

# Radio Amateur News & Views

Amateur Radio – With Attitude!

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## NATURAL POWER VHF ROVING The April RANV Meeting

For our April 1st meeting, we are in for a special treat! David Fideau AK1DF will demonstrate *Natural Roving*. This is a relatively new pastime which combines VHF Roving with the Natural Power bonus found in Field Day. As everything in the station, including the vehicle, must run off of natural power, several changes from a normal roving station had to be made. David's station is powered by two Brazilian mules, named *Dit* and *Dah*. They pull a small covered wagon loaded with radios, batteries and antennas. David tells us that mules provide the most power per bale of hay. One ham used Clydesdales and had to hitch up a second wagon to carry the feed. Picking a good rover spot not only depends on good height, but also good grazing. When David pulls into a roving location, he hooks up the antennas and then has the mules walk a wheel generator to provide power for the kilowatt transmitters. It's quite an operation, but it works tremendous and David wins regularly.

The meeting will be preceded by the chowdown and food fight at Al's French Frys. Be sure to come early!

## RANV WORKED ALL SHIRTS COMPETITION

It's back! The very popular RANV Worked all Shirts Competition comes around again this year and will be held throughout the month of April. This competition started in 1996, and has been held sporadically.

The procedure is simple. Select your favorite frequency and call "CQ Shirts". After the contact, you exchange shirts. All applicants should assure that their callsign and location appear somewhere on the shirt. Applicants can exchange shirts using the most expeditious method. It's probably a good idea to include an SASB (*self addressed, stamped box*) as most shirts will not fit very easily into a first class envelope. Often a \$3.20 USPS Priority Mail envelope will work, as long as the shirt isn't too heavy. Unfortunately, the ARRL QSL bureau still does not handle shirts. There are no prohibitions against sending ripped or unwashed shirts, as long as the callsign and QTH are readable.

Scoring is number of number of shirts times number of states and DXCC countries. Endorsements are available for sweat shirts, work shirts and designer labels. The '98 contest was won by a fellow (*we won't say who*) who blew everyone away with a pink Calvin Kline design. For this year only, there will be a 1000 point bonus for anyone working the special edition Milton 2000 T-shirt (*and I have a couple more available at a good price!*)

## PAINTBALL FOX HUNT

The first annual Paintball Fox Hunt competition will take place Friday, April 7th 6-9pm at Delta Park in Colchester. This new sport is a combination Fox Hunt and Paintball exercise. In this hunt, all of the players are foxes and hunters at the same time. Each participant will be issued a low power HT on 146.52 which will transmit 10 seconds every minute. When not transmitting, the participants must hunt out the other players. When found they hit them with a paintball to score points. Points are deducted for hitting wildlife. The player with the least amount of paint on him after a 3 hour session will be declared the winner. This sport requires skill, cunning, ability and the knowledge of when to duck.

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## THE LAST MEETING

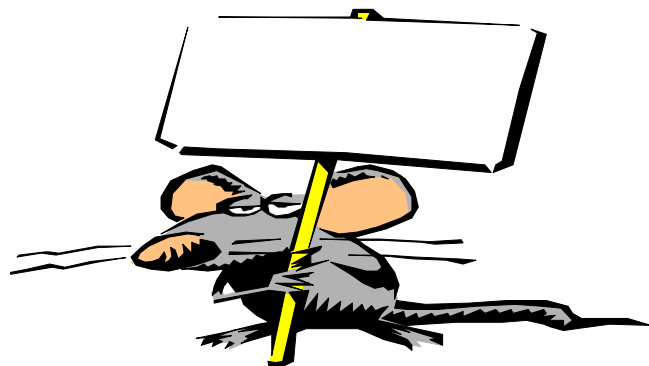
### *Perhaps the Very Last!*

It was a dark and dreary night on the evening of the RANV meeting. The rain had been falling for several days, seemingly appropriate weather for our topic for that evening. Bob WE1U, was to discuss his involvement in the Red Cross relief efforts during the North Carolina floods last year.

