



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

March • 2016

An ARRL Special Service Club

Vol. 26 • No. 3

March Meeting RFI and Grounding

As our ham shacks go more and more high tech with computers, microprocessors and similar devices, we are finding there are more instances of interference than ever before. Interference takes the form of confounded noise from the computers and also takes even the more serious form of RF from the transmitter wiping out the computers. Those of you who operated at Field Day last year got to see some of these problems in all of the stations. But there are things which can be done to mitigate these problems. Mike N1JEZ has built both broadcast and ham radio facilities over the years and has been quite successful in keeping these problems down to a minimum. He will be on hand to share some of his ideas with us and show how to keep that bad old RFI in its place.

HAM-CON 2016 – ANOTHER HUGE SHOW Mitch W1SJ

HAM-CON 2016 is complete, and reports from everyone indicate that it was another winner! While everyone had opinions on the attendance, careful counts of all the tickets confirm that it was essentially the same as last year. In fact, the attendance has been plus or minus 20 people over the last 6 years – essentially dating back to when we were last at the Hampton.

At 8:00, we were greeted by a monster line of attendees waiting to get in and buy a ticket. Why did everyone come early this time? Hard to say, but perhaps it was because I told everyone not to miss any forums, or it was simply because that they wanted to get there early to get a good parking spot. A couple of us helped out with the presale ticket processing and we had the line beat down by 8:15. Fifteen minutes later, when I peeked into the first forum, “Multiband Antennas” it was standing room only. I counted 42 people, in a room set up to

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Meetings: 2nd 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

seat 40. The rest of the day was the same story – full forum rooms. When I add up the total forum attendance and divide by the total number of seats for entire morning, it ends up being an occupancy rate of 80%, which is absolutely fantastic.

When I put together the “Set Up Your Ham Shack” talk, I envisioned a specialty forum for the newbies. Instead I was greeted by a full room which not only included newbies, but many longstanding amateurs who were looking for ideas to improve their current shack. Even the ARRL Forum at noon, which gets somewhat lower attendance because folks like to duck out early, was essentially full. Attendees at that forum got to see Director Tom Frenaye present the *Bill Orr W6SAI Technical Writing Award* to Joel Hallas, who gave a couple of presentations earlier in the morning. In hearing feedback from attendees, no one forum stood out – everyone had their favorite forum which they attended.

While all this was going on, there was serious hosing going on in the vendor room. While the amount of junk was down from last year’s record amount, the buying and selling was still pretty acute. Reports we received indicate lots of treasures changing hands throughout the morning.

Over in the Activities Room, Special Event Station W1V racked up nearly 250 QSO’s in the log. The station split time between working DX on 15 meters early and stateside on 20 meters later, along with using the cluster to build activity. The Tech table and Jeff’s demonstration table ran throughout the morning and had lots of folks watching the action.

The Closing Ceremonies handed out some 20 small door prizes before the grand prize. With over 100 people in the room, everyone had a very good chance to win something. Some of the “small” door prizes included a pair Baofeng HT’s, so for the winners, it was definitely worth sticking around. The 40” HD TV was won by Moshe N1OVN, who came by to find out some ideas about getting PSK-31 set up on this computer.

For the first time in Vermont, we sponsored a free Volunteer Exam Session. This has been a project I have been working on for a while and was a bit apprehensive about how it would turn out. When Carl starting raiding tables from the Closing Ceremonies, I got a bad feeling, “Oh no, what have I created?” We had a total of 19 applicants in the exam room, well above the average of 10. The six examiners were pressed to the limit to serve up and grade all the examinations. The pass rate wasn’t too shabby either, with 5 new hams, and 8 ham upgrades and two Commercial licenses.

Many of the out of town attendees see me as the face of HAM-CON and think I run the entire show. It is important to point out the folks who do some very key jobs which make this show what it is. I would like to detail some of these jobs so we all know what it takes to make HAM-CON happen.

The two people who everyone attending the show gets to deal with are Debbie W1DEB and Roger K1CRS who run the ticket table and have been doing so for something like 15

years. They take money (their favorite job), they make change (both in U.S. and CDN), they check tickets from the Paypal list, they sell Directories and they encourage new members to join RANV.

The person who runs the show before I get there (even before I wake up) is Carl AB1DD. He directs a small crew who sell early tickets, get vendors to their tables and make sure things run smoothly. I really appreciate not having to wake up at 5AM to do this! Carl also arranges to get the Grand Prize donated from WCAX-TV!

The big booming voice of station W1V booms because of a great antenna which oversees attendees as they arrive. How did THAT get there? That is a result of Bob KB1FRW and his crew. Bob gets the lift vehicle and brings the beam and gets the crew to assemble it on Friday and take it all down right after the show.

Many of us have enjoyed the Video Forums from folks we would normally not get to hear from, such as Joe Rudi, Elecraft, John Amodeo, Bob Heil and Gordon West. Ron KK1L takes care of the technical end of that, including setting up a test connection with the guest, setting up the room camera and running the software to make it all work.

All those small prizes we give away prior to the Grand Prize drawing are the result of work by our “prize wrangler” Kathi K1WAL. Do you think it is easy to get free stuff from companies for a small show? Not really – it takes a lot of communicating to get that done.

Finally, many of us have put things on the RANV Flea Market Table over the years. Robin N1WWW has taken care of that for all those years, keeping track of items, prices and money collection.

Robin wishes to retire after this year and spend time at the show taking in the events, something which she has yet to do. So we need someone to step up to do this job. I will also point out that the average age of the folks who help run HAM-CON is, well, a lot. That means that we will need to keep an eye towards training new people to do some very detailed jobs when staff needs to be replaced.

