



RADIO AMATEUR

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NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday May 12th @7:00pm

Mitch **W1SJ**

ALL ABOUT THE STATE QSO PARTY CHALLENGE The May 12th RANV Meeting via Zoom

The annual State QSO Party (SQP) Challenge recognizes radio amateurs' participation in the State and Province QSO parties. The Vermont QSO Party was the first event in this annual challenge. The concept is simple – make as many contacts in as many QSO Parties as you can. Results are posted to a Leader Board and various achievement levels can be attained. Hey, it's a great excuse to get on the air most Saturdays, but who needs much of an excuse!

Dave Edmonds WN4AFP, the Team Leader for the SQP Challenge, will be on hand to explain the details of this new operating event. If you work in any QSO Party, you likely have worked him. He will take lots of questions and help you come up to speed in this event, which has a long way to go this year.

The Zoom meeting will open up at 6:30, the RANV meeting will start at 7:00, with the presentation starting around 7:30. If you do not have the RANV meeting Zoom number, contact W1SJ.

Mitch **W1SJ**

PARK ACTIVATION DURING THE SHUTDOWN

In another one of my Looney Tune ideas, I said, "Hey, Let's do a Park Activation during a Pandemic."

Each year, we activate Knight Point State Park (K-3125) during the New England QSO Party, putting rare Grand Isle County on the air. But gathering during the pandemic shutdown? Unheard of. Immoral. Bad hams! Folks in some parts of our nation have been hauled off to the hoosegow for that.

CONTACTS

- Bob **KB1FRW**, President
mcamp@gmavt.net
- Jim **KE1AZ**, VP/Treasurer
jhefferon@smcvt.edu
- Duane **WL7CVD**, Secretary
dsalaskasep@ak.net
- George **KC1JGM**, Editor
gmavt1@gmail.com

Newsletter submissions to gmavt1@gmail.com

US Mail: PO Box 9392
South Burlington, VT 05407

Web: www.RANV.org

Reflector: RANV@groups.io

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

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

New Hams, Mentoring:
RANVMentor@gmail.com

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

Online Dues Payment:
www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html

Fortunately, we're a bit more laid back in Vermont. The park was accessible. We'd be outside, and it is always windy at Knight Point, aiding in the quick dispersal of unwanted pathogens. All we had to do was to stay out of each other's faces.

We set up 3 separate stations and separate antennas, while wearing masks. Actually, during antenna setup we never got closer than 20 feet to each other. A generous supply of alcohol was used (not drank). Each of us operated from inside our vehicles. I had a multiband dipole and stayed on 20/40 meter CW, while BIF did 20 meter phone and Bob did 40 meter phone. Our 2-meter intercom was used to schedule who was on and who was off.

There were some 25 other people at the park during the day. All behaved and distanced properly. Some inquired as to what we were doing (at a distance, of course). Despite punky conditions on 20 meters, we managed to put 760 QSO's in the log. Was the operation successful? Ask me in 14 days to see if any of us have symptoms.

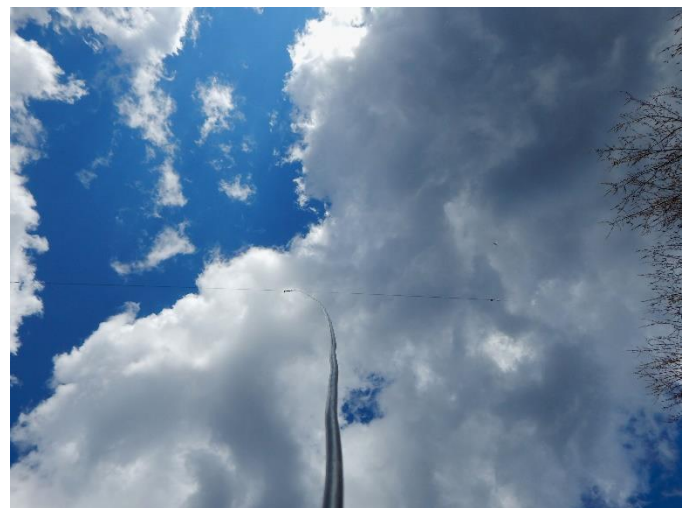
There was also another important issue we were exploring: How to run Field Day with the virus still going. Some changes will have to be made, but from what we've seen from this operation, we can do Field Day effectively and safely. With the virus hanging around, everyone's mission is to come up with unique and novel (gee, I hate that word) ways to go about our business safely for everyone.



Bob KB1FRW



Bob K1BIF





Mitch W1SJ

Mitch W1SJ
REMOTE HAM RADIO TESTING
The Future is HERE!

Sometime in the future, we will look back on all of this (hopefully) and ask each other, “What did you do during the shutdown?”

Well, I have a few answers to that. I finally rebuilt my SB-200 amplifier. I had to replace the band switch, a tedious job I wish on no one. I’m planning to finally paint the interior of the house, a job which has been deferred for many years. But the one thing I will most remember is putting together one of the very few amateur radio remote volunteer exam testing teams in the nation.

By the time you read this, we will have tested some 40 applicants from all over the country. The wait list runs a full week out. Besides the 7 hours a week proctoring the exams, at least that many hours are spent processing and scheduling both applicants and examiners. I’m having a ball!

How the heck did we get here?

