



Radio Amateur News & Views

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LIFE BEYOND TWO-METERS The April 11th RANV Meeting

You've talked to everyone through all the repeaters everywhere. Now what? What do you do when 2-meter FM has lost the sizzle? You could chase DX on the low end of 20-meters, but that only works if you have upgraded to General. We have another solution!

For our April meeting, we have assembled a panel of experts to talk about and demonstrate various activities you can do right on VHF. Starting us off is Fred N1ZUK, Mr. Six Meters. In a few short months, Fred has gone from a mild-mannered repeater user to working 100 grids all over the country. Anyone who was at Field Day last year who saw Fred in action will know what we mean. Next up is Mike N1JEZ, Mr. Satellite. Mike has worked almost everyone on every satellite up there, including a few we don't know about. This section of the meeting is scheduled to occur right during a satellite pass and Mike will bring hams from all over right into "our" living room, live, via satellite. Finally, we will hear from Mitch W1SJ, Mr. Contest. Mitch has been successful in applying his HF contesting techniques on VHF and UHF. If we are lucky, he just might show us his heralded technique of CQing on four bands at the same time!

If you are a newcomer to amateur radio, this meeting is for you! If you have been licensed for a long time and are looking for new ideas, this meeting is also for you. Come on down to the meeting and let's have a great turnout! We're at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington. The pre-meeting foodfest, commonly known as *Snax-at-Zacks*, gets underway at Zachery's Pizza on Williston Road, starting at 5:30.

FOX HUNT TIME

The first RANV Fox Hunt of the season will take place Friday, April 7th, starting at 7pm. Mitch W1SJ will be the honorable Fox. To participate, please check into the 145.15 repeater (required) and then switch to the input to look for the fox. The rules are simple. The fox will be located in Chittenden County. The fox must have at least an S-1 signal at I-89 Exit 14. The fox must transmit 10 seconds out of every minute. First one to find the fox will be next hunt's fox and will claim all the glory.

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VPT AUCTION

Come join us for an evening of fun, food, and camaraderie at the *Vermont Public Television Travel Auction*. RANV, BARC, and now possibly STARC are getting together to help out on the evening of Saturday, April 15th. The start time is 6:00pm and our shift ends at 9:30pm. The first hour will be for training. The 7:00 hour will be simulcast on Channel 22, and it is expected to be quite busy. People are needed for a variety of tasks, including stage hands, bid markers, bid sorters, phone answerers, runners, and bid confirmation callers. This is not a normal pledge drive. It is actually an event that is carried live, and ham radio might just get a much needed plug.

This is a fun club event for club members to get together, hang out, and volunteer in a non-ham event. It will be a fun time, and a chance to break out of that cabin fever.

We need about 20 volunteers, and if we have too many, we will rotate positions. You could probably even bring a family member, if you would like.

Please E-mail me at aa1su@arrl.net or call me at 860-1134 to let me know if you can make it.

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Fred N1ZUK, Sec'y

A good turnout was on hand at the March RANV meeting. After the usual conversations of things radio and otherwise, the meeting was called to order. Howie K2MME volunteered for the most critical job, that being to bring the snacks to next month's meeting. Richard WN1HJW gave the Treasurer's report. A hand-out with the past year's income and expenditures was handed out. Discussion on individual line expenditures, such as the club's liability insurance, followed. Also discussed was at what level of funds would necessitate the club to do substantially more paperwork. This is to be looked into.

Our guest speaker for the meeting was Bob WE1U. Many know Bob as an active ham and ARRL Vermont Section Manager. Bob is also quite active with the American Red Cross, both locally and nationally. Last year, Bob volunteered his time in the relief effort following the floods in North Carolina.

Bob explained that there are two levels of volunteers of the Red Cross Disaster Services: the LDV (*Local Disaster Volunteer*), who assists in providing disaster relief in the local community; and the DSHR (*Disaster Services Human Resources*), which are a pool of volunteers available to help on the national level. Anyone can be an LDV, as all it requires is a willingness to help. To become a DSHR, one must complete the first aid and CPR courses offered by the Red Cross.

