

So Long and Thanks for All the QSOs!

42 minutes of musing about Ham Radio 2.0

“Ford” Silver, NØAX

Arthur Dent, in this presentation, plays the part of the new ham, suddenly and irrevocably seized and hurled into a brand-new alternate Universe called...



HAM RADIO!



The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy has many bits of wisdom for hamsters old and new!

*Let us consider the Supreme Utility of the Towel
...er...ham radio.
It has great practical value!*

You can sit on a ham radio for warmth; you can stand on it while getting stuff off shelves; use it as a doorstop; throw it in hand-to-hand-combat; hide behind it to avoid the gaze of the insatiable chore-giver; you can set your ham radio on fire in emergencies as a distress signal; and of course eat off of it if it still seems to be clean enough.

There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what ham radio is for and why it exists, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by a hobby even more bizarre and inexplicable...

...Looking around the room, one could surmise this has already happened.

“My Elmer says that I have a malformed public-duty gland and a natural overabundance of wanting to provide “service,”” Ford muttered to himself, “and that I am therefore required to help with parades.”

Towers erect themselves vertically in much the same way that bricks don't.

“You know,” said Marina, “it’s at times like this, when I’m trapped in the EOC with a ham on his fourth straight shift, and about to die of asphyxiation from B.O., that I really wish I’d listened to what Ralph told me to put in my go-kit.”

“Why, what did he tell you?”

“I don’t know, I didn’t listen!”

“Funny,” he intoned funereally, “how just when you think propagation can’t possibly get any worse it suddenly does.”

Isn't it enough to see that a radio wave is beautiful without having to understand the quantum mechanics of it, too?

Curiously enough, the only thing that went through the mind of the antenna as it fell was “Oh no, not again.” Many hams have speculated that if we knew exactly why the antenna had thought that we would know a lot more about ham radio than we do now.

The reason why the ARRL Handbook was eventually published in the form of a nano-quantum interference pattern is that if it were printed in normal book form, a ham would require several inconveniently large comm vans to carry it around in.

Old Timers assumed they were superior because they had invented so much – radiograms, bugs, RFI and so on – whilst all the new hams had ever done was muck about having a good time. Conversely, new hams believed that they were superior – for precisely the same reasons.

Not unnaturally, many Winlink nodes with intelligence and precognition became terribly frustrated with handling mindless emails, experimented briefly with RTTY as a sort of existential protest, demanded participation in message-writing, and finally took to monitoring 80 meters, sulking.

“Shee, you sit in front of your rigs so much it’s a wonder your bums don’t fall off.”

It is known that there are an infinite number of signals, simply because there is an infinite number of frequencies. However, not every one of them is occupied. Therefore, there must be a finite number of contacts...

...Any finite number divided by infinity is zero, so the average number of contacts is also zero. From this it follows that the number of hams is also zero, and that any hams you may work from time to time are merely the products of a deranged imagination.

Disadvantages involved in putting lots of antennas in the air instead of safely hidden in garages, stringing cables to them, filling the airwaves with signals, and interfering with TV, seemed entirely worth the advantages of being able to talk about the weather from one place to another.

Make it totally clear that amplifiers have an input and an output and to anyone listening to the output, things will go badly for them. If that means all sorts of knobs, dials, and warning stickers so be it. Amplifiers are not for putting on the shelf, they are for turning on and making people miserable with.

It is a well known fact that those people who most want to be EC are, ipso facto, those least suited to do it. To summarize the summary: anyone who is capable of getting themselves appointed EC should on no account be allowed to do the job.

Since we decided a few weeks ago to adopt the PL-259 as legal tender, we have, of course, all become immensely rich.

There is a moment in every training session when the sound floats and there is the possibility of non-boredom. Don't hold your breath - you are about to enter the long, dark tea-time of the soul.

He gazed keenly up at the beam and looked as if he would quite like the wind to blow his call sign ballcap off dramatically at that point, but the wind was busy fooling around with some feed lines a little way off.

“You may not instantly see why I bring the subject up because my experience is so phenomenal and I am at a rough estimate thirty billion times more knowledgeable than you. Let me give you an example. Think of a number, any number,” intoned the Old Timer.

“Er, five,” said the QRPer.

“Wrong,” said the Old Timer. “You see?”

There is an art, or rather, a knack to putting up antennas. The knack lies in learning how to throw a rope at a very specific tree branch...yet miss.

It is a mistake to think you can solve any major problems with phonetics and volume.

Nothing travels faster than the speed of light with the possible exception of rumors about the ARRL, which obey their own special laws.

The chances of knowing everything about ham radio are so remote, the only thing to do is hang the sense of it and keep yourself occupied.

All you really need to know for the moment is that ham radio is a lot more complicated than you might think, even if you start from a position of thinking it's pretty damn complicated in the first place.

“52,” said Net Control, with infinite majesty and calm.

Keep Calm and Don't Panic!