



Radio Amateur News & Views

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SPY RADIOS The April 10th RANV Meeting

Our March meeting will delve into something completely different – *Spy Radios*. What exactly do we mean by *Spy Radios*, anyhow?

These radios are artifacts from the World War II era. Spies used them to send messages back home about what they learned on their spy mission. So far, so good. However, 50 years ago, radios were quite large and used vacuum tubes – most were real boat anchors! These spy radios were very compact and are works of art – even by today's standards.

Mike W1RC collects classic radios and transmitters. If you are a regular at hamfests, you have seen him searching out these prizes. He will bring some equipment to demonstrate and tell the story of how they were built and used. It will be a very interesting evening – one quite unlike we're used to!

As an added bonus, Mike will be selling advance admission tickets to the new Nearfest event May 4-5th.

Don't forget to join us on Tuesday, April 10th at 7pm for the next RANV meeting on *Spy Radios*. Wear your best spy outfit. And don't forget the secret conclave at Zach's starting at 6:00!

TIME FOR NEW EDITOR

I have been clamoring for help with the newsletter for a long time. And while I have had some support here and there, for the most part, I have to write much of the newsletter from scratch. Last month, I made it clear that I wanted serious input from the membership in the form of articles for each month's issue. I have received nothing except for one E-mail. It is clear to me that few want to devote any time to this venture. I put in hours writing, editing, producing and proofreading the newsletter. This has gone on for 15 years and 177 issues, through power fail-

ures, disk crashes and printer problems. The only compensation I ask for is that I enjoy what I do. For many reasons, especially lack of support, the enjoyment is no longer there.

This will be my last newsletter. I tried to make this work out, but it didn't. I wish the new editor, whomever he or she is, best of luck and happiness in this pursuit.

I offer this one warning: An organization without a strong newsletter doesn't usually last very long. Finding a qualified successor should be of utmost importance.

NEARFEST

Nearfest will be held May 4-5th (Friday and Saturday) at the Deerfield Fairgrounds in New Hampshire. The show opens at 9 AM Friday and runs until Saturday afternoon. Admission \$10 for early admission, \$5 for late admission (*after 3*), and \$10 to bring a vehicle into the flea market area.

Deerfield is a bit further than Hopkinton – 176 miles. Head down I-89 to its end at I-93. Go south. After paying the 75 cent toll, bear right and stay on I-93. Pay attention, otherwise you will end up on I-293 which is the wrong way! Go a few more miles on I-93 and get off at Exit 7, Route 101 East – Seacoast, Portsmouth. Go 5.5 miles on Route 101 and get off at Exit 3, Route 43 Candia. Turn at the top of the ramp. Follow Route 43 for 7.4 miles. Notice a very sharp right turn and then a very sharp left turn. The Fairgrounds are 0.7 miles past the second turn on the right. Follow the antennas! Coordinates are: 43 5 57N x 71 14 34

Hamfest talk-in is 146.70 (88.5). My repeater will be on 146.67 on the grounds. See you all back at Deerfield!

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OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

The RANV March meeting was called to order at 7:00 on March 13th by President Brian, N1BQ. There were 24 Members in attendance.

Brian started off with a word of thanks for doing a good job with the Hamfest in February. It was a successful event, adding more dollars to our treasury.

Next, John K1JCM gave a short presentation on the Mt. Norris scout camp radio project. The camp wants to offer the radio merit badge during the summer session. There has been enough equipment donated to set up a station, and bodies are needed to set up and operate the station. There is a work weekend on June 9th, and anyone interested in helping should contact John. Also, anyone able to help out during the summer can contact John also.

Jim KE1AZ will bring the snacks for the April meeting. We then went through introductions and recognized the newly upgraded members.

Mitch W1SJ mentioned that he is conducting a licensing class on March 17th and 18th. Mitch then gave a report on the state of the repeater. Some problems were resolved on the Saturday trek to the site, only to have some other problems return just as the repair team returned to the bottom of the mountain. Mitch thinks the duplexer is in trouble, and suggested it be replaced. A motion to spend up to \$1500 was made by Bob KB1FRW, and seconded by Bob W4YFJ. The motion was voted on, and passed unanimously.

