



Radio Amateur News & Views

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THE 500 Kc. EXPERIMENTAL GROUP The February 13th RANV Meeting

Under the experimental license WD2XSH, a group of radio amateurs have begun exploration of new uses for the historic and now unused 600-meter (500 kHz) band. This band has the potential to give the amateur service a unique capability for ultra-reliable regional groundwave communication and also offers unique opportunities for experimentation with antennas, propagation, modulation, and signal processing. The 21 WD2XSH stations are operating from 505 to 510 kHz with up to 20 watts ERP. QSOs have been achieved at distances up to 900 miles, and signals have been received in Europe and Hawaii.

Fred Raab W1FR will be our guest speaker. He is one of the authorized transmitting stations (WD2XSH-14). Fred will first talk about the objectives, give a description of the equipment and antennas and review the results to date. Details can be found at: <http://www.500kc.com>.

The meeting will be Tuesday, February 13th, starting at 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington. Pre-meeting eats will be at 6 at Zachs on Williston Road. See you there!

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MILTON HAMFEST 2007

The Milton Hamfest and ARRL Vermont State Convention will be Saturday, February 24th, 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. The show will cost you one crisp five dollar bill, an especially great deal in these days of skyrocketing prices. Bring the kids along and they get in free. Such a deal! And no, we don't provide child care since we are all too busy being children on this day.

First, the topic which many of you have been salivating over. Yes Virginia, there is no more code testing as of the day before the hamfest. I have received word that prospective General Class operators will be swarming around the fest just like flies around you-know-what on a warm day. We've added a second VE session in the morning for applicants who have already passed their General test and have the CSCE in hand. You show up at 8:30, fill out a 605, and provide license, ID's, CSCE and \$14 in loot and after about 5 minutes you will be able to call CQ

on 20 meters. If you are missing something, you get kicked to the noon session, where everyone else will be taking tests. Do your homework and check the Milton website before the sessions and make sure you have everything you need (*including the cash*). There won't time to deal with missing paperwork.

Because of all the new Generals we expect to turn out, the Forum program has a definite leaning toward HF operations. In fact, we have a whole room devoted to it! Our guest this year is ARRL Laboratory Supervisor Ed Hare W1RFI, who is an

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OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

The first meeting of the 2007 season was called to order at 7 PM by Mitch W1SJ. One officer was out of town, and the other two were delayed a few minutes "rescuing" the vehicle which had the snacks. There were 28 members and guests attending the meeting, which was held at the Burlington Coast Guard Station on the waterfront.

Mitch started off talking briefly about the Saturday morning brunch meeting on January 20th. He then brought up the need for help at the Milton Hamfest, especially for Volunteer Examiners. The recent announcement by the FCC eliminating element 1 testing (*code*) for General and Extra class licenses will probably tax the exam session. Anyone with proper VE credentials interested should contact Mitch.

Next, a motion was made to once again place an ad in the Vermont ham directory by Paul, AA1SU. The cost will be \$65. The motion was passed unanimously.

Paul AA1SU was selected to provide snacks for the February meeting.

Bob KB1FRW reported that we are the proud owners of a mint AB-577 Portable Tower "rocket launcher". It is presently in the Detroit area, and anyone traveling that way could have a chance at bringing it home.

Carl AB1DD gave a report from the ARRL New England Cabinet meeting that he and Paul AA1SU attended the previous Saturday in Framingham, Massachusetts.

The main part of the meeting was a tour of the Coast Guard station. Rod N1PLA first talked about the mission of the Burlington group, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. One of the things the Auxiliary does is to provide help manning the communications center to free up the active duty personnel when they are needed elsewhere. Rod also talked

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

Wow! It's already a month into the New Year. Winter has finally arrived with temperatures low enough and long enough to make up for the balmy fall weather of November and December.

