



Radio Amateur News & Views

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VINTAGE TELEGRAPH KEYS The February 14th RANV Meeting

For our Valentine's Meeting our special guest will be the return of David Hale, W1KR to update us on his work on miniature telegraph keys. Over the last several years, David's passion has been reproducing half or third scale replicas of historical telegraph keys and semiautomatic mechanical keyers or "bugs". Words or even pictures cannot do justice to the level of detailed work which David does. His projects start with detailed research to know how they were built and of what materials. Sometimes, historical documents are used, and other times, David borrows the actual key from a collector and makes measurements. Not only do all the pieces have to be machined, but sometimes, even tools have to be made to actually build the key.

Even if you have little interest in telegraphy or antiques, David has a great presenting style which will draw everyone in for a wonderful evening.

Other meeting activities: Brian will again have parts and tools available for anyone who wants to build Power Pole cables. And we will be going over organizational details for the Hamfest. Be sure to join us at 7 PM on February 14th at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington. Pre-meeting activities start at 6 at Zach's on Williston Road.

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VERMONT QSO PARTY

The fun starts this FRIDAY, February 3rd at 7PM. Get on and call CQ and have a ball! Or call W1SJ and help operate WB1GQR. Full rules on the RANV Web.

MILTON HAMFEST 2006

The Milton Hamfest and ARRL Vermont State Convention will be Saturday, February 25th at Milton High School. Doors open to the General Public at 8 AM and the hamfest closes at 1 PM. Milton High School is on Route 7 in Milton, 5 miles north of I-89 Exit 17.

If you are waiting for a closer or better hamfest, you will not find it. Milton is the only hamfest in Vermont and is the best hamfest of its size anyway (*so we'd like to think*). But it won't be much of a hamfest if apathy runs rampant and few show up. This is why it is imperative that all hams in our area make an appearance and they drag any other

hams they can find with them. You will have a good time. It is very, very rare that I hear a complaint that the hamfest wasn't any good.

Why go to Milton? There are a lot of reasons:

PEOPLE. For many, this is the reason to go. It's one thing to talk on the radio, but yet another thing to have face time and that valuable eyeball QSO! I go to lots of hamfests, and even when I don't buy or sell a blessed thing, I have a great time because of all the interesting characters I get to meet (*some of them are my pals*). Hey, it's winter, and besides skiing (*which stinks, so far*), what do you have to do that is better?

FLEA MARKET. I don't buy as much stuff as I used to, and I even recognize some of the junk I've sold over the years! But I still manage to find valuable trinkets. It certainly beats mail order and inflated shipping charges! The hamfest experts tell me that they enjoy Milton because they manage to find good deals on vintage equipment. We will have the usual compliment of small dealers. For the first time in many years we will have a major equipment dealer. KJI Electronics will be up from New Jersey and will have a nice assortment of the latest radios from Kenwood, Icom and Yaesu. Start making your shopping list!
Milton... continued on Page 5

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

The first meeting of the new year was called to order on January 10th at 7:10 by President Brian N1BQ. There were 22 members and guests in attendance.

After a round of introductions, there was some discussion about some upcoming events. The 2006 Milton Hamfest is February 25th. The need for volunteers was mentioned. Tables are needed, as are a couple of trucks to transport them. A request was made to spread the word to make this event successful.

A motion was made to spend \$99 for domain name registration for RANV.ORG was made by Dave W1DEC and seconded by Bob KB1LAX. The motion was passed.

Bob KB1LAX also made a motion, seconded by Bob W4YFJ to spend \$60 for an advertisement to be placed in the *Vermont Amateur Radio Directory*. The motion was passed.

Paul AA1SU gave a report on the ARRL Division Cabinet meeting in Springfield that he and Carl AB1DD attended. This meeting is a chance for local clubs to give input to the ARRL Director, Tom Frenaye K1KI and to also find out what is going on at the ARRL. This information is taken to the ARRL Board of Directors meeting on January 21st. Among the topics presented was an upcoming public relations campaign called Hello Radio.

Brian N1BQ talked a little about the need for help on the newsletter. There is too much work for one person to do well. We need people to write articles.

Next, Greg KB1MPL showed a short PowerPoint presentation he did for his school a couple of months ago. It was a very good presentation, and was well received.

The topic of the evening was HF Direction Finding, presented by Bill Noyce, AB1AV. Bill came from Hollis, New Hampshire to do his presentation. This sport is like a fox hunt combined with orienteering. A group of three to five transmitters

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

We have started off a new year and barely a month into it the view from here looks pretty nice.

