



Radio Amateur News & Views

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ANTENNA TERRAIN MODELING The April 12th RANV Meeting

We all know about antennas – or at least, we think we do. We know for example, that in general, a big yagi beats a small yagi, which beats a dipole and, the higher the antenna, the better. But now, for something completely different, we have also found out that the ground contour below the antenna has just as much to do with the signal as the antenna itself. For example, we didn't end up at our present day Field Day site by accident – we know the site itself plays well. The study of how the ground terrain affects signals is called *Antenna Terrain Modeling*.

In our second presentation in our antenna series, noted DXer Ed N1UR will talk about Antenna Terrain Modeling. Ed has used software in which the topographic data is input and the program makes predictions on what the signal level will be in various directions. The discriminating Contester or DXer will be well advised to make use of these tools before buying the new QTH. Ed found that his new location worked well in the directions which counted the most for DX: towards Europe and South America. We'll get to see how to use these programs and how to interpret the results.

Festivities get underway at Zack's on Williston Road at 6 PM, April 12th. The meeting starts at 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington. Hope to see you there!

MS WALK APRIL 16TH

The 2005 Multiple Sclerosis Walk is scheduled for Saturday, April 16th. This is an early chance to brush up on your communication skills and do a good deed. The MS Walk needs a few volunteer communicators to man the rest stops and travel with the walkers. Volunteers need to be on post by 7:30 AM for the 8:00 start. The latest jobs will finish up by 1:00. The Net Control station will be at Burlington High School, with most of the route traveling down North Avenue. If you can spare some time for a good cause, contact Bob KB1FRW at 434-2517, E-mail: mcamp@gmavt.net.

FOX HUNT

The first Fox Hunt of 2005 will be held Friday, April 15th, starting at 6 PM. This will mark the debut of Bob KB1FRW as the fox, since he was the first (*and only*) finder of the fox at the last hunt in October.

The hunt will take place on the input of the 145.15 Bolton repeater (144.55 MHz). All hunting teams must check-in prior to hunting. The fox must hide within Chittenden County, be in a public accessible place and have at least an S-1 signal to a mobile at I-89 Exit 14.

We pressed Bob for some details of his hiding spot and he mentioned something about bringing a boat! One could envision all sorts of delicious scenarios, such as the Fox located on the Ferry. The Burlington ferry doesn't start up until late May, but that doesn't rule out an *unscheduled* trip. As there is no rule against water locations (*the lake is, in fact, public accessible*), this could be very interesting – and a potentially, a very long night for Bob! But, we really don't know where he will be, so come out and try to find him!

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LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl ABIDD, Sec'y

Despite the snow warning, 19 brave souls fought the bad weather to attend the March 8th meeting. It seems that a snow-storm won't keep the hardy hams home. Brian N1BQ called the meeting to order at 7:05. His first announcement was a hearty thanks to all who helped make the hamfest happen.

Some upcoming events were mentioned. In April, the MS Walk will need volunteers. Get in touch with Bob KB1FRW or Brian N1BQ if you want to help.

May 6-7th is Hosstraders, the number 1 gathering of hams in the Northeast.

Closer to home, it was announced that there would be a Saturday morning brunch on March 26th, 10 AM-noon, at Ponderosa on Shelburne Road.

Paul AA1SU talked briefly about the status of the PRB-1 legislation.

There will be a second edition of the Vermont Amateur Radio Directory.

Coming up for April: Ed N1UR will talk about Antenna Terrain Modeling. There will also be a vote on whether the club should spend money to incorporate. Refreshments will be provided by John KB1EYC and crew.

The main program was a presentation by Rich Parker on computer security, and the Vermont InfraGard program. Those who missed this or want to learn more can find information at www.vtinfragard.org.