The hamfest is coming... the hamfest coming! As anyone who has read my ramblings over the past five years as president knows, I am not the least bit hesitant to play up the hamfest as the lifeblood of the hobby. It's the place where hams can get together informally and exchange gear and ideas. It's a place to show off ham radio to the outside world. It's an opportunity to test and upgrade your license. Each sponsoring organization sees the hamfest as its fundraiser to keep its club going for yet another year. I give every one of sibling clubs' a plug when their time comes up during the year; now, its time to plug our very own. Many hams say they have something else going on or their spouse has committed them to do something else. Quite simply put, this is lame. Some of the other hamfests in the region are either new or have been moving targets, but the RANV Winter Hamfest has been occurring on the last Saturday in February for over two decades. This hamfest is one of those events that others plan their calendars around. It is one of the better hamfests in quality and attendance in an era where many

about how we could help. There is a need for auxiliary members, especially in the communications group. The radio network around the lake is being upgraded. Anyone interested in helping can contact Rod N1PLA. Rod then took us for a tour around the station. It was a little strange that the radio room had a good view of down town Burlington, instead of the lake, 180 degrees away!

We ended up back where we started from and enjoyed the snacks. The meeting ended at 9:00.

hamfests are withering, but it could be even better yet – if you will just make the effort to come and be a part of the action.

Now, as if all that weren't reason enough to come to the hamfest, effective February 23rd (*the day before the hamfest*), there will no longer be any CW proficiency requirements for amateur radio licensing. We anticipate that the VE session at the hamfest this year will be as heavily attended as the one just prior to the license restructuring in 2000.

We had an exciting breakfast meeting on Saturday morning January 20th with a great turnout of RANV members and also persons representing the other clubs in the region. Jonathan KB1LYU and Chris N1GGB did a 30 minute presentation on the Icom D-Star system and then we had an hour and a half roundtable about the future, RANV, other clubs and ham radio, in general. Thanks so much to Zach, K1ZK, for his skillful leading of the session. I hope we will all be hearing and seeing more from the ideas advanced at the session.

Contacting RANV

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

BREAKFAST MEETING

A BIG HIT

by Mitch WISJ

If you were one of the few who didn't make it to the RANV Breakfast meeting on January 13th, you missed a great time. When I arrived at the Lincoln Inn, it was packed with hams from all over – 33 in all. We filled their entire back room! Every club was well represented in the group. The first part of the meeting was one of the best (*for me*) as I worked diligently on a stack of apple cinnamon French toast while trying to collect stories from everyone.

Finally, after running way over for this part of the meeting (*we've got the talking and eating part down!*), formal introductions were made. Then, Jonathan KB1LYU and Chris N1GBB gave a talk on the Icom D-Star digital system. Immediately, there was a lot of interest from the group. They passed around a laptop connected to the Internet which was surfing through a D-Star radio on 1.2 GHz. Pretty slick! Oh boy, now I can surf the net while driving out to Dayton!

For the main discussion, "The Future of Amateur Radio", Zach K1ZK took over as moderator. He affirmed that we weren't going to solve all the problems, but instead listen to each person's stories and ideas to reassess our visions for ham radio and re-energize ourselves.

We instantly went from old time ham radio meeting to group discussions and sharing our feelings. Each group discussed how and why everyone got started in amateur radio. A table spokesman then shared the thoughts of the table with the entire room. As much as I wanted to poke fun at a "sharing" exercise, it really did energize me when I relived those days (*long ago*) when I discovered ham radio. The effect was virtually universal.

We then had discussions on what constitutes ideal club leaders and then ideal club members. Out of this came a lot of great ideas and this was followed by a discussion of ideal club activities.

The final topics were where we wanted to see our clubs 5 years in the future and specific ideas to keep amateur radio healthy. When I listed all of the ideas I heard mentioned, they fell into two categories: be an active ham, and communicate with everyone – not just on the air or with other hams.

