



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

JUNE 2006

Vol. 16 No. 6

AMATEUR TELEVISION The June 13th *RANV* Meeting

Years ago, there used to be a group which was very active on Amateur Television. This wasn't Slow Scan Television; it was the real fast scan television just like you watch on TV. At its peak, there were some 8 people who could receive and transmit moving pictures in addition to an amateur television repeater. The group has moved on to other interests and there is no more activity.

With the recent interest in radio payloads in balloon launches, there is a parallel interest in putting up an amateur television payload. Our guest this month is Ed N1QG, the leader of the television group from years ago. Ed has single-handedly built most of the television units, including the repeater, so he certainly qualifies as the local expert. He will give us the details of how to receive and transmit moving television pictures and some of the challenges we would face. Ed is a great speaker and it plans to be a very exciting evening.

Activities get underway with ham feeding at 6 PM at Zach's on Williston Road, with the meeting starting at 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington.

FOX HUNT JUNE 16TH

The next Fox Hunt will be Friday, June 16th, at 6 PM on the input of the 145.15 repeater. The good news is that Mitch W1SJ will be the Fox and you won't be competing against him. The bad news is that Mitch W1SJ will be the Fox and you will have to find him! The usual rules apply: public accessible location in Chittenden County, at least an S1 signal at Exit 14 and at least 10 seconds transmit out of each minute. Outside of those rules, anything goes, and it promises to be a zany evening. Make sure you mark this on your calendar and get out and find the Fox!

FIELD DAY JUNE 23-25TH

Field Day is coming. Will you be there? Field Day is the greatest amateur radio event there is. It is also the BEST place to learn the intricacies of radio communication. If you get involved in Field Day you will learn new things. But, you have to get involved! Simply showing up for a half hour is great for brief socializing, but not much else. What works the best is to commit (*there's that WORD again*) to be at Field Day for a specific period of time and decide what job you would like to do. On Friday, we set up antennas all over the site and if you are there, you will learn more about antennas and tow-

ers that you care to. Saturday morning we set up the stations and generators. Operating starts at 2 PM Saturday and continues for 24 hours straight. Then on Sunday, we take it all down and put it all away. Obviously, we need lots of help for set up and take down. *RANV* has one of the best Field Day operations in the country, so this is the best place to be on Field Day.

Our main stations on CW and Phone use experienced operators. Our GOTA station is for operators who are learning the ropes of contest operating. Field Day is not a rag chew event; with thousands of sta-

tions on, it is a very busy contest. We are particularly looking for youth operators. The ARRL rules give us all sorts of bonus points for youth operators making contacts. Last year, we literally had to abduct kids. We hope that will improve this year.

Want to play Field Day? This is what you do. Go to the Field Day page on the *RANV* Web site and read about the schedule and details. Contact Mitch at 879-6589 and let him know what times and what things you would like to do. Attend the Field Day planning meeting, Monday, June 19th, at 7 PM at W1SJ's QTH. And finally, make sure you are at Field Day, June 23rd - 25th.

OUR LAST *RANV* MEETING

by Carl ABIDD, Sec'y

The May 9th meeting was called to order at 7:13 by Brian, N1BQ. There were 19 members and guests present.

The first order of business was the need for people for Field Day on June 23rd-25th. Those wanting to be a part of this should contact Mitch W1SJ.

Next was an announcement about the Vermont City Marathon on May 27th. Volunteers are also needed for this. Mitch, W1SJ is the contact for this event.

The formal vote to change the *RANV* bylaws was taken. Brian N1BQ summarized the reasons for the changes. The vote was taken by paper ballot, and it passed, 27 in favor and 2 opposed.

Paul, AA1SU once again volunteered to bring the snacks for the June meeting.

We then did introductions after which Brian introduced the speakers for the meeting. Henry KT1J and Paul, K1PJM gave a talk on the trials and tribulations of their Gore Mountain expeditions for VHF/UHF contests. The presentation told about the history behind going to Gore Mountain, some of the problems encountered with getting to the site, and how these were dealt with. Some very innovative packing racks for antennas and equipment allowed most of the gear to survive the brutal truck ride to the summit. Very interesting presentation, thanks Henry and Paul.