The topic of this meeting was "So Now You Are a General, Now What?" The presentation by Bob KB1FRW, Brian N1BQ and Carl AB1DD covered the steps needed to get on HF without breaking the bank. Carl covered radios, what was out there, cost, and where you could find them. Brian covered simple and easy antennas and how to make one. Bob

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

Spring is springing and it's still cold and damp (so, what else is new?) On the bright side, Hosstraders, whose demise we mourned last month, has been resurrected as NEAR-fest. It is even going to be held at Hosstraders venerable old venue, Deerfield. At this month's meeting, Mike, W1RC, our presenter who is also a principal in the NEAR-fest group will have available tickets or the event at \$10 each. The group really needs to get good pre-sales so they have the money to pay the fairgrounds to open the gates that Friday morning. Bring your wallets and checkbooks to support this effort.

NEAR-fest notwithstanding, we still need to look closer in and support the St. Albans hamfest coming up in August. I would also recommend the Sorel-Tracy hamfest across the border in Quebec on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. I have attended it for a number of years as both a buyer and a seller and found it to be pretty good. When you consider the numbers of Canadians from that region who regularly support our hamfests at Milton, Lake Placid,

put the system all together and explained what and how the pieces act together, including antenna matching devices (tuners). To show how easy it was, we put up an antenna that was just a piece of wire tossed over a tree, with the other half lying across the snow. We used an Icom IC-7000 along with an LDG tuner to excite the ether. One call on 20 meters to the Maritime Mobile Safety net brought an instant response from K4EDX, net control in Alabama. That proves that you don't need a lot of fancy equipment to make a contact.

The meeting ended at 9:00 and snacks were devoured.

and St. Albans, as well as Hosstraders, it is not outrageous to consider we might return the favor.

It is heartening to hear and see the numbers of hams upgrading under the latest restructuring of the ham license requirements. Let us hope they all get on the air and are not simply looking at this as just another 'merit badge' to add to their resume.

Two Sundays ago I had the privilege to attend the Court of Honor at Jericho Congregational Church where Thomas KB1KVY, son of John K1JCM, was advanced to the rank of Eagle Scout. Not content to simply do the required 21 merit badges, Tom completed 51! He completed the last three on the night before his 18th birthday when it all had to end. Congratulations and well done, Thomas! Good luck at Norwich next year.

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

NEARFEST

by Mitch WISJ

To loosely quote Mark Twain, reports of Hosstraders' demise have been greatly unfounded. After a long and flowing eulogy last month, Hosstraders has been resurrected as *Nearfest*, short for New England Amateur Radio Festival.

Mike WIRC, who was in our area for a number of years, got together with a few conspirators to continue the proud tradition of Hosstraders. Mike has probably logged more time in hamfests than anyone else and knows all too well what makes a good Hamfest work.

Hosstraders has had a long and storied history. It premiered at Seabrook starting in 1993 for a few years, moving to the Deerfield Fair for a 16 year run in 1976. It was during this time that the Hamfest grew in size and stature. Throughout most of those years, the weather was absolutely perfect causing some to think that the organizers had a connection with the guy upstairs. Unfortunately, some of the shenanigans of the attendees did not sit well with the Fair committee and we were exiled for a year to the Kingston Fair. Unlike the tree covered Deerfield site, Kingston more closely resembled a dump. That fall, it rained and snowed with a vengeance. Everyone was very happy when we were allowed to return to Deerfield the next year.

After a few more years, it wasn't possible to go back to Deerfield, so the Hamfest moved to the Rochester Fair in 1993. This was affectionately known as Rainchester, since that was the prevailing weather. In 2001, we welcomed the move to the Hopkinton Fair, which is much like the Deerfield site.

