



Radio Amateur News & Views

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SPY RADIOS

The September 11th RANV Meeting

Our September meeting will feature a topic we were originally supposed to have in April. This 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 Nearfest October 12-13th.

Don't forget to join us on Tuesday, September 11th at 7 PM 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!

HAM CLASS

The next Ham Radio Class will be Saturday, October 6th. This is a one day Technician class, meeting 8:30 until 6:00. The growth of amateur radio has dropped to very low levels. It is up to all of us to get people interested and into classes.

Getting a Technician license is a lot easier. The syllabus was changed, eliminating most of the technical questions. The course prepares the students for the exam, and also for what to do when they get the license.

A General course will be held on Sunday. Students can take both courses or Technicians can take the General course. There also is an on-line course for Technician, General and Extra if you can't make a class.

Contact Mitch W1SJ at 879-6589, for details on enrolling.

LET'S BUILD ON-AIR ACTIVITY

Notice the activity level on the repeater has dropped way off? True, it appears to have slightly rebounded this last week, but it is part of a trend I have seen everywhere. And it is not that everyone is on HF. I listen there too, and except for weekends, things are usually quiet.

Amateur radio is more than passing a test and pasting a license on the wall. You have to use it. That is, you have get on the air and make contacts or engage in some sort of activity unique to amateur radio. Spinning the dial around doesn't really count – short wave listeners can do that.

This all starts with a simple thing – putting your station on the air. All too often I hear people saying that they took the radio out of the car or took down the antenna for one reason or the other. Fine help you will be when a disaster strikes! Stop making excuses! Put a working FM radio in your vehicle and home. It's not that hard to do.

Second step is to turn the darn thing on! Calling on the repeater once a month doesn't work. Instead, leave your radio on in the car or at home in monitor mode at all times you are around. There is a trick for setting the volume on the radio. I

keep the volume just loud enough to hear activity if nothing else is going on in the house. If I'm on the phone or watching TV, I'm aware of activity, but it doesn't disturb. You should experiment to find just the right location and volume setting for your radio so that you can be aware of activity, but it doesn't annoy you. Just be sure to turn everything off when you go to sleep, or else you get an unexpected alarm clock when activity kicks up at 6 AM!

If everyone listened more often, we would return to our active on-air community which we had years ago. Participation builds an organization; apathy kills it!

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

There was no regular meeting in August. Instead, about 24 brave souls made the long trip to the RANV picnic at Kill Kare State Park in St. Albans Bay.

Carl AB1DD arrived early by boat to make sure that we laid claim to the spot we wanted. That was successful. The first members started arriving around 11. Brian N1BQ brought the charcoal and drinks, and shortly there was a fire going in the BBQ, ready for the grilling. Mitch W1SJ brought the rig for the special event station, W1V. He then proceeded to fire arrows in the air for the antenna. Meanwhile, Ron NF2O unloaded his Icom IC-706, laptop, and Rig Blaster. He was having trouble interfacing his laptop with HRD, the computer control software for his radio. With some expert knowledge from Carl (*pat myself on the back*) the interface was made to work with HRD as well as Digipan, the PSK software.

By now, W1V was on the air. The 400-watt SB-200 punched out a great signal through the dipole that was 80 feet in the air. There was a grand pile up in short order. There were 139 contacts made in a few hours on Saturday, and another 12 on Sunday, from Colchester. Phil KB1OOX arrived later in the day with a couple of his radios to get checked out. Mitch W1SJ hooked them up and diagnosed the problems. Unfortunately, the problems couldn't be repaired in the field, but the condition of the gear is known.

The picnic finished up around 5:00, and people started off for home. For those interested, for me, it was a very wet ride back to Burton Island, with the wind out of the north and waves breaking into the dinghy, but as the definition of a successful maritime trip goes, one needs to arrive back at the start with the same number of crew as was there at the start. That happened!

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

It has been a busy month! We started off with the annual club picnic at Kill Kare State Park in St. Albans. On the same day there was the Lighthouse event at Shelburne Farms and two weeks after that, the STARC Hamfest.

The club picnic had an attendance of over twenty hams and family while at the same time a number of club members were staffing the Lighthouse event. Most of the usual suspects were there, but we had a surprise visit from Leslie KC9CDY. Back in 2005, Leslie was a summer co-op student at IBM from Michigan Tech and she joined us for Field Day and the picnic. She now has a ham's dream job, working for Rockwell Collins in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Rockwell had sent her to Boston for a week. When she got done she came up to visit. Les is newly engaged and is a proud new home owner.

As a dedicated QRPer, I must say I operated W1V with Mitch's DX-70 with the SB-200 amplifier with mixed emotions. But, under the so-so conditions the amplifier's commanding voice really got heard and almost everyone got a chance to be the focal point of a pileup.

After a fine start last year at a small one day affair, STARC changed their summer Hamfest to emulate the "Hosstrader's style" format, starting Friday and running through mid-day Saturday. The Franklin County Fairgrounds in Swanton was an ideal spot with easy access by Interstate and a short drive to convenience stores, gasoline and fast food. There were good sized buildings and electricity and water on poles throughout the tailgate area. There were also on-site concessionaires and commercial vendors. The rains early Saturday morning coupled with the newness of the event kept attendance down. They are all set to go again next year on the same weekend. With a little effort on all of our parts it could become a perfect summer Hamfest.

We will start our fall meetings with a presentation on *Spy Radios* by Mike W1RC. Since Nearfest is only a month or so away, it is likely he will have advanced sale tickets with him so bring your checkbooks and/or wallets.

