



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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## FIELD DAY!

by Carl AB1DD

Field Day is the premiere operating event of the whole year. Clubs and individuals all over the U.S. and Canada set up stations to participate in this event. Stations range from simple single operators from home, to large multiple operator stations operating from temporary locations. Some stations use commercial power, some use portable generators and some use batteries. This event demonstrates the ability of amateur operators to set up and operate from "the field" under not so ideal conditions

The Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont set up and run their Field Day operations in Williston. We set up a small city, with our own power and light department, restaurant, operating positions and everything we need to operate for the 24 hours this event lasts. There is a CW, Phone, VHF, and GOTA station. **RANV** finishes in the top of our category, and was 1st nationwide last summer.

One thing we need is operators. This is where you can help. The GOTA (*Get On The Air*) station is for new hams and those who don't get on the air much. Although the Phone and CW stations are highly competitive, the GOTA station is more laid back, and fun.

I invite you to join our team for this event. No experience is needed. You can even bring along non-ham

## ERECTION NIGHT The June 9<sup>th</sup> **RANV** Meeting

You won't want to miss our June meeting where before your very eyes, we will train members on how to deploy our AB-577 "Rocket Launcher" tower. We will be putting 4 of these things up at Field Day and it will require a number of trained people to know how to get the job done quickly, efficiently and safely. We also deploy these towers at other events, most recently at Ham-Con and at last year's Camporee. Erecting an AB-577 is quite easy. However, as with any antenna project, it can be very dangerous if things are done wrong or steps left out. By the time we are done, everyone will know the drill well. Everyone will have a chance to do some erecting at the meeting.

While we are in the portable operation mode, we will also discuss details of the upcoming Field Day on June 26-28<sup>th</sup>. A number of antennas, radios and operators from last year will not be available and we will discuss plans to make the necessary changes to keep our effort competitive and fun.

Join us on Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup> starting at 6 PM for dinner at Zack's, followed by the **RANV** meeting at 7 PM at the O'Brien Civic Center, 113 Patchen Road, South Burlington.

friends to operate! There will be a mentor there to explain what to do, and assist you in any way. Your job would be to make as many contacts as you have time for. There is a short exchange of information, and the exchange will be scripted out so you will know what to say.

This event lasts for 24 hours. Each operator is asked to do an hour (*or more*) of operating time. If you don't want to do a full hour, that's OK. We can work with you on that. If you want to do more, that's fine too.

The event is takes place on June 27-28<sup>th</sup>. The operating portion starts at 2 PM on Saturday, and runs for 24 hours, finishing up at 2 PM on Sunday. There is space for camping

overnight. Food will be provided for those who are "working" during meal time. Can't make it during the operating times? There are many opportunities to help out setting up on Friday afternoon, and tear down on Sunday afternoon. It is quite a sight to behold, a field turned into a small city.

More information is available on the **RANV** web: [www.ranv.org/fd.html](http://www.ranv.org/fd.html).

Please let me know how you want to help out. Operators will need to be scheduled in advance so everyone isn't there at the same time. This is first come - first served. Get your requests in early. Get a group of friends together and come have some fun. Contact Carl AB1DD at [ab1dd@arrl.net](mailto:ab1dd@arrl.net).

## OUR LAST *RANV* MEETING

by Carl ABIDD, Sec'y

Vice President Bob KB1FRW was pinch hitting for President Brian this month. He called the meeting to order at 7:06 on the May 12<sup>th</sup>. There were 20 members and guests in attendance.

First, we did introductions, then announcements. Upcoming events include the Essex Memorial Parade on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Vermont City Marathon on May 24<sup>th</sup>, and Girls on the Run on June 7<sup>th</sup>. The biggest upcoming event is Field Day, on June 26-28<sup>th</sup>.

We had a short report on NearFest in Deerfield.

Snacks for the next meeting will be provided by Jim KE1AZ.

