



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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An ARRL Special Service Club

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RANV HOLIDAY PARTY

Mitch **W1SJ**

Saturday, December 10th , 12 Noon until 3PM
Holy Family Parish Hall, 30 Lincoln Street, Essex
Junction

Be sure to join us for our gala winter event, the Holiday Party. This will be our December meeting, and what a meeting it will be! We will have a scrumptious feast with all sorts of stuff, including at least 8 main dishes. We will again convene in the spacious parish hall where there will be plenty of space for gathering and eating.

Feel free to bring family, friends, former members, hams, non-hams, etc.

RANV hit another milestone by winning our category in Field Day by a significant margin and placing 7th of ALL Field Day groups in the event. We will have our traditional celebratory chocolate cake for dessert.

The party will occur during the ARRL 10 Meter contest. We will have a small station set up. If the band opens, we will be ready to make a few contacts and have fun.

Please go to <http://www.ranv.org/surpar22.html> to let us know if you are attending and what you plan

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Meetings: 2nd Thursday • 7:00 PM
Holy Family Parrish Hall
30 Lincoln Street
Essex Junction, Vt

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

New Hams, Mentoring:
RANVMentor@gmail.com

to bring to the event. This is a great opportunity to wow us with your culinary (or shopping) skills.

Feel free to bring show and tell items or conversation pieces. Probably should leave the boat anchors at home, though.

We will be selling early bird tickets for HAM-CON, so bring money.

We'll have it all – food to eat and people to talk to so that we can engage in the two activities which hams are best known for – eating and talking!

Let's have a wonderful safe event. All the best for the Holiday Season!

FUN ON THE TOP BAND

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

The TOP BAND – 160 meters. For many years, this was the lowest frequency which amateurs could operate on. We now have access to lower frequencies, but only with a lot lower power. The top band was where amateur radio pioneers played a hundred years ago. After the government authorities (before the FCC) proclaimed that hams had to stay at 200 meters and down (above 1500 kHz), the top band was the place where it all went down initially.

I use a full size 160-meter dipole up 50 feet. It works well, but I cannot compete with the 200-foot-high dipoles and phased verticals which the big boys use. A big problem occurred when a heavy branch in the pine tree broke off and snagged the 160 dipole on the way down. The dipole wire was under tension and was pulling on the tower. I had to go up and cut the dipole so that it would no longer stress the tower. The heavy branch remained hanging precariously in the tree.

I thought that I really didn't need a 160-meter antenna any more since I have DXCC on that band and have nothing more to prove. But wait, that is a terrible way to look at things. There is something romantic about staying up all night on the top band looking for the very weak signals of new DX. Some

call it insane instead of romantic. No, I will do what it takes to get the antenna back working.

To do this, it required expenditure of money, something which I am still not very good at. But eventually, I had to bring in a tree service to clear out the dead branch, and get someone to reconnect things on the tower. I ordered myself up 260 feet of Flex Weave, a real nice antenna wire which is very flexible and very slippery – the requirements needed for successful hauling through trees. I also had to whip out the bow and arrow and play William Tell to get the wire where it needed to be. Eventually I had the dipole back up, and it loaded great.

I also had to perform the annual job of putting back up the beverage antenna. This entails running 600+ feet of wire through the woods, and providing proper feed and ground connections. Every trip I do out to the end of the beverage is a ¼ mile hike providing a great opportunity for exercise. Ham radio is not just sitting around making contacts.

Last weekend, I operated in the ARRL 160-meter contest. It starts at 5PM and I operate straight through until 7:30 in the morning. After sunrise, the band pretty much dies. But when do you sleep? True 160-meter operators are totally nocturnal creatures, much like rodents, and we sleep during the day.

But with all this romantic talk, conditions were truly horrible. I couldn't hear many people. It seemed like everyone was in the noise and I was guessing more than receiving. I did work a bunch of guys in Europe, so I know that things were working – just not all that well. Contacts to 6 and 7 land were quite rare.

