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Wireless Association
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No Regular Meeting this Month.
Join the fun at the MARA/MWA
dinner on December 13 (See last
month's Solid Copy).

Stocking-Stuffer Strategy – A True Christmas Story



I know a ham, call him Elmer, who has figured out a way to get what he *really* wants in his Christmas stocking.

The custom in his family is for each person to hang a stocking – the largest one available – late

on Christmas Eve. Of course the hope of each person is that Saint Nick, or at least Mrs. Nick, or if not her then one of Nick's many helpers and stooges, would place goodies in the stocking sometime before breakfast on Christmas Day.

Now everyone in the family knew that Elmer was a Radio Ham – Hams kind of stand out, you know. But his family didn't know how to buy any of those strange parts, switches, knobs,

tubes, wires, boxes, or other esoteric paraphernalia that seemed to send Elmer into glassy-eyed throes of ecstasy. So, on Christmas mornings, Elmer feigned a smile of delight as he emptied his stocking. He ate the raisins and the M&M's, cracked a few of the nuts, put batteries in the key chain flashlight and sniffed the little bottle of pea-green cologne. He dug deeper in the stocking hoping to find at least a bubble pack of 2N222 transistors, only to find more M&Ms. Sometimes there were a few more gadgets and trinkets, but as far as real ham radio stuff, the stockings were always lacking.

The thing about the whole stocking stuffing lark was that no one knew who had placed the stuff in the stockings. There was a lot of stealth in those dark hours of Christmas Eve. That was a big part of the fun. And for Elmer, that element of secrecy was the key to his plan.

It began with a solder sucker. Elmer didn't have one on his bench, and it would be so handy for those kits and jobs. No one in the family would ever, ever, put a solder sucker in his stocking. The day before Christmas, while he was out beginning his gift shopping, he dropped into Radio Shack and bought a solder sucker. That night, after all of the sneaking around the house had settled down, he crept to where his

Best Wishes
for a
Merry Christmas

stocking was hanging, and crammed in the solder sucker. He put the stocking stuffers (mostly M&Ms) for the rest of the family in the other stockings and went back to bed. Visions of solder drops danced in Elmer's head that night.

Christmas breakfast was, as always, a bright and cheery time. Everyone was delighted with the haul they had made from their stocking. Elmer finally got out of bed and came in with his stocking. All watched as he emptied the contents – M&Ms, nuts, raisins, a 1/4 inch nut driver, new socks, and the solder sucker.

Elmer grinned from ear to ear as he removed the solder sucker from the stocking. "My very own solder sucker.," he blurted. Smug grins popped up all around the room. None of them knew who gave the tool. No questions were asked. That was part of the lark. They were all so happy that he was pleased with *their* gift.

Since that day years ago, Elmer has found in his stocking an HT, a subscription to *CQ* magazine, a *full* set of nut drivers, a "morse code" key, a speaker-mic, a dummy load, and various connectors, adapters, and obscure parts. Elmer's family is pleased that they have made him so happy with his stocking.

– Jack, WF8X

MWA Repeaters IV

This is the final article in the MWA Repeaters series.

Simplex operation on 2 meter FM is greatly underutilized. Simplex operation simply means that two stations talk on the exact same frequency. The stations are in direct contact without going through a repeater. So what does simplex operation have to do with repeater operations?

The primary function of a repeater is to provide communications between stations that can't otherwise communicate because of terrain, equipment limitations or both. It follows that stations able to communicate without a repeater should not use one. That way, the repeater is available for stations that need it.

After you have made a contact on a repeater, move the conversation to a *simplex* frequency if possible. The repeater is not a soapbox. You may like to listen to yourself, but others, who may wish to use the repeater, may not be so appreciative.

To see if you and the other station can communicate on a simplex frequency, listen on the repeater input frequency. This is done with the "Reverse" function on most FM transceivers. If you can clearly hear what's going into the repeater, you don't need the repeater to communicate. (Besides, simplex offers a degree of privacy impossible to achieve on a repeater and you can carry on an extensive conversation without interruption).

Move your conversation to a frequency that is designated for FM simplex operation. The ARRL Band Plan designates 146.40 - 146.58 and 147.42 - 147.57 for FM simplex operations. But remember that 146.52 is the two-meter simplex National Calling Frequency and should be used only to arrange movement to another frequency.

If you need to perform an on-the-air test of a 2 meter radio, do not use the repeater. Do your testing on an unoccupied simplex frequency.

The shorter range of simplex operation is not often a problem for the many short-range conversations between mobiles that each may be running 25 -50 watts of power. With the exception of a couple of "dead spots" in downtown Morgantown, simplex operation can be carried on effectively throughout the community. Perhaps half of all conversations on the MWA repeaters can be completed on simplex frequencies.

So check your repeater QSOs and see how far you can get with simplex. If the other station fades, you can always jump back to the repeater.

– Norton, WD8AFJ

