



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

May • 2012

An ARRL Special Service Club

Vol. 22 • No. III

## NEXT MEETING:

### “RADIO ASTRONOMY”

THE MAY MEETING will be a little different. Jack St. Louis, N1XGB, who is the president of the Vt. Astronomical Society, will talk with us about radio astronomy. This should be a very interesting side-trip into another realm of ham radio.

The presentation will be followed by the usual snack & gab—your chance to ask Jack any additional questions, and catch up with everyone else!



## MARATHON & PARADE THIS MONTH

Mitch W1SJ

THE VERMONT CITY MARATHON is Sunday, May 27th. As we do each year, ham radio will be providing the communication backbone for this large event.

The difference this year is that we have already lost seven operators due to a variety of reasons. We've added a few new operators, but we are still short and time is running out. It really is a sad day for ham radio that we must struggle mightily to staff the largest non-emergency public service event in Vermont. Ham radio exists because of our ability to provide this type of communication. If we are unable or unwilling to do this, the vultures out there are very much ready to circle and justify that we don't need our bands.

A large event like the Marathon requires a commitment and preparation time. There are always a few operators who say, "I'll let you know the day before." That's not going to get it done. Folks are planning on the

## MUSEUM SHIPS WEEKEND

June 2 & 3

MAKE ROOM ON YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 2012 MUSEUM SHIPS WEEKEND! This annual event is sponsored by the *Battleship New Jersey* Amateur Radio Station. Over 80 ships of all types including battleships, destroyers, steamships, submarines and passenger ships will be participating from all over the world! See [www.nj2bb.org](http://www.nj2bb.org) for a complete list of ships.

Thanks to Bob W4YFJ, RANV will be operating the special event station W1T on SSB from the *Steamboat Ticonderoga* at the Shelburne Museum during this event. The operation time will be 0000Z June 2<sup>nd</sup> through 2359Z June 3<sup>rd</sup> (which translates to 7:00 pm Friday, June 1, through 7:00 pm Sunday, June 3). A commemorative QSL certificate will be available. A sample certificate can be seen at the RANV website.

Look for activity on 7.200, 14.250, 21.300 and 28.500 MHz and join in! All stations that work at least 15 ships will receive a certificate if they send a copy of their log entries.

If you wish to participate on board the *SS Ticonderoga* contact Bob W4YFJ at [w4yjfj@comcast.net](mailto:w4yjfj@comcast.net). Those operating will have free admission to the Shelburne Museum.



## FIELD DAY 2012

Mitch W1SJ

FIELD DAY IS IN ANOTHER 7 WEEKS: Friday, June 22, through Sunday, June 24. That means that all plans for weddings, graduations, parties, vacations and other trivial affairs are null and void. Whether you plan to be involved for the full duration of Field Day, or just for various pieces of it, you should work out the logistics so that you don't end up disappointed by missing it and we don't end up disappointed missing you!

I heard mention from someone that this is just another Field Day, indicating that this has become rather routine. Oh my God—please don't think this! Nothing is ever routine and there are so many things which

services we provide.

Operating in the Marathon requires a commitment of 4-6 hours on race day, attendance at the pre-meeting and preparation time. Your pay is a T-shirt, training and the knowledge that you did a fine job assisting 8000+ runners on race day.

To sign up for the Marathon, go to: [www.hamclass.net/vcmnr.htm](http://www.hamclass.net/vcmnr.htm) and fill out the form and click submit. That puts you into the system.

THE DAY BEFORE THE MARATHON is the Essex Memorial Parade. This is a smaller event, which requires 10 operators to serve as Marshalls. We get excellent exposure in the Essex community from this. And this is an easy event which is a lot of fun. To sign up for the parade, just drop me an e-mail.



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**SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**JEFF NIYD, SECRETARY**

**APRIL MEETING**

Kathi *K1WAL* (substituting for Jeff *NIYD*, while he is out of town)

**Business:**

- ✦ Future meeting topic: Kit Building evening! Open to ideas. We discussed such items as building test equipment, crystal sets, a rocket launcher, shortwave receiver. If you have suggestions for a fairly inexpensive kit please let us know!
- ✦ Certificates were presented to the top scorers for the VT QSO Party
- ✦ Upcoming Events: Essex Memorial Day parade 5/26, Key Bank Vermont City Marathon 5/27, Museum Ships Weekend June 2-3
- ✦ Jim *KB1LOT* will bring snacks to the May meeting

**Presentation: Show & Tell**

(N.B. Some of the details presented were above my head so the following is my rather loose interpretation.)

