



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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## HAM-CON

MITCH W1SJ

HAM-CON 2011 is history and it might have been our best effort to date! When I compare it to 30 years of previous shows we have held, this year's show was incredibly well rounded in the number and variety of events and it was a show which was executed with hardly a glitch. You have to look a long way to find a ham show anywhere that has the amount of variety of forums and activities we put on the floor. You'll find more stuff at the biannual New England Convention in Boxborough (4 hour drive) or the Hamfair shows down in Long Island (6 hour drive). Clearly we have a jewel of a little convention.

Much like Field Day 2010, this show was headed for disaster and our crew turned it around into a smashing success. It never snows on HAM-CON and it hasn't for all of years it was previously in Milton. However it can and does snow before or after the show. This year we were blessed with a snow event on the Friday before. Fortunately the Weather Service got the forecast 100% correct (*how often does that happen*). The snow would be limited to Friday during the day but it would taper off at night and things would be totally clear on Saturday. Hey, that really wasn't so bad as it only affected the long distance travelers—which amount to the vendors, some of the presenters and few of our regulars from afar. I sent messages to those folks to shoot for Thursday or Friday evening travel and avoid midday Friday when the accumulation would be most intense. Otherwise, the overwhelm-

## NEXT MEETING:

### MARCH 8, 2011—MOVIE NIGHT!

THE 2009 EXPEDITION TO MIDWAY ISLAND. Well known as a World War II battleground, a military base and a trans-oceanic fuel stop, today Midway has an entirely new purpose. This ancient volcanic atoll is now a national wildlife refuge and gateway to the remote Northwest Hawaiian Islands. A multi-national amateur team was authorized to activate Midway Island in October, 2009, for only a 10-day period, its first radio activity in almost 10 years.

Mindful of the sensitive environmental issues, this DXpedition demonstrated how Amateur Radio is now a welcome activity inside one of America's most protected wildlife reserves. The video features the setup and operation, as well as scenes from the historical island, where the famed Battle of Midway took place. The official K4M website is [www.midway2009.com/](http://www.midway2009.com/).



ing majority of HAM-CON attendees travel in the morning hours before the show, when I knew everything would be plowed and cleared.

Our keynote speaker, Joel Hallas, told me that he would not travel in snowstorms when I booked him 2 months ago. As a backup, I had Bob W1ICW graciously agree to have his Moon Bounce Forum ready to go, just in case. I really did try to convince Joel that it would be OK to travel up Friday night, but he didn't opt for that. In speaking with Joel, we hatched a plan to resurrect his "Doctor Is In" Talk by using the Skype system. We spent much of Friday working this out and we had more fun with Murphy than a barrel of Field Day sites. During this time, heavy rains knocked out power in Newington, knocking out his arrl.org addresses (*guess they don't know what UPS's are at ARRL*). Eventually Joel switched to his backup E-mail. Meanwhile Skype was crashing my computer. The eventual result was that

the well attended "Doctor" forum was perfect—only Joel was missing in corporeal form. Sounds like a job for Ghostbusters!

While I was playing on the computer Friday, Bob KB1FRW and his crew were having a 50-foot erection in a snowstorm. The W1V antenna was put up the tower in short order in very less than ideal conditions.

When Saturday morning rolled around, all of our vendors were present and we lost only 2 presenters—with backups in place. The show rolled on like nothing happened.

The forums were VERY WELL attended, having a high number of attendees compared to the total attendance. One of the highlights was Bob's Antenna Launching Forum which packed 31 people in. Now I know that everyone in this hobby is nuts!

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## Upcoming, Notices, & Other Misc

- ♦ RANV: April Meeting—4/12;
- ♦ NEAR-Fest IX: 4/29–30, [www.near-fest.com](http://www.near-fest.com)
- ♦ Steering Wheel: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30—Ninety-Nine Restaurant, Taft Corners
- ♦ Dues due? Pay online at [www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html](http://www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html)
- ♦ VT Ham Radio Calendar [www.vthrc.net](http://www.vthrc.net)

## RANV: FEBRUARY MEETING SECRETARY'S REPORT

JEFF N1YD, SECRETARY

WARREN SEVERANCE, K1BKK was the speaker at our February meeting. His talk was titled "The Linked 440." Warren has a long history in amateur radio. He earned the WAS award on 2 meters. In 1964, as a member of the Northeast Repeater Association, he was on the team that chose the 600 KHz offset used on VHF repeaters, and made the first repeater database used for frequency coordination. That organization is now known as the Northeast FM Repeater Association.