Nearfest will mark a return to the Deerfield Fair site where many of the old Hamfest goers have fond memories. There are two new items. Youngsters will get in for free (*I wonder if that was copied from a longstanding Milton tradition*). The Fair requests that no alcohol be permitted, which means that we will have to have fun without the firewater.

Since the Fair requires prepayment of a large sum of money which doesn't exist, tickets will be sold in advance of the event which will allow the purchaser early entrance. Mike will be at the April meeting and will have plenty of tickets available for sale.

A very important and beloved ham radio event has returned to us. Make sure it continues by lending your support.

REPEATER NEWS

by Mitch WISJ

Last month we reported on problems with the repeater. On March 1st, the repeater became incredibility deaf and had very low output. That event was followed by over a week of very cold and stormy weather. Finally, on March 10th, Bob and I were able to get up to the site, carrying all of the replacement parts needed to get the system back working.

Unlike most trips up the hill, this was a breeze. Usually a trip involves a long exhausting hike up steep, dangerous terrain, while carrying a 35 pound pack. Fortunately, we were able to grab a snowmobile ride from the ski area maintenance people and we made it to the summit in 8 minutes flat. I knew something was going to go wrong – this was too easy!

The root cause of the repeater problem was that someone broke into the building through the vent and kicked in the grill. The heavy grill landed on the duplexer, doing some damage. We found a bent connector and a shorted connector. Of course, we brought everything except the tools to repair a BNC connector. Eventually, these problems were repaired and the repeater was back operational.

All was not right however. There was a small amount of desense in the receiver. Desense is when the transmitter causes the receiver to lose sensitivity. For the repeater to be able to pick up all the weak and distant mobiles and HT's, it needs to have full sensitivity. In addition, the transmitter was putting out a signal into the receiver, which was causing interference to the received signals. Various techniques were tried to isolate the problem and find a solution.

As the day wore on, a solution wasn't forthcoming, so the repeater was put back together. Then another problem appeared. This took sounded like a motorboat was running on the repeater. Along a whole spate of Evinrude and Johnson outboard jokes, I found that the problem appeared to be coming from the duplexer connections. These were cleaned and tightened and the problem was solved. And then it came back. And then it was solved and then it came back again. I wrapped the coax around the duplexer, said a blessing and three languages and left. The repeater was working fine. Bob prohibited me from listening to the repeater lest I found it was acting up and wanted to go back up.

Of course, when we reached the bottom 45 minutes later, the motorboat was back. Between the noise, the desense and the tight squelch setting, the repeater was not going to hear DX very well, although it was working fine locally.

Various analyses and discussions have led to the conclusion that the duplexer was whacked and detuned. To tune the duplexer we would either have to bring test equipment up the mountain or bring the duplexer down. It was decided to purchase a new unit. This would solve the current problem and fix on-going issues of noise and detuning, unique to the duplexer we are using right now. That system served us well. I purchased it in the early 1990's. It is a homebrew unit, and its age is unknown. The original construction plans are from 1974 QST (*just in case you want to build your own!*).

The new unit has been ordered. Getting up to the site will be exciting story in itself. Stay tuned.

ATLANTICON, BALTIMORE HAMFEST

by *Brian N1BQ*

It is that time of year, and I went on what has come to be called "N1BQ's Annual March Walkabout." I left early Thursday March 29th and headed off to New Jersey to visit my kids and granddaughter and then on down to Timonium, Maryland on Friday.

Atlanticon is the annual East Coast QRP gathering and conference. There are similar gatherings at other times of the year: Pacificon in California and Ozarkon in Arkansas. People pretty much start arriving by noon or so on Friday to gather in the lounge to sip spirits, renew old acquaintances and make new ones. About 5:00 or so, 20 of us saddled up and moved to the Steak and Ale across the street where we had a room all to ourselves. The demographics were interesting: Ji AL7FS came all the way from AK and there were a few from CA, MI, OH, and MN. And then we had to put up with a minor Michigan State versus Ohio feud! There was of course the expected broad representation from NC north to ME.