Our first meeting and presentation of the year was given by Bill Noyce, AB1AV, from Hollis, New Hampshire. He made the long drive up, had dinner with us at Zach's and gave a very well received presentation of Amateur Radio Direction Finding, a ham radio variant of Orienteering. A lot of interest was generated there.

For many months we have lamented the difficulty of getting material for the newsletter. A bare handful of people regularly contributed. Mitch W1SJ has been doing the newsletter for over a decade, both writing and publishing. It's not fair to have the entire burden fall on him. Once again, though, the club membership came through. Ed N1UR, has volunteered to take over as content editor, leaving Mitch only with the task of composition and editing. I am happy to say that Ed rolled up his sleeves and waded right in and Mitch has been grumbling less.

Mike KB1MDA, a relatively recently licensed ham and RANV member, has been working at UVM with the *Amateur Radio High Altitude Balloon* program. He came to the recent Steering Wheel meeting and offered a joint effort with RANV to help us get started in ARHAB while getting in return more hams involved in tracking and recovering the balloons. Their planned launch in April has several pounds of payload space available allowing us to cre-

are placed around the countryside, and the object is to find them as fast as possible using direction finding techniques. Bill had a receiver with a loop antenna and some of the other equipment needed to participate in this sport. This looks very exciting, and plans may be made to do one at a later date. The presentation was quite interesting, and thank you to Bill for coming up.

Refreshments were served, and the meeting ended at 9:06.

ate our own package without having to worry about the balloon logistics. Mike and Sherman Austin, KC2NAZ, a professor at Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York, will be giving a presentation at the hamfest on the joint UVM/MEC high altitude balloon program. At the March meeting, Mike (*and possibly Sherman*) will do a presentation on the next planned launch. We will have a skull session there and set plans for the payload that RANV will launch with it.

This month we have the irreplaceable David Hale, W1KR doing another presentation on his fabulous historic miniature precision keys. He has a bunch of new creations he is anxious to show off. Even if you aren't a CW buff, Dave ALWAYS gives a great show.

See you all at the Hamfest! Remember, help get out the local hams. I will bet that the many local hams who pass up the hamfest every year have no idea what they are missing. We have some great forums and demonstrations lined up. It's the mid-winter break from cabin fever and time to renew old acquaintances.

Contacting RANV

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

MEET THE MEMBER: *Ed N1UR*

Each month, we will introduce a member of RANV. News & Views used to have a column 10 years ago entitled, "Famous Hams in RANV". Ed will be bringing back this concept with a member's story each month. Please share "your story". It doesn't have to be this long. It just needs to be about YOU. Email Ed at sawyered@earthlink.net. He will be out recruiting for this column, so be warned!

I got started in Ham Radio as a young teenager in Massachusetts. I used to listen with my grandfather back in the early 1970s to AM 75 Meter rag chews on his Zenith Transoceanic radio. It caught my interest and I wondered how I could be part of this interesting hobby. A brief foray into CB radio at age 14 convinced me that CB wasn't what I was looking for, but I did like to communicate, and enjoyed setting up antennas, and such things. So in 1976, at age 14, I received my Novice license, KA1CFC. My first radio was a 25 watt Archer crystal controlled CW transmitter with a 6L6B final. I had a Hallicrafters receiver and a dipole 20 feet off the ground. When I had my first QSO with a Novice in Virginia on 3720 KHz, I was hooked. Quickly upgrading to General Class and moving up to a Hallicrafters AM/SSB/CW 100 watt transmitter and later a solid state Heathkit receiver, I found that I enjoyed both SSB and CW but really thought CW was neat. I was also frustrated not being able to work DX in the Extra and Advanced portion of the bands. I received my Advanced in 1977 and Extra at age 18 in 1980, changing my callsign to KS1Y. One of my early mentors was Julie Hoffer, W1DL, who taught me how cool CW contesting was as I rode shotgun with him on late night 40 meter CW Field Day runs at 30-40 wpm. The first year, I couldn't copy anything. By age 18, I was trading chair time with Julie. I had very, very fond memories of late night operating in a tent with Julie.

My DXing and antenna building mentor was Bill Poellnitz, K1MM. He heard me DXing in our local town and invited me over to his shack. His two 100 foot towers and monobanders made this 16 year old drool for the big stuff. I was a regular tower monkey at K1MM's place, eventually installing 15, 20 and 40 meter monobanders on his towers and getting some hand-me-down stuff for my eventual first tower. By age 18, I had a 50 foot self supporting tower with a home brew 10/15 meter duo band yagi (20 foot boom), a Hygain 204BA (4 elements on a 26 foot boom) and some wires. I was big into DXing and somewhat into contesting at the time. I started collecting countries and ended the first part of my ham career with roughly 270 countries mixed mode all on 100 watts of power. I have never owned an amplifier! I also followed K1MM's worldwide DXpeditions with awe. I even did a DXpedition myself at age 20 to FP0 (St. Pierre) as FP0GXV, doing about 3,000 QSOs with a TS-530S.

