Hot air or helium, you be the judge. WB2DSH lofts us through thermal dynamics, Murphy's Law, and the power of positive thinking.

How To Get A Wire Antenna Up 70 Feet, Easy

BY BRIAN LONGWELL*, WB2DSH

I like construction articles. I always read them, but like most people I usually don't build them. When I do follow through and try to reproduce an author's results, I generally run into a "surprise" or two along the way.

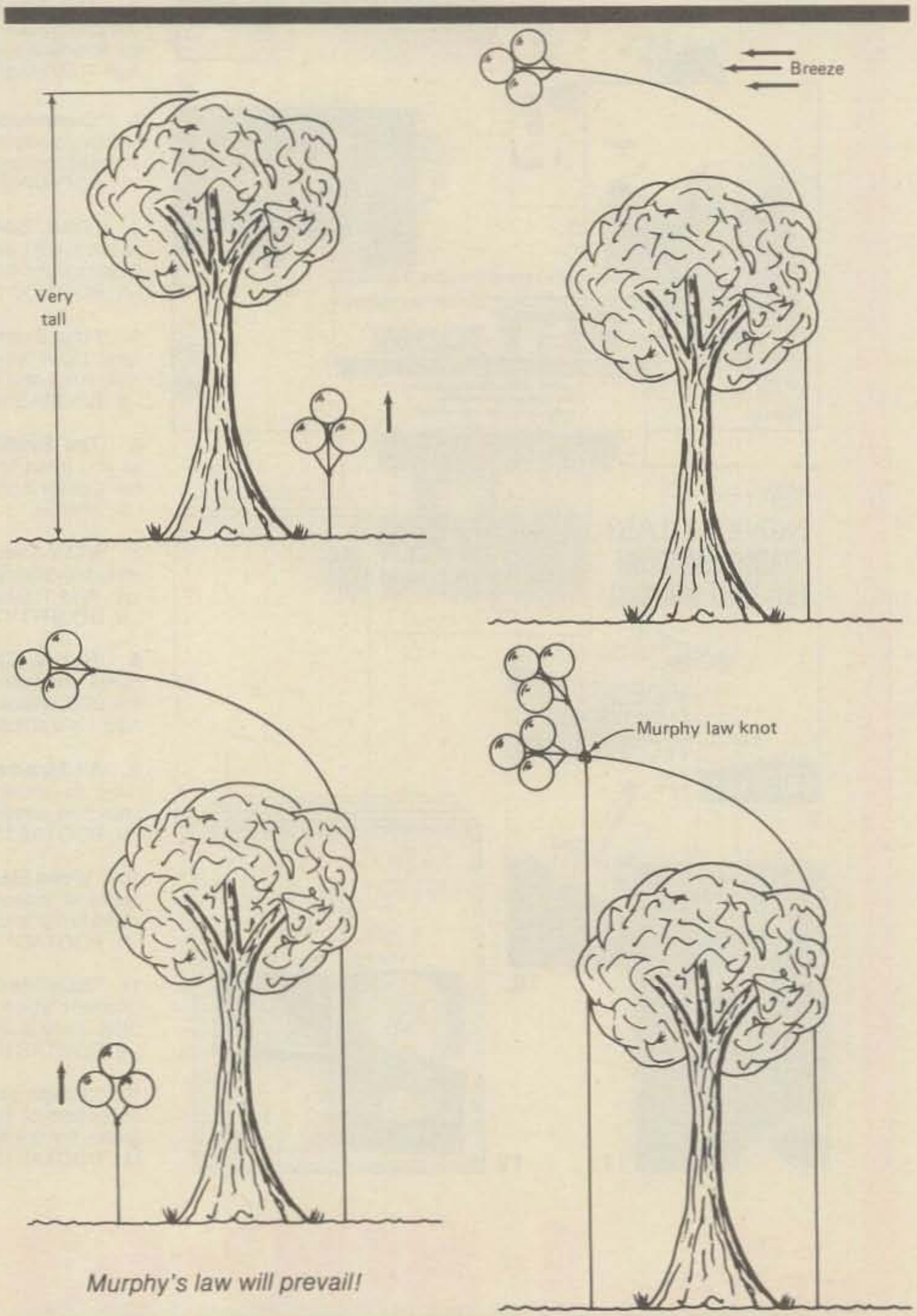
The most common surprises I come across always remind me of a routine that comedian Steve Martin does. He starts out by repeating several times that he has the secret to "how to make a million dollars and not even pay taxes." He then says, as if an insignificant detail, "First get a million dollars," followed by "and then don't pay taxes." This closely parallels the "how to get a 2 kw linear amplifier cheap" type article that tells you, "First find someone selling a 2 kw linear amplifier, and buy it from them cheap."

