



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

The Official Journal of the Radio Amateurs of Northern Vermont

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An ARRL Special Service Club

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## Next Meeting – Compressed Air Antenna Launcher – January 9<sup>th</sup>

In January we will discuss the building of pneumatic tennis ball launchers, the device that puts up the wire antennas that we use at Field Day and various RANV field expeditions like NPOTA and VPOTA.

These are about the best way to put a wire way up in a tree where you want it. The other methods are generally banned or frowned upon by state officials and local residents and don't generally work as well.

Bob A., **KB1FRW** has assembled 3 of them from scratch over the last few years and Bob H., **KB1WXM**, built one from a kit this year.

Bob A. will show the details of the last 2 made from commonly available parts and assembled without any really special tools.

The original launcher which required advanced machine tooling will also be there and he will explain the difference.

You too can make one of these in your secret laboratory, come and see how.

## SO WHAT HAPPENED AT THE PARTY?

*Mitch W1SJ*

Well, we had a load of fun and eats, that's what! We ended up with 17 at the party – about the same as last year. Actually it was a few less in that members did not bring significant others this year. Interestingly, female members attended (**N5WVR**, **KB1VLD**, **W1SLR**), leaving their male counterparts at home – an interesting reversal from year's past.

On the eats front, we had an overabundance of food. In addition to the usual items, we had things like sushi,

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South Burlington, VT 05407

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

Reflector: [RANV@groups.io](mailto:RANV@groups.io)

Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday • 7:00 PM  
Wheeler House  
1100 Dorset Street  
South Burlington

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

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

VT State Parks On The Air:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/292829457810746/>

Online Dues Payment:  
[www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html](http://www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html)

tabbouleh, roasted potatoes, various sizes and shapes of crackers, chips and dip, and the air was pungent with the smell of Fritos. Dessert fans got to choose from several apple pies, cookies and one very yummy chocolate cake. We had a ton of leftovers. This is likely due to the fact that folks do not eat as much for lunch and with our graying population, it is likely everyone is eating less and wiser.

The lunch munch was accompanied by music provided by WEVT (98.1 FM and wevt.com) which offered up theme music like, "Radio, Radio", "On the Radio" "Mexican Radio", "Morse Code of Love", and other similar type songs.

After the food, the multitude split up into focus groups. There was group in the living room, a couple in the dining room and kitchen and a hi-tech group found its way into the shack. While Debbie gave Cheryl information on ballroom dance lessons, several of us were in the shack making FT8 contacts on 17 and 20 meters. Bob showed off two newer versions of compressed air antenna launchers. Jeff got out his "Chaos Circuit" and was demonstrating some very weird waveforms on a scope. And Carl and I were investigating alleged spurs on my K3 using his KX3 and P3 Panadapter. I'm sure there were many other interesting topics of discussion which I have yet to find out about.

The mid-day time for this party seems to be quite popular as it doesn't require anyone to drive at night. The down side is that everyone is busy on weekends, so we are up against a lot of other activities people are doing. A few folks liked moving back to my QTH as it was a lot nicer than eating in a large activities room. And, the antennas and shack were already in place!

## **HAM BREAKFAST JANUARY 27<sup>th</sup>**

*Mitch W1SJ*

It's time once again for Vermont's Annual Ham Breakfast, Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 9AM - 12 Noon at JP's Deli, 39 River Road in Essex.

Many of you have been there in the past, and you know what to expect. For those who have never been there, it is simply a large group of hams who get together for breakfast and meeting and talking with other hams. JP's has a variety of breakfast and other food items, and most will agree they serve up good stuff.

Most of the dining finishes up at 10, at which time we launch into a quasi-organized group discussion of ham radio topics du jour.

Do your best to join us Saturday morning January 27<sup>th</sup> for eats and greets!

## **VERMONT QSO PARTY FEBRUARY 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>**

*Mitch W1SJ*

It's QSO Party Time! The 60<sup>th</sup> running of the Vermont QSO Party will be on February 3-4, UTC. That is a start time of 7 pm Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> and an end time of 7 pm Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. The goal is simple: get on the air, call CQ and work as many people as you can. While there are a few of us who make a lot of contacts each year, there are still some folks who haven't worked Vermont and think it is rare! Despite the reputation and myth that we are rare DX, we'll keep serving up Vermont in our annual bash.

The rules are simple. Operate for as long as you want on any bands or modes, using any power level (legal, of course) that you want. There are scoring perks for using low power and operating on CW or digital, but unless you are competing, choose whatever modes make you happy. Don't forget to try out that new exciting mode, FT8! While operating, you are searching for new states, provinces, DX countries, and those rare and elusive Vermont counties. And if the action gets slow, there is always the Minnesota and British Columbia QSO Parties and the Black Sea Contest on Saturday to keep your attention. Be sure to read the rules on the RANV Web before setting out.

