

“Introduction to Parts one, two and three of
Mentoring series”

The information I will be sharing with you this evening came to me in the form of an e-mail from one of our outstanding new Arkansas hams that began his journey into our hobby in 2007 and is now an Extra class. I believe his e-mail addresses the feelings and concerns of many of our Older as well as most of the newer hams in our Arkansas Amateur Community.

I QUOTE:.....:

We, meaning us new hams, don't have the experience of some of the older folks, but many of us have more energy to accomplish things that will benefit everyone. We just need folks that are willing to accept us and encourage us with a friendly word. I wish as you that we could get more of the seasoned hams to dedicate some time to at least mentor one Ham.

I helped an older gentleman build an 11 element 2 meter beam this afternoon and constructed the Gama match from the scrap we had from TV antennas. The one I am using is the same pattern we used today and I get into the 940 in LR from here

with 5 watts. The point being, I only have so much time to try to mentor, and I am one of the new ones who needs much more mentoring. I have had some good mentors for myself, you included in that group, and I am very thankful. I must admit I know that you have mentored other folks, and I do appreciate what you have done and do.

We need to be in a place of serving each other as friends helping each other without any prejudice on either side, because neither the new hams, or the older hams, really had much of a say about the rules as they presently exist. I know the newest hams didn't cause any relaxing of the rules as they were not even hams when the rules and guidelines we now go by were put in place.

The thing is that some folks do not take advice very well, especially when they feel like folks are trying to change their ways by criticizing them. It doesn't work with the old ones and it won't work with the new either. They don't mind how it sounds to the new guy when they are criticizing them, but one word about how the old hams should act and the bolts start to fly out of the few machines that look for a reason to fall apart. I know that there are some, if they could read this e-mail, that would

have a problem with me saying it as it would be the new against the old argument, which I never would have thought would be an issue in Ham radio. They forgot and left that one out of the materials I read when studying for my exams.

It is not that some of the older Hams are failing to do their duty, but it is more in these terms. If we could get more seasoned Hams to mentor and to Elmer us, what a great privilege it would be, and if they don't, then we will loose out on many of the great traditions of the Ham radio of the past that only they can teach us.

Lets consider discussing what it is the new ham needs to do in order to get some of those well rounded, extremely polite and understanding Elmer's and mentors to help us. What do the old timers expect the new guys to do? We can't change the ARRL or the FCC any more than they can. What did the experienced Hams that are now in the hobby have to do in order to get the Elmer's and mentors of their days to Elmer and mentor them? I wonder if any of the old timers experienced folks when they were new, who knew it all, but died with their information rather than to have shared it with a fellow Ham. I wonder how many had rather take

the bitterness they have toward National organizations, and let that hold them back from elmering or mentoring some new folks. I realize the correct difference between the Elmer and the mentor, but we have a great need for both. Either way, people need to understand, the new Hams are the future of ham radio like it or not.

The biggest thing I have gotten from the new hams in my area, and some of the older less vocal ones I have talked with at Hamfest this year, regarding HF, is not so much what has been said to them. They just don't like the constant controversy regardless of who they agree with, and some of the guys I am talking about have been hams for decades. They don't want to take time out of their evenings away from family to listen to any "us verses them" discussions. It doesn't matter if it is in reference to the ASTEN or the Sunday Morning Net, they just want honest accurate training and leadership without any us verses them. They want training that will help them be better operators - better Hams - Better EMCOMM servants and the list could cover much more, as long as it doesn't fit under the "green behind the ear, stupid New ham discussion" or the "grouchy old fart is on the rampage again discussions), both of those are

considered a waste of time by most folks and I understand that you and I agree on that, but I am still venting a bit.

The older hams should realize, the only reason the new ham would ever lose the respect for the older hams, is to listen to them bellyache and complain about how little knowledge the new guys have, and yet the old timers not offering to share the wealth of knowledge he has. It would make the new guy think, maybe it's because the only thing these older Hams really know is how to gripe and moan. It's like the older ham laughing at the new guy for being thirsty and then not being willing to offer him a drink because he knows if he offers him the drink, he can no longer laugh at him for being thirsty. That's what causes me to lose respect for folks.