Upon leaving, I really did feel energized about amateur radio and had a small blueprint: activity and communication. Of course, I already knew these things, but now a lot of people were seriously considering them, too. I also felt good in that we brought together a lot of folks with divergent ideas who all had fun together. I remember some 15-20 years ago when a similar sampling of folks would have resulted in snarling, growling and a general negative miasma hanging over the room. On that account alone, the gathering was a tremendous success.

Minutes of the meeting are at: www.ranv.org/brkmtg.html.

SILENT KEYS

by Mitch WISJ

I recently received the sad news that **Cena Galbraith, N1HJR** passed away on January 30th. She was 79. I first met Cena in the Fall of 1989 when she showed up for ham class. She became very active on the Jay Peak Weather Net and it was there she met Eric VE2LLO. They married, she retired and they spent most of the cold weather months traveling in their motor home. I often ran into them at various hamfests, the latest being last year's Hosstraders when I spotted Cena and Eric walking their greyhound. Not content to sit around like many people their age, they spent a lot of time traveling around. It was during a recent stay in Georgia when Cena became suddenly ill. Cena comes from an extended ham family, including son Ian N1FMH and brother Don N1DCO.

I also recently learned of the passing of **Joel Ross, K2HXS**. He was 66. I first met Joel probably sometime in the late 70's at one of the Charlotte Hamfests. He was a regular at the annual hamfest VE sessions. Debbie also knows Joel quite well. Joel was a Physics professor at St. Michael's College. Although he lived in Vermont for 40 years, his callsign address was always listed at his house in Brooklyn, which he visited several times a month. In mid-December, we met someone who knew Joel and he mentioned that he had a reoccurrence of cancer and was staying at a hospice. I knew that wasn't good, since that usually is a one way situation. Apparently, Joel passed away 5 days after we found that out.

MUSICAL HOUSES

by Mitch WISJ

A number of moves have taken place in the last month. John KB1EYC, Leela KB1EZD, Leo KB1EZE and family have relocated to Albany, New York. We'll miss them! Next month, if all goes to plan, Paul AA1SU will move from Colchester to KB1EYC's former house in Essex Junction. Also next month, Ted K1HD will move from Burlington to a location a block away from Paul's former house. And last Fall, Seth K1SAH, our star GOTA Field Day operator, relocated to Washington state.

CW IS NOT ALL GONE – AND STILL FUN

by Brian NIBQ

As I write this we are about to embark on the new era of ham radio – a time without any CW proficiency requirement for any level of license. There is, as expected, a large element of ham radio rejoicing, and the equally expected large group of hams weeping and gnashing their teeth! Personally I think it was long overdue and in the end those new hams who come in and decide to take up CW will ultimately be more proficient because they *want* to do it rather than *have* to do it.

Enough of the politics. Every summer, the Adventure Radio Society (www.arsqrp.com) sponsors an event called “The Flight of the Bumble Bees” (FOBB), a 2-4 *sprint* held on the last Sunday of July. In April they send out an invitation to QRPers to serve as Bumblebees. The Bees all agree to reach their operating sites by human power (*hiking, biking, canoeing and kayaking*). On Sunday, home-based operators chase the Bees. A popular, exciting contest!

On an absolutely gorgeous Sunday afternoon last summer, I packed up my IC-703, a gel cell, my portable solar panel and my collapsible 20 foot fishing pole antenna, filled my water bottles and made a sandwich. Sara W1SLR, the two dogs and I set off and hiked up towards Mount Mansfield from home. I set up on a high open hill top with a great view while Sara took the dogs down to Brown’s River for a swim.

It took but a few minutes and Bumble Bee #217 was on the air. I started on 40 meters, heard a modest amount of signals, tried to work them, but no luck. I finally worked one station, a lone Bumble Bee hanging around in the old Novice section of the band. OK, let’s change the jumper on the antenna and slide up to 20 meters. “Ah, that’s more like it, plenty of signals and not too crowded.” There were a lot of “CQ BB”s being thrown around so I tuned along until I found one more my speed. Oh-oh! I am up to the PSK frequency of 14.070 MHz and not one station is at my pedestrian speed. I tried tuning down and back up again. Gee, it sounds like Sweepstakes. What am I going to do?

