the Compaq laptop and immediately started printing 80-meter PSK31 stations, and there are lots of them. It’s hard to believe they can be packed into so little spectrum and all be 100% copy! The “Warbler” kit is on order and I’ve got to go string a new antenna.

I guess we’ll never go back to the old RTTY days...and thank heaven for that!—Ken Shubert, K0KS, Olathe, Kansas

LARRY SCHEFF POINTS THE WAY

♦ Kudos to Larry Scheff for his outstanding “How to Maximize Your Receiver’s Selectivity” articles in the February and March QST. I had wondered why I would ever want a control to “attenuate” a signal. Now I understand. I will re-read this article several times. I immediately used these practical ideas in my net operating.

I wonder why the makers and sellers of such a sophisticated piece of gear assume that we automatically know how to use them properly? The manuals don’t adequately explain practical use of the filters, bandpass tuning and the differential use of RF and AF gain controls to isolate the desired signal and leave out most of the noise. Ten-Tec, Kenwood, ICOM, Yaesu and other makers of sophisticated HF gear: listen up! We would appreciate your product much more if the people writing your manuals would take the time to write about such practical management of the receiver controls.—Eugene C. Clark, W4AYK, Albany, Georgia

ARRL DUES INCREASE

♦ I received my March QST and read the “It Seems To Us” column about the new dues increase. Two words described my reaction: Don’t apologize!

I was a member back when I was first licensed in the early seventies and I’m pleased to be a member again. In spite of the naysayers and the ever-present acrimony, the hobby is healthy and so is the ARRL. I also belong to some other organizations that promote and support my hobbies and interests, but none of them yield anywhere near the return for the dues invested that the ARRL provides.

I sometimes buy other Amateur Radio magazines, but QST always has the most information and the broadest coverage. The ARRL Web site is world class and a good spot for researching any ham radio topic that comes to mind. The Headquarters staff is always friendly and courteous when I call with an inquiry or order. And, I deeply appreciate having a watchdog function to look out for my Amateur Radio privileges in a world that is hungry for spectrum.

One need not agree with every position or function of the ARRL in order to support it. Diversity of interests and agendas is common to all organizations and the only acceptable response to any directional conflict is active participation and support for the overall mission. Apparently, many licensed American hams who are not League members don’t understand this. That’s a shame. They’re benefiting from the actions of the ARRL anyway.

I won’t be lying awake worrying about a few more dollars the next time I renew my membership. It’s a bargain.—F. Gordon Hubbell, WD4FGH, Charlotte, North Carolina

THE VENETIAN BLIND ANTENNA

♦ I just read, with interest, about AA1DO’s condo antenna farm (QST April 2001, page 64). My own situation is a ham’s nightmare or challenge, depending upon how you look at it.

I live in a second-floor apartment and am unable to have any outdoor antenna or anything in the common attic space. This is a Senior Citizens apartment in a converted church building. I immediately tried to come up with a workable indoor antenna arrangement. What I devised has netted me 67 countries or so on 20, 17 and 15 meters CW and SSB.

The antenna is a simple bottom-loaded “inverted U” wire that is mounted in my second-floor window. It is supported on the venetian blind with cable ties. The blind slats are vinyl, not metal, of course. The window itself is 40 inches wide and 44 inches high, so the wire is 35 inches across the top and 40 inches on the two sides. A 27-inch piece of stranded insulated wire with an alligator clip on one end connects the one side of the inverted U to an airwound loading coil of 14 turns of no. 10 wire 2 inches in diameter. A short run of coax from my Yaesu FT-920 transceiver is connected to the bottom of the coil and a “ground plane” of random length 4-inch wide copper strap. Using the alligator clip I can resonate my Venetian Blind Antenna for 20, 17 and 15 meters with an SWR of less than 1.5:1. The built-in tuner in my FT-920 trims it down to a perfect match.

I’m pretty satisfied with its performance. I haven’t been able to put in a lot of hours operating, but 67 countries in the limited time I have been on the air aren’t bad. The one thing that amazes me, though, is this: The window my Venetian Blind Antenna is mounted in faces southwest. Contacts with Europe and Russia and Africa are most common and usually with the best reports (often S7 or better), yet my transmit signal has to go through the entire apartment building to exit toward those countries!

So, there is always hope for the “antenna disadvantaged” ham. Apartment dwellers, take heart!—Ray Jenkins, W3MQA, Youngwood, Pennsylvania