Actually, some thoughts of this came up in December. At that time, I decided to move all of my ham radio classes to on-line and video formats. Participation in live classes was dropping. Print media, which accounted for much of the enrollment, was no longer helpful and their readership is rapidly declining. The move to on-line classes was a stroke of genius, given the total shutdown in March.

But one problem remained. How do we get these potential new hams tested? Normally, in a live class, I bolt the door, and no one leaves until they become a ham (something like that). But with a student body from all over the country, the best I could say was, “Go to ARRL-find-an-exam, and good luck

with that.” And then the exam sessions dried up in the heat of the virus.

On March 15, I posted in the Laurel-VEC reflector that it was time to start looking at how to effectively do remote ham radio testing. First, hardly any exams were being given during the shutdown. Second, I had a selfish reason – to test my students. And, I also know that there are pockets of places throughout the land where going to a VE session is a very long trip – perhaps 4-5 hours in places. And there always is the issue with applicants who are unable to travel to a session.

I thought this was a good idea and volunteered to do some of the work to develop the procedures to do this type of testing. Several on the reflector yelled, “Blasphemy!” and then I heard about folks searching for a suitable stick to burn me at. Some of the real comments: “This is the way we’ve always done it” and “The virus will end soon, and this is very temporary” (boy, did that scenario change!). Undaunted by the noise level, I set up a mock remote exam session for my class and had some of the senior people at Laurel sit in and watch. While there were some rough spots, they were somewhat impressed. However, I was told that the CEO and several of the directors of that VEC would absolutely not go for it. We had a dead end.

Remote testing is really not a new idea. It has been going on since 2014, mostly by the Anchorage VEC. However, their system is not entirely remote – a single non-VE proctor must be at the test site. Of course that doesn’t really work in the shutdown. A couple of weeks later, I learned of a fully remote session run by VEs with W5YI-VEC, using the Exam tools software produced by Richard KD7BBC. Many phone calls and emails followed. Eventually, I ended up on a Discord chat room where all the movers and shakers in the remote testing world were gathered. I got invited to a remote session run by the Greater LA Amateur Radio Group (GLAARG). One day, for over 5 hours, I watched applicant after applicant being tested. I was able to see their work space, their screen and their eye movements. A professional poker player might be able to game the system, but I doubt most anyone else could. The remote testing system worked! But the bad news: only ONE applicant is tested at a time, making for some very slow throughput and long waiting lists.

GLAARG was doing 9-hour sessions, 4 days a week and had a waiting list which ran out for weeks. There was only one other group in Massachusetts just starting up, and that was it. The LA guys were amazing troopers and I felt I had to pitch in to help out.

I re-registered our examiners with W5YI-VEC, ran a practice session and then opened up for exam scheduling. Yikes, it felt much like being overwhelmed by a giant wave at the beach! But with a few sessions, we got very efficient at doing the exams and eventually managing the crowd. But not a day goes by when I open up my email to a chorus of, “Test me, test me!”

One day this virus business will calm down and the need for remote exams will not be as acute. But I still see it as a solution for on-line courses and for folks tucked away in rural America, not near any VE sessions.

Currently, we test Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are 5-6 other remote VE teams running sessions 3-5 times a week. Outside of an occasional outside drive-in VE session, this is where all the testing is being done. Thanks to an amazing VE Team who works hard to pull this off: KB1FRW, K1BIF, AB1DD, KE1ZEB, KE1VT, K3BH and NQ1B.

Duane WL7CVD

General Discussion and Announcements

Meeting Minutes (April)

RANV Meeting Minutes April 14, 2020

Regular Meeting

Duane Sherwood, Secretary

There were 25 people in attendance via Zoom.

President Bob Allen (KB1FRW) called meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Meeting Notes and Announcements

Some members mentioned an interest in participating in the New England QSO party at Knights Point State Park, where everyone could have their own well-spaced setup areas. It is hoped we can have more Parks on the Air events later in the year. Field Day will have to have special safeguards, if it takes place. The Essex Memorial Day Parade was cancelled.

Boxboro has been moved to November. Museum ships on the air cancelled. June is scheduled for a VHF QSO party. Exams are being done on line in some areas. Steve passed his general in Queensbury NY.

Presentation

Mitch W1SJ gave the presentation, Build the Station, Collect the Awards. Mitch was able to share his slide presentation on the Zoom screen.

A basic station consists of a radio, power supply, and antenna. Good to have a comfortable location for the station, with main floors being better than basements or attics.

The antenna is a very important part of the station. A half-wave dipole will work well if high enough.

Vertical antennas need a good ground screen. Mobile whips, Buddipole, mag loop, G4RV or short antennas were not recommended. Mitch talked about how he set up an antenna and station across from Wall Street in New York City.

Another factor in a successful station is the operator. It helps to boldly state your call sign. Some alternative phonetics might work better than the standard phonetic alphabet.

Learning CW is a plus to work more difficult stations and DX. It is good practice to listen and assess the situation for DX: are they working split? What frequency to call on. Avoid tail ending somebody or call out of turn.

Awards are another dimension of operation. Some are simple, some are fancy, and some are specialized. If interested in awards, be sure to know the exact requirements.

End of meeting



NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • May 12TH • 7:00pm

Meeting Topic
ALL ABOUT THE STATE QSO PARTY CHALLENGE

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