

# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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An ARRL Special Service Club

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## NEXT MEETING: Holiday Party

The 2014 RANV Holiday Party will be Tuesday, December 9th at the QTH of W1SJ in Essex. Arrive at any time, AFTER 5:30. Our host will be busy running errands and preparing for the event before this time, so please do not call early. If you need directions, contact Mitch at [w1sj@arrl.net](mailto:w1sj@arrl.net) BEFORE Tuesday night.

Two things you need to do:

1. Attend the party - there isn't much point of having this activity if you don't attend.
2. Let Mitch know who is coming and who is bringing what. If you keep this a dark secret or don't say anything until the last minute, then he will have no idea on how much food to have. This makes an otherwise fun activity a drag, so please respond immediately. Please go directly to [www.ranv.org/surpar14.html](http://www.ranv.org/surpar14.html) and answer the questions. Please don't communicate this information by sending E-mails or leaving phone messages - those get lost.

The party is open to all club members, their families and hams in our area. This is a good opportunity for those mystery members who we never see at other club functions. And please do bring family as this is a family event. It doesn't matter if they are not interested in ham radio. We can talk about other things, if pressed.

If you plan on bringing something, please let Mitch know so he can make sure that we cover the basic items and we don't get dupes. If it's a main dish, you should come around 5:30. If you plan to arrive later, bring a dessert item. Miscellaneous suggestions include: soda, cider, cookies, cheeses, dips.

The party will go on no matter what the weather. We will not postpone the event in the event of snow, unless it is measured in feet.

Again, remember to fill out the RANV Holiday Party form. We look forward to seeing all of you at the Party!

## FIELD DAY 2014 RESULTS: WE DID IT AGAIN!

Mitch W1SJ

The Field Day results are in and RANV has again taken first place in the competitive 2A category. This revelation came as quite a surprise. While we did manage to post roughly the same score as last year, we were crushed by the K5UZ group in Arkansas last time out. This year, their score dropped a lot and we held on to take the top spot by 500 points. The 3rd place finisher was well behind – more than 3700 points. Across all Field Day categories, we were 15th overall in points, 9th in QSO's and had the highest score in all of New England.

When one considers that we had staffing, equipment and computer problems in the CW tent, this has to make us even more proud. The phone and GOTA stations were able to pick up the CW effort with enough of an increase to offset the drop due to the problems. Rest assured that we will resolve all of those issues for next year and we will get better!

It is said that RANV is one of the best Field Day groups. While I really don't know how that is measured, I can give you these statistics. In the last 10 years, RANV has finished 1st five times – half the time, 2nd 4 times and 3rd once. Nobody in the low number categories can claim that level of performance. RANV (along with forerunner SJRC) has competed in Field Day 31 years with all but 4 of those years in the top ten of the 2A category.

We should be very proud of our continuing achievement over the years. And we will continue to strive to improve and be the best we can!

## REPEATER NEWS

Mitch W1SJ

After years of little change, there have been a number of new and resurrected repeaters coming on the air of late.

The most interesting news is the return of 145.47 to the air. This is one of several new repeaters put on by Tony WA2LRE. It is currently "resting" at a site on the back side of Rand Hill in Plattsburgh, so it is not terribly strong in our area right now. But there are plans to move it back to Mt. Mansfield. This repeater requires a tone of 100.0 Hz for access.

A number of new repeaters have shown up at the Terry Mountain site in Peru, New York. This 2000' high mountain was the former site of old TV Channel 5 and continues to be the home of several FM stations. A new repeater, 145.49 was relocated from deep in the Adirondacks to this site and it plays every bit as well as the 147.15 repeater. The 224.02 repeater, originally located on Rand Hill and off the air for many years, was also relocated to the Terry Mountain site. A new analog UHF repeater on 447.575 and new digital UHF repeater on 442.2875 round out the offerings from this site. The analog repeaters at this site all use a 123.0 Hz tone for access.

Over on the Vermont side, we are still waiting the return of the 145.41 repeater to Sugarbush in Warren. This system went off the air in August due to site construction. At press time, there is no news about its return.

Another repeater which was off for a number of years has returned. The 224.96 repeater has returned to Northeast Mountain in Wells, after a hiatus of 3 years. There were all sorts of construction and litigation at this site and we're happy to see that this repeater has returned after all of that.