But the end of the evening, I was over 200 QSO's short of what I typically log. Something must be wrong with the antenna. But really, what can be wrong with a simple dipole and good feed line which loads well and is up in the clear. I was pretty disgusted.

Thinking about it, I realized that the noise was much higher than normal, and had a pulsing effect

to it, much like engine noise. Was this a new type of radar? Did the jerk next door buy a new toy which was wiping me out? I checked the band in the afternoon, and the noise level on CW was around S3 – pretty much normal. I started firing things up and all of a sudden, the noise jumped up to S6. On SSB, it was well over S9! What the heck? I finally traced the culprit to a video monitor. I set up a TV in the shack for the overnight. This is really needed in the wee hours when the rates drop to around 15 per hour – one could go crazy from boredom. I was using a different monitor this year. It causes noise on the radio. It will not be used again. I use this same monitor in the VHF QSO Party and have noticed some on-again off-again mysterious noise there. We have had similar problems at Field Day with different equipment being brought in and biting us in the butt. The moral is to trust no piece of equipment and test everything thoroughly before the event.

OK, so now I'm psyched to run some good rates Saturday night. Not so fast! The reason why the QSO's were down was that the propagation stunk. The extra noise made things more miserable, but was not the root cause. Saturday was even worse than Friday. No Europe (I heard one guy) and no West Coast. After midnight there was hardly anything heard beyond 1200 miles. It was a long night. I took a nap for a while.

I thought this was all due to my station, but the crying on the 3830scores site summed it up. "Worst score since 2002" and "There's a wasted 9 hours of my life I won't get back" were notable quotes. This year's ARRL 160 was not "romantic"; it was more like "true grit". While it is true that 160 meters does not do as well in higher sunspot years, this time it was horrible. It was my lowest score since 2001, and I believe that was the year of a magnetic storm. We get to look forward to the Top Band Distance Challenge in another week. Hopefully things will get better.

Yes, 160 meters builds character. Wait. I'm already a character!

CQ WW CW Contest

Paul [AA1SU](#)

During the Thanksgiving weekend, I dabbled in the CQ WW CW Contest. I think I only made about 65 contacts. I spotted a few people on the Cluster as I Searched & Pounced. Soon after one post of the Russian station RU1A, I saw my own call sign go by.

[showing spots for DX call: AA1SU](#)

[send a spot](#) / [search spot by callsign](#)

de	dx	freq
RW1F	 AA1SU	7019.2

I saw this comment throughout the weekend of other similar spots. I thought the guy had some nerve to speak for all the DX Clusters.

RW1F is a Russian Contester, so the guy probably was imitating the call.

Back in the day of 2 Meter Packet Clusters, this would have been an FCC violation (for a US Ham). Nowadays, everyone uses the internet.

In case you're wondering, this obviously has something to do with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

RANV meeting. 11/10/2022

Bob [K1BIF](#)

Present on-line was: N1LX, KB1VJD, W1EJC
In person: KB1ZEB, KC1JGM, K1BIF, AA1SU, W4YFJ, KC1IFK, N1WCK, W1SJ, KC1PYO.

The meeting began at 7:20

The Christmas holiday party will be on Dec 10th , 12 to 3. Also, on January 28th, 9:00 to noon is the Ham breakfast at JPs.

The Vermont QSO party is February 4th and 5th . No new nominations for officers were sent in this past week, so by unanimous vote the current officers were reelected. George will check on the status of our insurance policy.

We voted on \$200 for the use of the Parish Hall for our Christmas party. Paul made the motion, Bob seconded – it passed. Then, we voted on \$150 for food; that also passed. Mitch spoke about our low meeting attendance. We discussed ways to engage more people, not only new hams, but our own members.

Mitch gave a presentation on preparedness. Bob followed up with another presentation on preparedness.

The meeting ended at 8:57

Bob, k1bif, secretary



NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING

Saturday December 10TH • 7:00 PM
Holy Family Parrish Hall

Meeting Topic:
Holiday Party

Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- Steering Wheel: 3rd Thur Noon; 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