



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

January • 2016

An ARRL Special Service Club

Vol. 26 • No. 1

## January Meeting Movie Night

The movie will include various Ham Radio Topics

## RANV 2016 Mitch W1SJ

As we start 2016, it's time to look at where we've been and where we are going. RANV is one of the largest, most active clubs in the Northeast. I read newsletters from other clubs and follow what many organizations are doing. We are right up with the best. Our club meetings always have an interesting topic with an average attendance of around 20. Our Field Day effort is the best in New England (score-wise) and one of the largest. We hold an annual Hamfest, HAM-CON, which, while it is small due to our limited population density, is notable in the sheer amount of activities available.

But not all is perfect. Our membership numbers have been dropping for the last two years. Other clubs have fared worse. Some formerly large clubs in the Northeast have been decimated to the point where they are no longer functional. We certainly do not want to wait until that happens to do something about it.

The key goal for everyone is recruitment. The average ham lasts about 2-3 years. Although the license is good for 10 years, interests wane and people move on. That is why it is important to continue to bring people into the hobby. And it is not just about getting people to pass their test. We already have folks getting their ham license. They get the license and then paste it up on the wall or put it into a drawer and that is it. These days, new people need to be encouraged to get active. How do we do that? Good question! The answer is unknown. We already give folks club material at VE Sessions and new hams get a newsletter mailed to them. Something more is

## CONTACTS

Bob **KB1FRW**, President  
mcamp@gmav.net

Adam **KB1LHB**, VP/Treasurer/Editor  
vtlmore@gmail.com

Kathi **K1WAL**, Secretary  
k1wal@arrl.net

*Newsletter submissions to vtlmore@gmail.com*

---

US Mail: PO Box 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> Tuesday • 7:00 PM  
113 Patchen Road  
South Burlington  
The O'Brien Civic Center

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1QR

---

New Hams, Mentoring:  
[RANVMentor@gmail.com](mailto:RANVMentor@gmail.com)

needed. We need to get creative on this one.

The cost of not doing anything is bad. We are already seeing the number of active hams and the number of club members drop. It is a trend we must not allow to continue. At the very least, we need to discuss this and find ways to include new people in our activities.

I find it useful to set a few goals for the year. What goals shall we have as a club for 2016? I can think of two possibilities. One is to set up a remote station so that other club members can access it. Most of our members do not have HF stations of their own. If a station could be accessed remotely from home, perhaps that would encourage more activity along those lines. I'll admit that this was a goal left over from last year, so I will be more diligent to work on it soon. The second idea is to push for more presentations via the Internet. Although we have a lot of smart people here, there is a wealth of knowledge beyond our area as well. For this to happen, we will have to figure out a way to bring speakers into our club meeting from other areas, while not having a wired internet service at our meeting location.

Should we be doing other things? Bring it up and let's discuss it at the next Steering Wheel and at the Winter Breakfast. It should be very exciting to see what everyone else comes up with.

## **ANNUAL HAM BREAKFAST**

**Mitch W1SJ**

Start off the New Year right! The Winter Ham Breakfast will take place Saturday, January 30th, 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 30th!

## **VERMONT QSO PARTY 2016**

**Mitch W1SJ**

The 2016 Vermont QSO Party will take place Saturday-Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> UTC. The activity will start 7 PM EST on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> 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.

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! So don't be afraid - get on and make some noise!

Operating in the Vermont QSO Party is easy - just give a signal report and your county and 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. New this year - I plan to set aside some CW slots. We need more CW operators for Field Day and now is a good time to provide training. Here is a chance to get your feet wet trying a CW contest, but I'll be there to help you out if you get stuck!

Spread the word - and see you on during the Vermont QSO Party, February 6-7<sup>th</sup>.

## **NA QSO PARTY**

**Mitch W1SJ**

Put aside some time to operate in the North American QSO Party. The NAQP is a short contest - only 10 hours long. It runs on Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup> from 1 PM until 1AM. Single operator stations get to choose any 10 hours of this 12 hour period. Most operators on the East Coast usually finish up by 11 PM. And since you can work stations on each band, there are a lot of QSO's which can be made. Generally, you start on 15 meters and work down the bands as the afternoon segues into evening. For an exchange, give your name and state - that shouldn't be too hard! It is an easy, fun and fast contest. Oh, and the maximum power allowed is 150 watts, so if you don't have an amp, you are already a big gun!