Bob had pictures and stories about his stint as a DSHR in North Carolina. As the stories unfolded, it was obvious that the Red Cross doesn't do things on a small scale. Everything was coordinated – communications, logistics, health services, and transportation. A logistical center was set up in an unused warehouse, where phone service for over seventy phones lines (*and jacks,*

THE PREZ SEZ

by Paul AA1SU, President

Spring is here, and our thoughts are turning to other things, such as yard work, travel, tire changeovers, cleaning, exercise, etc. While you're out doing that yard work, check over your ham radio antenna. During spring cleaning, take some time to spruce up the shack, maybe dust off the computer monitor, or vacuum the floor. If you are attending to your car, check the mounts and connections of your mobile set-up. For those of you traveling, get out the trusty Repeater Directory (or ARRL software) and program in some repeaters that you will be passing by, on your travels. For those of you exercising, just exercise!

It's okay to stay away from the radio for periods of time. After all, it is only a hobby. But, your equip-

and phones...) were set up in one day. Sure beats sitting at home, waiting for the installer!

Another demonstration of the scale of relief was how a mobile kitchen would be set up in a parking lot. Trucks would arrive, wash down the lot, and a kitchen would be set up under tents that would supply several thousand meals a day for those in need.

As Bob's specialty is communications, he told of many different jobs he was involved in. These included: installing mobile radio setups in a number of vehicles; supporting base radio installations at the many relief sites; installing a repeater system to supplement the low band VHF Red Cross radio frequency of 47.24 MHz; and spending his 'day off' driving a Humvee that was loaded with radio gear from HF to satellite telephones, digital communications and FAX.

Bob finds his volunteer work rewarding, and is looking forward to being able to assist again. He is looking for other people to assist him at the local chapter of the Red Cross.

ment and skills should be ready for any unforeseen emergency. Hams have been aiding victims all over the world these past few weeks. Those of you who subscribe to the ARRL Letter and Bulletins may have read about the life saving and post disaster efforts of many ordinary amateur radio operators. Vermont does not seem to get the life threatening weather that other states do, but we do handle several calls on the repeaters each year which are life and death emergencies.

We should all keep our skills sharp and our equipment ready. There are several ways to do this. One of the best ways to get acquainted with net procedures is to help with a non-emergency event like a parade. This spring, summer and fall will feature several such activities, where we will get to showcase ham radio. Some of them will be posted here, while others might be word of mouth, or in other club newsletters, etc. Be on the look out for them.

So, do what you gotta do to have a life. But get on the air at least once in a while, and be prepared. And, oh yeah: Attend some meetings!

Contacting RANV

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By Radio: 145.15 repeater
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Please send submissions for newsletter to the editor, W1SJ.

REPEATER NEWS

By Mitch WISJ

There was a lot of stuff going on with the repeater in February and this would have been reported on last month except that the story was bumped by other news!

Ten days before the Milton Hamfest, I stopped by the High School to check on some logistical items. When I got back in the car, I found it strange I couldn't get the repeater to work. Before panicking, I told myself that somebody had their mike locked down and the repeater was simply timed out. However, after switching to the UHF downlink and hearing the repeater work fine there, it quickly became obvious that the solution would not be an easy one. Something in the transmitter had died, and guess who had an unscheduled trip up the mountain!

The complete and total lack of any signal on 145.15 (*save for the damn fax machines*) told me that either the transmitter exciter or controller keying circuit was dead. I actually had a list of four scenarios and spare parts and tools to fix each one.

Three days later, on a Friday, Eric, Fred and myself found ourselves at the base of Bolton gathering our gear for the long trip up. Fortunately, the Gods were smiling on us. We were

blessed with a wonderfully nice day, and a wonderfully nice staff at the ski area who agreed to give us a ride up the mountain on their new snowmobiles. The ride up was exhilarating – the high power, long-track machines easily handled the worse parts of the mountain – spots where many other machines were gobbled up by deep snow and steep slopes. The ride and view was punctuated with a little humor as Eric dumped off the machine. Twice.

