



Radio Amateur News & Views

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

MARCH 2001

HAPPY 10th BIRTHDAY, RANV!

Vol. 11 No. 3

VINTAGE RADIOS & RANV BIRTHDAY PARTY The March 13th RANV Meeting

Join with us for the March RANV meeting as we delve into our past! The meeting will have two parts, with the first being on *Vintage Radios*. Todd KA1KAQ and Mike W1RC, two active purveyors of vintage gear, will talk about the collection of "boatanchors" as they are affectionately called. There will be a short introduction, some words about the gear and some explanation on why people actually collect really old (and heavy!) stuff. A number of items will be brought to the meeting, including a Collins KWM2-A which we plan to put on the air. The meeting wouldn't be complete without a story about each piece of equipment and a vigorous question and answer session.

We'll start off the meeting by delving into our recent past – the past 10 years of our club, the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont. RANV turns 10 at this meeting. Actually, the very first meeting was the day before – March 12th. We plan to have some members of the original RANV cast as well as some short pieces of rare video footage of the first meeting and the night RANV members took over the Vermont ETV Auction! There are some surprises in store for refreshments, but as it is a birthday, that information is a secret.

So, by all means, join us for the 10-year anniversary of RANV and talk on *Vintage Radios*. We expect it to be even better than the last meeting (and that would be hard to do!). And, it might even stop snowing for a day or two!

FOX HUNT TIME

The first RANV Fox Hunt of the season will take place Friday, April 6th, starting at 6pm. The fox of the evening will be Bill N1IRO. To participate, please check into the 145.15 repeater (required) and then switch to the input to look for the fox. The fox will be located in Chittenden County. The fox must put at least an S-1 signal at I-89 Exit 14. The fox must transmit 10 seconds out of every minute. Beyond that, anything else is possible. First one to find the fox will be next hunt's fox and will claim all the glory.

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www.ranv.org

RANV REFLECTOR

We have a method by which anyone can reach many members of RANV by E-mail. It is called a *reflector*. Interested parties subscribe to the reflector. Anyone who wants to send mail to the group sends to an address and all people subscribed will receive the mail. This is preferable to sending out mail to many different addresses.

You won't receive anything from the reflector unless you subscribe to it. To do so, send an E-mail to: ranv-request@wpi.edu. Leave the subject line blank and type one word in the message: **subscribe**. The server which manages the reflector will send you back a confirmation. After that, you will receive mail whenever someone posts something. If you later change your mind and do not want to receive mail from the reflector, send the same note, but type **unsubscribe** in the text. Make sure you use the same E-mail account!

When you want to send out a message which you would like to go to everyone on the reflector, send an E-mail to ranv@wpi.edu. Enter an appropriate subject and message. Remember, you are talking to a rather large audience, so make sure your message is appropriate for the group. Shortly after you send the message, you should receive some mail. That will be your message "reflected" back to you, as a subscriber. Hopefully, you won't find too many spelling or grammatical errors at this point.

Thanks to John N2YHK, who set up and maintains the RANV Reflector at WPI.

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by *Grant K1KD, Sec'y*

The February monthly RANV meeting was called to order at 7:05pm on Tuesday, February 13, 2001 at the O'Brien Civic Center. I counted 27 people in attendance for the meeting.

The first order of business was that the club passed a motion to contribute \$200 to fund the Milton Hamfest. Looking to the future, an announcement was made that a special event station is planned for July 14-15th. The station, using callsign N2V (for "New York to Vermont"), will be activated to commemorate 250 years of Lake Champlain ferry service. The station will operate from the Grand Island Ferry. We learned from Paul AA1SU that RANV was not a recipient of the Club 2000 Achievement Award but did get honorable mention. We were congratulated on our recent club achievements and are encouraged to apply again in 2001.

