



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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HF RADIO DIRECTION FINDING The January 10th *RANV* Meeting

For our first meeting of 2006, our special guest will be William Noyce AB1AV, who will be driving all the way up from Hollis, New Hampshire. He will be giving a presentation on HF Radio Direction finding, which is the basis of the International Radio Sport competitions. Unlike a 2 meter Fox Hunt, HF Direction Finding usually takes place on 80 meters. And no, they don't use yagis on that band to triangulate! William will bring a number of 80 meter RDF receivers of his own design and fabrication so that we can take a look see what makes them tick. We're told that, weather permitting, we will get a chance to try them out. Well... unless there is a major January heat wave, your editor will watch from inside, thank you!

Festivities will get underway at 6 with the pre-game show and dinner at Zach's. The meeting will start at 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington.

MILTON FEST FEBRUARY 25th

The Northern Vermont Winter Hamfest will be Saturday, February 25th at Milton High School. I've been working the phones and E-mail to come up with another tremendous forum and demonstration program. There is even a chance of getting a new equipment dealer to come up that day. Let's keep our fingers crossed. You can count on the Milton Hamfest to be the quality show you have counted on for the last 24 years.

But there is a dark side looming over all of this. Milton is a compar-

MILTON – continued on Page 3

COMING UP!

There are all sorts of ham activities to keep you heated up this winter season. The January contests are smaller and don't get the big billing that their Fall counterparts get, but they are a lot of fun, nonetheless.

Next Saturday, January 14th, is the North American QSO Party, or affectionately known as NA. This is a great contest for the beginner. First, it is only 12 hours long and you operate only 10 hours in it. The contest starts at 1 PM and you get to pick which 10 hours to operate, up to 1 AM. Valid contacts are with stations in the United States, Canada and anywhere in North America. The overwhelming majority of contacts will be stateside, meaning that a small antenna should be fine. NA covers all the HF bands, so you'll have fun trying to pick up contacts

on 10 meters during the day and 160 meters at night. Your best bet will be 20 meters, though! Jump in and make a bunch of casual contacts, or better yet, check the rules on the web and try to go all out!

The next weekend, starting Friday night January 20th, is the CQ Worldwide CW 160 Meter Contest. You wouldn't think that there are a lot of *RANV* members on 160 Meter CW, but I worked 3 people during the ARRL contest in December. Contests on 160 are fun. Start operating at dusk and stay up all night and party! Be sure to send other family members on a trip somewhere first.

On that very same weekend is the VHF Sweepstakes. The VHF SS starts Saturday afternoon and is similar to the June and September VHF QSO Parties. You won't hear a

ton of activity from this area, but if you have a good station, you should be able to work a bunch of people over incredible distances. The main place to be is 6 and 2 meter SSB!

Finally, on the first Weekend of February (4-5th) is the Vermont QSO Party. I think. I haven't seen any publicity from the sponsor yet. Somehow, someone will figure this out and we'll put on a Party once again. The Vermont QSO Party is license for Vermont stations to get on the air, make a lot of noise and work lots of people. If a group is interested, I'll open up WB1GQR for a multiop again. And the fun part is that the New Hampshire QSO Party, Minnesota QSO Party and Sprint Contests all occur on the same weekend, making more opportunities for making contacts!

LAST *RANV* MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

Our December 13th meeting found us not really at a meeting, but at the *RANV* Holiday Party at the QTH of Mitch W1SJ. There were 18 members in attendance. No business was discussed. Attendees (*along with appetites*) started arriving around 6:00. There was a great variety and plenty of food spread out for all to enjoy. If you weren't there, you missed knishes, franks, meatballs, chilli, wings, cold cuts, seasoned fries, beans, veggies, cheese, cheesecake and brownies. There was a net gain in overall weight and waistlines by the end of the evening.

Bob KB1FRW brought a CD full of pictures from past *RANV* activities. There were some interesting shots of fallen towers and a work schedule. You had to be there to understand. In the back room, Brian N1BQ had his laptop on the network and was hacking into all sorts of interesting sites. Several attempts were made to bring Mitch's computer back to life. In the shack, Ron KK1L was explaining antennas to Jerry KB1KPO while he tuned for DX.

There was lots of good food, plenty of time to sit and chat face to face and everyone reported having a good time. The gathering broke up after 9:30.

The Meyer family (*WB2PBH et. al.*) has volunteered to provide snacks for the January 10th meeting.

POWER POLES

by Brian N1BQ

I have recently come into possession of a crimping tool for Anderson Power Pole type connectors. At the January meeting, I'll have parts available for anyone who wants to build some power cables. Or bring your own supplies and make use of the crimper.

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

By the time you all read this, the New Year will have been rung in. It's been cold and snowy, unlike in Sydney, Australia, which opened its new year with a record high of 112 degrees Fahrenheit! So, how are you doing on your resolutions for the coming year? Got room for one or two more?

The year 2006 should be a good one for ham radio. We are coming off a lot of good press for our participation in Katrina/Rita relief efforts. Washington is more aware of us in a positive way.

Also important is the impending rule making which will remove the Morse code requirement for HF operations. I know all the arguments spread by some about this being impending doom. I chose to call the glass at least half full. When the new rules become active, a lot of very talented Technicians will have nothing but a written test standing between them and HF operating. So, here's your **first additional New Year's Resolution**: learn the General Class material and take the test and collect the CSCE. When the code requirement is removed later this year, you simply show up at an exam session and trade it in for a General Class ticket. Now you can really tune in the world.