Having missed our exercise for the day, it was time to get to work. Predictably, we were faced with the frozen lock in the front door. However, this time, as good boy scouts, we had the correct tool for the job as Eric pulled out a torch and warmed up the lock. Just before the building ignited, we managed to get the door open.

The room where the repeater is located is not anyone's idea of a vacation. It is tiny – 7'x8', half of which is a big diesel generator. There is just enough room to walk in. The average winter temperature hovers around 15 degrees. After a quick assessment, I found that indeed, the exciter was dead. I pulled the whole repeater out of the back room into the slightly larger (*by 1 foot*) front room and got to work.

Since the exciter board was DOA, I disassembled the repeater and installed a new board. However, this didn't work very well either. After 45 minutes of messing with it, I remembered that I had to jump a land on the board to make it work. The tuning was troublesome, but I was able to get it to run stable for a couple of hours, during which time I checked power settings and did

some routine maintenance. Fred worked out near the tower to secure a loose coax cable (*not ours!*) which was wagging in the 30-mph breeze. For much of this time we attempted to find the cause of the paging noises which annoy us several times a day. Nothing conclusive was found except for the fact that we were hit

with this noise with our transmitter and antenna disconnected!

We had a nice relaxing

(!?) walk down the mountain. On the ski slopes, I chose to walk down the *Lift Line* (expert) while Fred and Eric, showing more sanity, (*probably less exposed to RF*), chose the more desirable *Sherman's Pass* (Novice).

The fix more or less works. The tuning of the exciter board is not quite right and at certain temperatures, the transmitter gets a little unstable, which then bothers the receiver with a little hash. That will have to be looked at another time. We still have the paging noise and still have the occasional pulse noise, which keys the repeater up every 5-10 seconds. When things get annoying enough, the tone is engaged. You should always have 100.0 Hz programmed into your radio. If you don't have tone in your radio, you will find times when you cannot access the repeater. Sorry about that!

As far as how the repeater works, I recently called a ham in Manchester, NH and asked him to turn his radio down to 5 watts because he was regularly keying the repeater. The antenna is a collinear on the roof of a 1-story house at 250 feet above sea level, 120 miles away! If you are ever in the Concord, New Hampshire area, try checking in from I-93 just south of I-89 from the 2-mile long "magic spot". Turn your tone off (so as not to bother the local repeater there) and give a quick call.

"...guess who had an unscheduled trip up the mountain!"



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CONTEST CORNER

By Paul AAISU

At the Milton Hamfest, we had a “tidal wave” of hams upgrading their licenses. At special upgrade sessions on April 15th and 18th, we are expecting a large increase in the number of hams with HF privileges. Hopefully, many of you will get on the air that weekend signing your call with “Temporary AG (/AG)” or “Temporary AE (/AE)”. If you’re a Technician with new HF privileges, no extra identifier is required. Get on and rag chew and have fun! There will not be too much contesting on the bands, so you can explore at your own pace.

However, it will not be totally quiet. For those a tad more daring, you can search & pounce in the *Michigan QSO Party*. It starts at noon on Saturday, April 15th, and runs for 12 hours.

If you want to keep trying, you can listen for Israel (4X) in the *Holyland DX Contest*. It starts at 2pm Saturday, and ends at 2pm Sunday. I worked 4 stations in 1998 and received a QSL card via the bureau a few months later. That was cool!

April 22nd features a Six-Meter Sprint. Sprints are short contests, as the name implies. It runs from 7pm until midnight. The exchange is grid square. For more on six-meter secrets, be sure to attend the April meeting, as it will be one of the featured highlights. Sunspots are up and the Equinox just went by. Both combine for good six-meter propagation.

On April 29th, you will find the Florida QSO Party. This is a rather popular stateside contest. It starts at noon Saturday, and runs until 6pm Sunday, with a break from 10pm until 8am. Some of the new contesting software supports this event, but you can also visit <http://6mt.com/contest.htm> for more information and software. Another, less popular, event this weekend is the *County Hunters Contest*. Exchange is signal report, county, and state.