Nine members presented various projects, ideas, and interesting tidbits:

- ✦ Jim *KE1AZ* presented a keyer he built from a K1EL WinKey kit. He said it was fairly easy and areas that presented some trouble were easily solved with advice from club members. This kit is independent of operating systems (Jim uses Linux) and the keyer is powered by USB or AAA batteries.
- ✦ Eric *KB1VNA* showed a BitX20A 20m SSB transceiver he built from a Hendricks QRP kit (see <http://www.qrpkits.com/>). Eric said it had a good assembly manual, and he uses it in his car.
- ✦ Carl *AB1DD* showed a QSL card from *KA0XTT*. Recognize the callsign? It belongs to Tim Allen's character Mike Baxter in the television show *Last Man Standing*. Check on *QSL.com* for the address where you can send your QSL card and get one back from *KA0XTT*.
- ✦ Jim *KB1LOT* discussed his projects restoring old Heathkits. He showed an EK-2 AM/SW receiver (in two parts) which was originally sold as an educational kit.

He stripped it down completely and restored it. He was able to hear WABC from NYC Incidentally, scuttlebutt has it that Heathkit will soon be making amateur radio kits again!

- ✦ Mike *NIJEZ* shared several projects, details of which were lost on me! He described an amplifier, a 222 MHz transverter, and an SDR receiver called the FUNcube Dongle (see the articles he wrote at [www.w1ghz.org/small\\_proj/small\\_proj.htm](http://www.w1ghz.org/small_proj/small_proj.htm)). Mike's also working on a 6m project.
- ✦ Bob *KB1FRW* discussed shack organization including the usefulness of pre-made crimped jumpers and connectors, labeled for size and type. He also made mention of the bad capacitors made by a nefarious outfit (from a stolen but incomplete formula) which made their way into many computers and other electronics.
- ✦ Paul *AA1SU* showed his K1EL Winkeyer. He scored a Microham CW keyer, rig control, and the Winkeyer on eBay for \$39 without a cable (this would usually go for around \$170!) Paul used a CW cable he made about 15 years ago with no problem.
- ✦ Bob *W4YFJ* described how he interfaces all the equipment in his shack. He built a soundcard box which interfaces soundcards to a particular rig. He built other boxes for antenna switch to amplifier, power supply to battery, antenna to rig, and keyer to rig. Bob said they were big and ugly but easy to read! (I didn't think they were ugly at all, and very practical!)
- ✦ Mitch *W1SJ* showed his 440 MHz Training Dipole which uses a train for loading. For demonstration purposes he used an HO model of the Green Line from the T in Boston (which technically is a trolley but that can be overlooked). He has been successful using a freight train as well. It is unknown if a NYC subway car would work.

*Field Day cont.*

can go wrong it boggles the imagination. I can relate two stories here.

The first time we did a two-peat was 1986-87. In 1988 we were pretty puffed up that we could win it all again. In that year, Field Day started just as a thunderstorm moved in. The static crashes made it pretty hard to hear anything. Then the CW station bailed. I hung in there on phone until there was a crash-boom – meaning a lightning strike within 500 feet of our location. I gave the word out over the radio to abandon ship and we lost about 45 minutes of operating time. We never made up that time, nor the lost momentum.

And then there was the disaster of 1996. Within hours of the start of the contest, a VHF radio, the phone radio and the phone amp were all dead. The phone generator was putting out 150 volts. And the kicker was that 5 different people (including myself) measured 150 volts on different voltmeters and all believed it was measurement error. If ever there was a case of a blanket of stupidity

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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 • 7:00 PM  
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)



hanging over a site, this was it. Our mighty phone station was reduced to a DX-70 running off of a battery for nearly 3 hours until generators and radios could be repaired. As a consequence, we didn't do very well that year.

Field Day is much like a sporting event. We can still celebrate our victory last year up until 1800Z on June 23 when Field Day 2012 begins. At that time, all the numbers get reset and we start over.

