



Radio Amateur News & Views

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CONSTRUCTION NIGHT: Portable Two Meter Antenna The October 9th RANV Meeting

For our October meeting we will hold another hands-on construction night. We will be building a portable 2 meter antenna from TV antenna twinlead. This antenna is very useful when that rubber duck just won't cut it or your regular antenna decides to quit during an event. The antenna will roll up into a very small space, making it easy to stow. All the needed parts and test gear will be provided at the meeting. It would help facilitate things if you bring soldering irons and small tools. By the end of the meeting we should have a whole bunch of these antennas working. There is also a dual band version of this antenna which we might try to build, as well.

Activities get underway next Tuesday October 9th with dinner at Zachary's on Williston Road, starting around 6 PM. The meeting will be 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington. We hope to see you there!

FOX HUNT

The next Fox Hunt will be Friday, October 19th starting at 6 PM. The hunt will take place on the input of the 145.15 repeater (144.55 MHz). Paul AA1SU will be the Fox in the Box this month.

Rules are simple. The Fox will be located in a public accessible spot within Chittenden County, provide at least an S-1 signal at I-89 Exit 14 and transmit at least 10 seconds out of every minute.

Hunters should check in on 145.15 repeater prior to hunting. First finder gets to hunt next time and get all appropriate bragging rights.

STEERING WHEEL

The next Steering Wheel Meeting will be Tuesday, October 16th at 7 PM at the Ground Round, Williston Road, South Burlington. The purpose of the Steering Wheel is to put together RANV meetings programs and other activities and take care of any needed business. Steering Wheel meetings are open to all. Unfortunately, it is rare when non-officers show up. We would like to change that and get more people involved in planning activities. Besides, sitting down with other hams and eating and talking ham radio is a lot of fun!

NEARFEST

Nearfest will be held October 12-13th (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.

There are two new things this year. For those who have to get there very early, Thursday night camping will be provided. The camping area is outside of the Flea Market area, so sellers will have to move Friday morning. Second, forms will be offered on several topics.

To get to Deerfield, 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! Mileage from Burlington: 176. Coordinates are: 43 5 57N x 71 14 34

Hamfest talk-in is 146.70 (88.5). Rocking 146.67 Repeat will be on the grounds. In addition several low power FM and AM stations will broadcast all sorts of fester information. See you all back at Deerfield!

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl AB1DD, Sec'y

The September meeting was called to order by president Brian, N1BQ at 7:00 on September 11th. There were 27 members and guests present.

The first order of business was the upcoming hamfests. There is one in Lake Placid on October. 6th. The big one is NEAR-FEST, in Deerfield, New Hampshire on October 12-13th.

Brian reminded everyone that elections are coming up at the November meeting. Nominations are due at the October meeting. If anyone wants to nominate someone, it needs to be submitted to the Club Secretary by the October meeting.

Bob W4YFJ spoke briefly about the Lighthouse special event, with the call W1L. He passed out certificates of thanks to those who helped make this event a success.

The October meeting will consist of constructing an emergency antenna out of 300 ohm twinlead. Those who choose to do so will leave with a working 2 meter antenna that can be rolled up and put in a pocket.

Jim KE1AZ volunteered to provide snacks for the next meeting.

After a round of introductions, Section Manager Paul AA1SU reminded everyone that joining the ARRL through the club would be good for a free ARRL Repeater Directory. Paul also announced that there is a new Section Emergency Coordinator, Fred WA1LIE.

John K1JCM was recognized for his work in setting up a station at Mount Norris Scout Camp.

Mitch, W1SJ reminded everyone that he is in need of articles for the newsletter. Without the help of the membership, the newsletter gets a little thin.

The highlight of the meeting was our guest speaker, Mike W1RC. As well as his topic of spy radios, Mike talked about the upcoming NEAR-FEST, of which he is the chairman.

THE PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ, President

The Autumnal Equinox has come and gone, and, the relatively balmy weather we are enjoying not withstanding, winter is on its way. The handful of summer windstorms, some quite strong, are child's play to what comes in November to January. Have you checked your tower and other sky wires yet? Best do it now when you can use your hands without needing heavy gloves and before the winds really start to blow. Of course there is always the old motto, "if your antenna array is still standing when winter's done, it ain't big enough!"