The guest speaker for this meeting was Ted Teffner, former VP of engineering at WCAX, and now a consultant for the Mount Mansfield transmitter facility. Ted's topic was the RF "plumbing" at the transmitter. He talked about how the RF from the various transmitters is combined and fed to the two towers on the mountain. It was interesting to see how the transmission line, from 4" to 6" hardline was routed through the building. It really is more of a plumbing nightmare than one would expect. The talk was illustrated with many photos of the facility on the mountain.

We adjourned at 8:30 and attacked the snacks.

## BIGGER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER

by Barb KB1LIF

My first experience with HF was definitely surprising and a shock to me. Unfortunately, I did not have quite the money to spend for an expensive antenna to get on HF. Son Jerry KB1KPO told me to try connecting a 16 foot copper wire from the roof and run it down from the roof through the door and connect it to the radio and see if contacts can be made that way. (Ed: Don't touch that wire when transmitting!).

After connecting this antenna, Paul AA1SU told me about a contest going on back early March (ARRL DX). Since I already had some experience in Field Day operating, this would be another good experience for me. So I listened for a while and decided to try the contest.

I later got up the nerve and turned the dial and I said to myself "Barb, it's now or never!" I got on the air with my first contact with Italy on 20 meters on Saturday and ended with my last contact in the wee hours of Sunday morning with Mitch who was operating FS5KA on 40 meters from Saint Martin.

I made 5 contacts during the contest and had fun and that was good enough for me. So, bigger is not always necessarily better just to get on the air.

## VHF AWARD

by Zack K1ZK

I recently received a certificate in the mail advising me that I achieved "First Place Single Operator Portable" in the Vermont section for the 2008 ARRL June VHF QSO Party. This came as something of a shock to me, because I barely had any recollection of operating that contest. I reviewed my records, and confirmed that, indeed, I did make one solitary contact on 2 meter FM during the contest weekend. I was hiking Mt. Hunger in central Vermont, and brought along my HT just for fun. At the summit, I called CQ on 146.49 and simplex frequencies on a few other VHF/UHF bands. I worked one station: Bob KB1FRW (thanks, Bob!). On a lark, I submitted my log. It appears I was the only person operating portable in Vermont that weekend who bothered to submit a log. That was good enough for first place, apparently.

Excluding the work I did hiking, a small bit of effort appears to have resulted in a relatively decent payback! I was studying for the Vermont bar examination that summer, so my mind was not focused on ham radio contesting at the time. Indeed, the hike was designed in part to get my mind off studying for a day and jog the ol' gray matter. Not only did I "win" the bar exam (I passed), it looks like I also won a contest in the process.

This is the first ham radio contest in which I won any kind of award. Sometimes just showing up is all you need! The June VHF Contest is next weekend. Get on and make contacts. Who knows - you just might win!

## ESSEX MEMORIAL PARADE

by Mitch W1SJ

We fielded a team of 8 hams to be Marshalls and provide communications support for the Essex Memorial Parade. I read somewhere that this actually is the largest parade in Vermont! This might be the last parade, as the organizers will step down and someone new hopefully step up..

We had W4YFJ and KB1FRW at the front, W1DEB and W1SJ in the middle and AA1SU, W1OKH and N1LXI at the back end. Ed made the mistake of calling in and was recruited on the spot. We lined up the various marchers, dealing with the usual shenanigans from notable dignitaries like Champ, the Governor, Shriners in miniature fire trucks and all sorts of fuzzy mascots. As all marchers were accounted for by the end of the parade, we called it a success and went to lunch!



The K1ZK VHF Contest Station

# BIKE PATROLLING HAM

by Bryan KB1OAH

The Vermont City Marathon (VCM) was the trigger for me to become an amateur radio operator. I first volunteered for the VCM in 2004, and passed out and cleaned up “goo” packets at Station 11 at the south end of the course. After the first bikes rode by I knew that’s what I wanted to do as a volunteer for this race. It’s one thing to see runners stream by a given point, and another entirely to see the whole course. I was equally fascinated watching the first runners go through as I was with the middle and even the “late” runners. In a 26.2 mile run, no one is really late, as they’re all heroic for even attempting such a long race on foot. And no, I’ve never been heroic!

