



Radio Amateur News & Views

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DIGITAL TELEVISION TRANSMISSION The May 12th RANV Meeting

The May meeting will be about mountaintop plumbing. No, not that kind! We mean *radio frequency* plumbing. Now that the digital TV transition is over, just how do all those RF signals get from their transmitters to the antennas on just two towers? Not to let the cat out of the bag, but it is done with filters and tuned sections of transmission line. This is somewhat akin to how a router connects multiple computers to one Internet cable. Only in this case, the line is 6 inches in diameter! That's some serious piece of coax! Once again Ted Teffner, former Vice President of engineering at WCAX, and now a consultant, will explain how all this is done. If you remember, Ted gave a great talk about the digital change over back in May of 2004. A question and answer session will follow the talk.

Activities get underway at 6 PM with dinner at Zack's on Williston Road. The meeting will start at 7 PM May 12th and will be held at the O'Brien Civic Center, 118 Patchen Road, South Burlington.

OPS NEEDED !

Radio operators are still needed for the Vermont City Marathon on Sunday, May 24th. This is the biggest and best public service event in Vermont and you will have a lot of fun doing this. Our primary mission in amateur radio is to provide public service communications - so why not help out in the cause. Operators need to be signed up by the time you read this to allow time for training. Can't make it? Send a friend instead!

We also need operators for the Essex Memorial Parade on Saturday, May 23th. This is also a fun event which is limited to the morning.

To sign up, contact Mitch W1SJ.

Contacting RANV

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

MORE SPACE STATION QSO'S

by Carl AB1DD

Those of you who read the Space Repeater article in the last newsletter found out how to use the repeater on the International Space Station. Well, it turns out that 3 area hams did one better. Gene W1EBR, Nick KB1RVT and Jim, WY0N were all successful making contact with the Space Station. Gene decided to take his mobile inside to give the repeater a try. Jim was driving through Hardwick during his contact. Nick was on his HT on an antenna in the attic when the contacts were made. Here are the details as told by Nick:

"Yes, Carl, someone does read the RANV newsletter! This afternoon I read your article about contacting the International Space Station. I found additional frequency and tracking information on the ISS Fun website you mentioned. I loaded the up and down frequencies into my HT. I heard it go over on its next pass, but no contact. On the second pass, I lucked out and made a brief contact with Charles Simonyi on International Space Station on 2 meters using my mighty 7-watt V82 and a ladder-wire Slim-Jim indoors up in my attic. Thanks, Carl - that was a blast."

Gene W1EBR posted a QSL card of his ISS contact on the RANV Reflector. If you are a member, you can see it at groups.yahoo.com/group/RANV.

Congratulations to all. You never know what you can do until you try. And please, keep us all informed of your experiences on ham radio!

OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl ABIDD, Sec'y

The April meeting was called to order at at 7:11 on April 14th. There were 17 members in attendance.

It was announced that the MS Walk will be April 25th. Other events include Near-Fest in Deerfield, New Hampshire on May 1-2nd, March of Dimes Walkathon on May 2nd, the Essex Memorial Parade on May 23rd and the Vermont City Marathon on May 24th. See elsewhere in the newsletter for more information. Bob KB1FRW was volunteered to bring snacks in May. We then did a round of introductions.

The main topic for this meeting was getting PSK on the air. This multimedia demonstration was done by yours truly, ABIDD. We had an Icom IC7000 connected to a PC running Digipan PSK software. The video output from the radio was projected on the big screen along with the display of the PSK software and HRDDM780. I started off reviewing how to connect the audio to and from the radio and PC. Next, a little history and how PSK worked. I then talked a little about some of the other modes, and demonstrated them transmitting so all could see and hear what they were. Next, I showed how to set up the software and set levels.

The crux of the demo was to make a PSK contact. Just before the meeting, I had a QSO with a station in Germany. As the evening wore on, the band started to go quiet. But, with the excellent efforts of Bob, KB1FRW and his 20 meter dipole, we did make a contact in Florida. I don't claim to be anywhere near an expert on PSK, but if anyone has questions, I'll try to help out. We broke for refreshments and finished up about 8:30.