I pretty much left ham radio from 1986-1996 as other things in life kind of pushed the hobby aside. I got re-interested in the hobby as I began to travel frequently to Asia on business and was reminded of some of the cool DXpeditions that K1MM used to do. So, now in Michigan, I applied for the vanity callsign K8EP, and relaunched my ham radio career. Using a Kenwood TS-530S and all wire antennas in Michigan, I became much more interested in contesting and re-gained my interest in DXing. I also started DXpeditioning as I traveled to Asia operating 5 times as XX9TEP in Macau, and 9M6AAC and 9M6A in East Malaysia. I also contested as C6ARS in Bermuda) and PJ2E in Curacao.

I moved to Texas in 2001 and found myself in the classic deed restricted neighborhood. Even though I did some DXing from the house with many stealth wires into the trees (moving my DXCC up to 302),

competitive contesting was out of the question. I connected up with Bob NX5M who has very large multi-multi contest station in Texas. There I did station and antenna work with Bob. I operated a number of multi-operator contests and guest operated on many occasions.

As job opportunity moved me back to New England and Vermont, I decided that I really wanted to find a great location to set up a station. My first couple of years here in Vermont, I lived in a rented farm house in East Montpelier. The owner had no problem with me putting up wires and even allowed a temporary "Field Day" style ladder tower. I set up a 25 foot ladder with 10 and 15 Meter 3 element monobanders. I also had numerous wire antennas including a 4 element 20 meter quad. There was a very favorable drop off to Europe and the station did surprisingly well running low power. Once I was able to buy a house, I decided to purchase some land to build on and it had to be a great contest location to Europe. Ideally, I would have liked a great location to everywhere but what I found was a very "work convenient" location with excellent antenna properties to many parts of the world and primarily Europe. It isn't great to the Pacific or Japan and much of Asia. But it is a "wow, you are LOUD" location long path into Australia running 200 watts and is just a killer into Europe. I am still constructing my dream contest station. Right now, I have one 70 foot tower and many monobanders. I also have some large wire antennas on 80 and 160 meters. I am really enjoying DXing and contesting.

You will also hear me on 2 meter FM from my car. I also enjoy that. I really don't operate any other VHF bands. To me, Ham radio is HF DXing and contesting. I am sure it is different for most of you. That is what makes this hobby so great. It is what you make it, and there are plenty others who enjoy what you do.

DX IS...

by Ed N1UR

DX... What does it mean? This is the great thing about DX and the pursuit of it. **DX IS** the thing that you don't have. **DX IS** the thing that you find challenging and difficult. **DX IS** the one that you need to contribute to an award or goal. **DX IS** the thing that you had doubts that you could do.

Traditionally, DX is most often discussed as HF DXing. Typically, it is working one of the other continents or one of the more rare DX countries heard on the air. However, DX is much more universal than that. DX could be hitting a repeater in Maryland during interesting 2 meter conditions or working California on 160 meters or working Florida on 6 meters or even working Boston on 1296 MHz. How about working Alaska using less than 5 watts? All of this is DX because it represents challenges to the operating skill and technical skill of making a contact.

So, when you hear of people talking about DX on the repeater or at a club meeting or hamfest, the feeling of "I can't work DX" or "My station is too small to work DX" or "I can't work DX because I am just a Technician" should not emerge. Instead it should be something like, "this DXing thing sounds fun, what would be DXing to me right now?" Consider giving DXing a try, you may find it really enhances the fun of the hobby for you. But make DXing, what it IS for you, not what you think it should be.

Here in the Newsletter, I would like to recount members' DX highlights of the month. Tell us about what your DX goal is and about any contacts which met that goal. And also tell us about the near miss (*I heard them but they couldn't hear me*) or about the strategy (*I read that the conditions for 6 meter skip could be good and spent some time listening but didn't hear anything*). DX becomes even more fun when it shared with others who can appreciate the chal-

lenge of what you are doing. Come to a meeting and share what you have done and what you are working on.

I will supply some DX information here which may be of interest to you. But my information is HF DXing using 200 watts and really good antennas. Other members are using VHF/UHF bands or smaller antennas but I would still like to hear from them as well. I have defined what DX IS for me, so that is the easiest to share, but the purpose of this column is not for it to be DX according to N1UR; it is to provide a forum of interest to all members.