Friday evening they have a hospitality suite for more networking and where vendors got to set up, show off and sell our wares. About fifty to sixty people attended Friday night.

Saturday morning, a lot of guys were up and off to the Timonium State Fairgrounds for the Baltimore hamfest, while the rest of us slept in a bit and went down to the start of Atlanticon. This year's theme was remote control with low power radio. Joe N2CX, Jim K8IKE, Jay K4ZLE yours truly did one hour presentations each on that theme. Joe did an extensive overview. I followed with interfacing microprocessors to radios. Jim showed a whole series of projects he has done with his students at University of Cincinnati. Jay revisited old technology: RX Noise bridges interfaced to newer technology, allowing antenna measurements while you stay warm in the shack.

Departing from that theme, Vic KG4HTT gave a talk titled "Antennas for Your Urban Tower (Attic Antennas)." With the trend today, even here in Vermont, increasingly towards CC&R restrictions, Vic's talk and experiments were closely listened to by everyone present.

We finished up with Ron WB3AAL, a.k.a. "the A-Trail Ninja" talking about his experiences seven years of hiking the Appalachian Trail and operating from various places at all times of the year.

Saturday night of Atlanticon is always the highlight. It is back to the hospitality suite and the same setup of vendors. There were about a dozen this year. About 8:00 the 'competition' begins. When you register to attend Atlanticon you get a kit. This year it was a digital decoder board with a 567 chip and a PICAXE processor and cheap FM radio. The contest was to roam the hotel's first floor looking for hidden transmitters which were emitting a digitally encoded signal which the PICAXE firmware would decode and, oh yeah, you have to find them in the right order. I was kind of busy selling my wares, but the view from where I sat of over 100 people with mysterious boxes and head phones roaming the halls was enough to wonder if some paranoid guest might not call Homeland Security on us! When that was done and the awards presented, the QRPers present set up their construction projects from the past year for judging on form, function and workmanship. Jim KC1FB from NH won hands down with a tube transceiver he built in the style of forty years ago on a stained and polished wooden base. Not only was it a beauty to behold but it worked quite well.

Sunday morning we all packed up and headed to the hamfest at the Fairgrounds and then back from whence we came by noon. There are bigger conferences and hamfests, but in the six years I have attended Atlanticon, I have always come away wiser and satisfied. The people are great, friendly warm and sharing and oh, so knowledgeable.

CW LONG AGO

by *Mitch W1SJ*

It was a different age. Long before computers and satellite transmissions, radio stations got the news and weather from one or more teletype machines which were constantly banging away in the newsroom. But before that, news was sent via Morse code on shortwave and received at radio stations.

In the 1930's the call letters WCX (7850 kHz, 10 kW) and WJS (15700 KHz, 10 kW) became known around the world for daily news CW transmissions. While domestic users subscribed to Transradio Press Service, dozens of shipboard operators surreptitiously copied the CW transmissions to keep on-board personnel current with the latest news. As strange as it must seem today, seventy-some years ago radio stations seeking to augment local news with national and international events were unable to get access to the news agencies of the day. United Press, Associated Press and International New Service all had contracts with their newspaper clients forbidding the sale of their services to broadcast stations.

It was in this environment that Transradio Press was organized to fill the gap. Rather than using leased wires and teletype machines, new dispatches were delivered by shortwave Morse code transmissions from the high-powered commercial transmitters in New York operated by Press Wireless, Inc.

The transmissions were at 39 words per minute at scheduled times throughout the day. Clients would install a shortwave receiver and if their engineers did not have high-speed code copying ability, they would hire a radio operator.

During the 1930's Bart Bartlett W6OWP worked as a Transradio Press Service CW intercept operator at various stations. Hams will recognize the W6OWP call as the west coast source for ARRL code proficiency runs. He is also considered the inventor of the automatic CW keyer and holds the patent for this.

[reprinted from Feb. 2007 Radio Guide]

NEXT MEETING:
“Spy Radios”
Tuesday, April 10th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

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<http://www.RANV.org>