HOW DO YOU SOUND ON THE AIR?

by Red K1RED / WS1J

When I was growing up, and some say I never did, I was known to have a quicker mouth than mind. No doubt that remains true today except both have slowed down a bit due to age.

I have always been quick to react to someone running down my country, my wife, my kids, my religion, my fraternal organizations, even my cats. I try, however, to keep it one on one and not on the air. I don't always succeed, but I try.

I have overheard many comments about how hams act on the air and especially on the 15 repeater. My opinion is that this is true simply because nobody is on, or seldom is, on any of the other local repeaters.

However, here are a few observations with no particular order or intent to establish the "baddest" of the activities to which I allude:

Imagine for a moment, if you can, back to the first transmission you finally got up the courage to make and this happened: (All call signs are fictitious).

"Umm, err, KX9RR2 listening"

Silence.

"KX9RR2 listening, anyone copy?"

Silence.

"KX9RR2 clear."

Then, almost immediately, "W9A9 this is K2Z8" - followed by a lengthy conversation. Hmm, wonder how KX9RRR felt? How would YOU feel?

Or far worse and much common:

"KX9RR2 listening"

"KX9RR2 - hey how are you and welcome to the 15 repeater this is W3X5 back to you."

Then, before KX9RR2 can answer or even after, you hear: "W3X5 how you doing bud - this is K2Z8"

And they carry on for 5 - 15 minutes while the new ham sits and listens. Sometimes they finally remember who lit the repeater up to begin the QSO but all too often the new guy or gal has turned off the radio.

And we wonder why new hams don't bother renewing their license? Why some never get on the air?

OK, next up. How do you think

new hams feel about joining in a conversation when far too often they hear nothing but negative chatter.

"Someone is out to do me wrong, someone did me wrong."

"I got a new radio but probably got screwed."

"I want to put up an antenna but probably my neighbors will complain."

"Man, these drivers out here are all so stupid - What a bunch of idiots!"

And on and on and on. Do YOU want to join those conversations?

How about conversations where people start ranting about the government? Doesn't it strike anyone as a bit much to get on a federally licensed repeater with your federal issued license to complain about the federal or state government?

I know I am one of those who occasionally am involved in conversations on the air that should not be there and I truly hope if someone hears me that they bring me up short.

Remember, new and prospective hams DO listen to us and they DO make decisions to get or keep their license based a lot on how they are treated or by what they hear on the air.

If anyone has ever heard KD1R in a group QSO you know how it can be done to keep everyone involved in the conversation. It progresses through everyone that has dropped in their call sign and nobody is ever left wondering why they bothered.

Listen to yourselves sometime as others listen to you. 73 and keep the airwaves active.

Repeater Trustee's comments: The watchword here is to be polite and respectful of others. If repeater activity (or ham radio) becomes so negative that no one wants to turn on the radio, then we all lose. The hard part is that what I may find positive and fun, you may find annoying! We are a diverse group with diverse opinions and there is no problem sharing those opinions as long as we keep a positive spin and everyone treats each other with respect. And - those drivers out there really are stupid and a bunch of idiots!! -

MS WALK

by *Brian N1BQ*

RANV continued its support of Multiple Sclerosis by providing communications for the MS Walk in late April. This year's event was on Saturday, April 25th. The walk follows a route from Burlington High School down North Avenue to Battery Park then up Pearl Street through the Church Street Marketplace, and then down Main Street, back down to the waterfront and the bike path back to the High School.

There were 8 hams who volunteered for this year's event: Brian N1BQ, Bob KB1FRW, John N1LXI, Erich KB1KVW, Chuck KB1RQX, John K1JCM, Amy KB1KXF and Robert W1RFM. We set up two ten foot mast sections and small vertical 2m dipole in the bed of my truck. The entire event was conducted on 146.58 MHz simplex. We utilized four fixed points: Net Control, Burlington College, Church and Main and the Coast Guard station. We also had a station in the SAG wagon, two ham bicyclists, and a ham shadowing the event coordinator.