The main presentation of the evening was on the real life stories of the Border Patrol. We were honored to have AI N1DRO and Ross KB6GCS give a description of some of the electronic devices used to patrol the U.S. - Canadian border. Given the vast distance to patrol (*approximately 4000 miles for the northern border*) and limited number of patrol officers (*less than 400*), a variety of electronic gadgets are used to help do the job. They explained that the regional border patrol relies heavily on station to station communication via a network of approximately 15 VHF repeaters. Furthermore, many different remote-sensing devices are used to transmit information to manned stations. These remote devices can be used to detect movement along roads and trails that traverse the border. For example, a small unit called a "pelican case" can be buried along the side of a road to detect the presence of a human or animal. Generally, detection occurs by way of vibration (*like a seismograph*), or light (*like infrared radar*). Some detectors work by creating magnetic fields that, when disturbed by a metal object such as a car, indicate the presence of a passer-by. Several remote-sensing stations can be hidden in an area to collect more data about an approaching person's direction and speed. In addition, the border patrol has 15 fast scan TV's, 7 real-time cameras and good (*i.e. expensive!*) handheld VHF transceivers. All of these devices help border patrol officers keep our borders secure.

We certainly enjoyed getting a chance to learn about all the neat electronic gadgets and hearing some of the funny stories. Thanks, guys!

THE PREZ SEZ

by *Paul AA1SU, President*

I am happy to report that we had another very successful Milton Hamfest. It was great to see several faces that I only get to see once a year. The socializing aspects of these functions are so important to us. It is not just the chance to get a good deal on an item, or to browse the merchandise at the flea market. The personal contact that we get from attending has a positive effect on us. Thus, I hope that you all got to come out, and have fun.

The meeting last month about the U.S. Border Patrol Communications was an absolute hit! Who would have thought that the border police could be such a hoot, as well as educational? We were all most fascinated with their presentation. For those of you that weren't there, you didn't get any of the giveaways that they bought along. This was a first, as far as I know.

I am delighted to hear that more and more of you are getting on HF with your new privileges. Some of you even dabbled in the ARRL DX Phone Contest recently. This is truly heart-warming news. As I recall, 10 Meters was open from one end to the other. It is good to get the most that we can out of this band, before the cycle bottoms out.

All in all, we have nothing but good ham radio news around here. Please join us at the March meeting where we will hear a talk on the older radios. It's been a while since we have heard anything on this subject, but it is always fascinating. Hope to see you there.

Contacting RANV

In Person: Meeting, March 13, 7pm,
O'Brien Civic Center
113 Patchen Rd, So. Burlington

By Mail: PO Box 9392,
So. Burlington, VT 05407

By Radio: 145.15 repeater

WW Web: <http://www.ranv.org>

President Paul AA1SU 860-1134
aa1su@arrl.net

VP/Tres: Brian N1BQ 899-4527
n1bq@wulfden.org

Secretary: Grant K1KD 862-6203
kesselrg@us.ibm.com

Editor: Mitch W1SJ 879-6589
w1sj@arrl.net

Please send submissions for newsletter to the editor, W1SJ.

RANV – 10 YEARS LATER

by Mitch WISJ

It's been only 10 years since the formation of RANV, the *Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont*. The first meeting was held March 12, 1991 in the Board Room of Fanny Allen Hospital. How was RANV founded and how did it grow to be the largest and one of the best radio clubs in New England? This and a subsequent article will provide the details.

Amateur radio in 1990 was different than it is now. The FCC had just created the No-Code Technician license. Growth of amateur operators was approaching double digits. There was a lot of excitement. Things were quite different in Vermont then also. In the Burlington area, there was only one radio club, the *Burlington Amateur Radio Club*. Another club existed at IBM, but while having some open activities like Field Day, most meetings were only open to employees. There were no clubs in St. Albans or Middlebury. The 145.15 and 145.23 repeaters didn't exist yet.

The Burlington Amateur Radio Club, which had been in existence since the 1930's, held its annual meeting at the Red Cross in September, 1990. Election of officers should have been routine, as the incumbents were running again. However, there was major dissent. Some 60 people showed up for the meeting – an unheard of number for a club meeting. While there are probably 60 different versions of the story, things turned ugly at the meeting. Other candidates were nominated and won. The turning point of the election was several "proxy" votes from members who joined just prior to the meeting. A large level of dissatisfaction existed. It probably wasn't too different than the general feeling after the last presidential election.

