

CHARLIE'S WHISTLE

By

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For as far back as Charlie can remember as a child, he can recall how insistent his parents were that he speak correctly. When an “ain’t”, a double negative, mispronunciation or some other literary mistake slipped out in front of his parents, young Charlie would be firmly admonished that he shouldn’t use his native language incorrectly. Of course, even as early as three to four years of age, they didn’t cut him a bit of slack. His elders were mindful that as he grew, habits in speech as well as other things may become more difficult to change, so it was important to establish the importance of proper speech and language usage at an early age. His parents and older family members all realized that he would always be judged by others as he grew up, not only by his education but as often and more commonly, by how he presented himself to his associates, employers, friends, neighbors and of course in Charlie’s case, to the world’s hams via Amateur Radio. We are always being silently judged by those around us, like it or not. Our speech and writing speak volumes about us and who we are.

One of Charlie’s childhood neighbors was a family that moved to our country from Italy shortly before World War II. The newly married couple didn’t want to raise children in their homeland back in the 1930s, under the imminent threat of war or a Fascist or Nazi government. Mr. and Mrs. DiAngelo were wonderful neighbors and loved Charlie and regarded him as one of their own sons. As a boy, Charlie ate many meals in Mrs. DiAngelo’s aroma filled kitchen. That might explain his love of Italian food. Mrs. DiAngelo was so pleased when Charlie enjoyed a home cooked meal with her two children and husband. Charlie so admired the DiAngelo family and he can still see Mrs. DiAngelo today in his memory, always smiling and singing as she worked in her home and yard. Mr. DiAngelo worked very hard during the day and studied nights for several years. After long hours of work and many sleepless nights filled with study, he completed college and graduate school and went on to become a very successful architect. He designed many gorgeous commercial buildings in major cities of the US and Canada including several corporate headquarters around the country with fountains, lavish statuary, gardens and water features.

But, Charlie can easily remember from his childhood that Mr. DiAngelo was very concerned about the manner in which he spoke the language of his new country. He was so very proud to be here. He and his wife Sofia worked very hard to become US Citizens and to look and sound like Americans. They flew an American flag in their front yard every sunny day. Both of their children proudly served in the US military during the 60s and graduated from different universities later under the GI Bill education program.

Mr. & Mrs. DiAngelo would ask Charlie and his parents to correct them if they ever said something incorrectly or not as an American would say it. Mr. DiAngelo often said that he wanted to be a “perfect American”. He wanted to speak and write as well as any native born American and would accept no accent or poor use of English, the national language of his new country. Whenever Charlie was in their house, only English was spoken even though everyone in their family was fluent in Italian. They wanted to practice and perfect their English skills.

That experience early in his life most likely gave Charlie the lasting desire to respect his own language. As an engineering manager, he needed to write quite well of course and as any engineer will tell you, his or her communications skills are critical since a great majority of an engineer’s work time is spent documenting the design and process work he/she has developed.

In his mentoring work, Charlie always felt it necessary that new Amateurs being influenced by him acted in an exemplary manner as well in their operating procedures, courtesy and skill. Every product of Charlie's teaching was a role model for others to follow. Even today in his retirement years, Charlie can't help himself but notice when he hears someone misspeaking on the repeater or at a club meeting. In the interest of not wanting to embarrass anyone, his good manners generally don't allow him to openly correct the mistake in front of everyone. If he is in the conversation, he will often reply by stating correctly what the other person said but as part of his answer. If someone said that "his new radio ain't got none of those features", Charlie might reply, "I understand that your radio doesn't have any of those features but you might look for them in your next radio". That way, he hopes that the person might politely get the gentle hint through his example without feeling embarrassed or demeaned.

Charlie's major language issues are with the recent crop of hams who have graduated from the CB ranks. Unless someone is old enough to remember ham radio before CB was introduced, he might not understand the older hams' severe irritation by their CB references. Any reference or reminder to CB simply sends a chill down Charlie's back.

In 1958, the FCC was moved to taking the 11 meter band away from the Amateur radio service to be given to the newly created the Class D Citizens Band service. At first, the service provided quite useful communications for small businesses around town. Users had call signs and followed proper operating procedures. However, soon the service imploded and was reduced to a complete fiasco. Several millions of untrained, unlicensed and undisciplined operators from all walks of life populated the frequencies with all sorts of radios, including many that were never intended to be used in that service. The demand for KW amplifiers that would function on 11 meters increased by at least 50% and flea market prices, buyers and sellers showed that trend immediately.

Older hams like Charlie were extremely disappointed with the FCC's lack of wisdom in destroying a perfectly fine ham band and turning it into a circus. After seeing how they allocated and essentially destroyed that portion of spectrum after taking it away from licensed hams, older hams just shook their heads and lost respect for most of the good buddies that came out of the program, which is a shame because most modern former CB graduates who have seen the light and graduated into Amateur radio are very good hams. They're serious and dedicated and will become fine Amateurs.

However, Charlie and very likely plenty of other good hams would appreciate very much not being reminded of their origins by their use of CB expressions. Charlie has said on many occasions that he considers the entire CB world to be similar to a wet umbrella. Leave it outside the door when you come into the house. When Cbers come into the Amateur world, they should drop their prior operating habits and vocabulary. Otherwise, they will never become fully transitioned and recognized by established hams. As Mr. DiAngelo said to young Charlie in the 1940s, he wanted to learn how to be a "perfect American" and be corrected when he made errors. Being a "perfect" ham requires more than simply use of proper terms, of course, but as with being a good American, proper use of the language will label you just as incorrect use of language will do so.

Asking someone for "his personal" or stating that you'll "be on the side" will easily label you as a recent CB convert. You won't have problems on repeaters as much as on HF bands because most repeater users aren't old timers. Charlie will take every chance he can to tell new hams to please drop their old lingo and learn how to be a ham. They will enjoy their new hobby of ham radio much more and make lots more friends. It will also be less painful for Charlie. When doubt of what word to use, simply use English. Ask someone what their name is, that you will be standing by or what town you live in. When in doubt, listen to experienced hams or ask them to help you. Most would be delighted to

do so. Charlie and I want to be first to very warmly welcome our new graduates to Amateur radio who have upgraded from their experiences in CB. Enjoy and respect your new privileges. We'll be glad to help you.

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