The weather cooperated, as it was neither too cool nor too hot. All in all, this edition of the MS Walk was a milk run for the radio hams. This was a good thing! There were some lessons to be learned.

The course seems simple enough but presents several management challenges. First, at Burlington College walkers have the option of turning around and going back, giving them a total walk of a little over a mile. Other "options" were invented on the fly by some participants who decided, en route, to detour off course. These options serve to make it difficult in determining where the start and finish of the pack really are. It is all manageable – with prior thought.

Another management challenge is that we cannot take vehicles on the Church Street Marketplace and our bicyclists must dismount and walk for those couple blocks. Add to this the plethora of enticing shops and restaurants to distract the walkers and we have often lost track of the pack. One year, a group of 15 people sat down and had lunch at Leunigs, finishing up an hour after everybody else – and we were searching all over for them!

The final gotcha this year, was a very zealous "tail end Charlie" crew from the MS Walk group picking up signs. However they got ahead of our drag bicyclist who didn't know the course and was depending on the signs. Next year we will have maps!

FIELD DAY

Field Day is June 26-28th, just a mere 7 weeks away. Last year, we blew everyone away and ran up a record score and record participation. Will we be able to repeat? That depends on everyone coming together to do a piece of the many jobs. Contact W1SJ or AB1DD to sign up for Field Day 2009!

RANV MEMBER PROFILE:

MELANIE W1BZD

by *Kathi KB1OQK*

If the child of a military parent can be called a Military Brat, Melanie could be considered a Ham Brat. In fact, she was both!

It seemed perfectly normal to grow up among various pieces of radio equipment and gear and to have a ham shack in the house. Her father, John Audette W1BZD, got his ticket in the late 1940's. He was an Air Force Communications Officer and was the head of MARS (*Military Affiliate Radio System*) at many of the bases where he served. When he retired in 1968, he continued his radio operations full guns from Underhill and from Florida.

When she was only 12, Melanie earned her Novice license and her older sister Valerie earned her Technician license. Melanie could never quite get the hang of copying CW. She could send code but had trouble receiving fast enough.

While living in Plattsburg and using the call sign WN2MOC, Melanie made regular contact with another young ham named Alan Dalton K1YZK. Alan lived in Burlington and had lost his eyesight from an accident. Melanie referred to him as the Yappin' Zaney Kid, taking the name from his call sign. As ham destiny would have it, Alan was a good friend of Carl AB1DD. Carl was with him at the time in which he was blinded. Over 40 years later these mutual friends of Alan would meet, both touched by his friendship!

When her Novice license expired Melanie moved on to other things in life and never renewed it. Her sister Valerie WA1DQJ kept up with her license and remains an active ham.

One day last year Melanie received a phone call from Valerie's husband Bob, who is W1RRH. "Can I have your dad's call sign?" he asked. "No!" said Melanie, "I want it!" Upon learning the code requirement had been dropped, she had decided get back into amateur radio. That phone call from Bob was the impetus to make it happen! She earned her Technician license last July and has her father's call sign W1BZD.

When Melanie's father John passed away in 2001, he gave all his radio equipment to her sister and brother-in-law. When she became active again she retrieved some of her father's older hand held rigs. She also has a Yaesu VX-170 that she uses regularly, especially from her car which has an antenna. With her daughter preparing to go off to college soon she looks forward to spending more time with her rig. Being a true tinkering gadget-loving ham she looks forward to expanding her collection of rigs, gear, and goodies. Her goals are to obtain a high frequency rig to explore beyond the 6-meter band and to be active and volunteer with RANV events.

NEXT MEETING:
“Digital Television Transmission”
Tuesday, May12th, 7 PM
O’Brien Civic Center

RANV

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