So here are some January thoughts on HF DX to get things rolling:

Conditions: You have no doubt heard that we are at the bottom of the sunspot cycle and that means that HF DXing conditions are not at their peak, and probably that DX is "no good" right now. This is only partially true and actually wrong to some extent. It is true that on 10, 15 and 20 meters, conditions are much lower than found at the sunspot peak. However, there is enough variance in conditions that you can still work great DX on the higher bands, certainly some of the time. In the last 4 weeks, I have worked much of Europe and some Africa and Pacific on 15 and 20 meters. Sure I have big antennas, but in some cases the signals reached 20dB over S9, which means that even with a simple dipole up 40 or 50 feet in the air the signals should be S9. And how about 80 meters? All I have there is an inverted-V dipole up 70 feet. Just about every night you can hear Europe on 80 meters coming in over S9. So, don't believe that just because conditions aren't peak that it means nothing is out there. **DX IS...**

Activity: One of the things that is essential to working someone in an interesting place is the requirement that they are THERE. So one of things that quickly happens with DXing is

learning about where people are. Trying to DX on 432 MHz? How about listening for Mitch W1SJ when he is up on Mt. Equinox? One thing is for sure, he can't hear your signal up there, if he isn't up there, or if the radio isn't turned on. So it goes with any DXing. On HF, it often comes down to a couple of things: Does anyone live there? If no one lives there, is anyone going there, and when? How hard will it be to work them when they are there? There are lots and lots of DXing activity around the world but I will mention just a notable one here. Starting at the beginning of February a DXpedition to Peter Island (3Y0X) is planned. Peter Island is on the World's top 10 needed DX list. According to the web site established for this DXpedition, "More people have gone into space than have walked on Peter Island!" This group will be there for about 2 weeks. If you have ever even THOUGHT about DXing on HF you should try and work these guys. It has been over 10 years since anyone has operated from there. So how do I have a chance of working them, you say? Well, as much as everyone needs them, by the second week, most of the world will have worked them. Yet they will still be there. There will be 5 stations running on multiple bands at once. Those that have already worked them will be looking for them on some other band or mode or just not calling any more. I expect that these guys will be begging for contacts on 20 and 15 meters during the last few days of the expedition and be very workable from Vermont with a modest station. Any one up for the challenge? Take a shot and let us know what happened. Just don't be discouraged by the bedlam which will occur in the first week. It will die off, as it always does.

Have fun and let us know what **DX IS** to you.

Milton... continued from page 1

DEMONSTRATIONS. Each year, we find interesting items to show off to the ham public. This year is no exception. We will have a special event station. The callsign will be K1D, and it will be manned (*kidded*) by kids! Carl AB1DD is putting together a gaggle of kids to operate and compete to make the most contacts during the morning. If you are a kid, come down and operate. If you are an older kid, we need control operators and spectators! Contact Carl to sign up. We will also bring back the IRLP/Echolink station and PSK-31 station. No matter what the HF conditions are like, the IRLP system will allow us to talk all over the world in noise free, high fidelity sound (almost). And if the above isn't enough, to complete our 3-ring circus, we will have a high altitude balloon (*tethered to keep the FAA happy*) outside. The balloon will contain a payload of sample radio equipment. The usual stuff includes APRS, television and repeaters.

FORUMS. Milton's Forum program is second to none. We have an assortment of forums, including a mixture of new and old. Your only problem will be to figure out which ones you want to attend. This year's special guest is **Mike Gruber W1MG** of the ARRL Laboratory. He will give forums on *Powerline Interference* and on *RFI and Consumer Devices*. I dare say that there likely isn't any ham who hasn't experienced one of these nasties. Mike will detail the various forms of interference, how to track it down and how to get it fixed.

President **Brian N1BQ** will again be spending most of the morning in the Forum Rooms, bringing back the popular *QRP Forum*, giving us an update on *APRS* and introducing a new topic, *Microcomputers in the Shack*. A recent topic which appeared at a previous **RANV** meeting was on *Radios and High Altitude Ballooning*. So, we have two experts in the field, **Shermane KC2NAZ** and **Mike KB1MDA**, veterans of many balloon launches, to give a talk on this exciting topic. We will do more than have words on this - this spring **RANV** will get involved in a balloon launch. Yes, we really are space cadets!

The **ARRL Forum** is a fixture at Conventions and this year's forum will include our Director, Vice Director, Section Manager and as many ARRL appointees we can round up. Just back from the ARRL Board of Directors meeting, Director **Tom Frenaye, K1KI** will share his insights on where the ARRL and amateur radio is going this year.