Hamfest season will be winding down for a while. But we still have the big one coming up. NEAR-Fest will be on October 12th and 13th. The organizers are promising it to be bigger and better than their incredible inaugural effort last May. They have even secured access to an adjacent camping facility for Thursday arrivals and informal festivities.

Mike talked about some of the new events at the hamfest, such as forums. He also announced that the hamfest is a non-profit organization, and money will be available for schools to set up stations.

Mike then moved on to the topic of the night, Spy Radios. He defined a spy radio as a transceiver used by spies. They were used to get information out of an enemy country. Most were small, some battery powered, and some ran off of commercial power. Some of them even used tubes; in fact one had an big 807 in it! There were some models that were modular so they could be more easily hidden.

The meeting finished up around 9:00 and the membership headed for the snacks.

Two weeks later, on Saturday October 27th, the Club Radio Amateur de la Rive Sud de Montréal is holding their annual hamfest in Longueuil, just south of Montreal. It is indoors and very well attended. More information is available at <http://www.raqi.ca/~ve2clm/hamfesta.htm>

Our meeting this month is getting us back to the workbench to build a simple field expedient antenna to give your hand held radio an extra reach in an emergency.

This month we will also be entertaining nominations for the November elections.

A number of our members have upgraded their license recently, I am sorry I don't know all of the names. But I do know that my very capable vice-president, Bob KB1FRW, successfully upgraded to Extra. Great work, Bob!

We are still working on an agenda for the November meeting. Suggestions are still quite welcome. December will be our annual holiday party.

Contacting RANV

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

MORSE UNDER LINUX

by Jim KEIAZ

I am interested in Morse code, in part because I have a modest station and I have heard that Morse helps a person with that kind of situation. Besides, I just like Morse.

I enjoy rag chewing for a half hour or an hour, but I've also been interested in trying some contests and some DX.

But whenever I've listened to contests, I feel that it just goes too fast. I passed the 20 word per minute test a few years ago, but only because it was multiple choice. I've tried listening to W1AW at 18 words per minute and some other techniques, but I didn't see my rate climb, really.

I decided that I needed a program. I use Linux, so I needed to find some program that ran on that operating system. I tried a number of them, but they were either unsophisticated or I couldn't get them to work. There aren't many times that I wish I had Windows, but I have been impressed in the past by a program called Morse Runner, which runs under Windows, and I wanted it.

This program (www.dxatlas.com/morserunner) simulates contest operations. It uses the sound card's ability to generate up to six separate channels to make it seem as though many stations are calling. Maybe an experienced contester would find it lacking, but for a beginner like me it is a way to experience things like pileups every night, so I could practice.

My frustration made me decide to take the plunge. Linux systems have a program called WINE that fools Windows programs into thinking they are at home. I had heard that WINE was temperamental. But that information was either old or just wrong. I followed the directions on the web page (www.winehq.org), issued a single command, and the next thing I knew the Morse Runner program window was waiting for me to try.

It works great. I do ten minutes a night of practice and my Morse speed is creeping up. I'm at 22 words per minute now, and making steady progress. I'm also getting used to some contester tricks that always gave me trouble in the past, such as using T for a quick zero.

A nice side effect is that my rag chewing Morse is much easier. I'm able to be comfortable at higher speeds and the numbers, which always gave me trouble in the past, seem to come with less work.

VERMONT SECTION NEWS

by Paul AAISU

I am very pleased to announce that Fred Messer WA1LIE has agreed to take on the ARRL Vermont Section Emergency Coordinator (SEC) appointment. Fred had been the DEC for District 3 since 2003. District 3 encompasses Washington, Orange, and Lamoille counties. Fred is also a previous president and newsletter editor for the Central Vermont Amateur Radio Club and is currently Net Manager for the CVARC Net. Please join me in welcoming Fred to his new Section Cabinet Appointment.

Bob Brown W4YFJ told me this summer that he was ready to move on from the SEC position. Bob accomplished a lot with his two years in the appointment. It is without a doubt the busiest appointment in the ARRL Field Organization! I wish to thank Bob for all his hard work and dedication. Bob will be missed, but has agreed to help out as needed.