And, for those of you hoping to hone your CW skills, May 5-7th is the *10-10 CW Contest*. It runs for 48 hours starting at 8pm Friday. Exchange is call, name, state, and 10-10 number, if member. As always, QST and CQ Magazine are full of the details.

Next month – who is Major Six?

IT’S UPGRADE TIME

With the date of the rules change, April 15th, right around the corner, here is the rundown on local exam sessions.

Sat.	April 8	9am	9 Heaton St	Montpelier	Old Exams	276-3325
Fri.	April 14	6pm	Red Cross	Burlington	Old Exams	878-6454
Sat.	April 15	6pm	Red Cross	Burlington	Admin Upgrades	878-6454
Tues	April 18	6pm	W1SJ	Essex Jct	Admin Upgrades	879-6589
Sat.	April 22	9am	9 Heaton St	Montpelier	New Exams	276-3325
Fri.	April 29	6pm	81 Main St	Essex Jct	New Exams	879-6589

The sessions marked “Admin Upgrades” are for paperwork filing only; no exams will be given. Bring in the appropriate paperwork and \$6.65 and get your CSCE. The Tuesday night session on April 18th will be at W1SJ’s QTH. If you let him know that you are coming, he will have the upgrade paperwork ready for you and will be able to process your application in a few minutes. There is talk about setting up a kiosk in the middle of the street to facilitate all the traffic coming and going.

FIELD DAY PLANNING

Planning for Field Day so soon? You bet! The effort required to put on a winning Field Day requires quite a bit of advance planning.

Field Day will be on June 23-25 this year. We will again be at the site up on Redmond Road in Williston. We will probably run 2A again this year. And the most important item – Chef Richard (WN1HJW) will be back – this year with barbecued chicken and the fixin’s. Someone mentioned that we get more points for more food, so we’re not fooling around!

There are a lot of little things to be considered at this stage. On a personal level, everyone should decide now what level of participation they will engage in and make the plans with bosses, spouses and whomever to get the time free. Once that is done, decide what aspects of Field Day you want to be involved in. It is really like a 3-ring circus and is impossible to take it all in.

Despite having a clear operating plan for Field Day, we have a lot of little nagging items which should be tended to now. For example, should we upgrade our software, the venerable NA Version 6.14 to something newer. This old software works perfectly, but later versions support networking – in itself, a real headache. This also asks the question of whether we should change out the aging IBM PCC laptops. They work fine, albeit a little slow, and we know they are RF quiet. When our current computer logging was put into place 10 years ago, a couple of us worked on the project for a few months to make sure everything would be perfect.

Other items which could stand scrutiny are antennas. Most work very well, but could we do better? The satellite station is pretty much an afterthought. Someone could devise a plan to get all that working real smoothly. And, the Novice dipole is a real throw-together operation. It’s time we cleaned that up – assuming we can find any Novices after April 15th!

This is an opportunity to take on a small project and really have fun. Any takers? Be sure to check the RANV FD Web site.

And we STILL need a comfortable canvas tent for the CW station!

A BETTER HAM

By Fred NIZUK

Having a clear conversation with someone several states away, through a series of interconnected FM repeaters, while driving your car. Sitting on a remote hilltop, sending CW across the country with 2 watts of RF power. Receiving a television picture of the latest DXpedition, while reading comments about it via FSK31. Across town, a station running 1 KW has been making 80 SSB contacts an hour contesting. Nearby, someone is building a microwave waveguide, preparing for the Phase 3 satellite to become operational. All of this is amateur radio.

What amazes me about this hobby is its diversity. Ask ten hams what they do in their hobby, and you'll get ten different answers. Very few pursuits have this wide choice of options available.