The answer to last month's trivia question was *Mitch's Law*, and the prize goes to Jon KB1LIE. This month's trivia question is: *Before the FCC, what agency issued amateur radio licenses?*

HAM CLASS RESULTS

by Mitch W1SJ

The latest weekend class produced 3 new hamsters. Although a small class, it was a very satisfying class as all students were well prepared and we all breezed through the day. It was also satisfying in that there was a class at all. Sign-ups didn't start until the Milton Hamfest, only 3 weeks out and virtually at the 11th hour. Another interesting factoid: none of the students were from Chittenden County and represented a treasure trove of rare counties if we were holding a county hunters net!

Mike KB1MDA from Ferrisburgh (*Addison County*) is a graduate student in Electrical Engineering at UVM. One of his projects is developing instrumentation which flies aboard high altitude balloons. We almost got to see one of these flights at Milton! Mike passed the General exam as well, and I expect him to get the General license soon.

Marty KB1MDB from Morrisville (*Lamoille County*) works in the food service business. He attended the talk I gave about amateur radio at Milton and was hooked!

Alan KB1MDC from North Hero (*Grand Isle County*) attended the recent Milton Hamfest. In fact, he has attended Milton in the past, as well as other hamfests and is pals with several area hams. After the hamfest, I pulled his ticket out of the barrel and, noticing that he wasn't a ham, called up to see why he attended. Immediately, I knew he was a perfect candidate to be a ham and helped him to "decide" that taking a class was the right thing to do. Alan tells me that he will never fill out a raffle ticket again, but he also was very happy when he got his license!

Bill KC2NIN from Baldwin, Long Island has a second home in Springfield (*Windsor County*) and decided it was time to upgrade to General. He aced the General exam and is now working on the code.

So, if you hear KB1MD-A/B/C / KC2NIN on the air, be sure to give them a shout and a warm welcome!

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

Oh boy, what to talk about this month? It is imminently April 1st - maybe I could try - SURPRISE - to say nothing!

Spring is about to sprung! Time to take down the tangled antenna arrays thanks to winter storms and pick up all the junk that was thankfully hidden by the blanket of snow. Time to shed the "Seasonal Affective Disorder" that we northern folk simply call cabin fever.

The first fox hunt is only a week off. In a month, the hamfest season kicks off with Hosstraders in Hopkinton, New Hampshire on May 6th.

People have a hobby because it is fun and provides relief from the stresses of day to day living. We have again planned a number of fun activities that we all have enjoyed over the years. Let's all make a Spring resolution to find a local ham or even prospective ham and bring him or her along to one or more of these fun outdoor activities. What better way to attract and/or keep hams in the hobby?

Contacting RANV

In Person: Meeting, April 12, 7pm,
O'Brien Civic Center
113 Patchen Rd, So. Burlington

By Mail: PO Box 9392,
So. Burlington, VT 05403

By Radio: 145.15 repeater

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

President: Brian N1BQ 899-4527
n1bq@wulfdn.org

VP/Tres Bob KB1FRW 434-2517
mcamp@gmavt.net

Secretary: Carl AB1DD 482-3878
ab1dd@arrl.net

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

Please send submissions for the newsletter to the editor, W1SJ.

LONGEST HAM RADIO TRANSMISSION FINALLY OVER

Denton, TX, April 1, 2005: The reign of Tommy Schnooker W5FOB is over. Thankfully, the ham radio media circus which chronicled Tommy's last 17 years is also over.

Thomas Rudolph Schnooker was an average ham operator back in 1988. He passed his Technician Class examination and quickly upgraded to General. Just as quickly, he assembled an impressive station in his home just outside of Denton. Sometime at the end of March, he was adjusting his new high-powered amplifier and accidentally came in contact with 3200 volts, throwing him clear across the shack. Normally, this is a fatal voltage, but Tommy not only survived, but also walked away. Or so everyone thought. Suddenly, his behavior took a bizarre turn for the worse as he quickly became disconnected with reality.

On the first day of April 1988, Tommy began transmitting on the 34/94 Denton repeater. This was not your average transmission, as it had no end. The Denton repeater timed out long before Tommy's soliloquy was even in full swing. By nightfall, everyone breathed a sigh of relief as they thought Tommy would give up and go to bed. But it was not to be. Tommy, as everyone learned, talked in his sleep and managed to relate coherent stories. In fact, in his sleep, Tommy made more sense than most 2-meter repeater users.