But I always have been a cyclist, at least since 4 or 5 years old when I first rode, as my Dad was always commuting to work and riding for fun as well. In Junior High School, he bought a beat up old Schwinn Continental and we took it entirely apart, and cleaned, painted and lubricated it, and put it back together. By the time we had been through all the grease and sandpaper and paint and grease again, I was committed to a lifetime of two-wheeling. Truth be told, I think the bicycle is simply one of the finest human built machines in the world – simple, reliable, fast and user-friendly – transportation, exercise and a lotta fun in the same package. Wish I had hung on to that old Rosebud, err, I mean Continental!

In that summer of 2004 I got a hold of Steve Cota KB1LVE, head of the Green Mountain Bike Patrol (GMBP). He was gently encouraging, and explained there are really two sets of bikes in the VCM. There are lead and trail bikes that cover and protect the lead wheelchairs, the trail wheelchair, and the runners, and there’s the Green Mountain Bike Patrol, which covers the entire course, focusing on the “difficult” areas where bike paths and geography make it a little more trickier for

course monitors to keep track of. And they watch for serious medical problems in between aid stations. The GMBP is made up of bikers that are also either Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) or Ham operators or both. There are now also some other bikers that have become very valuable to the VCM – the Parks Patrol folks and the National Guard – who also monitor the course and help to keep the public from mingling too closely with the runners.

In the 2005 VCM I rode with Steve, the head of the GMBP and I was hooked! As we covered the course and then some, I realized I can enjoy the marathon, get some very good exercise (40-50 miles of riding), and provide a pretty unique service as a patroller. And where else can you ride in almost any kind of weather, in a sea of serious runners, on a scenic lakeside marathon course?

For the 2006 VCM, I was given a loaner radio with amateur bands, but was told not to use it except in emergencies. I know, not a good protocol, but at least I had the primary frequency locked in and knew where the transmit button was! And I had the cell phone too, as a last resort. In general, the VCM prefers the use of the amateur radio net, as it notifies multiple race people of situations and communications are logged by the net control.

My bike and only radio consists of a Yaesu FT-60R, with an MFJ 296 mini speaker/mike and a dual band MFJ 1715-S whip antenna, about 14" long. The radio goes in a Blurr EMT chest harness built for radios, and the antenna tip sits out from my right shoulder about 6 inches when riding. The harness has an attachment spot that puts the speaker/mike on my left shoulder, plenty close to hear everything. The speaker/mike has an input for earphones that I’ve experimented with but haven’t had the need for so far.

So you might wonder in the midst of all this fun, do we actually do

anything to help with the race? We do provide minor first aid, providing ice packs, ace bandages, blister care, and band aids, but we also provide support for more serious injuries or race ending problems, often leading to runner transport, depending on the issue at hand. In this role we are foremost, communicators. Through the VCM Net control operators, we can assist runners or others by requesting medical care, transport, or supply needs.

Now for this most recent and 21<sup>st</sup> VCM, it was excellent! It got pretty wet in the morning rain, which worked well for the full-marathoners but not so well for the relay runners, many of whom had to wait in the cold and wet for their team mates to finish and pass the baton. And for the stationary volunteers – well, the weather didn’t turn out as forecasted, perhaps they were underdressed, and some probably got very cold. Radio communications were excellent, with the exception being a mike “lockdown” situation that was remedied almost immediately when net control requested that all speaker/mikes be disconnected. And there’s always people like me that forget that primary rule – Net Control first, then give your tactical call!

## Contacting **RANV**

In Person: Meeting June 9, 7 pm,  
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**NEXT MEETING:  
“Erection Night”  
Tuesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM  
O’Brien Civic Center**

***RANV***

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**<http://www.RANV.org>**