



# Radio Amateur News & Views

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## OFF GRID LIVING The October 13<sup>th</sup> RANV Meeting

The October meeting will take place at **Wulfden**, the home of Brian N1BQ, and Sara W1SLR in Underhill Center. It will be a food meeting with pizza and beverages available from 5 until 7 before the meeting. We would appreciate a head count to facilitate food ordering.

As many club members know, Sara and Brian have lived off grid for nearly 20 years and have hosted gatherings and presentations on the subject. It's been a while since they have done this and there are new members who have not seen it. In the intervening years, there have been significant changes made to the system, many lessons have been learned and newer technologies have been put into place.

Currently the system consists of nearly 2 kilowatts of photovoltaic (PV) panels feeding two separate battery/inverter systems. This system was designed and built over the past 21 years. The presentation will cover the system from a generic non-technical overview in terms of it means to live off the grid, and then a slightly more technical explanation as to how we make it work. The discussions will also get into the aspects of life-style compromises in living off-grid, selecting appliances and of course what toys are practical.

**Wulfden** is located at 101 Harvey Road in Underhill Center. Go out on Route 15 East and past Jericho Center, turn onto River Road, toward Underhill Center. This intersection is bounded by Mills Riverside Park and Jolley's Gas and general store. Go three miles to the village of Underhill Center. From the stop sign (*General Store on left, Catholic church on right*) go exactly two miles to Harvey Road (*right turn only, sign there says "University of Vermont, Proctor Maple Research Center"*), go one mile straight up the road to the driveway on the left. At the ¾ mile point is a sign that says some thing to the effect of "end of town road, private road ahead".

For your GPS: 44 31' 44" x 072 51' 32". If you have trouble: 899-4527.

## N1ELL - SK

Paul Valois N1ELL was killed in a plane crash as he was landing at Hilltop Lakes, Texas, his second home. Paul built and owned the 145.47 repeater on Mount Mansfield and 146.685 repeater on Covey Hill in Quebec as well as Contact Communications. He donated the equipment which is currently used on the 146.85 repeater in Essex Junction. Many of us in the radio communications business worked with Paul and will miss him.

The 145.47 repeater will continue on the air for now, using the call N1VT.

## NEARFEST

*Nearfest* will be held October 16-17<sup>th</sup> (*Friday and Saturday*) at the Deerfield Fairgrounds in New Hampshire. The show opens at 9 AM Friday and runs until 3 PM Saturday afternoon. Admission \$10 Friday, \$5 on Saturday, and \$10 to bring a vehicle into the flea market area. Carl will have Near-Fest tickets available at the October meeting.

Thursday night camping will be provided outside of the Flea Market area. There will be forums offered on several topics and VE Exams will be on Saturday.

To get to Deerfield, head down I-89 to its end at I-93. Go south. After paying the \$1 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 6.3 miles on Route 101 and get off at Exit 3, *Route 43 - Candia Deerfield*. Turn at the top of the ramp. Follow Route 43 for 6.6 miles. Notice a very sharp right turn and then a very sharp left turn. The Fairground is 0.7 miles past the second turn on the right. Follow the antennas! Mileage from Burlington: 176. Coordinates are: 43 05 51 x 71 14 51

Official 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. Detailed information at: [www.near-fest.com](http://www.near-fest.com).

## OUR LAST RANV MEETING

by Carl ABIDD, Sec'y

The September meeting was called to order by President Brian N1BQ at 7:16. There were 17 members in attendance.

Brian announced that the October meeting will be at his house in Underhill. The topic will be his off the grid electrical system. Directions will be in the newsletter.

Near-Fest will be October 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> in Deerfield, New Hampshire. See their website [www.near-fest.com](http://www.near-fest.com) for more details.

The November meeting will be our annual elections. Brian announced that he will not be running for President. The Steering Wheel submitted the following candidates for nomination: Bob KB1FRW for President, Carl ABIDD for Vice President - Treasurer, and Jeff N1YD for Secretary. Anyone else wishing to nominate anyone else should do so by the October meeting.

