



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING: Digital Modes

Bob W4YFJ will talk about digital modes and software that makes it happen. Bob has extensive experience with digital and has had some very enjoyable contacts with occasional beat-your-head-against-the-wall frustrations.

Come hear Bob and you just may learn something! Refreshment will follow.

ANNUAL HAM BREAKFAST

Mitch W1SJ

Start off the New Year right! The Winter Ham Breakfast will take place Saturday, January 31st, 9:00 AM until noon at JP's Deli, 39 River Road (Route 117), 1.4 miles east of the Five Corners. The first hour is devoted to eating and meeting. That is followed by a semi-disorganized discussion on some aspect of amateur radio. With 30-40 folks showing up, it is like a mini-hamfest. Actually, it may be better than a mini-hamfest, as there is plenty of food and companionship to make for a fun morning! Make plans to join us on January 31st!

RANV: 2015

Mitch W1SJ

It's not my style to do a summary of the past year. Instead, I like to look ahead. RANV is the largest general membership club in New England (not counting DX or Repeater clubs). We are, undoubtedly, one of the most active clubs as well, with regular meeting attendance over 20, a successful Hamfest and the highest scoring Field Day in both our category and in all of New England. We have a lot to be proud of.

VERMONT QSO PARTY 2015

Mitch W1SJ

The 2015 Vermont QSO Party will take place Saturday-Sunday February 7th through 8th UTC. The activity will start 7 PM EST on Friday the 6th and finish up Sunday night at 7PM.

The purpose of the Vermont QSO Party is to put Vermont on the air! That said, the goal is for as many hams to get on the air during the weekend and maximize the number of contacts. In addition, the Minnesota and British Columbia QSO Parties, the 10-10 International Contest, the CW Sprint and Black Sea Contest will be running concurrently, so there should be no shortage of people to work.

A comment that I hear each year is how rare Vermont is in the Vermont QSO Party! The few active stations are easy to find, but after that, finding Vermont stations is tough. We ask that everyone get on and call CQ for a while, especially during the peak times in the afternoons. Folks outside of Vermont really do want to do well, the top three scorers receive a bottle of maple syrup!

Operating in the Vermont QSO Party is easy - just give a signal report, your county, copy signal report, and state, province or country. Full rules are on the RANV web site. But if you plan to work stations in the other contests, it would be worth your time to learn their exchanges so that you can help them out too.

Before the QSO Party, do some research on contest logging to make things easier for both you and the log checker (me). N1MM Logger is the gold standard for logging these days, but any software which generates a proper Cabrillo log will do. While we will accept a paper log, this is not ideal, because I have to collect it from the PO Box and then check it by hand - but please do operate and submit a log!

Once again I'll be hosting a multi-op effort at my station. This is a great opportunity to get some operating time in. This event is particularly nice because it is quite low key and the QRM is low. And unlike Field Day, there isn't a whole bunch of people watching over you, so it is more relaxing. I'd like to fill all of the operating slots during the day, so please do contact me with desired times.

Spread the word - and see you on during the Vermont QSO Party, February 7-8th.

HAM-CON 2015

Mitch W1SJ

HAM-CON is coming! In 8 weeks it's time once again for our annual winter ham radio bash. HAM-CON is considered one of the best small hamfests anywhere. Attendees keep telling me that year after year, so believe it! And make sure you attend!

In the next couple of weeks, I'll be putting together the program. This is an inexact science as I have to figure out what things people want to see and then attempt to bring in the people to make it happen. I'm always looking for reasonable suggestions, so feel free to send along suggestions.

We will have a program similar to previous years with both long and short forums. We plan to set up W1V again this year. We also plan to have the RANV Flea Market table again. We'll have vendors again, except that we never know exactly who this early on.

The thing we all need to be doing is selling the show by networking with all our ham and electronics type friends. Gone are the days when everyone gets on the radio all the time, so we have to resort to using more social media (gasp!). However you do it, reach out to your pals and make sure they accompany you Saturday, February 28th to HAM-CON 2015!

FIELD DAY CELEBRATION BECOMES

FIELD DAY EXERCISE!

Mitch W1SJ

Murphy visited the RANV Holiday Party in a big way in 2014. A major storm was forecast for the Tuesday party and copious amounts of snow would have been a sure bet. I watched the forecast through the National Weather Service, Accuweather, and Wunderground and decided that having everyone trudge through 6-8 inches of snow would be a real drag. I wrestled with staying on Tuesday, delaying one day or delaying one week. Since much of the food was already purchased, I decided to move the party out to Wednesday when the forecast called mostly for rain. In checking with the group, the date change mostly worked for everyone.