A list of current repeaters in Vermont and the surrounding area can be found at [ranv.org/rptr.html](http://ranv.org/rptr.html).

## SEEKING PUBLICITY COORDINATOR

We propose to pair our Field Day operation with a fund raiser. While a bike ride or walk gets money donated per mile traveled, we could get money

per QSO. We average 4500 QSO's each year, so it is a great target number to shoot for. For example, a pledge of a penny a QSO would be a donation of \$45, while a nickel a QSO would be \$225. Of course, many donation amounts are possible.

The easiest way to do this is to find a worthy charity to take this over and run with it. We know little about fundraising and absolutely do not want to get into handling money. The charity should be something well known and somewhat connected to ham operators. Most medical charities (i.e. Heart Association, Cancer Society, etc) are perfect since we tend to be older in age and some of us are dealing with these very issues. Other charities may be appropriate also. The charity must have a provision where they can come in and do the administration and publicity. We then collect the pledges and make the QSO's!

We are looking for the person to be our Publicity Coordinator who would deal with the charity and be our contact person. Many of us who make things happen in the club are technical people and are not into fundraising. We are looking for someone to handle this so that the rest of us can continue to make Field Day, HAM-CON and the other super RANV activities continue to happen.

There is not a lot of work to be done – mostly communicating with the other organization and getting the word out. Once the coordinator and charity are in place, we will promote this fundraising at HAM-CON and other Vermont Ham Radio events, culminating in the Field Day event. If done right, two things happen – we raise money for a worthy cause and get a good deal of publicity about Ham Radio and RANV. It is a win-win situation.

Who is willing to step up to take on this activity?

## TEN METER CONTEST COMING UP

Mitch W1SJ

The ARRL Ten Meter Contest will be held on the weekend of December 13-14th.

If you are waiting for a better time to be on 10 meters, wait no longer. Conditions are good right now and are predicted to go downhill after that as we head into another sunspot minimum in a few years.

The contest starts Friday, December 12th at 7 PM. At this time, the band is usually dead, but you might pick up some locals and perhaps some E-skip or even scatter. If the band is in real good shape, Europe can start rolling in around sunrise, at 7AM. Otherwise, you might have to wait a bit later in the morning for the opening. Europe will usually peak at 10 AM, finally falling off in the afternoon. The U.S. rolls in through the mid-morning and then all through the afternoon until an hour or two after sunset at 4:30. And then the whole show repeats on Sunday, giving you an extra day to do your DX shopping. Things finish up at 7 PM Sunday, just about the time the band has rolled over and died.

The rules are simple enough - just give a signal report and your state. U.S., Canadian and Mexican hams will also give their province or state. DX stations will give you a serial number.

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Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday • 7:00 PM  
113 Patchen Road, South  
Burlington

The O'Brien Civic Center

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1QR

New Hams, Mentoring:  
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If you have a station, make sure you get on. If you don't have a station, get yourself invited somewhere. Sometimes an inactive ham with a good station can get excited about getting on the air if there are operators to help. And remember, Technicians can operate at 28.3-28.5 MHz, the portion of the band where 90% of the activity takes place.

See you on 10 meters!

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Kathi K1WAL

### Business:

Our November meeting started with collecting and counting the ballots. Surprisingly the incumbents, running unopposed, won: RANV President Bob KB1FW, RANV VP/Treasurer Jim KE1AZ, and RANV Secretary Kathi K1WAL.

It was moved and voted that the amount of \$110 be designated for expenses for the Holiday Party.

Carl AB1DD said the FCC will no longer issue paper licenses. Right now one can opt out for receiving a paper license but soon that will be reversed and you will need to 'opt in' to get it. Otherwise a copy can be printed from the FCC website.

### The Presentation:

CathyN5WVR gave an informative presentation on Beverage Antennas. While these are receive only antennas they are very useful for spotting. Cathy discussed her design process and the antenna she strung across her two acres. She noted that beverages work quite well over poor ground which is a big benefit in many areas of Vermont! Her goal was to be more active on 80m/160m. She played audio clips to show the differences on the beverage and a dipole.

## K3 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Mitch W1SJ

This year I decided on a fancy birthday gift – the Elecraft K3. This would be my first new HF radio in 32 years! The time was right – the TS830 was starting to get cranky and funding was available.