Maybe the reason they don't mentor or Elmer, is maybe they have forgotten. I don't think like that, but the only other option makes you think they have a tremendous amount of knowledge, but they want the new hams to starve out for a lack of support, and that is just not going to happen. Mentoring and elmering however is the issue that is a must (if the Ham radio even that I know, is going to survive)

In other words, in my fairytale land, we would all work together, the new and the old, we would all have wide shoulders and not be easily offended, the old would teach the new about tradition and share the experience they have and be excited for the new guy to be interested in what they had to say, the new guy listening attentively at every word wanting to learn..

Then in contrast the new guys who can, should offer to climb a tower, to help his fellow older hams, install wire antennas, crawl under the floor to run cables, find something for them on the internet and print it out for them and mail it to them if they don't have a PC or internet, and there are a lot of Hams who don't have computers. Maybe help them with computer questions and digital stuff for the ones who are interested. There are new hams that are doing stuff so advanced I never thought ham radio would include it. We have new hams here that are beaming broadband high speed internet, all over the county on 2.gigahertz. ONE OF Those guys is my son. I get internet at 3MB per second over RF. These guys can do things with 1 watt that I can't do with 1000. The thing is we all have things to offer, but the new guys are not going to offer "what they know" to folks who will only

gripe that the new guys, are somehow stupid, even if they are electronics engineers and hold degrees, but they didn't learn the code etc etc etc..

HOGWASH

If ham radio is going to be what it should be, everybody needs to quit griping, both the new and the old, and start setting goals instead that will require the new guys to be mentored by the old, and the old to depend on the energy of the new to make new breakthroughs in the hobby. Surely this was done in the past, or everyone would still be using AM tube rigs?

If we CAN'T turn this thing around, and I honestly believe with a real honest effort on all sides that we can, the day will come when the new hams will carry the day, and it will be at the expense of the old. New folks are only going to respect the older hams for so long before they start to rebel and if that happens the day will come when you see the new hams ridiculing the old-timers for being obsolete and out of date and out of touch and laugh at them for the lack of knowledge about Modern Ham radio. The old timers won't all die out at the same time so that means many of them will have to suffer being a minority on the bands and I can only

hope the new generation of hams will treat them with respect, yet I don't think it will be automatic anymore. It will have to be earned.

“PART ONE MENTORING SERIES”

Over the next three evenings I will be presenting some different views as seen by some of our newer Ham's and how mentoring is important to the well being of Amateur radio. This material is being presented as food for thought and is in its original form as written except for a few illegal words that I did not see reason to use. It is my hope that everyone will listen to what these new hams have said with an open mind. Some of the things I'll be covering the next few nights I agree with, some things I can see or have seen and heard and something's have left a question in my mind. I am sure that there will be some that will try their best to down play what I will be presenting and there will be those of you that can agree with most of it and yes, some will totally agree. None of this series of mentoring lesson plans are meant to degrade any group, person, club, net, newer hams or Older hams, and I ask that everyone please remember, I am only reading what others have written. This evenings program was written by a gentleman in

the Dallas, TX area that is heavy into emcomm and the NTS, KE5ICX and it's title is:::~::~:

Does Ham Radio Suck? You Tell Me

I quote.....

I would love to think ham radio is a noble hobby and an opportunity for others to enjoy the social and technical aspects of this hobby; a method of exercising “both” sides of the brain in a constructive and one would hope, fun way.

One thing I'm discovering as I enter my 3rd year in this hobby is a bit of, shall we say, disappointment in several areas. These would be the “myths” of ham radio which I thought were the unchanging “truths” about the hobby and the people in it.

I bring these things up, not in anger or in malice, but as a point of discussion or reason.

Myth: Hams are primarily social animals and seek other hams and members of the public to promote and preserve ham radio.

The LAST thing many fellow hams want to do is reach out and talk to either “new” people in the hobby, or fellow hams they don't already know. In

short, they head to their friends they met 30+ years ago and stick with those people. You won't find them congregating with new people, nor do they extend a hand of friendship to people possessing new call signs or help others who look "lost" amongst a sea of unfamiliar faces.