The linked 440 is a set of eight (formerly nine) repeaters in New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The repeaters are located in Monkton, Mount Mansfield, Newfane, Killington, Mount Norris, Mount Equinox, Graniteville, and Mount Burke. A repeater in Brooklyn that used to be part of the system is now off the air, but there are plans to bring it back. Also, a new repeater is planned for Mount Snow. All the repeaters meet at the home of Dave Decelles, Jr., KA1UAG, with antennas at 4235 feet above sea level.

Several of the repeaters can be set to operate locally, or to link to the entire group. Packet radio is used for control to some extent. The system was designed as an emergency communications backbone and, although used by travelers for short QSO's, is not intended for use for lengthier rag-chews. Warren urged folks to exercise the system, but with restraint, and recommends that to get the most out of the system, one should "use the correct tone, and be nice."

- Evan from UVM was a guest at our meeting.
- Melanie will bring snacks to the March meeting.
- Mark Greenberg, WP2MG has been ill but is feeling better.

### VEC Exams

Every 2nd Friday  
6:30–8:00PM

29 Mansfield Ave. • Burlington

Tech, General, Extra class licenses.  
Bring 2 forms of identification, copies of existing license and CSCE (if applicable), pens and pencils, and the exam fee (\$15—exact amount only please).

??s Email Ralph KDIR@arrl.net  
or the GBA ARRL VE Team  
website at BARCVT.net

## RANV THE PREZ SEZ

BOB KB1FRW, PRESIDENT

WE GOT IT DONE AGAIN, HAM-CON 2011 THAT IS—another great performance by the RANV crew! Despite a raging blizzard the antenna and tower went up as scheduled, W1V went off without any major hitches, the demo station got on the air and people manned their various stations quite well.

The storm was no help of course, it caused a forum presenter who was going to give two forums to cancel, fortunately Bob, W1CW with his EME escapades and Skype came to the rescue. Bob graciously filled in at the last minute with a talk about his EME setup, a very interesting talk that I had already attended at our regular club meeting a couple or so months ago. Then Mitch, with some local help, managed to get a Skype connection running and QST's Technical Editor, Joel R. Hallas, W1ZR was able to answer questions quite well even though he wasn't there.

The difficult weather made the assembly of the Mosley tri-band beam very hard; and because of rushing due to weather-related delays, some parts to the tower were forgotten and had to be retrieved across town. With all this adversity the whole thing went up in near record time, a real compliment to the crew and a real reflection on the ability of local hams to be able to put together a station in the worst of conditions, a benefit in a real emergency—not that this was a drill.

The inside scene on Saturday morning was also quite smoothly done, the forum rooms setup quickly, the vendors readied their wares and the demo and W1V stations went

together with only a minor glitch or two. The Software Defined Radio demo attracted quite a bit of attention this year, I think people are trying to find out what it is and what they can do with it. The 26-inch door prize LCD TV donated by WCAX made a pretty spectacular display for the SDR, which isn't too fancy by itself.

Gene, W1EBR, gave a talk on SDR in one of the forums and although I couldn't attend, I heard it was quite interesting and informative. It is nice to see the interest in these newer technologies, this is the kind of stuff that keeps ham radio rolling along.

The surprising forum, at least from my point of view, was the Antenna Launcher presentation given by yours truly, I just never realized how many wackos there are in ham radio.

I didn't get around the fest very much, but I saw many familiar faces go by or stop at the demo/W1V area to say hello. It was a fun time, I sure enjoyed myself and I hope everyone else did.

GREAT WORK, job well done!

73, Bob KB1FRW



### CONTACTS

Bob KB1FRW, President 434-2517  
mcamp@gmav.net

Carl AB1DD, V-Pres./Treas. 482-3878  
ab1dd@arrl.net

Jeff N1YD, Sec'y 879-1789  
jbonn@us.ibm.com

### EDITORS

Kathi K1WAL 985-8535  
k1wal@arrl.net

Robin N1WWW 349-0214  
n1www@arrl.net

Newsletter submissions to both (in case one of us is away: k1wal@arrl.net  
n1www@arrl.net

US Mail: POB 9392  
South Burlington, VT 05407

Web: [www.RANV.org](http://www.RANV.org)

Reflector:

[groups.yahoo.com/group/RANV](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RANV)

Meetings: 2<sup>ND</sup> Tuesdays • 7:00PM  
113 Patchen Road  
South Burlington  
The O'Brien Civic Center

Repeater: 145.150, PL100; WB1GQR

New Hams, Mentoring:

[RANVMentor@gmail.com](mailto:RANVMentor@gmail.com)

JIM KE1AZ

THE VERMONT QSO PARTY IS A NICE ANNUAL EVENT, but I have not had too much luck with it in the past. I've never generated the contacts that I hoped for. So when Mitch Stern *W1SJ* offered to host a multi-operator effort, *W1NVT*, at his well-equipped home station, I jumped at the chance.

