbie replied that Charlie and Mike were pushing a good S10 and wished them good numbers and said that he'd be on the side. Charlie picked up the mike and stated that he had reached the post office and wished them each a good day. Actually, he was miles away from the post office but he just couldn't deal with that CB style of talk. As hard as he tries to overlook it, Charlie finds it annoying. Since the CB craze which eventually caused so much trouble for hams with their neighbors, causing all sorts of interference which was blamed on generic hams, Charlie cannot find enough charity to cut them any slack. CB is a surely good feeder program for entrance into ham radio which is fine but Charlie wishes strongly that as they transition, they would lose their CB lingo at the door.

Of course, Charlie's strong favorite ham activity is DXing and especially CW DXing. All the DXers in the area with similar likings know Charlie and his reputation for solid operating skill and knowledge of the DX world and what it takes to be a top DXer. After all, he has every one of the current 337 entities worked and confirmed, many on several bands and furthermore, has been at the top of the heap for many years.

In general, it pleases Charlie and his same minded friends to hear hams with relatively new calls chatting with one another about DX. A few of these instances took place just this past week. In one instance, a fellow on the repeater was chatting with his friend about his new DX antenna which he described as a "100 ft right angle doublet". The antenna was 30 ft high with one leg heading north and the other east. It was fed with open line through a tuner. He was pleased

because he could load the setup on every band from 80 through 10 meters. Charlie was wondering why he considered it as a DX antenna when the other fellow asked him that question. The fellow replied that he sloped the eastern leg to lower its angle of radiation toward Europe.

Charlie is occasionally tempted to call new comers like this and try to help them with some of their theory but restrains himself. He doesn't feel that he's known by these new hams and by correcting some misguided ideas; he might sound like a "know it all" old geezer. If you had attended his club meeting a month ago, you would understand why Charlie and his friends stay out of offering much advice until and unless it is requested.

A small group of these new hams who had recently been bitten by the DX bug attended the meeting as the guest of Alan, one of the members who taught over at the Community College. They weren't club members, at least not yet. All of them had taken courses at the school and made friends with Alan who taught in the Electronics Department. Alan was not a DXer but had told Jeff and Todd, two of the most enthusiastic and rambunctious fellows he taught, that his ham club had some members who were DXers also and they might enjoy sharing stories. Well, that was all they needed to come to the next meeting.

Traditionally, after every meeting, the members hang around to rag chew and enjoy coffee or soda with cookies, brownies, muffins, pie or whatever delicious items that Mary, Charlie's better half, had sent to the meeting along with Charlie. Sure enough, Jeff, Todd and the others helped themselves to their share, talking about their latest DX conquests all the while. Charlie just watched and listened, enjoying every minute. They were enthused about working Spain, Gibraltar, Canary Islands and the North Cook Islands during the week and were exchanging war stories about how they managed to beat out the pile-up and how they managed to use clever phonetics to get the DX station's attention. Alan was quietly enjoying a slice of apple pie that which was still warm from Mary's oven (yum) and told Jeff that Charlie, who was standing next to him has some DX experience and might enjoy sharing his stories.

Jeff said hello to Charlie and without asking for his call or asking anything about him, gave him his call and that he liked to work DX very much. He continued in his motor-mouth style to tell Charlie what his secrets were to work lots of DX. Charlie tried to ask Jeff a question when he took a breath but his friend Todd filled the space in the monologue so Charlie didn't have a chance. It was plain that these two high achievers had absolutely no idea that they were talking to the club's top DXer and probably one of the best DXers within fifty miles. That's OK with Charlie. In fact, he loved being tutored by these new DXers who were just discovering for the first time what the art of working through a pile-up might be or how to "tail-end" your call at the end of the transmission of last station worked by the DX station. They're so enthused in sharing their new found knowledge that Charlie just sat and listened and loved it. It made no difference that they didn't illustrate the seasoning and subtle tricks that they will eventually learn through experience. They enjoyed what they doing and appeared to be having some success. What more is needed?

Anyone who has raised children or taught them about most anything can understand Charlie's pleasure in seeing how these new DXers were telling their story as if they had just discovered something for the first time and needed to share it with everyone. What is fact is that the knowledge is new for them and interest to gain more of it needs to be encouraged and applauded. The fact that an old timer has heard nothing new and could point out that they knew that before these young DXers were born would be totally out of place and serve no good purpose. So, when Alan, their teacher managed to break in with a few words, he said "You know, Charlie here has worked a lot of DX too. Maybe he could give you a few tips."

Charlie played what Alan said down and said, "It sounds to me like you have the most important thing very well covered, your enthusiasm and drive. Keep it up and enjoy the chase. I'd be very happy to help you when you need help."

Todd said that they're close to getting their DXCC and only need a few more zones to get Worked All Zones. Charlie told them that they had done very well and they should keep up their good work. Even though these new DXers probably ran off some theory and DX tactics that weren't entirely flawless, Charlie saw no need to correct them or in any way, dampen their spirit. Let them enjoy what they're doing and learn for themselves. In time, as they become better skilled, they may learn that they don't have all the answers and would benefit from the Elmering that someone like Charlie could provide. Charlie prefers that new hams do as much as they possibly can do before asking however. They will learn less if Charlie spoon feeds them with everything and all they need is to swallow. Like a batting or pitching coach in baseball, his job is not to teach a player how to swing a bat or pitch a ball. In order to reap benefit from a coach or a mentor like Charlie, one needs to know how to perform the basic function before ever meeting the coach. All the coach or mentor will do is bring their skill to a finer and higher level.

To be a mentor requires much patience and restraint. You must allow the student to make mistakes. They learn the most from realizing and correcting their own mistakes. Students do their best work when they teach themselves under a teacher's guidance. Thanks to all of our teachers, Elmers and those who, like Charlie, patiently provide their help to us.