Here are some options to try in the QSO Party.

1. Get on from your home station. Best bets are early afternoon on 20 meters or late afternoon on 40 meters. If conditions are good and you have a good station, you may get a Europe run in the mid-morning on 20 meters. But be sure to call CQ. They can't find you if you simply tune around. If you are set up, try CW or RTTY or even FT8. These modes can often produce good runs.
2. Don't have a station or a very good station? Join us at my QTH as we put **W1NVT** on the air. You'll command a KW to a yagi and get fairly good runs, and also have someone to help you out if things get too crazy. Contact **W1SJ** to schedule times on Saturday and Sunday.
3. Go on the road! If you don't have a good station, go on the road and set up your own station in the rare counties. Last year **N1GVT** put all 14 counties on the air. But this requires a good deal of experience. You will have to find a suitable place to set up a dipole or similar antenna and be able to work people from your vehicle. Don't just use a mobile whip - it will not work very well with today's poor conditions. If you have limited experience when you start, you will certainly learn a lot by the end of the activity.

However you choose to play, be sure to get on the air for the 60<sup>th</sup> Vermont QSO Party!

## **HAM-CON 2018**

*Mitch WISJ*

HAM-CON is Saturday, February 24<sup>th</sup>. There are 3 things to do:

1. Attend. We need everyone to be there, no exceptions. We'll let you slide if you are vacationing in a warm place, but we won't like you very much, especially if it is cold out.
2. Bring others with you! Bring friends, family, unlicensed and licensed people. Extra points if they are under 30.
3. Volunteer to help out. There are a lot of jobs and few people to do them.

I am working on the program for 2018 HAM-CON. Suggestions for speakers and activities are most welcome, but please, be specific. Saying, "Have a talk on Digital" is not very useful. Suggest specific topics and potential speakers. Ultimately we want to put on a show which makes folks drop what they are doing and attend all morning.

We have two specific needs:

1. Door prize wrangler. Kathy has left us for warmer climes in North Carolina. She was responsible for getting all those neat door prizes we gave away at the drawing. If someone does not do this job, then no door prizes. The job entails calling up dealers and manufacturers and asking, and/or begging.
2. How to mount the antenna. The hydraulic lift we use to raise the Yagi is likely not available due to age. Using the portable tower is not a possibility. We could forgo the antenna and station, but too many people look forward to that. As an example, they did not put a station up at Boxboro, instead using an Internet station, and people complained! We're hams, and we are at our best when we figure these things out.

The ticket price at the door will go up to \$9 this year. This should not be an issue for most of us as the pre-buy price remains at \$6. Be sure to pick up your ticket at the breakfast, a meeting or on line.

In the old days we used to talk it up on the air. Sadly, few get on the repeaters any more. So talk it up on the Internet chat rooms and get your pals to come down to HAM-CON.

## **HO HUM, NOTHING TO DO IN WINTER – NOPE!**

*Mitch WISJ*

Wow, nothing can be further than the truth! The first two months of the year seems like a let down from the insane holiday weeks, but it carries a lot of radio stuff to get involved in.

On the air, there are at least one or two events going on each weekend! On the first weekend, January 6<sup>th</sup>, is the ARRL RTTY Roundup. OK, I'm not much of a digital operator, but I messed around with this one last year and banged out over 200 QSO's in a few hours. And by, "messed around" I mean that I didn't even have a computer hooked up – all the RTTY QSOs were made on the K3 with the keyer paddle in the CW to RTTY mode. There are many, many people who operate in this contest, and working all states on this mode is not all that hard.

On weekend number 2, January 13<sup>th</sup> is the North American QSO Party CW. Yes, it is CW, but it is also a great place to practice. All you need to do is to send you name and state (and copy the other's name and state). And since it only runs 10 hours, you needn't kill yourself to operate the full contest. But if you cannot stomach CW, the phone version is on the third weekend, January 20<sup>th</sup>.

On that same third weekend is the January VHF QSO Party. For most of us in Vermont, the pickings are very slim. However if MORE OF US actually got on the air, it could be a load of fun. Perhaps someone can set up sked times for Vermont stations to meet and greet.

The fourth weekend, January 26-28<sup>th</sup> is the CQ Worldwide 160M contest. Again, this is a CW only affair. And unless you have killer antenna on the top band, this is the mode you want to be on anyway. The exchange is simple enough – 5NN and your state/province if you are in the U.S. or Canada. The phone version is a month later on February 23-25<sup>th</sup>.