The holiday party will be held at the residence of W1SJ on the regular meeting night of December 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mitch once again put out a plea for newsletter articles. Anyone can submit material for the newsletter.

The main topic for this meeting was the evolution of Elecraft radios. Brian N1BQ started off with a short history of the company. Next, Jeff N1YWB showed his K2, a real kit radio and the oldest model. Jeff explained the radio had a high parts count, but there were no surface mounted parts. You did, though, needed to wind your own toroid coils. Jeff said it took about 3 weeks to build the kit.

Next, Brian talked about the K1, A QRP rig. The first kits were 20 and 40 meter models, and later models had more bands. Since these kits have add on boards, they are "networked" together so when powered on they tell the front panel what options are installed. These radios use very little power and can be powered by a 9-volt battery.

## 10 METER REPEATER DXING

by Carl ABIDD

There are not a lot of 10 meter repeaters around our area. As a matter of fact, a quick Internet search didn't turn up any in our area. Because of this, I never thought about them until this summer. One morning, while I was on my sailboat at Burton Island, I was talking to Bob W1ICW on 2 meters. Not all of you know, but Bob has a lot of radios in his truck. As we were talking, there was a lot of squawking emanating from one of those radios. I asked Bob what was going on, and he said that 10 meters was open, and I was hearing some repeaters somewhere in the South. I got some frequencies from Bob, and programmed them into my IC-7000. I started listening, and heard them also. I decided to try to key up one of them. I selected 29.66 MHz, and gave it a try. I heard a tail come back from somewhere. As Bob was talking on 2 meters, I keyed it again. I heard it on his radio, and told him. Bob then gave his call. I heard that, so I answered him. He and I both heard this via his 10 meter radio, me over the 2 meter repeater. We didn't do much more than exchange calls, but we did "work" each other. I did get an ID from this repeater - it was W4GL in South Carolina. By the way, Bob was in Water-

The last installment was presented by Bob KB1FRW. This was on the latest and largest Elecraft radio, the K3. This is also a kit, but there is no soldering required. Don't let this fool you, though. There are a lot of pieces to screw together, and the instructions need to be followed exactly. This radio compares with others costing twice as much. There are many options, so you can have the features you want now, and add others later. We found out how good the K3 is during Field Day.

The meeting finished up around 8:30, and those present enjoyed the snacks.

bury and we could not hear each other direct. This was very cool.

Later on, I was listening to some repeaters I had programmed in. I heard some activity on one of them, so I gave my call. Upon releasing the PTT, I heard at least 4 tails come back. I have no idea where the repeaters were. After doing that, someone came on yelling and carrying on about causing interference to the repeaters. Someone else joined in, and a real good shouting match ensued. After a couple of minutes, it calmed down. Since there was someone listening, I tried again. After hearing the 4 or so tails from the repeaters, the same guys started in again. As there were no tones programmed in my radio, I could have been keying a lot of them. One repeater could have been keying another for all I know. No one ever answered my calls on these or other repeaters, so I guess activity there is as low as it is around here. Even though these openings only were for a short period of time over a few days, it was fun and a different thing to do with the radio. Maybe next summer I will make contact with someone on a distant repeater. Keep your ears open.

*Editor's Note: FM is only allowed on 29.5-29.7 MHz, so don't try FM down below this band segment. The band plan most use on 10 meters is this: Simplex at 29.5 and 29.6 MHz; 4 repeater outputs at 29.62, 29.64, 29.66 and 29.68, paired with their inputs (100 KHz offset): 29.52, 29.54, 29.56 and 29.58. Some repeaters use CTCSS and some don't. Typically the skip distance on 10 meters is 1000 miles or more, so any repeaters you hear will likely be down South or out West.*

# HAM ACCOUTERMENTS

by Steve KB1KJS

When I go downtown, I bring my HT with me so I can talk back to my VHF repeater and give it some exercise. It used to be that I would use only the rubber duck and the results were less than interesting trying to access a repeater with limited height and a long shadow. I then went through the catalogs and bought one of every antenna known to have anything to do with HT's. Fortunately, they were very inexpensive. Of the numerous acquisitions, only two were of any use. Both of these were telescoping and one of them had a loading coil. While exceptionally good, the loading coil unit seemed a bit timid when it came to overhanging branches. And after two, possible three trips downtown, it literally split wide open. Needless to say that did not make me happy. The other unit, known as the *Long John* from MFJ proved a little bit more reliable and got pinched near the top extension, but I pinched it back and am still using it. I lay the forgoing as groundwork since when walking with an HT and its attendant telescoping antenna and trying to look "Fonzie Cool", you find very quickly, it just plain ain't so easy.

