

Comma Plucker Breaks for CB

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BREAK FOR A 4-H CB PROJECT? Why not? Everyone else is getting into the CB way of life. So I wrote "Go Breaker — A 4-H CB Project." The missive is written to acquaint our 4-H members with the usefulness of CB and I have also provided some projects for the "learn by doing" aspect.

The introduction suggests that every CB-equipped vehicle is an extra pair of eyes to help forest rangers spot forest fires, range fires elsewhere, flesh floods or any other hazards to life or property. For motorists, those other hazards could include road conditions such as fog, snow, ice, traffic conditions or an accident (known as a 10-33 in CB jargon). I have been involved in assisting in a couple of 10-33's with my mobile unit and this gave me the basis for one of the projects. More about that later.

But how did I write this when I am a journalist who spends his time wrestling with dangling participles, quotation marks that wander inside and outside of the closing punctuation, whether to use effect or affect and those other little vagaries of our English language? So why would a comma plucker want to write something on diodes, capacitors, transistors, impedance, ohms and things like that? I didn't.

While I have enjoyed radio as a lifelong hobby starting with crystal sets, I wished not to duplicate the abundant CB literature already on the market. Those books go into the technical aspects of CB and the attendant electronics and they are written by pros who know. Besides, I do not have training in electronics anyway.

But to develop the 4-H project, I bought a stack of books and researched them out to write something that wasn't there. Namely some of the nitty gritty one learns after having used a CB for years.

As projects, let the 4-H members learn some of the terms like prescriptions, Tijuana Taxi, pregnant roller skate, seat covers, chicken coop, portable parking lot, ground clouds and the like. Then have the members write sentences using CB jargon. In the projects, I used these for openers:

1. There's a pregnant roller skate on my back door in the Monfort Lane.
2. Hey, that guy's got a pretty seat cover in his car!
3. Smokey has a 4-wheeler down writing a prescription.
4. Better keep the shiny side up and the greasy side down because there's fluff stuff on the grand slab.

Well then, so what does all this mean?

1. There's a Volkswagen (usually a van) to the rear of me in the passing lane.
2. That guy has a pretty girl in his car.
3. The highway patrol has an automobile stopped and is writing a citation. (Which the driver will pay in green stamps — unless he should beat the rap.)
4. There's snow on the freeway. So be careful and don't have a wreck.

I think having the 4-H members write this kind of sentences will make an exceedingly interesting project for I think their ingenuity would be endless. Should be good for laughs too.

As for the Smokeys, I haven't proposed this project as a anti-Smokey activity to beat the double nickel limit (55 mph) or to look out for picture takers (radar). Fact is, law enforcement personnel like CB operators.

CBers are an excellent lot in advising police of wrecks, drunk drivers (willy weavers), reckless drivers (harvey wallbangers), and other perils of the grand slab. So you see, look at all those extra eyes helping the Smokeys. This is especially advantageous since more and more patrol cars have CB radios (ears) and police stations (bear dens) frequently have base stations.

Part of the project was founded upon my regularly being asked how does one select the right CB radio and where. This is a good question when there are so many makes, models and claims about those available in drug stores, discount houses, by mail order and even radio stores. Even one who has fooled around with CB for years gets confused. Especially now that the FCC (Uncle Charley) has added 17 more channels to the previously existing 23. So a project: How to Buy a CB. And . . . I based much of what I wrote in the project book on what people asked me.

Thus I hit the aspect of buying a CB quite hard as I did not really find much of that type of information in existing literature. Along with purchasing a CB radio (transceiver), I also bored into selection of an aerial because one could buy the best CB available only to lose its effectiveness with a cheap antenna. So another project: How to select an antenna.

Okay, so one buys a good antenna, but even the antenna is useless if not properly tuned. Thus yet another project: Discuss how to tune an antenna. Antenna tuning is critical when one considers that a CB radio transmits on only four watts of output power. That is not much at all when you remember that a mobile unit has an average range of 8 to 10 miles — sometimes. A mobile's range can be reduced by buildings, power lines, lots of CB traffic, mountains, ignition noises from other vehicles and about anything else one can think of.

Thus a poor antenna or one that is out of tune can cut transmitting distance down to a few city blocks. Such suggests care in tuning and

provides the project: Describe how to tune a CB antenna using the VU meter on the transceiver or a SWR meter. SWR meters are fairly inexpensive and are exceedingly useful and accurate in tuning an antenna. They are easy to use too.