The past president of the club, Tom N1EXY, felt there had to be a better way. In particular, the level of politics at the meetings was not fun. That December he penned a set of by-laws for a new club where the goal was to have fun and the grunge work of business

and politics would be minimized. In looking at them, there was quite a bit of tongue-in-cheek humor included, but they did contain some significant changes to how a radio club was to be run. Discussion took place on whether a new organization should be formed. A meeting was held on February 8th at the Village Leprechaun Restaurant on Route 7 in Milton (this spot is on the RANV list of historic places). The group consisted of: Joe N1DMP, Joe N1EMA, Tom N1ENH (*now K1KBL*), Tom N1EXY, Ronni K1NRR, Carl KC1WH, Jon WB1BWV (*now W1BWV*) and Mitch WB2JSJ (*now W1SJ*). The group called themselves the Steering Wheel Committee. Some of the salient points of the new organization: politically free, elections by mail, minimal number of officers, well programmed meetings and informative newsletters. Some of the planned meeting activities: Amateur TV, Satellites, Contest/DX Forum, MARS, Club projects, and a proposed DXpedition to Burton Island! It was decided to hold meetings along the Route 15 corridor between Winooski and Essex on Tuesday

nouncing the club.

The big night, the premier meeting of RANV, occurred right on schedule. The meeting was videotaped for posterity. Twenty people showed up for the event. Tom N1EXY and Joe N1DMP chaired the meeting. The first part of the meeting was an open discussion on the direction of the club and how to fulfill the Bylaws which called for "minimizing the governing aspects of the organization while maximizing individual involvement." The discussion produced a list of proposed activities, which are not much different from what RANV does today. For the break, we were treated to homemade brownies, thus starting the tradition of refreshments at the meetings. For a humorous break, I brought in my pileup tape and challenged the group to see how many callsigns they could copy. Finally, we ended the evening with a video of the various hamfests held that year: Dayton, Deerfield and Milton.

Everyone enjoyed themselves at the meeting. Most returned to subsequent meetings and joined. It was the very first meeting of a long run. A meeting (*or the summer picnic*) has been held every month since. That's 120 of 'em in a row! A week later, we were back at the Leprechaun in Milton for the Steering Wheel meeting. We decided to change the name to the Planning Committee, but the first name stuck and has been used ever since. N1EXY, N1ENH and N1DMP were voted in as President and Vice President and Secretary and N1ENH took on the duty of editor. At

that same meeting we put together the paperwork to become an ARRL affiliated club, ordered the official light blue RANV hats, planned to help out at the Vermont ETV auction and started the discussion going for a Summer Hamfest later that year.

Whew! In looking back that was quite a whirlwind of a start. Next time, I'll look at what it was like in those early years of RANV.

PREMIER MEETING
RADIO AMATEURS OF NORTHERN VERMONT
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING AT THE
FANNY ALLEN HOSPITAL BOARDROOM
7:00 PM, MARCH 12, 1991
TALK IN ON 145.47 AND 146.61

Are you looking for an organization to enhance your hobby of amateur radio? Look no further. The focus of this organization is to learn and share amateur radio. We are planning fun, focused meetings in which we can advance our hobby. This will be YOUR club. Help us get RANV off the ground by attending the meeting. We can't do this alone. WE NEED YOU!

nights. Dues were set at \$15, plus \$5 for family members. Other activities discussed were a summer picnic and the possible idea of a hamfest. At the last minute we decided on the name Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont, I'm not sure who had the idea of this (might have been me or a combination of us). At the 1991 Milton Hamfest (*in those days it was run by a non-club group*), a flyer was passed around an-

NEW RANV WEB SITE

by Mitch WISJ

Last year, *Earthlink Networks* purchased *One Main Dot Com*, who owned *Together Networks*. A new owner means new rules and new procedures. In January, we received word that the *Together Networks* server, which contains the RANV Web site, would be going away in two weeks. This started a frenzied search for a new web space and answers to questions on how all of our worldwide links would be changed. *Earthlink* was no help – they didn't even know who *Together Networks* were, even though they had purchased them!

To facilitate the move we made two changes. First, we registered our own domain name, www.ranv.org. This is our very own URL address which we can transport to any server in the world (*as long as we pay the rent on it each year*). Second, we searched for a Web server which was reliable, fast and affordable. We are pleased to announce that we have relocated our web site on *SoVerNet*, Vermont's Sovereign Internet Provider. They have a very generous program for non-profit community organizations like our own. If you are considering an Internet Service Provider change, consider *SoVerNet* and let them know you are a member of RANV.

