

Strays – An unusual bunch

As I drive around the valley, I find myself constantly looking for signs of the ham enthusiast. On cars and trucks, it's a dead-giveaway when you see a call sign license plate. But if they don't advertise by plate, you can often spot the mag-mount antenna, and sometimes more than one antenna sits atop the vehicle to make sure you notice.

On homes, it may be a little more subtle, like the simple wire antenna stretched from a tree limb to a simple mast made from pipe. And then you notice the proud 16' x 10' beam mounted high in the air on a sturdy Rohn 45G tower with low-flying aircraft warning lights mounted on top. Regardless of the installation, the ham station is set up and ready to go. The ham operator is making a best effort to keep the hobby alive.



And of course, there's our way of talking. Someone might ask, *How to you spell vacuum?* and most people will respond V-A-C-U-U-M. But, a ham might say,



victor-alpha-charlie-uniform-uniform-mike. Yes, we do things a little differently!

We're trained to use the international phonetic alphabet when we need to identify our station or clarify wording. And we're in good company, because internationally you'll hear much of the same disciplined responses. The military also uses a language similar to ours in their communication protocols.

Today, we don't hear much CB (Citizens Band) talk such as, *Hey K7XYZ, you got your ears on?* or *Calling K7XYZ, you out there, good buddy?* I don't think I've ever heard anyone say, *Hey, we got us a ham radio convoy!* Although I have heard some amount of crossover from the CB era, we hams like to do things in our unique way.

Oh, wow, look at that big Screwdriver antenna on the back of that little car! I hope it doesn't flip the car over...

Yes – we are an unusual bunch!

Rulon Swensen K7BTU

