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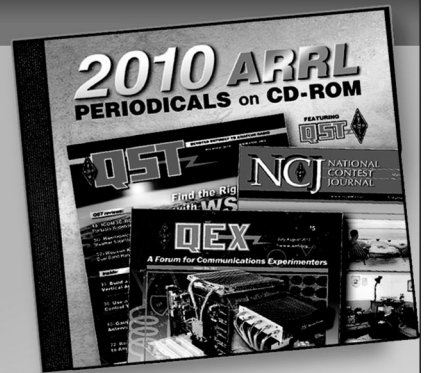
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QST Issue: Jan 2011

Title: The Last CQ -- A Survivor's Guide

Author: William Conklin, AF6OH

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The Last CQ — A Survivor's Guide

As much as we would all like to consider ourselves as invincible, there is one thing in life we cannot avoid — and that is the last CQ. Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying “In this world there is nothing that is certain except death and taxes” — and that includes Amateur Radio operators.

Critically Important

Although the last CQ is not something that most of us plan for, it is critically important for the benefit of those you leave behind. Let's face it a car accident, getting hit by a bus while crossing the street or something as immediate as a heart attack can take you out of the contest instantly. Being proactive and prepared for this eventuality is what this article is all about.

I participated in the decommissioning of a Silent Key's radio station and witnessed firsthand the issues that accompany this type of event. For a spouse, the steps required to disassemble the radio shack and dispose of equipment can be overwhelming. Removing the antennas and cabling, taking down the towers and selling the radio gear and related equipment is arduous even for someone familiar with the systems.

Fortunately, one of his local ham friends and neighbors took on the task of organizing the equipment to be sold. He also arranged for other local hams to meet at the station and disassemble and remove the antennas, towers and associated electronics. They not only created a list of the equipment but also arranged for the sale and disposal of the radios and antennas to local hams and at a local ham swap meet.

Keep in mind that although you may have paid \$2800 a number of years ago for that Kenwood TS-870 transceiver with station monitor, that is not what it is worth today. You need to consider what it is worth in today's dollars to local hams or at a ham swap meet.

Seven steps to help your spouse dispose of your ham radio estate.

William Conklin, AF6OH

Here you really need to provide your survivors information about the various online auctions and ham classifieds so your spouse or other family members will know if they are getting a fair market price.

Plan Now to Help Later

The reason for planning is twofold: first to eliminate as much headache and hassle to the survivor as possible and second, to help your life partner recover as much money as possible from the sale of the equipment. Your investment can easily run into the thousands or tens of thousands of dollars. Put yourself into their shoes and try to

anticipate in advance what they will need to do to decommission your station.

We all seem to have the propensity to collect and assemble more equipment and more antennas, and as a result end up with more things that need to be disposed of after we are gone. That is why the time you spend in preplanning and organizing will help your survivor greatly after you are gone. The more detailed you are, the easier it will be for them and those ham friends who come to help your spouse.

Generally speaking there are usually HF, VHF and UHF radios; antennas; rotators with controllers; antenna towers and masts; coax and interface cables; meters; computers and printed materials including books; manuals and periodicals.

At my station I have initiated what I call the AF6OH Survivor's Guide. Although not all inclusive, it is a good starting point for everyone to consider. I recommend that you start putting your own list together now and not put it off for some later time. If you wish to donate anything to a person or entity (such as a club), be sure to make note of this in your will or estate plan.

Silent Key Notice

To include a Silent Key in the QST “Silent Keys” column, one of the following items is required: a letter or note from a family member, a copy of a newspaper obituary notice, a copy of the death certificate, or a letter from the family lawyer or the executor. Please be sure to include the amateur's name, address and call sign. Allow several months for the listing to appear in the column. Current or past ARRL membership is not a requirement for inclusion. Mail, fax (860-594-0303) or e-mail (sk@arrl.org) information to the ARRL Silent Key Administrator.

Steps to Take

1 Prepare the Inventory

Create an accurate list of your current equipment. There are many free software products available that can help you create an equipment inventory or you can simply make a list on a sheet of paper. The inventory can be as detailed as you want it to be but these critical items must be included:

- Description of product (type of radio, manufacturer, model number)
- Serial number
- Purchase date
- Estimated cost when purchased

How to Leave a Legacy to ARRL

There are many ways that a radio amateur may choose to support ARRL financially. One way is to provide for the organization's future in their estate planning process. Individuals should consult a financial advisor or attorney to determine the best process and to make arrangements to include ARRL as a beneficiary of a will, bequest, trust, insurance policy or retirement account such as an IRA.

In every case, the following language may be helpful in planning an estate document that includes ARRL:

“...to The American Radio Relay League, Inc, a non-profit corporation headquartered in Newington, Connecticut (Federal ID #06-6000004) I give....”

Or

“I give, devise or bequeath the rest, residue or remainder of my estate, whether real or personal as follows: [state portion]

to the American Radio Relay League, Inc headquartered in Newington, Connecticut for its general purposes [or name fund or area of interest].”

Or

“I give to The American Radio Relay League, Inc headquartered in Newington, Connecticut the sum of _____ dollars to be used for its general purposes [or name fund or area of interest].”

The Development Office will include the donor of any estate commitment into the ARRL Legacy Circle that recognizes individuals who have included ARRL in their estate plans. Recipients will receive a unique pin and certificate.