Then everything went wrong. Several people who initially were silent, then let me know that they had to work on Wednesday night. And the 6-8 inches of snow for Tuesday turned out to be a dusting. I felt like I had been played.

Wednesday started out with a light snow and rain mix, as forecasted. And in the afternoon it snowed. And snowed. And snowed some more to the tune of over 1" per hour. Thank you NWS for yet another blown forecast.

But many of our members are troopers and will not be deterred by a little snow. After all, we are Vermonters. Eventually

we had a group of eight, including Lin, who traveled in from Waitsfield. We were well on the way through the appetizers and starting dinner when, at around 6:30, all went dark. A few seconds later the lights came back. And then dark. And then light. And then dark. If you understand powerline circuit breakers, you know that it is 3 strikes and you're out, and we were outta juice!

I proceeded to light up the candles on the mantle. Candles are somewhat romantic, but are very poor as a light source, so I grabbed a lamp, an LED bulb and my 1000 watt UPS. Now we had a good source of light which would last the entire evening. But how were we going to fire up the microwave? At that point Bob KB1FRW called in on the repeater as he was just leaving his house. I had him swing back and pick up the Honda Generator. About a half hour later, RANV Power & Light was up and running, the microwave cooking and the batteries a-charging. The party then continued on as if nothing had happened. I wonder if we can get Field Day bonus points for having a Field Day celebration on 100% emergency power!

This will be the last Holiday Party I will host, thus ending a 17-year RANV tradition. Even before the weather problems became apparent, the turnout was going to be poor – only 15. We have typically had a turnout around 25 for a lot of years. A new activity should be tried. I have heard that many folks do not care to

drive at night. Perhaps a Saturday or Sunday luncheon might be something a lot of folks can embrace. The January Saturday morning breakfast is very well attended, so this might be the ticket. The problem is that with contests and holiday activities, weekend availability is in short supply. But, we have a full year to figure this out for next time.

RANV MEMBERSHIP LIST

The 2015 RANV Membership list can be found in this issue. This list shows the current membership as of the end of December. Please forward any corrections to W1SJ. This information is provided as a service to RANV members to help contact each other. This list is not included in complimentary copies of News & Views nor is it included in the on-line edition.

CENTENNIAL GOES OUT WITH A BANG!

Mitch W1SJ

The last W1AW portable operation ended on Tuesday night December 30th. At that time, the final Red Badge event commenced. "Red Badge" refers to top ARRL leaders who wear the distinctive red badge: Presidents, Directors, Section Managers, etc. These are also the folks who have high point values in the Centennial celebration and include ARRL president N3KN (300 pts), all the Directors (225 pts), ARRL CEO K1ZZ (150 pts) and in Vermont, SM AA1SU (175 pts) and Past SM W1SJ (100 pts).

If you didn't get on, you missed quite a show! My plan was to get on early Tuesday afternoon and operate into the night across all 9 HF bands. For the entire 11 hours I was on, I had massive pileups, even on 12, 17 and 30 meters using only a dipole! The pileups rivaled the W1AW/1 pileups we had in March and August. How insane was this? I logged 1929 QSO's for an average rate of 173 QSOs per hour. The instantaneous rate ever peaked over 300 (5 QSO's every minute). I thought about shooting for 2000 QSO's, but I had to jump off the radio, pick up Debbie and spend the next 11 hours celebrating at First Night. What a wild two days!

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CENTENNIAL

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If you were looking to finish up your Worked All States, this was the place to be. Being a contester, I never operate on 12, 17 or 30 meters (no contests allowed). With an hour of operation on each band I'm about 10 states short of WAS on those bands and within sight 9 band WAS. Wow!

The other fun part of this was meeting and greeting many of the same folks who were all going band to band to push up their Centennial points total. The number of QSO's generated was intense and it was rumored that the LOTW server caught fire on New Year's!

The year-long Centennial celebration was a smashing success. It dramatically picked up activity which was sagging quite a bit over the last few years and got a lot of people reignited. We can only hope that the ARRL will recognize this and try another similar activity in the future.

NEWSLETTER TEAM

Kathi K1WAL

We have been very fortunate to be one of the few radio clubs to still have a newsletter. However, we need help with articles and the occasional photo. I need to step back from being co-editor with Adam KB1LHB. It is a big job for just one person. It also includes inserts for renewals and getting them labeled and stamped to mail.