Also, I've noticed, when hams have an opportunity to promote the hobby they "talk a great game," saying they will attend this or that event to promote ham radio, but as is the situation with any ordinary hobby, fail to show up. The same handful of people attend and promote those hobbies while the vast majority of those who SAY they contribute, don't. They perpetuate a lie and their imaginary presence at events speaks volumes about how much they really care about their hobby and their community. "Let someone else do it and I'll take "credit" on the air." I personally grow weary going to event after event and seeing the same 1/2 dozen faces doing all the work and all the promotion. Yet I can expect three or more times that number of hams headed to a local hamfest "looking for deals". To me, that's selfish and self-centered.

Myth - Ham radio is the pinnacle of technology for civilians interested in electronics and

communications.

While this sort of thing is true with some hams - those who experiment with frequencies and modes of operation - these folks are in the minority.

Digital modes and capabilities are 40 years old, by many standards, and many hams still use 15 to 25 year old modems to communicate. When I attend hamfests it's more like a trip down memory lane – VOM's, oscilloscopes, even shortwave equipment I used when I was in high school are numerous and prevalent at these events.

I have no problem with preserving our past, but I really question whether we want to LIVE in it.

Myth: Hams are optimistic.

No they aren't. They could quite probably be the most pessimistic, negative, people I've ever met. I think some people actually exit this hobby because they get so tired of the negative vibes over the airwaves and at meetings. It's an increasingly older crowd of white men who lament "America's diminishing greatness," evil politics, terrible nations, and lousy operators worldwide. Yawn. Let me speak to these hams directly: I'm tired of

hearing about how your fellow ham is a “lousy human being” and “doesn’t deserve a radio license”. I really don’t want to hear about how you hate “this or that” political party, or how the loss of “CW” has created “morons on the air””

Myth: Hams mentor others and help them become better, more knowledgeable operators.

Hardly. Many hams never venture out of their shacks. They hide in their shacks away from family, friends and other hams. Their hobby is their oasis and they selfishly never share their passion or interests with other family members, kids, or new hams. They don’t attend club meetings, or if they do, run to their friends with the sole intent to talk about what new do-dad or what-not they acquired for their shack. You never hear a story about how they visited the BSA or some social event and brought in new people to the hobby. You don’t hear much from them talking to a new ham on the radio. If they DO talk to a new ham it’s usually about how they had “no clue” what an RST is or how they ventured into contesting frequencies causing the earth to fall out of equilibrium and ruining their contesting fun.

It's another "object lesson" for "listeners" to stay out of the hobby.

Also, you'll hear how these individuals speak affectionately about their Elmer who got them involved in the hobby, but never about how they helped someone else new get into their beloved hobby.

Myth: Hams are prepared for any emergency and willing to take on health and humanitarian messages and missions for their community.

Nope. Most who claim ARES or RACES certification, or drone on during emergency preparedness nets NEVER check in on their local traffic nets, or actively pursue contact with their local hospitals, Red Cross, or other organizations. Case in point, I had a RACES member proudly check into my NTS net. The usual 3 or 4 people who regularly handle message traffic weren't available. I asked him to take a message in his local area. My request was met with silence. I know he heard my request because he has never checked in on my net ever again. My punishment for daring to ask "royalty" to do something constructive on my net. I can only speculate that his opinion is "how

dare he request help of ME - MR. RACES.”

“Tiring” doesn’t begin to describe my feelings about all this.

So, if you’ve read this far, and you are a ham, your blood pressure is probably through the roof. Good thing too, there’s a reason why I wrote this. It’s simply this. Ham operators, myself included, aren’t special nor do we wield special powers, insight, loyalty, or love. We are ordinary people who, potentially, can do good for their community, but they have to recognize several things.

1. In order to gain the respect of the community, you must give to it freely and honestly before they respect you. No “official” capacity, radio related or not, will automatically give you that respect.

2. You must be honest and caring about yourself and others around you. How you conduct yourself speaks volumes about you and how you relate to others on and off the radio.

3. Give back to the hobby. Offer your services and not lip-service. A liar is easy to spot - particularly if you are the person “giving” and someone else is

SAYING they are “giving”.

Our hobby is in trouble. Frequencies and operators are in short supply both at our peril of non-interest and collective dysfunctional behavior. We have more passion for berating others and “making that radio deal” than finding ways to preserve the hobby.

I find this misuse of personal energy most disturbing. Don't you?