The repeater tried several times to come back on frequency but timed out each time. The club gave up and moved elsewhere. Attempts to reason with Tommy fell on deaf ears. After several weeks, complaints were filed with the FCC. The Commission was no help. They ruled that since Tommy identified every 10 minutes, his transmission was legal, if not a bit lengthy.

Prominent psychoanalysts proclaimed that Tommy was suffering from a massive vegetative disorder. This was no surprise, since Tommy's favorite discussion topic was about the preparation and cooking of vegetarian meals. However, Tommy's discussions, while not illegal, were getting very weird. His phonetics for his callsign bordered on tasteless to indecent, including W5 Fell Over Board, W5 Feeble Old Buzzard, W5 Fat Old Bxxxxd and everyone's favorite, W5 Full of Bullxxxt. Something had to be done.

The local radio club filed suit to get Tommy's power supply disconnected to end his transmission. After years in court and several appeals, Appellate Judge Myron Hamwerker ordered the power supply disconnected. Tommy's well-designed radio shack kicked over to backup batteries, but time was running out. Tommy was saved by none other than the members of the Texas State Legislature who quickly crafted a bill prohibiting the disconnection of any power supply in the Lone Star State.

Several more years went by until the Texas Supreme court ruled the law unconstitutional. By now Schnooker's home became a media gathering spot with scores of people presenting various points of view. "Save Tommy" became the rallying cry. It is even rumored that the rock band the Who were considering coming up with another rock opera, "Tommy II". The Governor, the President, religious leaders, heads of state and even the King of Siam all weighed in on the subject. However, Judge Hamwerker was not swayed, and on March 21st of this year, he ordered Tommy's power supply disconnected. The vigil and countdown started.

With all appeals exhausted, Tommy fought on valiantly on battery back up power, but he was fading fast. His signal was very weak at the end and finally, at 9:35 AM Central Standard Time, Tommy's transmission finally came to an end. The thousands of spectators made their way home.

Tommy is quite optimistic. Just last week he was spotted at the Fort Worth Hamfest hauling away a generator and some massive batteries...

EDITOR'S MAD RAMBLINGS

by Mitch WISJ

Our esteemed president did an April Fool's on us and almost had nothing to say. So, his short column is my gain and the club's loss. So here I go, rambling on about nothing in particular.

The Spring Weekend classes are over. As I reflect on them, I have realized that I get many requests to sell or otherwise unload used equipment. These requests come after a class announcement appears in the paper. I can't fathom how someone can read "Ham Class" and confuse this to mean "Unload Boatanchors Here". I see this in both Vermont and New Hampshire so I know this isn't a regional thing. Just last weekend, someone came into the classroom and dropped off flyers for the stuff he was unloading. Now, it wasn't late model hand-helds or mobile radios or anything a new ham could use. Nope, it was more of your Hosstraders type stuff, such as a very old signal generator, boxes of ancient capacitors and a vintage Eico 753 without tubes. Without tubes? Where did they go? Did some gremlin sneak in under the cover of darkness and steal them? In thinking about it, this particular transceiver might indeed work better without the tubes!

On a completely unrelated topic, the Memorial Day Parade occurs in late May. Usually I dress up the van with the club banners and roll down the parade route and everyone cheers. How about something different such as an actual parade float. It would require a large trailer, something to pull it, lots of work to build it and folks to perform in it. The float people might dress up in ham costumes and play with fake radios and climb fake towers. We might show a town official banning the towers (*subtle commentary?*). The idea is to entertain, get attention and have fun. Anyone interested?

Spring Calendar

April 12	RANV Meeting
April 15	Fox Hunt
April 16	MS Walk
May 6-7	Hosstraders
May 7	NE QSO Party
May 10	RANV Meeting
May 28	Memorial Parade
May 29	VT City Marathon

NEXT MEETING:
“Antenna Terrain Modeling”
Tuesday, April 12th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

<http://www.RANV.org>