For October, we are planning a building session. The project will be an emergency communications antenna - a J-pole made from 300 ohm twin lead with a pigtail of coax to a BNC connector. It can be rolled up and carried in a pocket or a glove box in the car. It can be attached in place of a rubber duck and double the range of a handheld.

November will be elections. Bob, Carl and I have been running the show for six years. It is time for the membership to start thinking about nominating others to take one or all of our positions. To maintain its vigor an organization needs to infuse new blood in the leadership positions. We, the officers are not going anywhere right yet, but anyone us would gladly step down to let someone new step up and we will be right there to help you get going. Think about it! It is your club!

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

CONTEST CORNER

by Paul AAISU

It's been a while since I have written *Contest Corner*. I decided to put out another edition even though I have not been participating much in contests for the past year or so.

Contesting is a fun way to make a lot of contacts in a short amount of time. It is also a good way to measure the effectiveness of your station set up, enhance your radio techniques, and learn a lot about radio propagation. If you want to work on earning an award, such as Worked All States (WAS), contesting can speed things up quite a bit. Of course there will always be those last two states that will seem to take forever for you to work or receive the QSL Card.

Another popular award is DXCC. DX stands for a foreign country and CC indicates Century Club, or 100 DX countries. There are over 300 countries on the DXCC list, so getting to 100 isn't all that hard except for those last two needed contacts again. From there on, you can work on endorsements for more countries, modes, or bands.

If you like playing on two meters, there is an award for that too. The VUCC award is available for contacts on VHF, UHF and up. We're not talking about repeater contacts here, naturally. Awards have to be earned via simplex. However, the good news is that you are not collecting states or countries. We are talking about Maidenhead Grid Squares. The grid squares are determined by latitude and longitude and they are 2 degrees by 1 degree. States have more than one grid square, which is handy since VHF signals do not propagate as far as HF signals do. To earn the award on two meters, you need credits for 100 grid locators. The same is true for six meters, but this drops to 50 and lower as the frequency goes up from there.

These are just a few of the ARRL awards that are available just for having fun on the radio. In addition, *CQ Magazine* has several award

programs, as do some other publications like *NCJ - National Contest Journal*. On top of all that, most states have their own QSO Parties that hand out award certificates. I submitted a contest log with just 4 entries on it once, and won First Place for Vermont in the *Nebraska QSO Party*. Sometimes, you find yourself keeping separate logs for two different contests at the same time. This can happen in early October for instance when California has their QSO Party, and Great Britain runs their 10/15 Meter Phone Contest. Being in Vermont, we are about in the middle of the action, and can work both sides of the world.

So what contests are coming up this month for you to participate in?

On September 8-9th we have the *ARRL September VHF QSO Party*. It starts at 2 PM Saturday, and ends at 11 PM on Sunday. Bands include six meters, two meters, and up. To get the best results for these bands, you need elevation. Driving to a high hill with a good antenna is recommended. Mitch W1SJ will be operating from Mt. Equinox in southern Vermont, and will aim his antenna north at the top of the hour to listen for commuters using 2 meters on 144.200 MHz SSB and 145.550 MHz FM. The exchange is grid square.

On the same weekend is the *WAE-DX or Worked All Europe Contest*. This is a slightly complicated contest that involves QTC, or handing traffic off to the guys in Europe. Better details can be found in QST. It is 48 hours long, and starts at 8 PM on Friday evening.

The *North American Sprint SSB* on Saturday, September 15th is a fast paced 4-hour contest starting at 8 PM. The bands are limited to 20, 40 and 80 meters. The exchange is other station's call, your call, serial number, name, and state. You can't stay on frequency. You have to move 1 KHz before working another station, or 5 KHz before calling CQ.

On Saturday September 22nd at 8 AM is the *Scandinavian Activity Con-*

test. It runs for 12 hours on 80 through 10 meters. The exchange is signal report and serial number. Scandinavia includes several countries including Norway, Finland, Greenland, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Svalbard.

Moving on to the end of the month, there are several contests, but the biggest is the *CQ Worldwide RTTY DX Contest*. It starts at 8 PM on Friday, September 28th and runs for 48 hours. The exchange is RST and CQ Zone (*we are 05*). With the advent of the computer sound card, you can now operate RTTY with little extra equipment. However, if you have a separate RTTY terminal unit, that works great, too. You could earn DXCC-RTTY in one weekend!

On October 6-7th we have the aforementioned *California QSO Party* and the *RSGB 21/28 MHz Phone Contest*. The CQP is a lot of fun, and CA has a lot of counties to put on the air, so there will be activity all weekend. The folks in Great Britain sure appreciate those rare Vermont contacts.

In addition to what I have mentioned here, several states are having their own QSO Parties. No more room to mention them here. Details of these and other contests can be found in QST, or on the ARRL web site. As I mentioned earlier, other publications and web sites have lots of good information, too. For example, most state QSO Parties have very detailed web sites to help you with the details. Some might even have free contest software for you to load in your computer to help you even further.

So whether you are Searching & Pouncing (*S&P*) in the SAC, or calling CQ (*Running*) in the VHF QSO Party, there is so much for you to do in ham radio this month. So throw a wire antenna up in the trees, set some time aside, get on the air and have some fun. We are working our way towards fall and winter when contest season really gets under way.

NEXT MEETING:
“Spy Radios”
Tuesday, September 11th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

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<http://www.RANV.org>