The first weekend of February (2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>) is the Vermont QSO Party. You should definitely have plans to be on the air for this one, whether from your own station or operating as a guest somewhere else. Even though conditions are perfectly awful right now, 100 watts to a good dipole should get you a run at various times during the day. And if you find the Vermont QSO Party boring, you can always look out for QSO's in the Minnesota or British Columbia QSO Parties, or even the Black Sea Competition!

February finishes up with the ARRL DX Contest on February 16-18<sup>th</sup> (CW) and March 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> (Phone). This is the perfect place to pick up new countries for your DXCC.

If talking on the air isn't your bag, we have a couple of great RANV winter meetings planned: January 9<sup>th</sup> on Antenna Launchers and February 13<sup>th</sup> on Rules & Regulations. We'll have the Annual Winter Breakfast, Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> 9AM at JP's, 39 River Road in Essex. And 1 month after that, February 24<sup>th</sup> is HAM-CON, providing a full day of Ham Radio Fun!

No need to be bored! Get out or get on the air. Or else, take advantage of the gorgeous chilly weather and put up a good antenna!

## RANV 2018: WHERE WE'VE BEEN; WHERE WE'RE GOING

Mitch WISJ

### It's been another active and productive year for RANV!!!

This past year was the roll out of the Vermont Parks On The Air program. Bob **KB1WXM** put this together from scratch as a fun follow-on to the very popular National Parks program. I've just put together a web site summarizing our efforts, and found that we've activated 15 different parks to the tune of just under 6000 QSO's. And virtually all of that activity took place in the 6 months between May and October. While there have been 4 main protagonists of these operations, we have had 19 different people involved in the activations. If you are looking for a dream team who can build a station or two inside of a half hour and put many hundreds of QSO's in the log, look no further than right here.

Our primary on-air activity is Field Day. This year we were challenged to find a new site. We learned that we have just about the best site around, so we modified and re-engineered the site to make it work. Despite monsoon rains, endless mud and other annoying distractions, we still managed to finish second, while beating back challenges from some of our tough competitors. But Field Day isn't a contest! If you want to buy into that discussion, we are one of the best in the business in emergency station operation.

Other members have been very active in non-club pursuits. Some of the most active SOTA (Summits On The Air) operators, **W1ZU**, **K1ZK** and **KCIAPK** can be found right here. The new digital mode FT8 came on the scene this year and **AA1SU**, **KB1WXM** and **WISJ** are among some of the most active stations. When we all are active on the air, no one can point a finger and say this is a dying hobby. We are out there, making contacts, building our skills, pushing the communications envelope and having a load of fun.

But let's not get too full of ourselves. There are warning signs of impending problems. With almost 90 members, we are the largest club in Vermont and one of the largest in New England. But that is down from a high of 120 a few years ago. True, all clubs are shrinking, but this is not anything we should be celebrating. We are losing members due to moving away, passing away and mostly due to loss of interest in amateur radio. But these are normal occurrences. Normally, this is offset by new members coming in. But the number of new members (and new hams) is not covering the losses. We've discussed this problem for years – it is not a new issue. But we are seeing more and more issues due to the lack of growth. Activity on repeaters is just about zero. Attendance at meetings is less than previous years. A good number of clubs don't even have meetings anymore! The number of attendees at Field Day, the picnic, and the hamfest are all less. And we are all aging! The average age at our Field Day this past year was 64. In 10 years, most of these people will not be able to do a fraction of what they do now – if they can show up at all. If we do nothing and let nature take its course, you can figure out where this will end up and it is not good.

What to do? Do what we do best – stay active and talk up ham radio to whoever will listen. I believe that what we do is far more interesting than anything you can do on a smart phone. All we need to do is to be able to sell that concept.

We start the New Year with the Ham Breakfast and HAM-CON. Be sure to attend. Be sure to bring others (both licensed and not) with you. We should not be a secret society. Come to the meetings and bring guests. That's one of the best ways to grow the club. We will continue with park activations through 2018. Be sure to join in. Find the time! It is a more worthwhile to spend a few hours doing something which is a lot of fun than whatever else you may be doing, which, if I had to guess, is probably not as much fun.

So put down this newsletter and plan your calendar now to attend more ham radio events!

## W1GHZ ARTICLE FEATURED IN JAN 2018 QST

Dave KCIAPK



Congrats to Paul **W1GHZ** on his article in the January 2018 edition of QST. In the article, Paul illustrates how antenna gain can increase a signal better than amplification, which increases noise. The article also covers various types of microwave antennas such as parabolic dishes, horn antennas for portable operation, and stacked short loop Yagis for permanent installation. Mike **N1JEZ** is also featured with a great picture of him on top of his tower installing a microwave Yagi. Congrats Paul and Mike!