If there are questions, individuals may contact ARRL Chief Development Officer Mary Hobart, K1MMH, by telephone at 860-594-0397 or by e-mail at mhobart@arrl.org.

- Using information from online auctions and classifieds, estimated resale value in today's dollars
- If it is an integrated system, list all parts, pieces and components that make up the system.
- Equipment manuals and schematics

Optional:

- Photographs of equipment
- Location of equipment within the shack

2 Ask for Assistance

It is extremely important to ask your ham friends to step in and assist your surviving partner after your departure.

Don't be afraid to talk to your ham buddies about this. We all have a number of ham friends we both trust and respect. Simply "ask them for their help." Explain your goals and desires and your need to have someone your partner is comfortable with assisting with the station decommissioning process. You may want to enter into a pact with your friend and offer to do the same for him or her if they depart first.

3 Identify Your Antenna Removal Team

Many hams out there will have large antenna installations, which can include tower systems, wire arrays and assorted antennas. For these systems you will want to enlist experienced hams who have the skill sets and necessary tools and technologies to safely remove the antennas and towers.

When the antennas come down, your friends should code each piece with a magic marker and organize the parts in a manner that will make them easy to reassemble for the

Legal Concerns

While AF6OH offers some good and very helpful advice, it is important when planning for the disposition of your station after your death to remember that all of the equipment, because it has value, is an asset of your Estate. It cannot simply be cleared out and disposed of in accordance with general instructions you make during your lifetime. There are probate procedures that must be followed in all states which might be applicable.

Typically, the Executor or Personal Representative of a decedent's estate must have all assets of the estate appraised and the value determined as of the date of death. Then, the equipment and all other property must be listed in an inventory submitted to the probate court. Finally, the equipment can be disposed of in accordance with the terms of a Will, or the intestacy laws of the State of residence of the deceased ham, and in accordance with the procedures established by the local register of wills or probate office. — *Chris Imlay, W3KD*

next owner. Keep all elements and large parts together by taping the components and put the smaller items in plastic bags clearly labeled and attached to the larger pieces. This will make it easier to sell later.

4 Consider Which Items You May Wish to Donate

If you are associated with a local Amateur Radio club, consider donating some of your

equipment for the club station. Or you might want to donate equipment to a local school to help establish a radio club. If your donation is made to a non-profit organization, some positive tax benefits could accrue. Despite your wish to donate to a particular school or community service group, they may not be able to take it or use it. Learn what options are really possible — or not.

5 Available Resources

In addition to your personal ham friends, consider your local radio clubs and ARES® groups. You may also want to place ads in Amateur Radio magazines or online classifieds. Make a list in advance and keep it with your Survivor's Guide.

6 Update the List

As you continue to add new equipment to your station you need to keep your inventory list up to date. As you add new equipment include it in your list of gear.

7 Explain the Plan to Your Spouse

This is not some type of secret assignment but one that needs to be openly shared with your spouse. Explain, as I have to my "significant other," exactly what you have prepared for them and let them know that your goal is to minimize any problems they may have in the event of your demise. Go over the list with them, point out the equipment, explain the overall goals and describe the action plan. Then be sure they know where you are keeping that list. It does no good hidden away.

Ham radio operators come in all shapes and sizes just as their stations and operational facilities do. So, each station owner must consider their own situation and adapt these concepts and suggestions to their particular station.

Although I never had the opportunity to personally meet the SK before his departure, I realized that he had many local ham friends who pitched in to help his wife after he died. By doing some advance planning, no matter how odd it may feel, you are actually providing a major service for your partner and your friends.

William Conklin, AF6OH, an ARRL member, has been involved in the field of communications security for the last 35 years, most recently in the area of bomb jamming systems for counter-acting improvised explosive devices. Yearning to be a ham for 45 years, he received his Technician and General class tickets in January 2009, followed by his Amateur Extra class license in February 2009. William can be reached at 343 Soquel Ave, Ste 317, Santa Cruz, CA 95062-2355, af6oh@arrl.net.

QST

Canceling a Ham Radio License

When a ham becomes a Silent Key, his or her license will expire at the normal license expiration date — and after 2 years (the grace period for renewal) it will be canceled.

To cancel the license of a deceased holder before the end of the 2 year grace period, the FCC must receive a signed written request indicating that the current licensee is now deceased (include the deceased licensee's name and call sign in the letter). The FCC also requires that written evidence of death accompany the request. Acceptable documents are a dated newspaper obituary, a death certificate or Social Security/Death Benefits documentation (SSDI).

Use postal mail or send by courier to the FCC, Attn: Amateur Cancellation, 1270 Fairfield Rd, Gettysburg, PA 17325-7245. Faxed documents are not accepted.

Allow the FCC one to two weeks to cancel the license. You can verify that the FCC has canceled the license by looking up the FCC license call sign data at wireless.fcc.gov/uls. If the license has been canceled, the FCC will show the license STATUS as CANCELED.

The effective date of the cancellation is the date of the former license holder's death. If that date is over 2 years old, the call sign becomes available to any Amateur Radio operator. If that date is less than 2 years old, only the family member (or a club, with the family's written permission) can acquire the call sign through the FCC's vanity call sign application process.

Note that in either case, the person applying for the call sign must have the appropriate license class applicable to it to be assigned the call. For more information, contact ARRL VEC Assistant Manager Perry Green, WY1O, at wy1o@arrl.org.



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