Milton forum veteran **John VE2EQL** is back with a new forum this year, *High Performance Antennas*. He will explain how to get the very most out of an antenna which needs to be located in a restricted space. And finally, we cannot forget the many non-hams who come to Milton (*whether willingly or via leash*). For the benefit of our non-ham friends, **Mitch W1SJ** will be doing *Why You Would(n't) Be a Ham?* which promises to be part stand-up comedy and part radio class! Don't miss it!

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS Milton is the place to do your one-stop ham radio shopping. Upgrade your license at the VE session at noon (\$14). We also run FCC Commercial License testing (\$35). Stop by the **RANV** table and renew your membership, buy a copy of the *Vermont Amateur Radio Directory*, or pick up a back newsletter or ARRL form. We'll also have some books on sale.

As always, we need volunteer help. The pay stinks and you don't get free admission, but you will have a great time. We need truckers to move tables and setup people on Friday night. We need ticket sellers, table watchers and tear down people on Saturday. Contact Mitch to sign up. And finally, we need everyone to show up and to bring a couple of hams with them. Hamfests have been losing attendance each year. I'd like Milton to be the weird little exception which bucks the trend (*just like Vermont!*).

HAM CLASSES

by *Mitch W1SJ*

One of the great things about ham radio in our area is the proliferation of Ham Radio Classes. The Spring Weekend Ham Class will take place on Saturday, March 18th at the Essex Town Office. This is a ONE DAY class. Arrive at 8:30 Saturday, take your Technician exam at 6:00 and get your license on Tuesday. It's that easy. But you do need to enroll and show up! There is a General Course scheduled for Sunday, making it easy to upgrade. There is also a class in Manchester, New Hampshire on April 1st if that will work better for you. To find out about the Weekend Class, contact Mitch at 879-6589 or at w1sj@arrl.net.

If you live in Franklin County, a 3-day Technician Class will be held at the St. Albans Armory, March 11, 12 and 18th. Contact Earl K1YLB at 524-3716 or eldecell@peoplepc.com.

Can't make it to the class dates? Can't leave the house? Interested in upgrading to General or Extra? No problem! Try out the *On-Line Amateur Radio Course*. This course is a lot different than what you think a computer based course is. Each lesson is displayed as an easy to read slide while the instructor (*yours truly*) narrates your journey through the depths of ham radio. There are pictures, graphs, diagrams and even a few anecdotes. If you don't understand something, simply type in a question and the instructor will quickly send your answer back. Or, with prior arrangement, you can even call. Students have taken these courses, and they do indeed work. To find out the details or to take a sample lesson, go to www.hamclass.net.

It is no newsflash that growth in amateur radio lately has been poor. I can count the number of new hams in our area in the last year ON MY FINGERS. That won't insure our strength. At the same time, with the end of Morse code testing imminent, I would expect a tremendous rush of hams to study for their General. Not happening! So the message here, as always, is to continue to SELL amateur radio by being involved in it. When people see you having fun they will want to join you. So get your friends signed up into one of the classes listed above, or at the very least buy them a study book (*I'll have 'em at the fest*) and give it to them!

NORTHERN VERMONT WINTER HAMFEST

ARRL VERMONT STATE CONVENTION

MILTON, VERMONT

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2006

NOW IN ITS 24TH GREAT YEAR!
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FORUMS

The latest in technology
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8:30 QRP & APRS Forum
9:00 Powerline Inteference
9:30 High Performance Antennas
9:30 Why You Would(n't) be a Ham?
10:00 ARRL Forum
10:30 Radio & High Altitude Balloons
11:00 RFI & Consumer Devices
11:30 Computers in the Shack

ACTIVITIES

RANV Information Table

K1D Special Event Station

IRLP & Echolink Demo

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Coffee, Donuts and Sandwiches

Hundreds of Hams to Meet!

ADMISSION \$5 UNDER 18 FREE

TALK-IN:
WB1GQR 145.15- Rptr
W1NVT 146.67 Beacon

DIRECTIONS:
MILTON HIGH SCHOOL, ROUTE 7
I-89 Exit 17, Route 7 NORTH 4 Miles
I-89 Exit 18, Route 7 SOUTH 5 Miles

FOR MORE INFO:
Mitch: (802) 879-6589
w1sj@arrl.net
<http://www.ranv.org>

**NEXT MEETING:
“Vintage Telegraph Keys”
Tuesday, February 14th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center**

**MILTON HAMFEST
ARRL VERMONT STATE CONVENTION
Saturday, February 25th, 8 AM**

RANV

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South Burlington, Vt 05407

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