We were almost without refreshments this meeting. Stuart WB2PBH had volunteered, but a ball game that Greg KB1MPL was playing in didn't finish in time. Stuart, knowing that there would be many hungry hams at the meeting thought that getting the snacks there on time took priority over everything else. So, fortunately the refreshments did make it on time. Thanks Stuart, (and Greg).

The meeting ended around 9:00.

FEST REPORT

by Mitch W1SJ

May is over and I've completed my whirlwind hamfest tour of Hosstraders and Hamvention. Attendees at Hosstraders were treated to a perfect, sunny, warm day on Friday. Sadly, the attendance was no better than last fall's rainy show, proving that the attendance is falling off even when the weather cooperates. There were plenty of goodies for sale and the choicest items moved quickly. I picked up some odds and ends and spent the rest of the day meeting up with everyone and networking. Saturday's attendance wasn't too bad, even if it started to rain slightly at 10.

Two weeks later I found myself at the Dayton Hamvention. I had a very bad feeling about Hamvention that it would be a bust. With gas prices hovering around \$3 a gallon, airplane tickets climbing and continuing hassles with international travel, it looked like many would stay home. The forecasted weather certainly wasn't promising. On the Thursday before the show, we had freakish weather which mixed sun, clouds, torrential downpours and hail. I'm sure I saw locusts and frogs at some point too. And then an amazing thing happened - Friday morning, the sun came out and it stayed that way throughout the 3 days of Hamvention.

Attendance didn't look too bad either. Some say it was up and some said it was down. It was obvious that there were fewer Flea Market vendors and fewer Exhibitors and there were even available rooms in the hotel.

There were plenty of goodies at the show - ham radio, commercial radio and computer stuff. I picked up a duplexer, a hard drive, a camera and lots of connectors and adapters. I also spent hours talking to other hams, be they contesters, DXers, vendors or teachers. After some 24 years of attending Hamvention, I still have a ball!

VHF QSO PARTY

by Mitch W1SJ

The ARRL VHF QSO Party will be this weekend, June 10-11th. All amateur bands above 50 MHz are available, which means Technicians can fully participate. The contest runs from 2 PM Saturday until 11 PM Sunday. The center of activity will be on 6 meters around 50.135 MHz and 2 meters around 144.200 MHz. With the spring being peak time for Sporadic E activity, 6 meters promises a lot of action, although openings are never certain. A common pastime is to drive or hike up to a hill or mountaintop to take advantage of the elevation. Activity is not limited to 6 & 2 - there is also a lot of action on 222, 432, 903 and 1296 MHz, as well as a growing activity on the microwave bands. If you don't have SSB, you should be able to snare a few contacts on 146.55 and 446.00 MHz FM. The most important part is to turn the radio on and call. No one can work you if you don't power up! I'll be operating as WB1GQR from Mount Equinox and most should have no problem working me at the top of the hour when the beams point north. Get on and make some contacts!

Contacting *RANV*

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

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

By Radio: 145.15 repeater

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

PUBLIC SERVICE DOUBLEHEADER

By Mitch WISJ

The Memorial Day weekend held our annual public service doubleheader. Saturday was the **Essex Memorial Day Parade**. I had already received word that the Parade leaders were having trouble recruiting Marshals. I was also having trouble recruiting hams. Fortunately, everyone's recruiting bore much fruit and we had an ample supply of Marshals and hams. We set up our usual net on the 146.85 MHz Essex repeater with Marshals in each division and N1WCK at the reviewing stand at the Five Corners. All Parade changes filed through him and were passed to the announcer. The line up had its usual situations with backed up traffic, marching bands going crazy, kids running amuck and politicians trying to campaign (*not allowed*). Somehow, we got everyone in the right order and paraded RANV-1 (*van*) and RANV-2 (*go-kart*) up the route, where we got a nice acknowledgement from the parade announcer. Thanks to KB1DUO, KB1EZE, KB1JOO, KB1LIE, N1LXI, N1WCK, N1WQS, N1YD, W1DEB, W1SJ and W4YCI.