In addition to the above, a big thank you goes out to Mike N1FBZ who ran the Tech Table and Jeff N1YD who ran the excellent demonstrations in the Activities Room. This year’s list of helpers include: KB1IVE, KB1LHB, KB1PDW, KB1WXM, KC1APK, N1BBR, N1PEA, W4YFJ. If I left you off the list, it probably means that you pitched in and I didn’t know about it, so let me know! And – we were short staffed – more helpers are needed next year! Thank you everyone for a job well done!

If you missed any forum and would like to see the notes, or videos, I have those posted on the RANV Web. So far, I have 4 presentations. Hopefully 2 videos will be posted later. We also have Con pictures and the interviews on WVMT and

WDEV. Let me know if these are useful. If so, I will try to make this a regular feature in the future

COMMENTS FROM HAM-CON

Mitch W1SJ

“I am still flabbergasted about winning the grand prize. Thank you all! That TV is just the right size for my living room and replaced the older smaller one. Other than that, I enjoyed a couple of presentations, and bought a few items including a 12 volt regulated power supply powerful enough to run my HF rig at full power. I also took home a box full of free stuff, mostly wires and cables of various sorts. Several people came by my impromptu PSK31 show-and-tell and I received a few tips on how to proceed with that.” - Moshe N1OVN, Essex Jct, VT

“You deserve congratulations on a job well done. We especially appreciated the fact that there were so many prizes given at the closing ceremonies. Having forums given by W1ZR and K1KI was another highlight. I'm glad we made the round trip in one day.” - Bob W2XL, Rosendale, NY (south of Kingston)

“Once again I sold (or gave away) nearly everything I brought. I bought a UPS, a receiving tube, and a modern function generator (from VTC), all for great prices. Great forums and demos as usual. ***** 5 stars!” - Brian W1IR, Milton, VT

HAM-CON? That's not someone who got caught stealing pigs” – Eric Michaels, WDEV

“What's with the guy wearing shorts? Jeez, it's like 11 degrees outside!”

“I should get in for free since I'm a senior citizen.”

VERMONT QSO PARTY - FUN FOR ALL

Mitch W1SJ

The 58th annual Vermont QSO Party ran on the first weekend of February. The log deadline is after we go to press, so I cannot discuss the specific details yet. I can say that, so far, we have received 20 Vermont logs (just under the 24 we received in 2014, the big ARRL Centennial Year) and we have received 75 outside Vermont logs, a new record. In Vermont, there are two packs of stations who are very close together – positions 1-4 and positions 7-11. The competition was somewhat fierce! In the outside Vermont competition, one station completely blew everyone away with an amazing score, and everyone else was tightly spaced behind him. One of the logs asked, “Where were the Vermont Stations? I can answer that 20 Vermont stations accounted for nearly 7200 QSO's, with hundreds of QSO's on digital, and hundred of cluster spots. There were at least another 15 Vermont stations on who have not submitted logs. We were on the air!

At the W1NVT host station, we were primarily concerned with putting a lot of people in the logs and getting new hams (and hams new to operating) on the air. The challenge was that

conditions were markedly a lot worse than last year. Ten meters is pretty much done for this cycle. Last year there over 1000 contacts on 10. This year, only 13 contacts could be eeked out. While 15 meters produced some so-so DX runs in the morning, the bulk of activity was on 20 and 40 meters. This was actually good news for some. With more time spent on 40 meters, stations in the 20 meter skip zone (out to 600 miles) were able to get a better shot at working Vermont. Still the loss of 10 meters dropped the QSO total from 2400 last year to 1900 this year. This was offset by the fact that we worked CW this year and picked up a whole bunch of multipliers on that mode.

Five other operators assisted me at W1NVT. Steve KB1IVE did the Saturday morning run at 10AM – noon on 15 meters. While he started out with some nice DX runs, 15 ran out of gas early, and we had to move down to 20 meters. Duane WL7CVD came in next and he ran some very impressive rates on 20 meters from noon until 2PM.

Later in the afternoon, David KC1APK showed up with a straight key in hand to do CW.

He looked disappointed when I told him that we would have no use for a straight key. My station generates CW either from the computer logging program or from a keyer and paddle. David's copying speed is around 20 words per minute and he was pushed to the limit with most copy running around 25. But he was successful in working people, along with occasional prompts from me. After he was done, 50 CW QSO's were in the log, impressive since there are a lot fewer stations on that mode to work. I'm sure his copying ability took a big jump!

The next morning Cathy N5WVR continued with the CW mode, this time, primarily working DX on 15 meters. The rates were quite slow, but we picked up many new multipliers and Cathy was quite good at copying the CW as sent.

Finally Jeff KB1UAY came by late Sunday afternoon. Jeff's experience up this point had been making a few contacts with his HT on 2 meters. It took a while for him to get comfortable with going back to people on 20 meters, but he got the hang of it. Once he got going, I retired to the next room and took my mid-afternoon nap while Jeff filled up the log! After he left, I got on for the last half hour and while the rest of the country was filling up on Guacamole Dip in preparation for the stupid bowl, I got a great run going on 40 meters! I finished up the contest by breaking the pileup to V44KBC on St. Kitts. Cool!

My advice to our operators and to everyone is to keep operating! Get on for every contest and operating activity you can, make contacts and improve your craft! Practice does indeed make perfect!

The 2016 Vermont QSO Party was another success. We had great participation both from inside and outside Vermont, we heard lots of great operating stories and we put some new operators on the air and on different modes. Look for the results on the web in a week. And keep operating!



NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING RFI and Grounding

Tuesday • March 8th • 7:00pm
O'Brien Civic Center • Patchen Rd
South Burlington, VT

Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- 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

www.RANV.org