

The Lighter Side of ‘Ham’ Radio

When asked, a lot of people will answer that they picture a Ham radio operator as a heavily whiskered old man, sitting hunched over his radio equipment in a dimly lit little home-made plywood cubicle in a garage or attic, a cigarette dangling from his lower lip, his hand feverishly sending off an endless supply of ‘dits’ and ‘dahs’ in Morse code to his fellow Ham in Muncie, Indiana.

Let me tell you about my first exposure to Ham radio operators. Back in the early 1960’s, I had two friends at Corona High School who, though only 17 years old, were newly licensed Ham radio operators. Let’s call them ‘Jack’ and ‘Doug’ (that’s their real names; they weren’t innocent to begin with). Jack had a mobile Ham radio in his new Plymouth Barracuda, and Doug had a mobile radio in his spiffy new Plymouth Fury two door hardtop. In the summer time on some Friday and Saturday nights, we would engage in what was a popular California sport, called ‘cruising’. However, we elevated that sport to a whole new level. Specifically, Doug and Jack would each have a male friend as a passenger in their car, and they would position their freshly washed and waxed cars at intersections three blocks apart on opposite sides of Magnolia Avenue in Riverside.

I was usually in Doug’s car waiting feverishly for a call over his mobile Ham radio. Suddenly the silence was broken when we heard a radio call from Jack, “Hey guys, there’s two blonds in a Chevy convertible headed your way!” Doug was so suave as he pulled out from the intersection and caught up with the girls at the first stop light. Glances were exchanged and Doug would usually say, “Hey, let’s see you girls at Tuxies (a popular burger joint for teens on Magnolia Ave.). With a little luck we would make arrangements for a double date for the following weekend and sometimes, we would get shot down in flames, it could go either way.

Jack originally retired to Florida because he liked to fish. Doug, a retired aerospace engineer, works part time at a hardware store in Wenatchee, Washington and spends his nights in a plywood cubicle he made in his garage where he corresponds, via Morse code, to Jack who later moved to Muncie, Indiana.

Our meetings are on the last Friday of the month @10AM in the Lodge. We hold radio nets every Wednesday @ 5:45 PM See our website, W6FSB.com for more info. Fred Weck, KK6HBQ