

# *Radio Interference*

*by Frederick Wickert*



Two-way radios have proven their value many times over. They have allowed communications between soldiers, between ships, between aircraft and between one another in an integrated manner. The use of two-way radios has helped to save many a life and has been a boon to rescuers.

Years ago the CB (citizens band) radio came into being. For some time they were a popular fad and half of our population had CB "handles." After a while the general populace became bored with them and now they are used for the most part by truckers and businesses. The truckers keep each other informed of all kinds of conditions on their lonely trips across the country, hauling our goods. They also use them to keep awake and to get directions.

Rescue services, ambulance, police and fire departments all use more sophisticated two-way radios to communicate with each other and making their jobs more efficient. This true story is about those radios.

In the mid 1970's I was a police officer in Middleburgh, New York. The neighboring village was the village of Schoharie. It was the county seat and also the home of the County Sheriff department. The County Sheriff department dispatched all radio traffic with the exception of the state police. They also dispatched the State Conservation Officers.

In the county, the police departments did a lot of mutual cooperation work. We worked together on roadblocks, on drug raids, and we backed each other up regularly and frequently.

The police car radios had a peculiarity. When passing a home where someone was watching television, a transmission on the police car radio could be plainly heard on that television. It became known that in some cases, a police car radio transmission also affected garage door openers.

Between the village of Middleburgh where I was the Police Chief, and the village of Schoharie, there was a place of business called Ginny's Hutch. Ginny's Hutch had a large number of valuable antiques and they had an alarm on the establishment. Quite often, all cars in the vicinity were dispatched there due to an alarm.

Every time we hastened to Ginny's Hutch due to the alarm going off, the establishment was checked completely, and nothing was amiss. We were all baffled by it. Our only theory of possibility was that mice might somehow be tripping the alarm. The proprietor doubted it, as they had no mice as far as they could determine.

One night when the alarm went off, there was a Deputy Sheriff's car passing by. There were two other Sheriff department cars nearby. A Schoharie Village Police car was also near and I in the Middleburgh Police car was en route to the Sheriff Department and near Ginny's Hutch. All of us converged on the building.

With five police cars there within seconds from the time the alarm went off, it was not possible someone had been attempting to break in and not be caught red handed at the scene, but there was no one. We were all baffled by it.

The building was checked and all was clear. The alarm was reset and we all got back into our respective police cars to depart the scene. One of the men picked up his radio mike and called the dispatcher to report an all clear and that he was back in service. Immediately the dispatcher radioed back the alarm had just gone off again. We could also hear it going off.

It was only then we all discovered the cause of the alarm going off was the radio transmission. The Deputy Sheriff that was passing when the alarm went off the first time realized that he was making a radio transmission as he passed the establishment and the alarm went off. It was police radios passing by, setting off the alarm system. We were very careful after that, not to make a radio transmission within a quarter of a mile of Ginny's Hutch.

In another year, the radio system within the county, as well as all other adjoining counties was remodeled. We had previously been using low band radio frequencies and the system was upgraded to high band frequencies. After the conversion took place, there were no more mysterious false alarms, no more interfering with peoples televisions, and no more interfering with garage door openers. The new system also removed radio dead spots throughout, vastly improving our communications.