

“BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY”

I cannot count the number of times in the past few years that I have heard fellow hams lamenting about the lack of “elmering” in Amateur Radio today. For those who are not familiar with the term “elmer,” it basically refers to experienced hams taking new hams under their wings, showing them the ropes and helping them to get started in their Amateur Radio careers. Back in the “good old days, as some call them” hams helped out hams, both new and old. I keep hearing that this is not the case anymore and there seems to be more division between new and old hams now. Why is this you ask?

Well, the average age for an Amateur Radio operator can be directly attributed to the lack of physical elmering, i.e. helping to set up antennas and towers. You can hardly blame a 75-year-old ham for not being able to help with your tower work, now can you?, but what about teaching new hams the ropes on the air or in person, i.e. teaching for the purpose of upgrading and furthering the knowledge of another Amateur in the radio arts?

I have seen newer hams get shunned by some of the older hams. They also get told that they are not a “real ham,” whatever that is. Plus there is the fighting that occasionally occurs complete with “You should know that, you idiot, or you damn LID!” type of comments. Many old timers do feel that new hams are getting into radio far too easily, and they discount them due to this. However, this is the wrong attitude to take. In these cases it is up to the more experienced hams to help out the new guys. Sure, you have to be patient and do a fair amount of hand holding along the way, but in the end it will be worth it. Plato said, “Never discourage anyone, who continually makes progress, no matter how slow.”

Here’s a perfect example... I heard a story about an older elmer, who that when it came time for him to move to from one State to another to be near his family and no one wanted to help him dismantle his towers or antennas. He could not climb anymore or lift the heavier things outside. It seemed no one cared, though. That really had to hurt, being an Amateur Radio operator for so long, doing so much for others and for Amateur Radio, and helping his fellow hams all of his life, then not being able to

get help when he need it. I am sure that is where some of the bitterness comes from and why many of the older hams seem to have an inherent mistrust of new hams. Far too many new hams are unwilling to “pay back” the old timers by befriending them and helping them to do the things that they can no longer do physically. In today’s world of Amateur Radio, elmering is a give and take affair.

It never ceases to amaze me when hams do not want to help out their fellow hams. It is even worse when no one even seems to care about fellow hams.

I have noticed that the general consensus from new hams is that they did not get ANY help with getting licensed or upgraded. However, they did not say if they bothered to ask for it or not. You cannot assume that other hams know that you want or need help. You have to ask. It seems like many of the newer and younger hams are not helping out the older hams when it comes to putting up their stations when they move somewhere and are unable to do it by themselves. They also are not helping out with simpler tasks like routine antenna maintenance. Remember what I said about give and take? Don’t make them ask. Go out and offer your help. You are the new ham; it is up to you to make the first move. You might be surprised at the help and knowledge that you receive in return. You will most likely end up with a great friend!

Sure there is a fair amount of division between the “Old Guard” and the “Newbie’s” these days. We have both groups wanting help from the other without recognizing the needs of the other group. Let’s start breaking down the “barriers.” The best way to accomplish this is to get out there and start helping your fellow hams. I feel that elmering should go both ways. This is the true art of elmering. That is the way it always has and always will work. It is time to start giving back not only to your fellow Amateur but also to Amateur Radio by practicing the art of elmering.

Remember, “Good judgment comes from experience, experience comes from bad judgment”.

Folks, unfortunately there is always going to be a group of hams, old timers, old farts, whatever you want to call them who think that because you didn’t pass the same exams they did that you don’t deserve your

ticket or that you are somehow lesser of an operator than they are. It's an old argument that has been around at least since the code requirement was lowered to 5 WPM for all classes. "They didn't pass the same test I did so I'm not going to talk to them, I'll just take my toys and go home!" Sounds kind of like a five year old brat doesn't it? Well it is a brat; it's just an older narrow minded brat is all. Ignore them and enjoy the hobby. Find yourself a copy of the amateur's code and conduct yourself according to that. You'll be fine and you'll be accepted and respected by most. As for the rest, let them wallow in that poisonous negativity and bitterness. I think they really enjoy it or they would have gotten on with the hobby and continued enjoying it rather than grouching about "how it used to be".