The hamfest is coming! The hamfest is coming! As it has been for coming on two decades, the *RANV* Winter Hamfest will be February 25th (*the last Saturday in February*) at Milton High School. Proceeds from the hamfest go towards all those nice goodies we have come to enjoy, such as food at the various activities, Field Day activities and improvements to the repeater.

Why should you come? Hasn't Santa Claus brought you everything you ever wanted in your ham shack? The hamfest is more than that. We have a dozen or so forums and live demonstrations on an assortment of topics. I see people leaving these ses-

sions animated and excited. I see hams old and young leaving the demonstration stations excited about new operating modes. I see people greeting old friends they haven't seen in a year or more.

It's interesting that attendance at the hamfest by local hams is rather poor. The hamfest attendance, as a percentage of the total number of hams in Chittenden County is less than their counterparts in Franklin County or even Clinton County in New York. There is a comparatively small core of locals who attend and participate in just about every club activity, but there are a large number of hams who do not participate.

Here's your **second additional New Year's Resolution**: seek out a local ham who has not attended the hamfest in the last two years and set about (gently, don't gang up!) to get him or her to come along. Now, if you like a challenge, let's up the ante and add one non-ham too; he or she may just find something interesting and get exposed to ham radio at the same time.

See you at the January meeting.

Contacting *RANV*

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

WHERE'S THE NEWSLETTER?

by Mitch WISJ

You may have noticed that the newsletter is late this month. Then again, perhaps you didn't notice. The simple explanation is that your editor has become burnt out. Too many months have gone by where the submissions have been too little and often, too late. I must acknowledge those who have submitted material for the newsletter and on time. Sadly, this was the exception and not the rule.

When stuff is submitted late, it causes extra stress for the editor. There are deadlines to allow time for editing, proofing, printing and mailing. Each step takes a finite amount of time. When something is late, the editor is forced to burn the midnight oil to get the product (*newsletter*) out. And sometimes, just for fun, the computer and/or printer crashes in the process.

When stuff is not submitted, it also causes extra stress for the editor. It is not OK to simply put out a meeting notice and a couple of announcements and call it a newsletter. It is also not OK (*in my opinion*) to fill a local newsletter with national news which could be downloaded from multiple sources. I won't waste my time on such a publication. And if that became the norm, I suspect many would not waste their time being a member of *RANV*. So, besides whatever feature article I write, I then also have to write other articles and search for other information to fill up a 4 or 6 page publication. While I can edit and lay out stuff in my sleep, it takes a lot more energy to compose a coherent discourse on some topic. Frankly, I have written on virtually every aspect of amateur radio I have been involved in – at least 2-3 times. Look at the last year of *RANV* newsletters and except for the normal monthly meeting minutes and president's message, notice whose name is on most of the bylines.

I have run out of gas. I know this to be true because after the submissions for this month amounted to only $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page (*and came in late for a variety of reasons*), I had complete writer's block. I couldn't write a single sentence until now.

The Steering Wheel has discussed the situation for quite a while. We considered going to a quarterly format. We rejected this, because the newsletter is the strength of the club. To reduce or eliminate it is tantamount to signing a death warrant. At the last planning meeting, I urged that we find volunteers to write a 1-page feature article for each month. And if that didn't work, we assign volunteers (*with plenty of lead time*). Yes, it sounds a bit dire, but sometimes, a push here or there can pay dividends. Certainly everyone in our club has something to share with the group.

So here is where I am on this. I am willing to remain on as editor, but only as the layout editor. Someone else will have the job of making sure I have enough appropriate material to publish a newsletter each month. This person will have to ask, persuade, cajole or howl people so that all of the material is submitted on time. I will do the layout magic to produce something which looks good on paper and on the web.

Make no mistake about it; this is very, very important. Most people initially join *RANV* because of what they see in the newsletter. This activity is right up there with the Hamfest, Repeater and Field Day. If we fail at this, it puts the club in a poor position. We are a strong club and I'd like to think that everyone would like us to remain that way.

MILTON – from Page 1...

tively small show and there isn't any wiggle room. We cannot afford to lose attendance. Before you start muttering how SJ is carrying on about the same hamfest doom and gloom, consider what I already know. Both Dayton Hamvention and Hosstraders, the largest hamfests in the world and New England respectively, are down almost 50% from their peak attendance. Virtually every hamfest has seen attendance drop dramatically in the last few years. I won't go into the reasons for this drop, but simply acknowledge that it is very real. And the drop in hamfests and other ham activities has accelerated in the last year. Fortunately, the Milton Hamfest has bucked this trend and although we have lost some attendance over the years, we have held relatively stable. This wasn't an accident. It was the result of reinventing the hamfest 2 years ago and a lot of hard work in publicizing the show.

A very sorry statistic is that the hamfest support by local amateurs in Chittenden County is rather poor. As a percentage of total ham population, there are more attendees from Franklin County and Clinton County in New York than from Chittenden County. In an area with a rather small ham population (*only 1000 in Chittenden County*), we need to see a strong turnout from our own backyard.

Continued success with the Milton Hamfest requires all hams in the local area to get out and support it. If you are busy that Saturday, figure out how to drop by for a half hour or so. Contact every one of your ham friends (*especially the inactive ones*) and invite them. Offer to drive them to the show! Tell them about some of the latest advances of amateur radio. Just today, I was talking to an inactive ham and piqued his curiosity when I described Internet linking of repeaters.

Supporting this hamfest is not something we ought to do, but it is something we MUST do. Two hamfests in Vermont have already died from neglect. This is the last one. Don't wait for it to also die and then moan about how there are no local hamfests.

Now get out there and have a fun time at Milton! Doors open at 8AM. Get there early for the fun.

NEXT MEETING:
“HF Direction Finding”
Tuesday, January 10th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

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