

Learning to Send

by Allen Chapman

“I’ve got two customers for those sets we wanted to sell,” announced Bob, a few evenings later, when the radio boys had congregated at his house as usual. “It was so easy, that I’ll bet we could sell all we make, if we wanted to.”

“Who’s going to buy them?” asked Joe.

“Dave Halley, who runs the barber shop near the station, wants one, and there’s a big novelty store on the next block whose owner will take the other. I promised that we’d set the outfits up and show them how to work them.”

“That’s quick work, Bob,” laughed Herb. “How did you come to land two customers so quickly?”

“I was getting a haircut in Dave’s shop, and he told me that he was thinking of buying a good set, but hated to spend the money. So I told him that I could sell him a good practical set for quite a little less than it would cost him in a store, and he jumped at the offer. Then he told me about Hartmann, the owner of the new variety store. Hartmann wants to get one because he thinks it will draw trade. I went to see him as soon as Dave got through telling me how much dandruff I had and how much I needed some of his patent tonic. Mr. Hartmann was a little doubtful at first about buying a home made set, but I told him if he wasn’t pleased with it he didn’t need to pay us for it and we’d take it back. That seemed to satisfy him, so he said he’d buy it. It was dead easy.”

“Well, that’s certainly fine,” said Joe, admiringly. “That will help a lot toward getting apparatus for the new sets.”

“You’re a hustler, Bob,” said Jimmy. “I’d like to be one, but I guess I’m not built that way.”

“It was more luck than anything else,” disclaimed Bob. “Let’s go down to the store after school to-morrow and pick out what we need. I want a couple of audion bulbs, and I suppose you fellows do, too. I want to price variable condensers like the one Doctor Dale brought us at Ocean Point last summer, too.”

“We’ve got to keep busy if we want to keep ahead of some of the other fellows in this town,” said Joe. “Lots of the fellows at High have got the radio fever bad, and are out to beat us at our own game. I guess we can show them where they get off, all right, but we may have to hustle some to do it. I heard Lon Beardsley at noon to-day boasting that he was going to be the first fellow in Clintonia to receive signals from Europe. I asked him what kind of set he intended to do it with, and he said he had been working on one all summer, and was putting the finishing touches to it now.”

“He ought to have something pretty good, if he’s been working on it that long,” commented Herb. “If one of us had been working on a set all summer, I think we’d have had it done before this.”

“Probably we would. But you’ve got to remember that we’ve had more experience at the game than Lon,” Bob reminded him.

“It seems to me that we’d do better all to work on one big, crackerjack set than each to make a separate long distance set,” said Herb. “In the first place, it’s more fun working together. And then we could put our money together and get better equipment than we could the other way. What do you think?”

“I think it’s a pretty good idea,” said Jimmy. “You can hear just as much over one set as you can over four, as far as that goes.”

“I was thinking of something like that myself,” said Bob, slowly. “It would certainly cost us less, and, as Herb says, we’d probably have a better set in the end.”

“It suits me all right,” added Joe. “This is going to be a tough term at High, and with so much home work I don’t know where I’d get the time to build a complicated set. It looks as though we’d be better off every way, doesn’t it?”

“You always will be better off, if you follow my advice,” said Herb, with his customary modesty. “You don’t usually have sense enough to do it, though.”

“We have too much sense, you mean,” said Jimmy, scornfully. “This suggestion of yours was only an accident, Herb. Chances are you won’t make another as good for the next year.”

“I don’t know that you’re very famous for bright ideas, Jimmy, so where do you get off to criticize?” asked Herb.

“Huh! I’ve got an idea in my noddle right now that’s worth half a dozen of yours.”

“Prove it!” replied Herb, promptly. “What is this bright idea?”

“Well, you know that just about this time they cook nice, hot doughnuts down at Mattatuck’s bakery. Delicious doughnuts! Um, yum!” and Jimmy’s round countenance assumed a rapturous expression.

“And the idea was, that you’d go down there and blow the crowd to hot doughnuts, was it?” queried Joe.

“Blow, nothing!” exclaimed Jimmy. “We’ll all chip in. But I don’t mind going after them.”

“The trouble is—can we trust you not to eat them all on the way back?” Bob laughed.