Even more amazing to me is the constant reports of amateur radio's demise. The cell phone is killing ham radio. The Internet is killing ham radio. Incentive licensing. FCC license restructuring. If you look back to its inception, many things were supposed to destroy this hobby. Novice licensing. SSB. The transistor. Prohibition of the spark gap transmitter. Yet somehow, it still survives.

I believe the key to ham radio's survival is innovation, both in what we do technologically, and how we adapt to the present. Many have cried that the Internet has reduced our numbers. True, but whom have we lost? A number were those who joined our ranks for only a means of inexpensive communications. They left when E-mail and cell phones became more available to them. But what did they contribute to amateur radio? Other than activity to justify our frequency allocations, not a great deal. The operators, those who use the airwaves because of the magic it has over them; and the experimenters, who are always trying something new, are the true spirit of ham radio.

I see the Internet as a great asset. There are scores of information on all aspects of amateur radio, at all levels of expertise. Information on how to become a ham. Articles on antenna design and propagation theory. Your radio won't work? Locate technical information, a service manual, or place to get it repaired. Or just look for the best price on a new one. Learn about a new operating mode. Download some new logbook software. E-mail an operator across the world, and make a sked. All of these things make amateur radio stronger.

As we are now on the eve of license restructuring, it's time to look at how this can be made to be an opportunity to improve ham radio, not cry about it being dumbed down. It's a chance to set new goals, whether you're a Technician or an Extra. Setting a goal provides the motivation to get things done. Last year, I was bored just operating 2-meter FM. I set a goal to get a 6-meter SSB station on the air, and work 100 grids in 100 days. This pushed me to acquire the equipment, and make several improvements along the way. Several antenna changes, an amplifier, and much improvement in my skills allowed me to achieve my goal. I know more about propagation, built a packet station to check the DX cluster, and became more confident repairing things. In other words, *I am a better ham.*

My new goal? Upgrading to General by Labor Day. Tonight I'll take my written exam. With my CSCE in hand, I'll buckle down harder on getting my CW right. There's a TS-520 on the floor, waiting for some parts so I can fix it. There are antennas to build and hang. The radio table needs to be reinforced, and a new shelf added on to it. A microphone and digital frequency display to wire. Then I can set it all up and troubleshoot.

On the air by Fall? What's your goal?

EIGHT NEW HAMSTERS

Congratulations to the eight new hams who are graduates of the Spring Weekend class this past March 18-19th:

KB1EXF	Steve Sorensen	Jericho
KB1EXG	Dave Cain	Waitsfield
KB1EXH	Larry Keyes	Ferrisburgh
KB1EXI	Al Maintner	Huntington
KB1EXJ	Tony Likhite	Jericho
KB1EXK	Jesse Krembs	Burlington
KB1EXL	Mark Bock	Burlington
KB1EXM	Matt Pepper	Johnson

This was a wild and exciting group! Steve is a very sharp 12-year old who I suspect will be involved in everything in the next few years. Dave works for the State and came all the way up from Waitsfield to take the class. Larry used to work for the power company. Al, who showed up with his family at Field Day a few years ago, finally got his license. Tony is the technical guru at Together Networks and will probably enjoy some analog contacts after being "digital" all day. Jesse and Mark work in graphic design and will undoubtedly spend a lot of time talking together. Matt is a student at Johnson State College. His home town is Exeter, NH, where Ted used to live a long time ago.

Some of these folks are already on the air. If you hear them on, be sure to give them a big "HELLO"!

Welcome to RANV

Arnie W2HDI of Stowe has spent many weekends in Vermont and has just relocated from Westchester.

Michael KB1EQG of Jericho just obtained his Technician Plus license at Milton.

HOSSTRADERS

The Hosstraders Swapfest a.k.a. Deerchester will be May 12-13th this year. I just thought I'd tell you in case you wanted to know!

So there!

NEXT MEETING:
“Life Beyond 2-Meters”
TUESDAY, APRIL 11TH, 7PM
at O’Brien Civic Center

FOX HUNT:
Friday, April 7th, 7PM

VPT AUCTION
Saturday, April 15th, 6PM

RANV

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