## CONGRATULATIONS - New Licensees and Upgrades

- **KCIITA** Josh Sled (Hinesburg) TECHNICIAN
- **KCIHOP** Samuel Moody (Essex Jct) EXTRA
- **KCIHOR** Kyle Wener (Williston) EXTRA
- **KCIHQI** John Lavoie (St. Albans) EXTRA



## RANV E-MAIL GROUP HAS A NEW HOME

Carl ABIDD

Over the last few weeks, the RANV e-mail group has been moved from Yahoo to a site called "Groups.io". The reason for this move, as some of you already know, was because of the instability of the Yahoo groups site. I own or moderate a few groups, ham related as well as other interests. All the groups have problems. It is sometimes not possible to log in to the Yahoo groups site, therefore making it hard to make any administrative changes there. For example, we saw a notification of a meeting (December) that wasn't happening, due to the Holiday Party.

About a year ago, I started to see where Yahoo was going, and it didn't look good. In January I set up the RANV group at Groups.IO. I spent some time experimenting with it. Lots of good things, even the events calendar worked! I had a few accounts set up like regular users would, sent messages back and forth between my accounts (the ultimate talking to yourself), and everything looked great. This fall, Yahoo wasn't getting any better, so there was some discussion about making the move. No one seemed to mind the move, so it was done. It really was easy, as Groups.IO did the work. All the members, messages, photos and files were copied over. They even sent an e-mail to all members explaining the change.

The new group has a lot of new features. If you got the e-mail, you will see the new posting address. Events have a link to a map to see the location of the event. There is even an RSVP function (if used) so you can let people know if you are going to attend. That function is not turned on for meetings, and won't replace Mitch's RSVP for some events. Hover over the event on the calendar and you will see more information. If you do plan on using the calendar, make sure to scroll to the bottom of the page and select your time zone.

One of the best features is the ability of members administering their own accounts. By setting up a password on the website, <https://groups.io/g/RANV>, you can change your e-mail address, add aliases, and more. The alias function will let you send to the list from an e-mail address other than the one you signed up from. The message will be "send only" you will not get messages at that address. You can change passwords, e-mail preferences, etc. just like with Yahoo. Join up at the web site, and explore. You can use any e-mail address and password, doesn't need to be the one used to get e-mail.

The old Yahoo group is still there for a while. All members have been set to "no mail", so you won't receive any mail from anything posted there. I'm still monitoring it, so if something is posted, it can be forwarded to the new list. It will be deleted when we think all is well with the new group. **Please DO NOT POST to the Yahoo group, and please do not cross post.**

One other thing, all new members also were signed up for an update group. You can leave it alone, change your subscription, or unsubscribe. There were 6 messages over the last year, so no e-mail overload.

Here are the important addresses you need. Feel free to ask me directly if you have any questions, [ABIDD@ARRL.NET](mailto:ABIDD@ARRL.NET).

Post: [RANV@groups.io](mailto:RANV@groups.io)  
Subscribe: [RANV+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:RANV+subscribe@groups.io)  
Unsubscribe: [RANV+unsubscribe@groups.io](mailto:RANV+unsubscribe@groups.io)  
Group Owner: [RANV+owner@groups.io](mailto:RANV+owner@groups.io)

## FEATURED PLATE OF THE MONTH



**Thanks Duane!**

*Got a ham plate or Amateur related vanity? Send us a picture, and we'll feature it one of the upcoming newsletters.*

## EDITOR NOTES

Dave KCIAPK

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

This is your club newsletter. Feel free to submit articles! Items of interest can be short, long, technical, anecdotal, etc. Share your experiences and stories!

## NEWS & VIEWS VIA YOUR INBOX

Did you know that 24 of our members have signed up for electronic delivery of the newsletter?

To enroll, just send me an email at [davidblin@aol.com](mailto:davidblin@aol.com). You'll get fast delivery, the club saves a dollar each month, AND the pictures look GREAT in color!

**A very special THANK YOU to Bob Brown W4YFJ for his dedication and support in preparing each month's newsletter for mailing. This involves hours of folding, labeling, and affixing postage prior to mailing – THANK YOU BOB!!!!**



## NEWS & VIEWS

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### NEXT MEETING COMPRESSED AIR ANTENNA LAUNCHER

Tuesday • January 9<sup>th</sup> • 7 pm  
Wheeler House, 1100 Dorset Street  
South Burlington, VT

### 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)