



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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An ARRL Special Service Club

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NEXT MEETING: Tuesday March 9th

VISIT TO W1AW AND THE ARRL

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

Join us as we take a video tour of the W1AW Maxim Memorial Station and also to ARRL Headquarters. W1AW is quite the historical site, dating back to 1938. The radios are a bit newer than that, though!

Be sure to provide for your own snacks after the meeting!

HAM-CON ON-LINE

Yikes, We DID IT!

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

HAM-CON 2021 is now history, and boy, was it historical! For everyone to get a feel for this, I'll divide this into the pre, post and future hamfest story.

I. INVENTING HAM-CON ON-LINE

Last November, it was obvious that there would be no live show. I personally would not go into an indoor space with many people (still won't) and I couldn't ask others to do so either. We could have simply used the "see ya'll next year!" motto which most events have been using, but we could do, and deserved better. Why don't we do the entire show On-Line?

But there were problems with this plan. The problem is people. People have opinions, and make decisions and none of this has anything to do with actual facts or logic. That's

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

what people do! Unfortunately, one of those popular opinions is that On-Line events (and most anything involving a computer) are no good. While this point could be debated, there were only two options available to us: On-Line Convention or nothing.

I've been to a few On-Line events in both the Ham Radio and Anime world. I can't say that I was overly impressed. These were mostly webinar events. The forums were very good, but essentially, that is all there was. There was, otherwise, no human interaction. Ham Expo, held last summer, did have a "chat" facility where one could type messages to other attendees or vendors. The problem with this is that I don't text, I don't do PSK31 and I don't write love letters. I'm a phone operator and I need to talk. The other missing piece – hams like to buy, sell and swap their stuff. It is what we do. And it was missing!

So the mission became to figure out a way to have forums, flea market and verbal meetings in an on-line hamfest. The second and more difficult mission was to sell this concept to the masses.

I developed a basic web site with links to two Zoom meetings, which served as the backbone of HAM-CON. It is a simple site, much like the RANV site, using basic HTML commands. In fact, RANV and HAM-CON will run on virtually any platform, including Windows 95 and perhaps even a wet sponge. But the next problem was how to do a flea market on line. For this, I set up a table in the basement and tossed a bunch of radios and equipment on it, and placed a camera on a tripod in front of it. I stood in front of the table and showed this off at a RANV meeting in December, proving it was possible.

As we were going along, more tweaks and features were added. A big issue was accessing the multiple breakout rooms in a Zoom meeting. In fact, the big question was how big a Zoom account was needed to accommodate everyone. Each week, we held the RANV gatherings linked off of the HAM-CON site to test many of the features. I somewhat cautiously promoted the event, ever nervous that I would have too many people show up or else crash the system.

I wouldn't say I was scared, but I was mighty concerned. If we fell on our face, a lot of people all over the country would see this and cleaning egg off of one's face is a tedious affair. I finally said, "What the Hell?" and started really promoting the event a week or two out. I appeared on W5KUB's live show, which was rebroadcast on WBCQ shortwave and well as sending out hundreds of emails to hams. I tried to get commercial vendors into the mix, but all were very busy selling product so I settled for door prizes, which were used to promote the show. We eventually ended up with just shy of 400 registrants representing 41 states and 3 DXCC countries! We had a Friday night "Banquet" meeting to do a quick meet and greet resulting in 60 people showing up to say howdy!

II. THE BIG DAY

My shack was converted to the HAM-CON operations center. Separate computers with audio and video were running the two Zoom rooms. A third computer was used to check the YouTube streams and keep the HAM-CON site updated.

Co-hosts Carl and Bob BIF had similar setups to watch both Zoom rooms simultaneously. We also had a few people recording the presentations for later viewing on YouTube.

There were no live forums scheduled until 10AM and this allowed time to cruise the various flea market and chat breakout rooms (we had 28 set up, just in case). Our flea market vendors were all in their rooms with their stuff proudly displayed. As I was visiting the various rooms, I noticed that others were doing the same thing. They would stop by, chat for a while and move to the next room – just as it was planned!

Our first live show was with David Minster from the ARRL. This was a bit nerve wracking because setting up the Zoom to YouTube stream is a bit tedious and takes a few minutes to get going. But I quickly noticed that as David was speaking, I heard him on YouTube saying the same thing 30 seconds later. By God, it worked! The ARRL Forum followed and we had 60 attentive viewers plus a few more on YouTube intently following both.

At 11:30, we started programming in the other Zoom account which meant we had content running on both sides of the house. I did notice that less people were cruising the flea market at this point, but that was the plan all along – concentrate on more forums in the afternoon. By the time we had Tom's Spy Radios presentation running, we hit a peak of 84 in his forum while we were running 30-35 in forums on the other side of the house. Counting all of the others in the breakout rooms, there were 125 people in the Zoom meetings at one moment in time. Generally, you multiply this number by 2 to get an estimate of the number of people in and out all day long, resulting in around 250 attendees. This is just about what we do for a live HAM-CON, except, we had folks from all over the country in this show.