The strength of our hobby is the diversity of activities that we can do as part of the hobby. Whether it is public service, digital modes, contesting or DX'ing, we can learn something new, you can become skilled in that area and when you get bored you can move on to learning something new, all in the same hobby.

Yet, too often, the experts in that sub-segment of the hobby trivialize where that person is at, trying to learn a new area of the hobby, with their learning curve. We've all heard quite often that you won't be a “real” Ham until you learn Morse Code. Right? Every day somewhere on our bands you can hear someone callously condemn fellow hams who

came in the hobby with a no-code license as not being “real hams.”

Hearing this behavior does not encourage people to join our hobby. This kind of talk makes newer ham’s want to crawl into a hole and die. Or, at least sheepishly walk away from the hobby. Or, tell the person to get a life and tell them to shove it and then walk away from the hobby.

When you are learning something new, no one is perfect. And to berate someone for their imperfection trivializes the work they are doing to become proficient at what they are doing in the hobby. We should be teaching and applauding the effort because life is about learning.

Are you trivializing the work of fellow hams?

“Part two Mentoring series”

This evening we are again quoting another ham, N5FDL, who is an EC and has been in emcomm several years that gives his thought as to mentoring and why.

IN DEFENSE OF HAMCRAMS / OR AS WE KNOW THEM, SUPER SESSIONS

Sometimes it helps the radio amateur to have a tough

skin, at least when dealing with his “brother” hams. I know this because lately I’ve raised the ire of some older hams that seem to believe the only “door” to amateur radio should be the one they entered through.

The ARRL says:::::

Although the main purpose of Amateur Radio is fun, it is called the Amateur Radio Service because it has a serious face. The FCC created our Service to fill the need for a pool of experts who could provide backup emergency communications. In addition, the FCC acknowledged the ability of the hobby to advance the communication and technical skills of our Service.

I think it’s fair to say that over the past few decades’ amateur radio hasn’t done much to dramatically advance the communication and technical skills of radio the way hams once did.

What that leaves us with, and this isn’t likely to be taken away from us anytime soon, is “the need for a pool of skilled operators who can provide backup emergency communications.” The amateur radio slogan, “When All Else Fails,” really is as true today as ever and we get chances to prove it. We need skilled people. But what kind? While

technical proficiency remains important, other skills matter also. Being a weather spotter requires more meteorological skill than radio knowledge. Search and rescue teams find amateur radio very helpful, but search techniques and skills matter at least as much. Hospitals need back up communications, but knowing something about how an ER functions can help also. Hams can and have learned about these non ham radio task, though often at a very superficial level. Just enough to do what the mission requires!!!

So, is one group, the ham's better than the emergency workers. I don't really think so, especially when ham radio operators of any kind are in short supply.

The writer of this article says, and I have to agree with him, is "My response is simple:" If we can't get more skilled hams interested in emergency communications, lets get some non hams involved. Let's find people who are already expert in one or more emergency skills and for whom amateur radio would be another useful tool.

Many of the ARRL Sections have been using one or two day Ham Crams/Super Sessions as a way to

give people who already have useful emergency skills a ham radio license that will help them do something else that's important and requires communications. In that way we've helped firefighters, police officers, emergency managers, nurses, maintenance workers and volunteers who work with them to get their ham license. Some of these people are senior officials whose support for amateur radio can make good things happen for us. Also, Ham Crams help current hams get their friends and family member's licenses. With that comes the responsibility for us older hams to teach the new hams what they need to know. Will the newer hams make stupid mistakes? Of course, but that should only provide an opportunity for us to do what hams have already been pretty good at: Welcoming newcomers to our hobby, becoming mentors and doing what we can to get at least some of these new hams interested in becoming real hams. If people want to criticize what is being done it is their right and I understand and sympathize with your concerns about Ham Crams/ Super Sessions. Of Course, if you think emergency training matters as much as radio training, it's a toss up.

Right now, I am working with our seven hospitals to get maybe 60 nurses, techs, and other staff members licensed so they can operate during quarterly communications drills. During a real emergency, we'll use a mix of these folks to meet the communications requirement for reporting how many and what types of hospital beds are available at each facility.

These people will represent a larger potential resource than the total number of hams in our county's RACES organization. Having them available frees other ARES and RACES members for other communications tasks.