The party started on Saturday, September 5. Bob Allen *KB1FRW* was on the air when I showed up and I watched him for a while. I am not a very experienced contester and I learned a couple of things just by listening to him.

One thing he explained was that in addition to keeping a log of the contacts we made for this contest, the Minnesota and Delaware QSO parties were also on this weekend, and I should use a paper log to keep track of contacts with those states. Now, I am not a multitasker, as well as being not an experienced contester, so I gulped. But what choice did I have?

Bob handed over the microphone at 3:00 and I started in. My usual on-the-air mode is slow speed Morse code. Here the contacts came in at what was—for me—a pretty fast rate. I had to log them, of course, but I also had to keep up with the casual conversation that people made (“I was in Vermont for my honeymoon.” or “It’s 91 degrees here in Phoenix.”).

The logging was easy to do, except that I had trouble remembering some of the state abbreviations. Fortunately, people from Arkansas seemed to expect I would need a prompt (“AR here; AK is Alaska.”).

The radio station setup was: 20 meters through a beam pointed west, with the amplifier at 500 watts. Since I have a dipole that is not too high up a tree, and 100 watts, I was impressed at how many people responded to a call. I never had too many for me at any time, but Mitch later told me that there was an hour where I made about 100 contacts so you can tell that, as I was calling, people were coming right back. It kept me busy.

I must have sounded a bit strained because after a couple of hours, Mitch appeared with a glass of water. That was great—my voice was tired.

One lesson that I got was in propagation. At 3:00 there were a lot of Western New York’s, Pennsylvania’s, and Ohio’s. Over the hours it moved to Arkansas’s, Arizona’s, Montana’s (my first), and by 6:00 it was mostly Oregon’s and California’s.

Several of the contacts were memorable. A couple of people mentioned that this was their first Vermont, which is nice to hear. And with a couple of people I found myself telling them enthusiastically what a great time I was having!

My time ended at 6:00, but already I’m looking forward to next year. I have to figure out how to improve my antenna ...

A big thanks to *W1SJ*, and to the folks who run the party.



## ODDS & ENDS

- Rumor has it that 13 hams were either newly ticketed or upgraded at the HAM-CON VE session! Congrats, and Welcome!
- The Flea-Table did rather well—several RANV folks went home with a few hundred dollars among them. Or, maybe not if they got snagged somewhere between the table and the exit! Think about your own thinner-than-you’d like wallet next year, and how you might fatten it up!

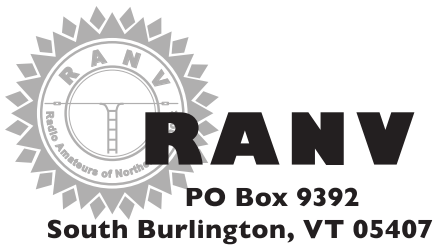
HAM-CON *cont.*

We had everything at HAM-CON 2011 except a lot of people. Attendance was awful—a big drop from last year and last year was a big drop from the year before. The snow had a minor effect, but by my count, it wasn’t the story. In the ticket box I see addresses from all over the place: Quebec, Northern New Hampshire, Western Adirondacks, Rutland and Bennington, all areas requiring around a 2-hour drive. There were a lot of tickets from the Plattsburgh area too. But I noticed a lot of missing people from our backyards of Chittenden and Washington counties.

I am not surprised by the attendance. I knew since last fall this was going to be a problem. Folks are not staying active in ham radio and this, coupled with the economic mess our society is in, is causing the perfect storm. Other hamfests and other non-ham radio events are seeing the same downturn. There were those in the local area who whined about the snow on Friday, but it is a convenient excuse. The bottom line is that if you enjoy something and think it is worthwhile, then you do it. If not, you make excuses. We had a bunch of setup people running around in the snowdrifts prior to the show and if you ask them, they will probably say that had a lot of fun (*just don’t ask during them during the storm*). All everyone else had to do was show up and clearly, HAM-CON is not high on many ham’s list of priorities.

I don’t know what the answer is; otherwise I would have tried it by now. Certainly, the folks who attend HAM-CON love it. I guess we will strive to have the best tiny little convention there is and go with that. And it is certainly not for lack of trying. In between dealing with all of the last minute show issues, I put on my PR Hat and appeared on broadcast media. I ended up on *WDEV*, *WVMT* and then on *WCAX-TV* during the prime time news. Everyone saw it, but I didn’t see a lot of non-hams at the event. Maybe we should roast a real ham, like I joked about on the air!





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[www.RANV.org](http://www.RANV.org)

### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • March 8 • 7:00 pm

O'Brien Civic Center  
113 Patchen Road • South Burlington

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**Movie Night**  
**“Midway Island 2009”**