

Funny Noises
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Spring, and a Young Man's Fancy...

Well, the excitement is mounting— only a month or so until the new licensing structure takes effect! Hams are talking about Tax Day, April 15th (can this be mere coincidence?) the same way they, and the public, were talking about Y2K a few months ago. My prediction, for what it's worth, is that it will be pretty much business as usual after 4/15. On the one hand, the new structure will not be the death of amateur radio. On the other hand, it won't be its salvation, either. On balance, I predict, it will prove to have been much ado about nothing.

And nothing is precisely what the preceding paragraph has to do with what I want to talk about this time. It's Spring! You can't prove it by the calendar, and you can expect that OM Winter has a few tricks up his sleeve still, but the crocuses are blooming, the trees are budding, and a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of springtime QRP activities. Not least of which might be spring cleaning in the radio shack. CQC's Top Ten provides a few tips¹, many of which would be useful in my own shack. But of course if I were the kind of person who embarks on a big spring cleaning project each year, odds are it wouldn't be necessary. What I need to do is a *Millennial* Cleaning. When you come across those odd pieces of gear which you just can't seem to find a use for, don't forget the CQC Swap List². Your junk might well be someone else's treasure.

It's time to start thinking of all kinds of outdoor projects, including antenna maintenance, repair, and replacement. Antenna projects are often easy, inexpensive, and rewarding— any experienced QRPer will tell you that the antenna is the true "front end" of your radio system, and will pay bigger dividends in terms of operating success than any other investment you can make. Over the years the Low Down has printed a wide variety of antenna projects and information, and if you need some help, from a bit of advice or hand-holding to some serious manpower, it's only a phone call or e-mail away. Get in touch with our Elmer Co-ordinator by phone or e-mail, and you will be surprised just how quickly your problems will be solved³.

Speaking of antennas, many (if not most) of us have fairly severe restrictions as to what we can use for antennas. There are legal restrictions (codes and covenants), practical restrictions (a full size 80M dipole simply won't fit on balcony of an apartment), financial restrictions.... It's always a matter of doing the best we can within the framework of what we can get away with! But Field Day presents a terrific opportunity to play with *real* antennas. CQC operates two field day sites, in keeping with our philosophy of "providing something for everyone." Whether your interests

lie in high speed CW operating, slow-speed SSB operating, putting up antenna systems, designing portable and emergency power systems, or feeding large groups of people— we have a job for you. You're welcome to just hang around and watch, of course, but we have a habit of turning watchers into operators, as my non-ham daughter can tell you. Like CQC, Field Day is one of those classic expressions of what ham radio is all about. Don't miss it!

We here at CQC HQ are busy planning club meetings and events, ever mindful that our next meeting (May 13th) is our Annual General Meeting and election of officers. CQC is a great club, and I have got much more out of being a member than I have put into being an officer. QRP is like old-time ham radio to me, and CQC is like an old-fashioned radio club. Lots of fun, lots of opportunities to learn something new, and lots of good fellowship. CQC is one of the largest and most successful radio clubs in the country, and our success is due to one thing and one thing only— the enthusiasm of our members.

Now is the time for *you* to think about the possibility of taking on a more defined role in CQC. Please think about running for office, serving on a committee, and or writing something for the Low Down. Each of you has something to contribute, and CQC needs your input in order to continue as the best of all possible radio clubs.

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¹ CQC TOP TEN...

...Spring Cleaning Tips for the Radio Shack

10. Enjoy a refreshing beverage while you make a list of things to do. Do this daily throughout Spring, unless you find yourself actually doing some things.
9. Pick up each pile of “stuff” and move it to a different location.
8. Give your antennas a tuneup with a fresh coat of antenna wax.
7. Prepare a written inventory of every item in your junk box.
6. Use Internet resources to prepare a map that shows how to get from the door of your radio shack to your desk.
5. Rip the magnet out of a large speaker and use it to find and pick up approximately 3 pounds of resistor clippings, screws, nuts, bolts, and washers from the pile of your carpet.
4. Pretend you are an archeologist. Get a paintbrush, a trowel, and a bucket, and try to find your radio without damaging it.

3. Disconnect each piece of coaxial cable and make sure that you can blow through it. If not, replace it.
2. Get a big can of brass polish and polish all of your tools.

And the **Number 1 Spring Cleaning Tip for the Radio Shack:**

1. Dust off the key, and use it!

² CQC Swap List– visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CQCSWAP>

³ Contact information for CQC Officers and Committees– <http://www.CQC.org>