On the very next day, a larger group of hams convened in Burlington for the 18th annual **Vermont City Marathon**. The largest ham radio public service event in Vermont drew 40 ham volunteers, positioned at aid stations, in medical tents, on trucks, bikes and busses and shadowing race officials. This was a particularly tough job this year in that the Communications Director (*yours truly*) was new, the Aid Station coordinator was new and runners had to contend with 83 degree heat after weeks of 50 degree weather. Right off, key supplies were misplaced, fluids were running out all over the course, and then runners started to drop from the heat. Some went down right near the Net Control position and we doubled up as first responders. To say that we were busy would be a gross understatement. At times, the communications took 100% of available air time and we were going nuts. Net controls K1ZK, KB1IVE and I presided over this chaos and the result was that the communications were quick, crisp and accurate. It was the best public service net I've heard in many, many years. The communications and training which occurred prior to the event paid off. This group could deal with a major disaster without batting an eyelash!

RANV members involved in this event included AB1T, K1PJM, K1ZK, KB1FRW, KB1JOO, KB1KPO, KB1LIF, KB1MPL, KM1Z, N1LXI, N1UFI, N1YD, W1DEB, W1RLR, W1SJ and WB2PBH. Special thanks to KB1FRW for procuring the Marathon repeater site and helping to install the repeater.

DXIS...

by NIUR

This month I thought that I would start off with 6 meter news. This report from Carl AB1DD came in about the opening during the May 20/21 weekend and he had these specifics to report:

The 6-meter opening turned out to be more than first thought. I was on Friday noon until 1 and Saturday morning and Sunday. From reports I heard, there was a lot of activity on 6 meter FM, as well as 2 meter SSB. I worked into South and North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Florida. I was getting good reports from them even though I was mobile with a vertical! I heard stations working a lot of 4s and 5s that I couldn't hear. Someone also said they heard the Caribbean. I guess you would never know about these if you didn't listen once in a while. I make a point of it when I'm on lunch, and have my radio scan the 6 meter SSB band as I eat. Time to get out the 6 meter beams and get on the air!

Thanks for that report Carl. It is really fun to see 6 Meters get active. Obviously, this opening is not happening because of high sunspot activity. Currently, we are at the literal bottom of the sunspot cycle. But that isn't the only thing that lights up 6 meters (*or any of the bands from 2-15 meters*). These bands are affected by aurora, E-Layer, meteors, and low pressure ducting. None of these propagation modes are directly affected by sunspots. As people who frequent these bands know, it is research and lots of listening time that pays off with fun DX. And while nice antennas at your home QTH are always an advantage, they aren't necessary to have fun. Also, as Carl shows in his submission, a mobile antenna is many times all that is needed (*especially if that mobile is driven to a good DX location or in Carl's case, floated!*).

Six or two meters offer ANY ham the opportunity to play the DXing game. It's a fun and interesting aspect of our hobby. A check of DX Summit shows lots of Caribbean and South American stations being worked from the Northeast over the past week on 6 meters.

By the way, the category of DX is what you make it. Carl, AB1DD, also reports making PSK31, SSTV, and SSB QSOs around Central Vermont and New York this month.

This past weekend was the WPX contest on CW. I was very active and worked all around the world. Asiatic Russia and Japan were especially strong on 20 meters. I was CQing on 40 meters at 6 AM, about an hour after sunrise, and amazingly I was called by VK6AA (*Perth, Australia*) and VI9NI (*Lord Howe Island*) in the span of 2 minutes. I ran 100 Watts to a 2 element yagi at 80 feet. I worked a lot of DX but that was the most memorable.

On the other end of the spectrum, my contest buddy Stu KC1F, reports working 40 countries in a couple of hours during WPX CW. What makes his report very interesting is that Stu was operating from his dad's new assisted living community. He was using a 15/20 meter dipole hung just outside the window.

Here at N1UR, I am now off the air for a couple of months. I am putting up a second tower and moving around quite a few antennas. As anyone who has seen the tower knows, there were too many antennas on it. During the installation, much of the antennas and cables will be disconnected.

MEET THE MEMBER – *Grant K1KD*

I got inspired to learn about ham radio as a kid because of my family. Growing up I can remember my dad spending countless hours in the “radio room” at my parents’ farmhouse northeast of Ottumwa, Iowa. In case you are wondering why that town sounds familiar, “Radar” O’Reilly from the TV show MASH was supposedly from Ottumwa. When I was really little I used to go in to the shack late at night and watch my dad chasing DX. He was and still is a great CW op and was always trying to fix some equipment using parts from old electronic gear that was stored in the basement. Actually, I grew up under the influence of many hams in my family – Dad K0JGH, Mom N0ICF, sister N0VTE, and grandfather K0JGI.