Well, this article is no exception. First off, the title "How To Get A Wire Antenna Up 70 Feet, Easy" is nice and deceptive. (You've read this far, haven't you?) Second, there is the "First get a million dollars" part, which is, first get a lot with two trees 70 feet tall and far apart enough to fit your antenna.

Okay, so I lied a little like everyone else. You still can use the idea described here to make antenna installations involving trees a lot easier. If you have a tree that you would like to use as an antenna support, but find it too difficult or dangerous to climb and too tall to throw a line over, then read on. If not, read on anyway. You might as well since you've wasted this much time already.

It all started after I bought a house in New Hampshire. My new lot has several pine trees over 70 feet in height, which I shortly realized was a mixed blessing. Having those trees there made me feel that I had to use them. I soon found that it was easier to just wish I had them.

I started out with conventional wea-



Murphy's law will prevail!

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pons. The "string tied to a rock" trick proved to be feeble. Climbing was quickly ruled out, for pine trees tend to have many dead lower limbs, and 70 feet gets to be pretty high when you're clinging to a tree. I needed something different.

After some meditation I thought kites might do it, but control seemed as if it would be a problem. More thought. What about balloons? I decided to give it a try. With this in mind I waited for a calm day. When the first one came, I went to a department store and bought approximately 300 feet of strong, yet lightweight fishing line on two rolls. I then got six helium balloons from a place that sells them for parties and returned home.

I tied three of the balloons to the end of a roll of fishing line. Then standing on the side of the chosen tree from which any breeze would come, I began to let the balloons rise by releasing some fishing line. After the balloons reached the top, I waited for a breeze to pull them over. When it did come, I let off about another 40 feet and tied down the line.

At this point I took the other balloons and tied them to the second roll of fishing line. I released these balloons on the opposite side of the tree from the first set. My objective this time was to get the two groups of balloons to become sufficiently tangled so that I would effectively have a loop formed over the tree.

Now you might ask, "How dare he rely on such an unpredictable situation?" Contrare. Very predictable. Recall from childhood Murphy's law concerning kites: "Any two kites flying anywhere in sight of each other will become hopelessly entangled without exception." I figured a law so powerfull must spill over to include balloons.

Sure enough, with a little maneuvering all six balloons became adequately tangled. (I would, however, recommend tying knots in the line near the balloon to assist in the tangling.) I then began pulling the balloons down using the second fishing line until I retrieved them. The rest was quite simple. I tied a heavier rope to the fishing line and pulled that through to replace it. Now I had a way to take advantage of my tall trees.

I would suggest using a long-lasting cable or rope to finally loop through the trees. This may require the use of an intermediate rope after the fishing line, for the fishing line likely will break if it is used to pull a heavy cable. Also, placing a pully at the end of this rope/cable would be a good idea. That way the raising and lowering of the antenna would involve a pully and not the cable passing through the tree limbs. This becomes important when you realize that after about a year the tree has done some growing around the cable and it won't budge.

Results

I hate antenna articles that give signal reports at the end. They always give some baloney about getting signal reports of 10,000 dB over S-9 from an outer Mongolian mobile or from a submarine at the bottom of the Indian Ocean while on 75 meters with ½ milliwatt output during the daytime, during a contest, and during a thunderstorm. Well, you won't find that here. Anyway, I haven't finished putting up the other leg of the antenna.

Seriously, try it. It's easier than it sounds, and more than that, I was able to do it. So what if the neighbors think you're crazy! CQ