

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

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These are generally quiet times around DX Hill. This year, the radio club holiday party as held at the big church hall as is customary, the club invites the pastor of the church and several professors of the community college in the valley. Those invited by the club are all interested to some level in Amateur Radio and are known to many club members. Sharing some good food and conversation with friends and colleagues is what this time of year is all about. Only two of the professors at the college are hams and aren't very active on the air but none the less, they're most welcome.

Typical of most ham club parties, there was plenty of food available, enough for several times as many people as the large hall could hold. Surely, no one would go home hungry. Mary's baked items, of course, were the anticipated star of the food table for members and guests. Her pies, muffins, cookies and cakes are legendary throughout the region.

Also typical at their club events is the number of new and unknown hams to the club who were invited by a club member. Many clubs wouldn't like what Charlie's club does in inviting so many non-members and strangers. They would prefer to only permit their own dues paying members to participate. While certainly understandable, the practice doesn't encourage very much growth and new development among the membership. For other members, meetings can become fairly unexciting and can give clubs major concern. Charlie's club surely doesn't have that problem. Charlie and several others are core members and old timers in the club but there's also a regular flow of new faces at meetings and holiday parties. This year's event is no exception.

Charlie was sitting and talking with his DXer friend, Mike while enjoying an ample supply of magnificently roasted tenderloins of beef that one of the members brings to the club party each year. This time, the roast was exceptional, very flavorful and tender. While they were discussing Martti's recent operation at St. Bart's in hopes of it being ruled a new entity, a few of the strangers sat down near them and started listening to them. Very quickly, Charlie realized that they were doing so and extended a welcoming handshake to them, "I'm Charlie and this fellow is Mike. Welcome to the club party. Did you try this roast beef yet?" One of the new group responded, "No, I didn't see it on the table. I'm having these meat balls and saving room for some pie. Those pies look awesome." Mike popped in with his own comment, "Trust me, the pies are awesome. We all know the baker very well. I'm Mike. Charlie and I are DXers. You wouldn't be new DXers, would you?" They all shook their heads and a different stranger replied, "I'm Joe. We're all pretty new hams. About all we have are these HTs to talk on a couple of repeaters." Charlie and Mike are accustomed to hearing this sort of response from new hams and tried to make them feel welcome even though they had very little in common.

In fact, that's really the reason the club opens its door to non members and strangers within our ham community. It's in keeping with the spirit of the season to welcome strangers and share what we have them. Furthermore, it's a pretty good recruiting tool to

attract new club members. They learned years ago that without a steady flow of new members and ideas, the club will fail.

But old timers like Mike and Charlie admittedly have some trouble when newcomers start telling them what they know about antennas, tuners, the best of the latest radios, high power, propagation, regulations and just about anything else. The fact is that despite what they think they know, they actually don't know very much about their topic most of the time. You'd never know it by the confident manner they exhibit in telling club stalwarts like Mike and Charlie in detail about their station performance and how their signals "get a bounce off the atmosphere". Showing an obvious generational difference, the visitors start most sentences with "Hey" or "Listen" and instead of picking up something, they "grab" it. This strikes many older folks including Mike and Charlie as insensitive and find it a somewhat annoying manner of speaking.

Charlie usually just keeps quiet unless something is directed to him, smiling and nodding his head but Mike's breaking point generally arrives quickly. Mike was ready to lay into one of the newbies, just waiting for a break in his recitation and eventually, Mike had his chance. He said, "I don't where you learned about propagation but you ought to learn more before you think you're prepared to explain how it works." Charlie quickly added, "Our club holds classes and has mentors to help new hams to understand theory and correct operating procedures. Why don't you come to a meeting and see if you like it."

Another of the new group who hadn't spoken previously added, "I'd like to come. Thank you very much. Are there other new hams in the club?" Charlie knew he was politely asking if all the members were gray heads like Mike and himself. He replied, "Sure, we have members your age. In fact, our president is probably not much older than you are." That caught their collective attention. Apparently, they were more sensitive to the age disparity than Mike and Charlie had realized. That apparently won them over. They promised that they'd be at the next meeting, and then went for some of that pie. They hadn't forgotten what they were thinking about before. It's refreshing to see that they had their priorities arranged properly. Mike called to them as they headed to the table of pies, "Our members eat a lot of pies like those. Charlie's bride bakes them for us all the time." The group replied with a smile and signaled with a positive thumbs-up signal. There's no doubt that there was solid understanding between the different generations on that issue.

Best wishes from other club members and "friends of Charlie's Whistle" for a Joyous and Happy Holiday Season.