After a few frustrating runs up and down, I found a quiet spot at 14.067 MHz and I set my keyer to 15 words per minute and started CQing. Luck! I had a comeback on the third try. I finished with him and there was another waiting. A dozen QSOs later I realized I had a run! I do love that IC-703 keyer and multiple memories! A few QSOs later I heard Sara coming back with the dogs. With my time running out I opened up my pack and broke out the sandwich and the water. I made my last QSO with a ham sandwich clenched in my teeth, a water bottle in my right hand, the pencil (*for logging*) hung on my ear, and keying the paddles with my left hand, all the while Spenser the Wonder Mutt was shaking excess water on me.

Over the next few days in conversation with other hams who also participated in FOBB, I came to the conclusion that there were a legion of modest CW ops like myself out there for FOBB and they were equally bowled over by the speed mavens running 30-45 wpm CW. When they waltzed up to the high end of the CW section and came upon my slower “CQ BB,” they said, “Oh, thank God!” and pounced on me. I had fun and they had fun. Isn’t that what matters?

VT QSO PARTY

by Mitch W1SJ

I operated in the Vermont QSO Party this past weekend and most stations commented I was the only Vermont station they heard on. So after a while, I started calling it the GQR QSO Party. Not exactly what the contest sponsor was counting on!

I did manage to work 16 different stations in Vermont. A couple of them were club stations and might have been CQing for a while, but most were just handing out a few contacts. KO1U drove up from Massachusetts to put some of the rare counties on. Good job! I also managed to work a fixed station in Essex County, which is as rare as some of the top DXCC locations.

Conditions weren’t great. The only place to work people was on 20 meters during the day. The opening into Europe was very subdued from normal with Eastern Europe few and far between. No one from Asia made it into the log. The band started to cough and sputter at 6 and went completely dead at 7. And there wasn’t much to do after that since 40 meters was a mess and 80 meters was already long. Folks on that band really do not care to work contests and the rates just didn’t pan out even if my signal was strong. New England was very, very difficult to work – only 3 guys in Massachusetts, for example.

Overall, almost 1800 QSO’s and a little under 120 multipliers made it into the log. This is lower than usual. In other concurrent contests, the NA Sprint was a unmitigated disaster (*no 20 meters and 40 meters very bad*). I picked up a bunch in the Minnesota Party but only had 2 QSO’s in the Delaware Contest (*had 5 last year*). Despite the punk conditions, I had fun in the early afternoon when the rates shot up well over 100. Paul AA1SU stopped in on Sunday for a few hours for much needed relief and he had a lot of fun, too.

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expert not only on RFI but most things technical in ham radio. His first forum is *Antennas, Feed Lines, Grounds, SWR and Other Mythical Creatures*, starting at 8:30. With a name like that you'll just have to attend! Ed comes back with *What is the best HF Rig to Buy*. As head of the lab which tests dozens of radios all year, Ed will be able to sort through all the specs and details to help you make an informed decision on your next purchase. Following at 10:30 is another Milton Forum veteran, John Grow, VE2EQL who offers up *Emergency Communications – What To Do When All Hell Breaks Loose*, which is always a crucial area of concern. Finally, John finishes up with *Portable Antennas*. Not only will he talk about antennas, but he will build not one, but TWO antennas from a collection of parts scrounged from a local home goods store.

On the other side of the hallway is the Digital Room. Brian N1BQ starts us off at 9:00 with *QRP Computing – Microprocessors in the Ham Shack*. This promises to be a fun time for geeks and normal folks alike! Following this, Jonathan KB1LYU and Chris N1GGB will talk about the *Icom D-Star Digital System*. Many of us saw a glimpse of this at the recent breakfast meeting and it looked great. There are more and more D-Star repeaters showing up, so this is topic you will at least want to know more about.