With several members owning the K3 and its sibling, the KX3, there is already a lot of information available. Indeed,

simply selecting amongst the wide range of option can be staggering. Ultimately I decided on the options I really need for my level of contesting: the Digital Voice Recorder, the 400 Hz CW filter and the transverter interface, which provides the separate receive antenna port.

The assembly was pretty relaxing. No soldering iron was used. Instead a plethora of tiny screws and nuts had to be marshaled into the correct holes. Sounds easy enough, but keen eyesight or good magnifying glasses are required. And you must follow instructions to the letter. I decided to leave out a couple of star washers on the outside of the cabinet because they would look bad and that caused the amplifier not to work!

The project was completed a week prior to the ARRL CW Sweepstakes, allowing just enough time to mate it up with the amplifier, computer and keyer. The internal keyer of the K3 is not used. Instead, I use an outboard keyer which is driven by the contest software on the computer. A new problem was keeping RF out of the keying line. The K3's key line is particularly sensitive to this. A bunch of bypass capacitors in the keyer and ferrite chokes over the keying cables took care of the RF. A big problem with the K3 is that the VOX control (which turns on the CW autokeying) is a soft control. So when RF got into the keying circuit, the transmitter would run away and could not be shut off unless the power was shut off to the radio. Bad engineering design - VOX should be a hard control – not a press and hold affair.

The K3 was wonderful to use on CW. The versatile filter controls allowed me to copy weak stations with strong stations right next door. A complaint is that the filter controls do not work when the radio is in transmit. As a contester, it is often necessary to set things up during the CQ's.

Things were running great until I moved down to 40 meters. After 30 minutes, the radio shut down hard and would not come back. High RF had caused the power supply to crowbar off. That was quickly reset. But the radio would not key. I frantically starting trying various configurations and came to the conclusion that not only was the keying circuit in the keyer dead, but the serial port in the computer was also dead. Big problem! I eventually rigged up my old

laptop with the serial port and an old keying interface I had laying around from a Field Day long ago. I managed to get back on the air after only losing an hour.

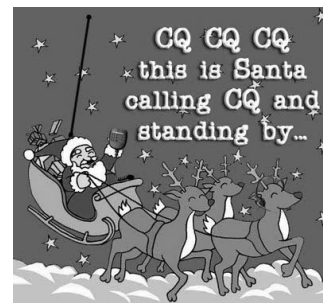
After 24 hours I had slightly more than 1000 QSO's to show for my work, which is typical. The radio performance was top notch. Unfortunately, the operator performance on CW was (as it usually is) somewhat lackluster.

Two weeks later was the phone Sweepstakes. I run in what is called SO2R, or Single-Op 2-Radios. This is another expression for insanity. It entails CQing on one radio, while listening and searching for stations on the other radio. What if two stations call you on both radios at the same time? Well, you get the picture. To be able to pull off this craziness, one needs an SO2R controller. In my case, it is a box which allows me to switch the microphone and the headphones between radios. The problem was that I could not connect the microphone ground between the K3 and TS830 without generating a disgusting noise. So, I took the cheap way out – I took the microphone off of one Heil headset and doubled it up on the other headset. Now, each radio had a separate microphone and separate foot switch and all was peaceful in radio land.

Again the K3 proved itself to be a smooth performer. Sadly, the filters didn't really help that much. Let's face it, when someone strong parks 1 KHz away from you, no filter will fix that. Instead, you bark at them until they go away. However, the auto notch was exquisite. One push of the button and the carriers simply went away! I tried the Noise Reduction on a few weak signals in the noise, but the results were mixed.

After 24 hours, close to 1900 QSO's were in the log, which appears to be the highest score in the Northeast and I'm quite satisfied. The K3 will get another

big test next week in the 160 Meter Contest!





## NEWS & VIEWS

### Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- HAM-CON February 2015!
- Steering Wheel: 3<sup>rd</sup> Tues 6:30; Ninety-Nine Restaurant, Taft Corners, Williston
- VE Exams every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday; Red Cross Building 29 Mansfield Ave, Burlington
- Dues due? Pay online at [www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html](http://www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html)

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### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • December 9 • 5:30pm

QTH W1SJ  
ESSEX

## Holiday Party

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