There is only one major change out of all this. The RANV web site will be accessed at <http://www.ranv.org>. The old *Together Net* address should be a dead end by the time you read this, since the entire server is going away. If you have a Web site which links to RANV, please be sure to change the URL address so that users won't get the dreaded 404 error – *site not found!*

If you are not familiar with the RANV site, here are some of the things it has:

- List of E-mails of Vermont hams and club members
- Links to Callbooks, FCC, FCC Forms, ARRL and other sites
- Newsletters from the past two years
- Milton Hamfest Information
- Field Day, VHF Contest, Contest Scores, Contest Info
- Pictures: Field Day, VHF Contest, Meetings, Repeater Site
- Club contact information
- Local VE Exams
- Repeater Information

Over the next few months, I plan to make a few changes to the front end of the site to make it a little easier to navigate around the site. The site will still feature fast loading and lots of amateur radio information. Of course, if you have any suggestions, please let me know so I can make a great site even better.

www.ranv.org

CONTEST CORNER

by Paul AAISU

Could it be that things are slowing down a little in the contest world? Well, yes they are a little bit. But, true to form, we have a few contests to choose from to keep your search & pounce skills up to date. We start things off with the *Bermuda Contest*. It starts at 8:00 PM on Friday, March 16, and ends at 7:00 PM on Sunday. You can operate no more than 24 of the 47 hours, and off times must be two hours or more. Modes are CW & Phone. Bands are 10 through 80 Meters. Although it sounds like you can only work the VP9 stations, this is actually an everybody works everybody contest. Score 5 points per QSO, and multipliers are DXCC/WAE countries worked per band and VP9 stations. You may actually want to call CQ for this one, as the winner gets a free trip to Bermuda to pick up the Award! There is a web site with all the details about this one. I'll post it on the RANV reflector.

Moving onto the weekend of March 23, you can work the very popular *CQ WW WPX Phone Contest*. WPX stands for Work All Prefixes. It is a 48-hour contest starting at 7:00 PM on Friday and ending at 8:00 PM on Sunday. This is actually a 48-hour period - remember the clocks get set ahead this weekend. Single operators can work no more than 36 hours. Off periods must be 60 minutes or more. There are many categories for entering, including Rookie, for those of you that have been licensed less than 3 years. The scoring is tiered, but most contest software will support it. The multipliers are call sign prefixes, and I bet that there will not be a lot of KB1's out there (*hint*).

Skipping one weekend, on April 6 is the *Japan International DX CW Contest*. It starts at 7:00 PM and runs for 48 hours. We can operate no more than 30 hours. The bands are 10, 15, and 20 Meters. The exchange for us is RST and CQ Zone. JA stations exchange prefecture number (1-50). Score 2 points on 10 Meters and 1 point on 15 and 20 Meters. Multipliers are prefectures. Details are in the January QST, page 99.

For those of you who are interested in this sort of thing, there is a list of major contests on the web put out by Bruce Horn, WA7BNM. It is updated more frequently than the magazines, and has listings for the next 12 months. It can be found at <http://www.hornucopia.com/contestcal>. On it you will find much more detail than I publish here. So, if you are working on your Worked All Oblasts Award, or some other specialized area, you will find something to suit your taste, like say, the *Russian DX Contest* on March 17.

Next month: are you ready to rumble?

MILTON HAMFEST 2001

by Mitch WISJ

Every year it becomes a challenge to make the Milton Hamfest a little better than last year. This year, it was very difficult to come up with something which topped last year's great show. The program planning started slowly at first, but it quickly came together to form what many have heralded as the best Milton Hamfest ever.

For our 19th year, we were again blessed with great winter weather: sunny and cold. Given the snow showers on both the preceding Friday and following Sunday, it was an another stroke of luck. Overall, the attendance was in the 400-500 range, within about 20 or so of last year's total. Considering that there were 60 people present for exams last year, we did very well keeping the attendance level up. Given that almost every hamfest everywhere has lost attendance, we did fine.

Collecting tables for the flea market is becoming more of an adventure each year. The available tables at the school have been dropping since they break faster than they can be replaced. That requires acquiring and transporting a lot of tables to meet the insatiable demands of the flea market. We managed to beg, borrow, and steal 90 tables, and every one was loaded with stuff by 8:30. When we say get to the hamfest early, we mean it!