The shows kept running and we ended up with "Ask The Experts" at 4:00. There weren't too many people asking the experts many questions, and the session started to seem like everyone was trying to be "experts" by sharing their opinions on a lot of topics. Not exactly what I planned, but it is what it is and folks seemed to be having a great time and hung out way past our planned 5PM closing time.

I received evaluations and a number of emailed comments. All gave rave reviews. Some had a little problem figuring out how to go between the different forums and meetings, but figured things out after a while. In fact, all on-line events are like this – there is a bit of a learning curve involved. The forums we pre-recorded from earlier years did not get high marks (tough to see, noisy room, etc.). But that content was included as

bonus content. As we build a library of good presentations, we'll be able to include a lot more.

Somewhere in the middle of all this, we managed to give away 14 door prizes, which was an extremely time-consuming process for me! We also picked up 5 new members and \$180 in donations, both of which keeps RANV in good financial shape. Not bad for a free event! We impressed a lot of people, brought many new hams an educational experience, and had fun in the process. Even I had fun while I served in the role as a one-armed paper hanger all day.

III. THE FUTURE

Adversity should always be looked upon as an opportunity. We cannot have live ham fests right now – boo hiss! But now we have a tremendous tool – on-line video platforms which not only work, but are starting to be adopted by the masses. Every year I hear how folks cannot make the trip to HAM-CON – “It’s too far”, “It’s too snowy”, “I’m too old to travel”. Now we have a Plan B which works. Sit home and watch the forums anyway. We’ll need to plan a way to have roving cameras throughout the show to bring pictures and sound back to the folks at home. And we’ll figure out how to plan to see and hear the folks at home as well. There is a lot more complexity and challenge in all this, but isn’t that what we aspire to? Personally, I find the whole idea of this rather exciting. It will certainly give me a lot more to do than to just peruse the Flea Market looking at all the stuff I once owned years ago!

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN RANV WE NEED A GOOD LEADER

Mitch [WISJ](#)

At our last election in November, President Bob KB1FRW stated that he would be stepping down as president soon. Aside from the jokes about RANV “President For Life” and RANV presidents serving longer than Supreme Court justices, we seriously need to take action now. I checked the records – Bob has been RANV President for 11 ½ years! This smashes the former record of 6 ½ years held by Brian N1BQ. I’m not sure what Bob will do in retirement – nothing can top all those years at the helm of one of best ham radio clubs on the planet.

What is the president supposed to do? Our Bylaws are vague and have the classic legal mumbo-jumbo. “The powers and duties of the several officers shall be as provided from time to time by the members of the organization. In the absence of such provisions, the respective officers shall have the powers and shall discharge the duties associated with such offices.” In other words, does this mean that the president shall do what needs to be done?

I’ll give a better synopsis. We need a leader! A leader provides direction. A leader provides inspiration and motivation. A real good leader makes us all feel good about what we are doing. A leader does NOT do everything nor does a leader order people around. Examples of good leaders? Sadly, most of our elected leaders are NOT that.

Did you see the forum by ARRL CEO David Minster? He said all the right things and checked all the boxes. How good a leader is he? Time will tell – he just started.

We have a number of hard-working individuals in RANV. All we need is a leader to provide a framework and direction and we can continue to be great. The other option is no leader. In that scenario, the future is not bright.

We must discuss this at the upcoming meetings. In fact, we must discuss this. Sweeping this under the table is no longer an option. If you are interested, please do write to the officers of the club, or other club members or bring it up at a meeting, if you feel comfortable doing that.

Soon, we will be in a position where we MUST select a 3rd officer and we will have to change the names on our bank accounts. These things really must happen, so we all must move forward.

There is a tremendous opportunity here. Let’s continue in the fine work that RANV does.

Duane Sherwood, Secretary [WL7CVD](#)

RANV Meeting Minutes February 9th, 2021

Regular Meeting

There were about 17 in attendance via Zoom including two club officers, President Bob KB1FRW and Secretary Duane WL7CVD.

President Bob, KB1FRW, called the meeting to order around 7:00 PM.

Official Business

There were no items of official business.

Announcements

Ham Con was discussed. There is hope that the Burlington City Marathon will take place, and Field Day will also take place, hopefully.

Presentations

Paul AA1SU presented a video of Rob Sherwood talking about ways to test receivers. Sensitivity is not as important as being able to filter local noise



NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • March 9TH • 7:00pm
Via Zoom

Meeting Topic
VISIT TO W1AW AND THE ARRL

Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- Steering Wheel: 3rd Tues 6:30; Ninety-Nine Restaurant, Taft Corners, Williston
- VE Exams every 2nd Friday; Contact AB1DD@arrl.net for information
- Dues due? Pay online at www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html