After much trial and error, I finally bought the MFJ chest pack for the HT and for cooler weather, put a hole in my jacket for the antenna to go up through. And every trip since, me and my repeater have played beautiful music, except for the odd look from a passing driver, or the comment by a contractor working at the Five Corners about how the fish are biting. I couldn't do much about the odd looks of passing drivers, but in my own droll, inimitable way, I fixed the street worker by reminding him that harassing a federal licensee of the FCC was frowned upon by the "The Authorities". Talk about snapping to attention; he apologized, said he didn't mean any harm and said to please excuse him as he has to---. I didn't catch the rest of his com-

ment as he was shuffling away from me at such an ever increasing rate of speed that his gait could almost be interpreted as an all-out four-legged gallop.

We've dealt with HT's. Now what about the badge? Well, I thought I would be smart and make a standard badge that had my call sign, handle and home QTH on one side, and on the other side, a phrase I've seen, to wit, "Your village called and they said their idiot is missing." The reasoning for all this is there are those who when they see a nametag or badge will invariably want to touch it, even to the point of seeing what is on the reverse side. Hopefully, seeing that their village had called, etc., would cure them for quite a while of trying to fondle other people's badges. Little did I know that my badge had a mind of its own and would twist over on its own and when someone finally did see the other side they thought the message was referring to my village and not theirs. Now some people have a good sense of humor and some people could care less. But this person had what I would call a real reverse sense of humor, or a very literal learning disability. I prefer to think the latter. Needless to say, I redid my badge so both back and front say the same thing. And I'm not telling you which lettering I used.

Probably the most important, yet least visible accoutrement of a ham is their license grade. When I became General, I decided that I would save people the sometimes awkward or even embarrassing, but let's face it, natural curiosity of just who they are talking to. So I went and bought a genuine General's star and attached it to my hat. When worn at the first "Eyeballer" after I became General, people said, "nice looking star, by the way, what's your license class?" Fortunately, the star didn't cost much, but I assure the reader

# PREZ SEZ

by Brian N1BQ

I have been at the **RANV** helm for almost all of this decade with the incredible support of Bob KB1FRW and Carl AB1DD. We have been quite successful thanks to these guys, Mitch W1SJ and the cast of usual suspects.

But, it's time for some change. Mass resignation of the current officers would be too traumatic; way more change than we could weather. After batting this around for some months, the board members have decided to do the following:

1. I am stepping down as President. I will not run for re-election, if elected, I will refuse to serve.
2. Bob and Carl will move up, running for election as President and Vice-President.
3. Jeff N1YD, will be running to fill the Secretary position.

In so much as the current slate of officers has run unopposed for at least five years, we needed to find a way to get some new blood on the board. The idea will be for these persons to run for election once or twice. Then the President steps down and the others move up and someone new comes in.

This is a simple agreement among the persons involved. It is not binding and is in no way prohibited by the Bylaws. And it doesn't preclude more new officers being nominated.

that that is the last time I'm going to save my fellow hams the trouble of finding out my license grade without going to QRZ.

I'm sure you, the reader, can think of many more accoutrement examples. But I thought these few from my own experience would be of some interest.

This is most sincerely submitted by KB1KJS from the TSHS (*Tool Shed Ham Shack*) saying, "You can always trust the mobile HF radio in your car to the General Grade Ham who wears the inexpensive star."

**NEXT MEETING:**  
**“Off Grid Living”**  
**Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 5 PM**  
**101 Harvey Road, Underhill**

**RANV**

P.O. Box 9392

South Burlington, Vt 05407

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