As far as winning goes, if that is important to anyone, realize we have our backs to the wall. In forty years that I've been following Field Day, a three-peat has never been done in 2A. For it to happen, we have to have a competitive setup and East Coast propagation. Normally, stateside propagation favors stations out West. And there's nothing we can do to change that. If I were a betting person (I'm not) I would bet against us. But that doesn't mean I won't try like hell to do better than everyone else. It's just that I know the reality of the situation.

So no, this will not be a routine Field Day! Just getting a great team assembled, great propagation and working equipment is hard enough to do. And as we do everything in RANV, we will always strive to do our best. Let's convene in 7 weeks and knock 'em dead – AGAIN!



## VE Exams

Every 2nd Friday  
6:30–8:00<sup>PM</sup>

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).

### Directions:

[barcv.net/directionsarc.html](http://barcv.net/directionsarc.html)

[CARL AB1DD@arrl.net](mailto:CARL AB1DD@arrl.net)

## TO USE OR NOT TO USE— THAT IS THE QUESTION

### A QUICK LOOK AT EASE OF USE FOR THE DISABLED

Mike K3BRJ

**O**KAY...LET'S ASSUME FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, FOR JUST A MINUTE, that you, or a friend, or a family member, are in the following category:

- + a ham, perhaps not so newly licensed and, therefore, with some experience
- + newly disabled
- + discovering that what used to work well for you in your radio hobby, no longer does
- + you're bewildered, uncertain about your options
- + you look at all those little buttons and multitudes of menus within menus, and wonder "now what?"

The first thing is to assess current physical capabilities and consider the existing shack arrangement: just how do you change your shack so it works for you and so you can continue with what has become one of your favorite activities—ham radio?

If reach has become a problem because, perhaps, you're now confined to a wheel-chair, the answer may be as simple as raising the height of your operating desk. Or, if you're lucky enough to have the space for what I like to call a deluxe shack, consider rearranging your equipment and set up in an "I" shape or as close to that as possible. That way you can swing around easily from one area to another. All depends on the scope of your disability. Keep an open mind and consider all creative ideas even if they seem absurd at first.

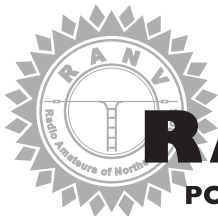
Shack arrangement is, arguably, the most important part—ergonomics are important for all of us after all, disabled or not. But, after bemoaning the sudden unfriendliness of your gear, and drooling over all the whiz-bang items and prices in qst or at a local hamfest vendor table, reconsider the use of older gear. Prices are likely to be better, older gear tends not to be as complicated, and may work better for your new situation. Be sure to get schematics if at all possible. There are many hams who will be happy to lend a hand if some older gear requires tweeking. Personally, I feel the very best rigs are the ones that have dials, knobs, and toggle switches. They are my favorites because they can be adjusted—quite easily, too—when it comes to tension, for example. And, if limited hand movement is an issue, toggle switches tend to be much easier to manage.



[Mike K3BRJ, has been a ham for 27 years. He is a member of ECARS, QCWA, RACES, ARES, and Handi-Hams ([www.handiham.org/](http://www.handiham.org/)). Mike is currently VT ARES District 2 DEC, and the LGL for Orleans County]

## ODDS & ENDS

- + The annual STARC summer hamfest is scheduled for Saturday, August 11, 8–1 at the St Albans VFW. Contact: NIARN—Arn Benjamin, [n1arn@yahoo.com](mailto:n1arn@yahoo.com), or call 802-309-0666, or email N1FBZ—Mike Gladu, [n1fbz@arrl.net](mailto:n1fbz@arrl.net), for info about vendor tables, admission, or other.



**RANV**

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South Burlington, VT 05407**

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## **NEWS & VIEWS**

**May • 2012**

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- Marathon
- Secretary: April
- Field Day Heads Up
- Ease of Use

### **Upcoming, Notices, & Other Misc**

- RANV: June 12—regular meeting
- Essex Memorial Day Parade—May 26
- VT City Marathon—May 27
- Museum Ships: June 2 & 3
- Field Day: June 23 & 24
- Steering Wheel: 3rd Tues, 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)

### **NEXT MEETING**

**TUESDAY • MAY 8 • 7:00<sup>PM</sup>**

O'Brien Civic Center

113 Patchen Road • South Burlington

***“Radio Astronomy”***

*www.RANV.org*