Based on comments I've heard, the stuff available at the flea market was very good. Although Bob, the connector guy, could not come this year, other large vendors such as Webster Associates and Radio Devices took up the slack. There appeared to be a lot of radios for sale and I'm still hearing people bemoaning a missed buy. There also appeared to be lots of books moving at the Radio Bookstore table. Education is good.

Speaking of education, it is with great enjoyment to see the forums program grow even stronger than in previous years. We had 7 forums averaging 25 in attendance. With forum overlap, that meant that around 50 people, or 10% were at forums at any given time. That is a

percentage which is higher than any other hamfest or convention I have heard of. When we set up the rooms, I mentioned that we needed to put extra chairs in place for the QRP Forum because I had heard a lot of talking about it. Even with that, we ran out of seats as 40 people packed the room. Mike and Tom had an another excellent show on Satellite Communications and two successful demonstrations outside in the balmy February weather. John VE2EQL's forum on NVIS antennas had people outside in the hallway planning to build such antennas for their stations. And this forum was added only weeks before the show! Ed W1RFI gave two great forums on Interference and Antenna building. I watched his antics trying to solder copper tubing with a torch while trying to not set his tie and everything else on fire. I laughed all the way back to the flea market.

For the Volunteer Exam sessions, we were offered a new venue since the library is no longer available to us. With 16 candidates, our new room worked out fine. We had excellent results, with 13 people upgrading or getting new licenses and an unheard of hamfest pass rate of 78%. There were also three candidates for Commercial licenses, all of whom passed. It pays to study! RANV members upgrading included John K3UBW to Extra and Dave W1DEC to General.

There are a lot of people who do all of the little things to make the hamfest run and we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge them:

Setup: Paul AA1SU, Eric N1SRC, Kristin AA1SK, Fred N1ZUK, Ted K1HD, John WA1RMS

Tickets: Bob KB1FRW, Paul AA1SU, Roger K1CRS

Forum Speakers: Ed W1RFI, John VE2EQL, Brian N1BQ, Fran KM1Z, Bob WE1U, John KB1ENS, Mike N1JEZ, Tom N1GZZ, Tom K1KI, Mike K1TWF, Don K2KQ

Examiners: Al W1BY, Joe K2KBT, Kristin AA1SK, Ed N1PEA Red K1RED, Ted K1HD, Jim AA1BO, Fran KM1Z

Every year, a good deal of effort is put into promoting the hamfest, particularly to folks outside of amateur radio. While a full-page ad would

be nice, it is not within the limits of the budget. We did have announcements in many of the local community papers and in the calendar of the Free Press, as well as all of the national ham radio magazines. This year, Adam Silverman of the *Free Press* came down and reported on the show, resulting in an excellent article on Page 1 of the Vermont Section of the Sunday paper. Every little bit of publicity helps in letting everyone know who we are and what we do (*hopefully good stuff*). And that will pay off later on with more people checking out the hamfest next year.

The goal of the Milton Hamfest is to provide a place for hams in the North Country a place to meet, buy and sell equipment, learn something new and play ham radio. Our measurement of success is whether people enjoyed the event. I've heard many positive comments, and no negative ones, so far. I think we met and exceeded our goals. Certainly, if you have constructive comments, please let me know of them so they can be considered for the future. We also made a little mad money for the club and amateur radio as well. This helps us support our mission to the community in the form of public service communications, as well as donations of radio books to libraries.

While organizing and setting up the hamfest was relatively easy this year, it is a job that is getting harder each year. We live in an increasingly complex world where things can no longer be done with a nod and a handshake. If you follow the news, you know that our venue, Milton High School, is facing heavy challenges in the safety and security of all who use the facility. This may affect us in the future and it might limit what we can do. Even more important is the fact that hamfests have been in decline and, we expect, ham radio numbers will also be in decline. That is a problem which we all own and must work diligently throughout the year to "sell" amateur radio to the rest of the world. Or to put it another way, if we want to play, we have to pay!

NEXT MEETING:

“Vintage Radios”

– and –

RANV 10th Birthday Party

Tuesday, March 13th, 7 PM

O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

NEW ADDRESS:

<http://www.RANV.org>