One of Bob's accomplishments was a top 10 finish in the 2006 Simulated Emergency Test (SET). With the help of Jane KD6PCE, Vermont racked up 279 points in the Net Activity Column and 680 points in the ARES Activity column. See July QST page 71 for the results. In that article, you will see that Ed W1OKH, Skip N1RRW and Mike K3BRJ all contributed scores as Net Control Operators for the event. Congratulations to all who participated.

I am also pleased to announce that Allen Tinker W1AAT has taken over as our ARRL Vermont Affiliated Club Coordinator. The ACC position is a Cabinet Level Appointment in the Vermont Section. Allen's appointment was effective earlier this year. In a recent letter to Leona Adams at the ARRL, Allen stated that he was "Looking forward to working with the clubs of Vermont and the ARRL". Please join me in welcoming Allen to this new important appointment. Allen has also been an Emergency Coordinator (EC) for Waitsfield since May 2004. Until recently, Allen was the president of the Central Vermont Amateur Radio Club. His term expired just before the new appointment.

Deb Clark NN1C had been our ACC since I took office in the summer of 2002. She was the one who really encouraged me to throw my hat into the ring for Section Manager. She wrote me a very encouraging letter just after the Milton Hamfest in March of that year. Deb has moved on to Wyoming and we wish her all the best. She joked with me that she had already checked to see if NN7C was available. It was not. Deb was president of the Green Mountain Wireless Society, and was very active in the Ham Radio community in general. She also taught ARRL Emergency Communications Courses. Her plate was quite full here in Vermont. In Wyoming, Deb tells me that she is looking forward to just playing radio for a change. Deb closed a recent E-mail to me with this quote, "I am proud to have been able to serve you as your ACC and I wish you and the rest of the field organization only the very best in the future."

Please join me in welcoming Allen in his new position, and wishing best of luck to Deb.

AN ADVENTURE OF GETTING ON HF

by Bob KB1FRW

The code had been dropped as a requirement for General and Extra class licenses and it was time for me to make the leap to General class operator and then Extra. I bought both of the ARRL manuals last fall and sort of knuckled down to study. Boy, did the Milton Hamfest come up fast or what! I was still a little low on the practice test scores, so I crammed some the night before and lo and behold I passed! I almost passed the Extra exam too without looking at the book.

I could now get on HF! I went home after the hamfest and threw up a 20 meter dipole that I had made for a previous hamfest. This was connected through my MFJ tuner to my Yaesu FT-100D. I fired the rig up and spun the dial only to hear nothing but noise. I checked all the connections and still nothing. I shut it down and waited to the next day, still nothing. This went on for the better part of a week.

Occasionally, I could hear stations but didn't hear one calling CQ. I tried calling CQ, and nothing. I was beginning to wonder if the radio worked so I got out the SWR meter just to make sure the meter in the tuner was working, which it was.

What was wrong? Carl AB1DD came over with his new IC-7000 and LDG auto tuner and that was better but a test with the 7000 mobile in his van showed that I have a high level of noise in my house that isn't helping. I'm pretty sure that this comes from the wired or wireless network installed at my house and it probably doesn't help that there are 3 to 4 computers on at any given time. The other notable issue is antenna height and orientation. When you

live on a 100 x 100 foot lot with virtually no trees and lots of power lines, the length, height, and direction of wire antennas is limited. It was time for a change and some more bandwidth. I took down the 20 meter dipole and put a triband Cushcraft R-5 vertical on a tripod about 10 feet off the ground. When I first turned the radio on you could hear the difference so I tried calling CQ on 20 meters. There it was, a big signal answering me from down in Georgia. We had a nice chat and it turned out he was also a new General class licensee going through the same issues I was having. I made a couple more contacts that evening and in the ensuing conversations

few west coast stations in the log, but I couldn't make it into Central or South America to save my life however.

The other day I decided to elevate the vertical to the top of my garage which put it up to about 17 feet and got it away from the house a bit. Of course this was fraught with difficulty as I discovered that the adjustments on the vertical were way off in the 10 meter section so I readjusted it and put it up. Now it has a reasonable SWR on all the bands except the high end of 20 meters and until I get some time and my antenna analyzer back, I am using the tuner on 20 meters. It seems to have better ears and when I first got on

there was a loud signal on 20 meters, XE1YQQ, Theodoro in Mexico City! There is hope for me yet, especially when the sunspot numbers increase and I get that 50 foot tower up with the tribander on top.