Be sure to set aside some time on January 16<sup>th</sup> to work the NAQP!

## **HAM-CON 2016**

**Mitch W1SJ**

HAM-CON is coming! In 8 weeks (Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>) 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 where your feedback is crucial. I know what I like, but I don't necessarily know what you like. Please be sure to send me suggestions of forum topics, potential guests, and new activities. I don't want to do exactly what we did last year – so suggestions on new topics are always desired.

We will have a program set up similar to previous years with both long and short forums. We plan to set up W1V again this year. We 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. However you do it, reach out to your pals and make sure they accompany you Saturday, February 27th to HAM-CON 2016!

### **RANV MEMBERSHIP LIST**

The 2016 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.

Of the 95 current members of RANV, 46% are Extra Class – one of the highest percentages of Extra Class hams in any club. No wonder we have trouble finding Field Day GOTA operators! There are only 17 Technicians.

Essex Junction is home to 13 club members, followed by Williston (10), Jericho (8) and South Burlington (7).

The most popular name? No, it is not BOB! There are 9 Johns (or Jons), 6 Bob (or Robs or Roberts), 5 Brians, and 5 Daves (Dave's not here...).

### **Improving Your CW By Cathy James, N5WVR**

I had a provocative discussion with Mitch on the Bolton repeater recently. I mentioned that I had heard him transmitting CW during the 160 meter contest, but I didn't have the confidence to respond given the very high speed he was running. He challenged me to do it anyway, listening as many times as necessary to copy it.

The frustrating thing about improving your CW skills on the air is that most other operators are either too fast or too slow. I hear people in contests running over 30 wpm, and just hear an unintelligible buzz-buzz. Or I swing down to the usual CW part of the HF spectrum and hear many contacts running less than 15 wpm, which is too easy and doesn't challenge me at

all. You want to be trying to copy CW sent just a little faster than your comfort zone.

Since then, I have discovered some software tools that can help you improve your code speed. I am still a long way from the QRQ that I would like to do, but there has already been noticeable improvement over the last few weeks of using these tools.

The first one is rufzxp. This piece of standalone Windows software is named for the German phrase, "Rufzeichen-Hören", which means "listening to call signs." And that's exactly what it does—push call signs at you at steadily-increasing speed, then waiting for you to type in what you heard. If you get it right, the next one is sent faster. If you get it wrong, the next one is sent more slowly. By giving you a score each time, you can track your improvement over time. rufzxp can be downloaded freely at <http://www.rufzxp.net>. Videos showing its use can be seen on YouTube; for example, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=we9cWDDkpmY>. You must already know CW, however. This is a tool for improving, not learning from scratch.

However, rufzxp is limited in that it only does call signs. This may help your contesting skills, but not your ability to rag-chew or to copy the longer exchanges sent in some contests. For that, you should consider <http://lcwo.net>. This website offers introductory CW character practice using standard Koch method, as well as words, phrases, call signs, etc. Like rufzxp, if you copy a word correctly, LCWO sends the next one faster; if not, slower. You can also fix the sending speed so that it will remain constant, neither increasing nor decreasing. The Koch tools in LCWO will let you start your CW from scratch if you haven't already learned it.

I have been using LCWO Koch drills at 30 wpm to improve character recognition, and single-word copy at variable speed to practice more real-world combinations. I am getting to the point that I can copy many words at 35 wpm or better if I am allowed to listen to them several times. (Just type "." and the site will send the same word again; this also works in rufzxp.) My goal is to be able to copy 20 wpm text reliably on the first attempt, no repeats. That will take some time, but I am confident I will get there.

Try it; I hope to work you on CW one day!



## NEWS & VIEWS

### INSIDE

- RANV 2016
- Annual Ham Breakfast
- Vermont QSO Party 2016
- NA QSO Party 2016
- HAM-CON 2016
- RANV Repeater Member List
- Improving your CW Skills

### Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- 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)

### NEXT MEETING Holiday Party

Tuesday • January 12th • 7:00pm  
O'Brien Civic Center • Patchen Rd  
South Burlington, VT