“Anybody that doesn’t think so can go for his own doughnuts,” replied Jimmy. “Kick in there, you hobos, and I’ll be on my way. I’m getting hungrier every minute.”

His friends, thus adjured, “kicked in,” and Jimmy set off at a rate of speed much above his usual leisurely gait. The bakery was three or four blocks away, but Jimmy returned in a surprisingly short time with a large bag of tender doughnuts, still warm from the bakery.

“Wow!” exclaimed Joe, as Jimmy tore open the bag. “The sight of those doughnuts certainly makes a fellow feel hungry.”

“Dig into them, fellows,” was Jimmy’s only comment, as he reached for one himself.

They all followed this example, and the pile of crisp brown doughnuts dwindled with surprising rapidity.

“Likely enough these will keep me awake half the night, but it’s worth it,” said Jimmy, with a sigh of contentment, as he finished the last crumb of his fourth doughnut. “I don’t feel near as hungry as I did, anyway.”

“I should hope that you didn’t feel hungry at all, old greedy,” laughed Joe. “I’m beginning to think that it’s impossible to fill you up any more.”

“Oh, lay off!” retorted Jimmy. “You Indians ate your full share, I notice.”

“I guess we’re all in the same boat,” agreed Bob. “But now that we’re fed up and feeling strong, how would you like to practice sending for awhile? I was just beginning to work up a little speed while we were at Ocean Point, but now I suppose I’m getting rusty again. Who’s game to send? I’ll bet nobody can send faster than I can receive.”

“I’m willing to try it, anyway,” said Joe, picking up a magazine. “I’ll send right out of this magazine, so when you say ‘stop’ we’ll be able to check up how much you’ve caught.”

“All right, that’s fair enough,” agreed Bob. “Just wait a minute until I get a paper and pencil, then shoot as fast as you can.”

Seating himself at the table, with a blank sheet of paper before him, Bob made ready to scribble at high speed, while Herb held a watch to time him. As for Jimmy, he was content to curl up on a sofa and act the part of self-appointed judge.

“Start sending as soon as you like, Joe,” said, Jimmy. “I’m all ready for you. I’ll bet I can fall asleep before you can send fifty words.”

“I wouldn’t take that bet, because I believe you can,” replied Joe. “I’d be betting against your specialty, and there’s no percentage in that, you know.”

“Don’t forget me, though, will you?” said Bob, in a resigned tone. “I don’t want to hurry you, but any time you’re both through that interesting conversation I’m waiting to begin.”

“All right, then, here goes!” said Joe, and started sending as rapidly as he could with the practice key and buzzer.

Bob’s pencil fairly flew over the paper, and for five minutes there was no sound in the room save the strident buzz of the sender and the whisper of Bob’s pencil as it moved rapidly over the paper.

Then, “Time,” called Herb, and Bob threw down the pencil.

“Whew!” he exclaimed, reaching for a handkerchief. “That’s pretty hot work, if any one should ask you. Count ‘em up, Herb, will you, and see how many there are? Seems to me there must be a

million words there, more or less.”

“Quite a little less,” laughed Herb, after he had counted the words as requested. “But you’ve written ninety-one, which is mighty good.”

“That’s a little over sixteen a minute,” said Bob. “It’s not near as fast as I want to get, but it’s fast enough to get a license, anyway.”

“You bet it is!” exclaimed Herb. “And there are very few mistakes,” he added, as he compared what Bob had written with the magazine text.

“Joe’s getting to be some bear at sending, too,” remarked Bob.

“Oh, the sending is a lot easier than receiving,” said Joe. “But now, if you don’t mind, Bob, you can send me something, and I’ll see how fast I can take it. I’m afraid I can’t come up to your record, though.”

Joe did very well, however, averaging about fourteen words a minute.

Then Herb took a turn at sending and receiving, as did Jimmy, and they both did well. The boys found it all very fascinating, as well as useful, and discussed many plans for the future, although they did not intend to go in much for sending until they had perfected a first-class receiving set. They agreed before parting for the night that they would meet the following day after school at the radio supply store, where they could buy some audion bulbs and whatever other apparatus they might need.

Source:

Chapman, Allen. “Learning to Send.” *The Radio Boys at the Sending Station*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1922. 69 – 76. Electronic.