What did I learn in all this? It was invaluable to have someone who had been on the air to offer their advice. My thanks to Carl for most of this, as I must have asked a thousand questions. It was very necessary to stick with it and not get discouraged. That is very easy to do when you spend several hours trying to make one contact and fail. Things slowly get better as you work on them, you find a bad part here, something out of adjustment there or even an operator error that gets corrected and before you know it you are making reliable contacts. It has been quite an experience and as I truly discovered while studying for the Extra test (*which I passed*) there is a lot more to learn.

*“What did I learn in all this?
It was invaluable to have someone
who had been on the air
to offer their advice.”*

learned that the bands had been pretty terrible the last week or so. It certainly caused me enough hassle thinking things were broken or just not right.

Since then I haven't had much luck on any bands except 20 and 40 meters and the success hasn't been that astounding either. In talking to Carl, it is clear that he is hearing and working more stations on his sailboat with a back stay as the antenna and an Icom AH-4 tuner for matching than I am. I also put up a 40 meter dipole that seems to get out about 1000 miles but of course you have to work around the broadcast stations. It is not to say I haven't made contacts. There have been a number of European stations and a

CONTEST CORNER

by Paul AAISU

Imagine my surprise when I opened up my October QST, and noticed that Ed N1UR had taken First Place Single Operator Low Power in the ARRL International DX Phone Contest. The contest took place last March 3-4th. Also participating in the test were **RANV** members Ron KK1L, and Grant K1KD, both in the Single Assisted High Power Category. Congratulations to all three for their excellent operating skills! Since QST does not print full contest scores anymore (*only the top 10 in*

each category), I had to search the ARRL web site to see which other **RANV** members had participated.

Then I noticed the results from the ARRL International DX CW Contest held last February 17-18th. The article about this contest was in the August QST. On the web, I found six Vermont scores with the only **RANV** member being Ed N1UR. Once again Ed took first place in the Single Operator Low Power Division Ed has been a top contender for many years now, and can really help us rack up the points at Field Day.

As an Amateur Radio Operator, you too can get your feet wet with contesting. There are many contests throughout the year. They are not

all ARRL contests either. As I mentioned last month, CQ Magazine and other organizations sponsor them too. Please get on the air when you can and keep a log to submit. Here is a glimpse of what is coming up in the coming weeks.

The Pennsylvania QSO Party: Saturday, October 13 Noon to 1 AM; Sunday, October 14 9 AM to 6 PM.

Scoring is a nightmare to explain, but you get more points for 80 Meters, which is pretty easy to do from here at night. Several

contesting software programs support this contest. The exchange is serial number and Vermont. They send serial number and Pennsylvania county.

CQ Worldwide DX SSB Contest is Friday, October 26th 8 PM to Sunday at 8 PM (*48 hours*).

Also known as "The Contest", this is the whole world working the whole world. DX from all over the globe will be on the air looking for contacts. The exchange is signal report and CQ Zone (5). You don't get any points for working stations in the U.S., but you do get zone credit. All contesting software supports this contest. I really recommend that you get on and work this one. You

will have a blast! On 40 Meters, you will need a radio that can wok split. This is because the Europeans have phone privileges in our CW portion of the band. So "split" means that you are listening at the low end of the band. The DX tells you where HE is listening. You set your radio to transmit at that frequency.

That's it for now. Of course there are several more contests on the air on any given weekend. For now, I am pointing out the more popular phone contests, so that it does not seem so confusing for the hams that are new to HF this year.

| CONTEST CALENDAR | |
|------------------|-------------|
| October 26-28 | CQ WW Phone |
| November 3-4 | SS CW |
| November 17-18 | SS Phone |
| November 23-25 | CQ WW CW |
| December 1-2 | 160 Meter |
| December 8-10 | 10 Meter |

NOMINATIONS

It's time for nominations. **RANV** is seriously searching for new officers. The current officers have been in there a long time and are running out of ideas. They would not mind stepping down and assisting someone new to learn the job.

You can nominate someone at the October meeting, or send an E-mail to all of the officers indicating your choice. You can also nominate yourself. There is a requirement that both the nominee and nominator are members in good standing.

NEXT MEETING:
“Portable AntennaBuild Sesssion”
Tuesday, October 9th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

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