Part three Mentoring Series

Kinder, Gentler, Ham Radio

One of the phrases in ham radio is "Elmering". The story goes someone new to ham radio had a buddy who mentored him into the hobby, his name, Elmer. Many, many hams state and believe this is the way to maintain our hobby, yet, and this is a personal observation over the last year and a half, but many

hams don't make a concerted effort to reach out to people in the hobby.

It's my belief every ham should make that effort. They should show their enthusiasm and share that enthusiasm with potential hams and new hams.

Personally, some of the behavior of many of our seasoned hams suggest the opposite, in my view. And while any licensed ham is free to do whatever is legally allowed, there's an undercurrent of resentment about where the FCC has gone in recent months and a perceived "loss of tradition" involving just how long a new ham should have to "wait" before entering HF or being considered "worthwhile" by established hams.

This may seem "hurtful", but as a new ham myself (licensed only for the last 1 1/2 years) – I'm still feeling a little like an "outsider" myself.

I've heard the following phrases and their descriptions by fellow hams.

Appliance Operator: A person who buys a complicated radio and knows nothing about its operation, construction, or capabilities. They PPT

and they are on the air.

Extra Easy Class: These are people who earned their Extra class with 5WPM or without element 1 code as a requirement.

CB Operator Mentality: Anyone - usually with a new call sign - who is trying to learn ham radio with a new rig and reach out to a repeater - any repeater - to talk with someone.

I'm sure there are others, but my point of this post is simple: as radio operators who are passionate about our hobby, it's in our best interest to help and engage other operators - particularly our new operators.

Currently, with the new removal of element 1 (CW) from FCC regulations some folks who couldn't or wouldn't learn CW can now gain their General Class license. Listening to some hams you would have thought the world came to an end. But, in fact, the ranks of General and Extra Class have been in decline for years. The result? We could have lost those frequencies with Element 1 still in place. Next to polar bears - the "HF ham" may have become an extinct species.

Many fear a “CB” mentality on HF with the infusion of people who weren’t novices, CW aware, or even interested in the technical aspects of the hobby. Some feel this means the “frequencies will go to hell” and I’ve already hear grouching about how breaking stations go “on and on” not knowing the frequency is in use. Or that people fail to use proper etiquette while communicating with others.

Bah!

It’s our job as hams to help each other and learn appropriate operating procedure. The fact is, you aren’t getting Morse Code back as the “filter” to prevent easier entry to HF. It’s up to those already on HF to help new people and to police existing hams on proper procedure.

On another, similar topic, it would be nice when new people visit local ham clubs, those clubs embrace visitors, new members, and actively engage them. Even the clubs I belong to fail to make others feel comfortable. They run to their friends and engage in the latest technical topic of the day leaving new people sitting alone, to fend for themselves. My own experience with one club - one

I've visited since November (it's now September - 10 months later) where not a single member (or officer) has attempted to talk to me.

That's deplorable.

Maybe if I looked like the incredible melting man, or had bad breath, or Tourette's Syndrome, that might invite a cold shoulder from veteran members. But that's not the case. From the president down to lowly members - none feel the compunction to talk to their new membership and I'm an example of this. (Yes, I could jump in and force myself on them - but why SHOULD I?)

Of course, people like myself will eventually go away, never to return.

Sad isn't it? That our "proud" Emerging heritage is that thinly applied today. We talk a good game, but do we really believe it?

And you are probably saying, "Bob, you are full of it. We go to events and try to get people to join our club and participate in events."

That may, or may not be true. Some of the public

service events I've been to I've watched club members sit as far as they can from a table where people are looking at information about the club. Club members don't walk over and engage those people - again - they sit with their friends outside of "ear shot" and engage conversation with the same folks they've grown used to. Come on people, we are radio operators. Our hobby is about communications with each other.

Field Day is another example of how we ignore visitors. I've noticed how few members of clubs actually walked up to visitors and gave them a tour of the club setup. Or offer materials the visitor can take home. Or offered them a chance to "get on the air." Our "Get on the Air" (GOTA) station sat vacant through most of Field Day. That station should be continuously occupied by new Techs, or those unlicensed to operate - with the most social General/Extra class operator available.