You can't have a good show without some comic relief and that's the mission of Mitch W1SJ in the *Why You Would (nt) Be a Ham* show at 10. The stated purpose of this forum is to entice normal human beings to transform themselves into full fledged hamster operators. But, there will be a lot of gags and spoofs along the way. Finally, one of the most popular gatherings is the *ARRL Forum* where you get to listen to and talk back to our elected Director, Vice Director and Section Manager.

The Demonstrations have become a big deal at Milton and we are in the process of planning a bunch more for you to see. We will have a live D-Star Digital System operating on 1.2 GHz where you can see and hear what that is like. Our second demonstration celebrates the removal of Morse code testing with, *ta-da*, a Morse code demonstration. This was actually proposed last year and the timing couldn't have been better. Although not on the test, Morse code remains a super efficient and I dare say, *sexy mode*. But that is only if you are good at it (*20 words per minute or better*). We've found that folks always flock to a code demonstration because of the unique sounds permeating the room. To round out the demonstrations, we will have the IRLP station up and running for guest QSO's.

Oh, by the way, did you know that we have a Flea Market too! Almost forgot that! Although small, Milton seems to attract some esoteric quality *junque* valued by collectors. If you are looking for something newer, dealers KJI, Quicksilver and Webster will all be back, in their usual spots.

Of course, all this takes a back seat to the most important aspect of the Milton Hamfest – the people. Where else can you meet 500 or so like minded hamsters in a couple of rooms in Vermont?

The magic doesn't work unless you all get to the hamfest. So don't whine about the weather. Snow and ice is always a reality (*year round!*). If you choose to live here, then you choose snow. And in 35 years, I've heard all of the other excuses too, so forget it. Family commitments will occur after 12:00 on February 24th. Don't you dare go skiing that day. No one is getting married. And if you plan to sit on a beach down south somewhere, that's fine as long as you get me a ticket too. And if you really cannot go, make sure you send 5 others in your place!

For any possible question about Milton, go to the web site www.ranv.org. If that doesn't answer your question, read it again. See you on February 24th.

HAM CLASSES

by Mitch W1SJ

The Spring Weekend Ham Class will take place on Saturday, March 17th, 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!

Everyone seems to be looking for a General Class upgrade. We've got just the ticket – a ONE DAY General upgrade class. This is scheduled for Sunday, after the Technician class. There is also a class in Manchester, New Hampshire, on March 31-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.

Can't make it to the class dates? Can't leave the house? Interested in Technician, 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.

For the 5th straight year, ham radio attendance in Vermont has dropped. New hams don't fall from trees. Instead they see and hear what we do and emulate it if they are interested. If we all do not talk about ham radio or even talk on ham radio, then how will anyone learn how great our hobby is? Get out there and talk it up. We have the books; we have the classes. Now all we need is the recruits!

NORTHERN VERMONT WINTER HAMFEST

ARRL VERMONT STATE CONVENTION

**MILTON, VERMONT
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2007**

FLEA MARKET

FORUMS

ACTIVITIES

Tables & Tables of Goodies

New Equipment Dealers

VT Amateur Radio Directory

Tables FREE while they last

8:30 Antennas, Feedlines, Grounds
 9:00 Microprocessors in the Shack
 9:30 What is the Best Rig to Buy
 10:00 Icom D-Star System
 10:00 Why You Would(n't) Be a Ham
 10:30 Emergency Communications
 11:00 ARRL Forum
 11:30 Portable Antennas

RANV Information Table
 D-Star, Morse Code and IRLP Demo
 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
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RANV

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 South Burlington, Vt 05407

NEXT MEETING:
“The 500 Kc. Experimental Group”
Tuesday, February 13th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center