Although Bob would have pictures from his trip, several club members were enlisted to help his presentation become truer to life. At a predetermined time, in an effort coordinated through the Mount Mansfield repeater, the dam at the Waterbury reservoir was breached, allowing a wall of water to rage down the Winooski River. This was done to simulate the conditions of the floods in the South. As RANV is a Special Services Club, we are expecting contact from the State of Vermont in the near future, for our part in helping the state's plans to drain the reservoir. Discussion at an upcoming meeting will decide where we will hang our Certificate of Merit for display.

It was quickly discovered how difficult it is to plan for an emergency, even when you know for weeks in advance that it would happen. Our initial plans were to quickly erect our Field Day setup behind the O'Brien Center meeting area to supply an emergency communications center. Unfortunately, both Mitch W1SJ and our guest speaker Bob were notably missing at the beginning of the meeting. Being resourceful hams, without either coordination or equipment, we quickly set up a communications link using a HT through the 145.15 repeater. Many contacts, complete with squeals and whistles, were made in the 10 minutes the link was up, until the HT's battery died.

As the water level was rising, Paul AA1SU looked for a volunteer to bring snacks for the next meeting, as we seemed to overlook this item in our emergency planning. Now cold, wet, and hungry, we were glad to see Mitch and Bob arrive at the meeting. Bob, driving the Red Cross ERV (*Emergency Response Vehicle*) was ready to feed us all a delicious prime rib dinner. He had this traditional ham radio event meal cooking in the back of the truck, which is used to feed people at emergency sites. Soon, the sun rose, the water receded, and it was great to see ham radio save the day once again.



## ULTIMATE QRP QSO

Recently, there has been an amazing new breakthrough in the use of very low power to communicate by radio.

We have all heard the expression, "If a little is good, then more is better." But, QRP or low power operators have a twist to this saying, to them, "If a little is good, then less is better."

As hams know, the common use of QRP means operating with less than five watts from your transmitter. QRPp means using even less power to make a contact, sometimes even a few milliwatts.

Ivan Haad, GU1IBL has conceived and developed the ultimate in QRP techniques. This idea is based on the premise that many QRP operators believe that the very best QRP contact means getting the maximum number of "miles per watt" per contact. Based on this, the ultimate QRP QSO would take place with zero power, thus achieving an infinite number of miles per watt.

### **How can you send a signal with zero power?**

Ivan has found a way and has made such a QSO. By using absolutely no power at all and simply absorbing the existing, ever present atmospheric noise into a dummy load, he has found that he can "send" a signal by keying a dummy load's connection to an antenna. Ivan's "transmitter" consists of an antenna, a code key and a resistor dummy load. The receiving station would then decode the signal by noting the overall reduction in noise level on the band. This technique has proven to be effective on the 2-meter band, due to high level of noise on or about the frequency of 145.15 MHz.

The effectiveness of this technique has been proven in tests. During one experiment, Ivan was sending CW using a hand key when a nearby QRP enthusiast, Dahmner Herdim, PI5WEK, successfully copied Ivan's random five letter per word message of "sloof lirpa", from one mile away.

In this case the measurable transmitter power was well below the range of any present-day instruments and is therefore presumed to be near zero. Since the formula for miles per watt is the number of miles divided by watts, this would result in an infinite number of miles per watt for this QSO, breaking any current records.

Thanks to the team of Ivan Haad and Dahmner Herdim for the ultimate QRP contact.

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## CODE CREDIT

The FCC has issued new instructions in association with amateur radio restructuring.

Effective on April 15th, not only will expired Novice licenses be accepted for 5-wpm code credit, but the following will also be accepted, weather current or expired:

- any amateur license
- No-code Technician license
- any driver's license
- any library card

Applicants should bring any of the above to a VE session along with \$6.65 for upgrade.