I'm very concerned we aren't even doing the minimal best to extend our hand to the community. One of the clubs I frequent is very much into emergency operations and support. They do a fantastic job with that, but they don't do any sort of "reach out" to the local community in any

substantive way. You won't find them in the local school systems drumming up enthusiasm for amateur radio - or for their club. You won't find them responding to new people on their local repeater, or inviting them to a club meeting.

Why is that?

So I say this. Here's what I think is going on - and how to avoid it.

1. Drop the "Elitist Behavior" - Sorry, some hams came into this hobby with "home built rigs" or got their license at the FCC field office and are masterful at 28 WPM CW. Good for you! Now share your knowledge and enthusiasm with new hams. Tell them about how "hard it was" but don't hold that against someone new to the hobby. Help them set-up their new HF station. Explain how grounding systems work, share net etiquette, and invite people to your daily or weekly net.
2. Move out of your "safe zone". Sure, you're trained, you've been to tornado stricken zones, you've been honored by the ARRL for your community service, and you are on a first name basis with your local mayor. When was the last

time you invited a new ham to your disaster meeting? Offered to explain how ARES works? Taken someone on a fox hunt? Invited someone into your shack to listen in on your MARS net? Never? Hummm... How about inviting a new ham to “go for coffee” – there’s dozens of them on 2-meter repeaters anxious to make their first contact. Offer up some of those exciting stories you’ve collected over the years. Buy the guy (or gal) a cup of coffee - shake their hand and say, “Welcome to the most exciting and diverse hobby on the planet. Glad to have you here!” Imagine their reaction and the satisfaction you get by being the first bonafide REAL ham they’ve met - and YOU made them feel at home.

2. You don’t know everything – don’t expect new people to know everything either.

Everyone has a “comfort zone” involving this hobby. I can’t tell you how many older hams lament “new radios”, computer software, D*Star, and other technologies which new hams may find interesting. Sure, you know the grid voltages of major transmitter vacuum tubes by heart. You can draw a working amplifier circuit on a napkin. You can load any band with your 40 meter beam antenna

and talk the world. Perhaps that new ham who “doesn’t know which side of the microphone to talk on,” just might know something about how to make that cluster radio program work with your radio. Hummm.... You may be that “hard line” Advanced Class operator who won’t upgrade because “Advanced was harder than Extra and I’ve got the FCC license to prove it”, but still can’t get their PC to boot! Yikes! Get over it and combine forces with new people. Let others enjoy the hobby by sharing your own expertise with them and they with you. There’s no loss in pride by learning new things from people, younger than you, for which they can make this hobby “new to you”.

3. Stop sitting in that same spot at your club meeting. Engage in the effort to “make new friends.” And don’t practice “age discrimination” - sit with that 20 something, 30 something, even 40 and 50 something. Find the “new guy in the room” and walk right up to him. Introduce yourself, tell them “welcome to the meeting” and, if appropriate, “welcome to the hobby.” It’s all about “extending your range” - not through a linear amp, but through mentorship and friendship.

REMEMBER YOU WERE A "NEW HAM" AT ONE TIME, AND YOU WERE THRILLED WHEN WELCOMED TO THE HOBBY BY A "SEASONED VETERAN" OF THE HOBBY.

ELMER - MENTOR - COACH

The 2007 changes in licensing by the FCC have created a significant surge in the number of licensees. This is great for the Amateur Radio Service, BUT, it also suggests that there are many new amateurs that haven't got a clue about the many intricacies, practices, technology or capabilities of amateur radio. They need help **BIG TIME**.

The very best advice any of us could give to these hams is to join the American Radio Relay League. The ARRL is dedicated to all aspects of our wonderful service/hobby and is a must if you want to get real enjoyment and satisfaction from your privileges.

For decades, knowledgeable hams have stepped up and become mentors (Elmers).

Elmering or mentoring has long been the backbone of Amateur Radio. While technology constantly evolves, the human interaction between hams will

not be replaced and will always remain one of the hobby's strongest traditions. As licensed hams we are all ambassadors of Amateur Radio.

Every Ham should take the time to become an Elmer at some point in their career, by helping one other person to learn about the hobby will insure the survival and growth of the hobby. Remember if every one mentors just one person we will double our Numbers.