It was suggested we have a Newsletter committee where those interested in specific aspects of our hobby (DXing, EMCOMM, digital, antennas, homebrew, etc.) can write an occasional column several times a year. RANV members are active in many areas and are always up to something. Please consider what you can do to help the newsletter.

RANV: 2015 (continued from page 1)

But we must keep our collective eyes on the ball. We'd better. Very successful enterprises can become ex-enterprises in short order. We've seen that with large corporations and large events, and we are certainly not immune.

We will be approaching a crisis in leadership later this year. One officer will

be retiring, and the others are thinking about it. One of the good things about RANV is that we tend to keep our officers a very long time. Presidents tend to serve an average of 3-4 years before being replaced, which is unlike most organizations. The good news is that this brings a consistency of service as there is no "learning curve" after each election. The bad news is that everyone eventually "burns out". We (and I include the others who attend the planning meetings) are running out of meeting and activity ideas. Fresh blood and ideas are definitely needed to keep us strong in the coming years ahead.

The newsletter is another area requiring critical work. It is very easy to brush this off and say that in today's age, a paper newsletter is a dinosaur. Say that all you want, but every other club who has stopped their print newsletter is now on life support. But the newsletter is not doing all that well. When I (or others) have the time and inclination to write something, we have a great newsletter. Otherwise, it is reduced to a 2-page rag sheet which does nothing much more than announce the next meeting. Each month the newsletter should have stories of what our members are up to, whether it is inventing some new widget, right on down to stories about getting on the air or putting up antennas. Folks are interested in that type of stuff. To build and retain our membership community that is what we must publish. But this requires folks to write something, and it requires the editor (or someone else) to pester people to do this. We've been thinking about forming an editorial committee to do just that – either write or coax others to write. It's funny how much time people spend writing useless stuff on things like Facebook, yet we have to struggle to get any amateur radio themed posting.

Speaking of Facebook, RANV has a page which no one posts to. I sometimes post there, but frankly, I hate Facebook. However, others, especially younger people, live by it and we should be reaching out to them. We need some avid Facebook followers to keep up a steady diet of RANV activities so that other folks will find out and want to join with us.

RANV is attempting to move into the charitable contribution business. The reason for this is simple: folks get excited about these types of things and support

the activity. As publicity for our activities go, we need all the help we can get. But for this to work, we need someone new to head it up. The officers are already busy with keeping the club running smoothly. This is a tremendous opportunity for someone to both help out the club and a worthy charity.

While some of our activities are well attended, others are lagging. The recently held holiday party is an example. Attendance would have been poor even without the weather issues. Does the time or venue or setup need to be changed? The picnic is in a similar situation. While we have helped things by pairing it with the St. Albans Hamfest on the same day, turnout remains OK, but not spectacular. Are changes needed?

Some might say that we do the same things year after year and try nothing new. That may be true to a point. There is always a nervous feeling about investing a lot of time and money into something different and have it fall flat on its face. One can say that we need to take risks, which is a good point. But remember, it is the very few of us who invest the time. There would be more of a willingness to support new things if new people took the lead.

Then there is HAM-CON. Given our raw materials (tiny population and crappy weather), we put on one of the best ham radio shows anywhere. But it is a struggle. Flea markets are not a growth industry. Getting folks out to a show which does little more than to celebrate amateur radio is quite difficult. The only thing we all can do as club members is to individually become advocates for this and to continue spreading the word and excitement. If participants are excited enough, we could get folks out to help spread manure! But the excitement definitely needs to be there.

Each month on the 3rd Tuesday at 6:30, officers and other interested members meet at the Steering Wheel meeting at the 99 Restaurant in Williston. What we mostly do is eat and tell stories (stuff which hams are uniquely qualified to do). We also work in some discussion about upcoming meetings and activities. Everyone is invited to attend. We are always looking for ideas. Stop on down and join us!



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Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- VT QSO Party February 7th-8th
- HAM-CON February 28!
- Steering Wheel: 3rd Tues 6:30; Ninety-Nine Restaurant, Taft Corners, Williston
- VE Exams every 2nd Friday; Red Cross Building 29 Mansfield Ave, Burlington
- Dues due? Pay online at www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • January 13 • 7:00pm
O'Brien Civic Center • Patchen Rd
South Burlington, VT

Digital Modes

www.RANV.org