

The Closet Ham

As years go by some words have different meanings. In the 1960's, I was a Closet Ham. I built my radio shack in my bedroom closet. It was just large enough for a chair and shelf to hold my KT200 and 6L6 transmitter. Now, flash forward almost 50 years!

Today we have many new Ham personalities. There are repeater jockeys or Ham shacks on the belt. These are the inter net tech's with IHOP, IRLP and other things that I don't understand. If you don't talk one radio to another the old fashion way, I want nothing to do with it.

A growing bunch, are the CB'er know it alls. These guys worked, WAS and DXCC all on 11 meters and are "the" experts on audio, antennas and everything electronic. They are easy to spot on the air, "how do I sound now?"

Contesters are the fun "type A's". My stuff is bigger and better then yours. Our motto is, "the one with the most toys wins."

Now, back to the "Closet Hams". They are not to sure of themselves and overwhelmed by the tech jargon. The test was hard and they studied diligently to pass. I call them the communicators. Ham radio is for fun. Talking and enjoy listening to the stories of others is an art. Relish this time and make friends with other hams.

We "Ole Timers" have left these hams in the lurch. The "Closet Hams" are very much like we were 50 years ago. Back then, Hams had an etiquette. We listened more then we talked. Some topics as religion, politics and certain crimes were taboo. I look back on those days with a great fondness. Ok, it's natural to reflect on the past but we are in the present/future. How do we marry these eclectic groups ?

Your local Amateur Radio Club should be the common rallying place. I believe that the local club is the backbone of the ham fraternity. What must happen, is due respect given to all. The American Radio Relay League has a "Code of ethics". Please read this !! The missing link is respect for everyone on the spectrum. Today, it seems that there are more and more individuals. Yes, we are individuals, but bound by a common thread, Amateur Radio. I see some local radio clubs with very small memberships. Some people tell me the small clubs are "cliques".

We, Ham Radio operators, consider ourselves communicators. Well, here's a new twist, start talking to one another and communicate. Older hams should try to instill the values of friendship and learning. I, like many started in Ham Radio when I was in high School. It's almost 50 years since then. Many of my Elmer's and friends have died along the way. It seems the older I get, more of friends die. The QCWA was depressing. Each year a good comrade died.

Please find a local Amateur Radio Club and join. You may be surprised by the common interest that you share with others. Today's tight economy, creates many commitments on your time. Work, family, church and relaxing leave few hours for ham radio. Make the best of the time that you spend on ham radio. I have made life long friends from all over the world.

Once you have joined a local club, get involved. Find a program that interest you. Keep it simple, do not over extend yourself. When you find a local club, ask yourself some question.

- 1) Does the club provide service to the community ?
- 2) Do they have a club HF station with antennas and multi mode capability ?
- 3) Does the club promote license upgrades, Elmer's and VE sessions?
- 4) Do they have programs after the regular meetings ?
- 5) Are you comfortable with club ?

These are some questions you may want to ask yourself.

Again, I stress, communicate your ideas and needs to the club members.

Spend time with an "Elmer" on and off the air. When you make a contact try to spend time getting to know the other operator. Do not give just a signal report, name and location . Relax, talk about your interests, and listen to the other operator.

I encourage all hams to join the American Radio Relay League. It is costly, but well worth QST and membership discounts.

Alone we have no voice in the wilderness. Collectively, we can roar !! The League is our only voice to the FCC. The ARRL is there to serve you. They can provide you with publications for all Amateur Radio facets.

Ham Radio is a hobby, it should be fun and interesting. Speak with kindness toward others. See you in the pileups.