

## The VP Waveform – February 2026

### The Secret Sauce

Ham Radio Operators take pride in their willingness to help each other. “Elmer” is our own unique term for those who mentor others to climb the learning curve in the hobby. I think of my lab technician Bob who worked with me during his lunch break to teach me Morse Code way back in 1984.

Even now, I can point to individuals who recently have been an encouragement to me and taught me new aspects of amateur radio. There is Jim KC3BTV who challenged me to take on the Net Control Station responsibility with the Delmarva Emergency Net as a “stretch assignment.” Then, there is Larry K3LT, a devotee of Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) who has been patiently teaching me the fine art of creating “code plugs.”

Thankfully, all my experiences with Elmers have been positive. Well... almost all.

After reading the instructions, checking YouTube videos, and visiting the manufacturer's websites. I simply could not figure out how to hook-up and follow operational steps for a piece of equipment that was given to me. (OK. I'll take the chance and tell you. It was an Ameritron AL-811 amplifier.)

In my opinion, the instructions were poorly written. The operating steps were not written in sequence. Steps were missing. Common terms were not used. This is an unfortunate situation for someone like me who takes things literally, over-thinks everything, and is easily frustrated.

So, like many misguided folks, I bared my soul and asked a question on a ham radio Facebook page.

A huge mistake.

The comments ran from “Read the manual” to “Ameritron is a piece of junk.” I was told that I was lazy by not doing my homework first and expected to be spoon-fed by posting my question.

After I licked my wounds and vowed never to post a question on Facebook ever again, I got a Direct Message from someone who said, “Don't pay any attention to these guys. I totally understand. I had the same problem. Let me help you. Give me a call.”

I called. I got the help I needed. I succeeded. I made a friend.

My message this month is: Be a “Let me help you,” not a “Read the manual” kind of ham radio operator. You may end up making a friend for life.

Fortunately, I have only met the “Let me help you” kind of hams at our club. I am grateful for that. I think that's the tone we want to continually foster. This is the secret sauce for a growing and welcoming amateur radio club.