Equally important as antenna selection and tuning is placement of the antenna on the vehicle. I see a lot of improperly placed antennas and such also curtails the effectiveness of radios and aerials. You guessed it! A project on antenna placement.

Now for the 10-33's. Once my son and I were hiking on the desert north of Reno and were returning home when we were first upon an injury accident. We discovered two young ladies lying out in the middle of the highway alongside their badly damaged and overturned car. They were in a great deal of pain and one of the girl's legs was obviously broken.

So while my son set out flares and diverted traffic, I radioed into Reno and requested an ambulance, the highway patrol and a wrecker. It wasn't long before all of them came blazing up the highway to our point nine miles north of town. With the radio, we figured we got assistance to them in about 30 minutes less time.

My message was picked up by some public spirited CBer who was monitoring Channel 9, the channel designated by the FCC for emergency use only. Obviously the CB operator telephoned for help. The cooperative Nevada Highway Patrol, by the way, replaced our flares.

The other 10-33 involved us when we were way up in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains and a long way from phones, doctors and ambulances. At first we thought we had a life and death situation with a fellow camper and I tried to radio for help from our campsite with my mobile unit.

But that didn't work because we were in a pocket and I could not get a signal out because of the surrounding forest and mountains. So we drove up to a bench several miles away where we were also clearer of obstructions. This time a CB operator with a base station high on a mountain about seven miles away picked us up and advised he would pass the word along.

He sent the message on to Truckee (California) which was about 25 airline miles distant and a helicopter was dispatched from there. As it turned out, the California Highway Patrol in Sacramento (about 80 airline miles away) also picked up the signal and passed the request for help to Truckee. Higher elevations and freedom from interference will really boost a CB's range.

Since I did not receive verification help was on the way, we started out for the nearest telephone 18 miles away. As we drove along, my son continued to give the location and description of the 10-33 and you can not imagine how many helpful campers were monitoring their radios and offered to also pass the word.

In the meantime the campground manager considered the situation critical enough that he put a mattress in his panel truck and evacuated the victim

himself. That was just as well, however, because as promptly as the helicopter responded, it was unable to land because of tricky air currents surrounding what landing space was available.

So the pilot summoned Truckee for an ambulance which intercepted the campground manager with his makeshift ambulance and the victim. And with all that help, things turned out well for the camper in distress too.

In this case I got action on Channel 19, the so called truckers' channel. Most truckers, motorists, police, campers and others monitor 19. At those distances, Channel 9 is often not within range of volunteer CB groups who regularly monitor that channel. This is how the short range limitations of CB are overcome because there are enough people monitoring 19 that word is passed along like an old fashioned party line.

So these experiences gave me the basis of another project: Describe what you would do if you were involved in a 10-33 or what you would do if you overheard one but were not involved. Thus one would be prepared. The experiences were quite helpful in developing that portion of the manuscript because I could not find much material on how to respond to a 10-33. I especially emphasized that if one were not near something as a named river, milepost, a road sign or some other definable location, then look for distinguishing features of the landscape. Or try to remember the approximate distance to a known location like a lake, dam, camping area or the number of the highway or nearby town.

Another fringe benefit of the camping 10-33 was that I got two willing reviewers for my manuscript — especially about the 10-33. One was the campground manager and fellow CBER and the deputy sheriff of the California county where it occurred. The sheriff happened along and offered assistance when he saw me transmitting. He used his police radio and Truckee advised help had been dispatched. I observed a CB radio in his vehicle in addition to his police equipment. He said he monitored 19 all the time and has a base unit in his home.

I wrote another project on the 10-4 code and to learn same, and why it is used. Namely the abbreviations really cut down on the amount of talk needed to convey a message.

As for the projects themselves, I did not write them into the member's book. CB is a rapidly changing activity and the language changes almost daily. So I listed the projects on a two-page addendum. This way we can change the projects on short notice.

Our State 4-H Leader, by the way, has been an enthusiastic participant from the start — especially since his budget picked up the cost for publishing the project. But not only that, he got so interested in CB he went out and bought one and I got the blame for costing him money.

So, good buddies, this is how I got into all this after fooling around with CB for so long. Now that I have "ratchet jawed" for so long, I am going 10-7 — or 30 in our language.