Until junior high school, the only thing I cared to know about ham radio was how to convince my dad not to do it while I was watching my favorite TV program (*TVI was pretty common in our household*). However, by the time I was eleven I started to take an interest in math, science, and electronics – and why my dad spent so much time doing ham radio. He finally convinced me to take the Novice exam, and on April 16, 1986 I was licensed with callsign KA0WKT.

At first I was very intimidated to make any contacts because my CW was very slow and unsteady. Eventually, I mustered the nerve to fire up my dad’s Heathkit SB-102 and call CQ on 80 meters. I awkwardly made my first contact with WA9ABB in Colorado. Though I was glad I had done it, the whole process seemed arduous and I was happy it was over. For a while I didn’t make many contacts. My Novice class license only allowed me to operate CW which seemed like too much work.

The turning point for me was that summer when I got to operate at the Novice station at Field Day with the *Ottumwa Amateur Radio Club*. Wow!

I was hooked on this ham radio thing! I watched in awe as some of the really good operators worked high speed CW. From that point on, I vowed to work hard to be as good as those ops. They say that a foreign language that is introduced at a young age is learned more quickly – or the corollary: You can’t teach an old dog new tricks. Well, I was a young pup and wanted to learn this Morse Code trick!

As time went by, my interests turned toward working DX. I learned quickly that I was missing out on most of the DX because I was limited to the Novice portion of the bands. At the time there were five license classes: Novice, Technician, General, Advanced, and Extra. The Technician theory was relatively easy and I upgraded to get the callsign N0ICL. The Technician license gave me VHF privileges, but I was really after more HF – where the DX was! The General class

*With a wink he said,
“It’s all about the timing!”*

theory proved much more challenging for me. I took this exam not once, twice, or even three times. It took me FOUR tries to pass the exam! However, I was so relieved to get the theory out of the way that I aced the 13 word per minute Morse Code portion. For kicks I decided to take the Extra class code exam at 20 words per minute and passed that as well! By the time I was 15, I had an Extra class license and began enjoying working all the DX that could be found using my new band privileges.

My dad and I made a pretty good team together working DX. He would listen for countries that I needed and pull me out of bed late at night (*much to my mom’s chagrin*) to work a new one. We were both members of the *Eastern Iowa DX As-*

sociation. Once every couple of months, we would drive up to Cedar Rapids to attend the EIDX meetings and then go out for pizza and beer (*or soda*) with all the guys.

Recently, a very rare DX country was activated called Peter I Island near Antarctica. It is very rare to work a station from there because there are no inhabitants. Hearing the entire world trying to fight through the 3Y0X pileups brought back the adrenaline rush I used to get when I was a kid. In fact, listening to the DX pileup clicked my memory back to the first time I worked Peter I. Island in 1994 when they used the callsign 3Y0PI. I was living at home at the time and it was late in the evening, but dad and I were up trolling the bands. The guys from 3Y0 finally showed up on 20 meters – it was a total zoo. Guys were calling for 25 kHz across the band. I looked at dad with a defeatist attitude and mumbled something like, “there’s no way we are getting through that pileup!” It was the largest pileup I had ever heard. Dad shot a glance over to his #1 Honor Roll (*award for working every entity currently on the DXCC list*) plaque hanging on the shack wall, and then back at me. With a wink he said, “It’s all about the timing!”

Together we sat and I watched him call what seemed like forever trying to break the pileup. All the while I studied his operating technique: Listen to the DX station. Determine the pattern that he is using to work through the pileup. Anticipate where he will be listening next. Find the guy he last worked and try to zero beat his frequency. Time your call to maximize your chance of being heard through the QRM. As I was about to say, “I told you so”, and retreat back downstairs to watch some TV, he broke through the pileup and worked them! Before he had even completed the contact, he was yanking me down into the operating chair by the scruff of my **K1KD... continued on Page 5**

K1KD...

continued from page 4

neck so I could be ready to work them too. As soon as his contact was complete, I dumped my callsign in right away, "November Zero India Charlie India!!" The DX came right back to me, and just like that, we both worked Peter I Island! High-fives! There was so much congratulatory hollering that we nearly woke up the entire house!

Currently, I have worked and confirmed every country on the active DXCC country list except North Korea, Pratus Is, Scarborough Reef, Heard Island, Christmas Island, and East Timor. With the advent of Logbook of the World, I have also started to track the remaining QSL's needed for 5BDXCC. Having worked several DX contests in the past few years, I was surprised to learn that I had nearly enough online QSL's to achieve the 5BDXCC award. Currently, I need only 6 more QSL's on 80 meters to round it out. If you haven't yet uploaded your logbook, you should really try it out! There is award tracking not only for DXCC but WAS as well. You might be surprised to learn you've made enough contacts to get an award. Getting credit for the award is easy and less expensive than getting and sorting all those paper QSL cards.

I moved to Vermont in 1998 and shortly thereafter received the vanity callsign K1KD. I joined *RANV* in 1999 thanks to Paul AA1SU. We had worked each other in the November Sweepstakes contest. When he learned that I had recently moved to Vermont, he invited me to check out the club. Since then I have enjoyed the club activities, especially Field Day.

Recently I've been keeping busy with station building activities and learning about ways to make my station more competitive for contesting. This includes automating the process of logging, switching antennas, and running two radios at the same time (*SO2R*). Much of my time these days is spent at work where I design analog circuits for IBM. The rest of my time is spent with my daughter who was born last November on SS CW weekend. Maybe it is a sign that she will become a forth generation ham in the family with an affinity towards contesting

VERMONT CITY MARATHON

by the average "JOO" Kayle KB1JOO

This was my first year working the VCM and by far the biggest most complex event. I'll do my best to convey my thoughts and views. My participation in this event all started a few weeks ago when my phone rang with Mitch on the other end, desperate to find hams to fill the empty spots. Reluctantly, I agreed (*wasn't sure I was ready for this event*), because I enjoy these types of things, at which point he briefly filled me in on the details that were available at that time. Unfortunately, as luck would have it I missed the planning meeting the Thursday before, putting me quite a bit behind. Despite all that, Mitch was quick to phone me on Friday morning to confirm my participation and relay all the information I missed. I was very impressed with all the planning and effort put into this event. Saturday night I made contact with the Course Director whom I was shadowing. At 6:30 Sunday morning I was in downtown and transferring my portable battery-powered mobile rig into his car along with my HT.

We started out by signing into net control that was operated by Zach K1ZK, Mitch W1SJ, and Steve KB1IVE. Now that everyone was signing in the first of the days havoc arose as hams all over the course were reporting their stations lacked plastic to line the water barrels. The two Supply Vehicles became very busy obtaining the plastic and keeping the Net informed as to their progress. At 8:00 the net grew quiet as the marathon began although this was short lived. It wasn't long until the radio again was a buzz with stations reporting water and Gatorade shortages. This was the majority of the traffic until around noon when Mother Nature decided to up the ante. As the temperature rose so did the net activity. Runners started having heat related issues and stations became hot with medical situations. Not only were Mitch and Steve working as Net Control they were in the field dealing with medical emergencies right outside of the Net Control location. I had the privilege of being the Shadow for the Course Director and remained busy relaying traffic and shuttling water to stations in desperate need of it. The havoc never let up until around 1:45 which was close to the end of the official timing of the race. Net Control and all radio communications were wrapped by 2:15. Some of us headed home, others stayed for the after race party.

Overall, with many first time hams at positions and with all the logistical problems, the Marathon communications went off better than I think anyone expected. Everyone kept transmissions short and concise, everyone did an excellent job sticking to the protocols and following procedures. Every volunteer put forth a 110% on a day when the weather got incredibly hot, and things got crazy. A big thanks is in order to all those who volunteered on Sunday and an even bigger salute to the three crazy hams who manned Net Control all day. How they managed to track and organized all the traffic is beyond me, but it was a job well done by everyone and we have a great deal of knowledge to carry forward to next year. Carl KC1WH would have been proud of the job everyone did as he looked down and watch the day's event unveil themselves.

**NEXT MEETING:
“Amateur Television”
Tuesday, June 13th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center**

**FIELD DAY
Friday-Sunday June 23rd-25th
Redmond Road, Williston**

RANV

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