



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PORTABLE OPERATION

The April 13th RANV Meeting We're always getting asked to do presentations on how to set up a station. This seems to be a big mystery, and yet, it is a quite simple procedure as long as you remain organized. In this presentation, we will go into specific details on how to choose the correct radio, how to power it, how to make sure you have the correct accessories, and finally, the most important step, choosing a good antenna and getting it deployed quickly. RANV is one of the best portable operations groups in the country. We put-on top-notch Field Day efforts each year and do park activations rivaling small DXpeditions. You will be learning from some of the best in the business!

We will also look ahead to future activities, including the status of antenna launcher build, the upcoming New England QSO Party activation, the Vermont City Marathon and the start of discussion on Field Day. Be sure to join us on Thursday, April 13th at the Holy Family Parish Hall on Lincoln Street, Essex Junction.

## CONTACTS

Stewart **KC1IFK**, President  
[stwbll2@gmail.com](mailto:stwbll2@gmail.com)

George **KC1JGM**, VP/Treasurer  
[gmayvt1@gmail.com](mailto:gmayvt1@gmail.com)

Bob **K1BIF**, Secretary  
[bhennebe@gmail.com](mailto:bhennebe@gmail.com)

George **KC1JGM**, Editor  
[gmayvt1@gmail.com](mailto:gmayvt1@gmail.com)

*Newsletter submissions to*  
[gmayvt1@gmail.com](mailto:gmayvt1@gmail.com)

US Mail: PO Box 9392  
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> 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](mailto:RANVMentor@gmail.com)

## W1AW/1 VERMONT MAKES ITS TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Mitch **W1SJ**

Volunteers On The Air (VOTA) is an ARRL program celebrating ham radio volunteers with various on-air activities. This is similar to the Centennial Celebration from 2014. First, there is a scoring program where you get points for working various appointees. Right here in Vermont, we have two high value stations, Paul AA1SU at 175 points (SM) and Mitch W1SJ at 100 points (former SM) and both are quite active. The various ARRL appointments carry all sorts of point values. You can look up on line to see how to collect points and show up on the leader board.

The other activity is putting W1AW on the air from all 50 states and many territories. Throughout the week of March 28 through April 4, W1AW/1 from Vermont was active from 14 different operator locations. I am still counting QSO's, but it looks like we have put 7000 QSO's in the log, an impressive feat from such a small operating team. At my station alone, I logged nearly 90 countries. There were a lot of juicy DX stations from Asia calling in. And it was impressive that the pileups were fairly organized and manageable.

I mostly operated on phone. While I was running at over 150 QSO's per hour at times, I did stop and chat with some operators. Part of the gig was being an ambassador for the ARRL and ham radio, and I enjoyed that a lot. A station from Georgia mentioned that they had some kids who wanted to speak with W1AW. So, I spoke with each of the 4 kids in turn as they asked questions about the operation. One wanted to know how old I was. "Oh, I stopped counting", I replied. Without missing a beat, "OK, how young are you?" It is always great to interact with kids with the hope that they will take up an interesting hobby or career as a result.

On Saturday, I worked several stations with the "Interim AG" tag at the end of their call sign. They all admitted to passing their General exam that morning and W1AW/1 was their FIRST contact. Cool! Throughout the 7-day operation, I was happy to see that we were able to cover much of the world. All the states were worked many times and 42% of

my contacts were with DX stations. And 11% of the DX stations (156) were with Italy alone. With the WRTC coming up this summer I made sure to say hello to the Italian hams in that area (4th call district). "See you in Bologna this summer, Ciao!"

For a day, I had a propagation anomaly I called, the "Middle East Connection". I was getting rather strong signals from all of the countries around the Arabian Peninsula, including A4 (Oman), A7 (Qatar) and HZ (Saudi Arabia). One A4 was so strong (around S9+40) that I was sure it was Paul AA1SU goofing on me with a phony accent. It sure sounded like him! This was one of 7 Oman stations logged. I later learned that they were all on the Arabian Knights Net, a few kHz up the band, and QSY'd down to work W1AW/1. The next day, stations from 4X (Israel), 9K (Kuwait) and even CN (Morocco), added to the sweep. I also worked stations in India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and even China, all with decent signals. Wow. I'm oing to change my call sign!

Thanks to the gang who kept W1AW/1 on the air: Paul AA1SU, Art K1ARR, Scot, K1JY, Alan K1MZM, Zach K1ZK, Kevin KE1VT, Ron KK1L, Erik N1CFO, Randy N1SP, Tom W1EAT, Scott W1ZU, Arnie W2HDI, Bob W4YFJ and Mitch W1SJ.

We had a ton of fun playing radio all week. And we'll do it again starting August 16. Contact me if you want to join the fun.

**W1AW**  
Mitch **W1SJ**



## Operating as W1AW/1

By Paul N. Gayet AA1SU

During the week of March 28 to April 4, 2023 Vermont had its first turn of two this year operating as W1AW/1. This is to help celebrate ARRL's the "Year of the Volunteer". This year long event is called Volunteers On The Air (VOTA). Hams can 'Chase' other hams that are worth points because they have an appointment or other function related to the League. W1AW/p stations are worth 5 points. The ARRL president is worth 300 points. As Section Manager, I'm worth 175 points. League members are worth 1 point, etc. This just a small sample of a much larger chart that can be found on the official web site here: <https://vota.arrl.org/> .

The ARRL sponsored a similar event back in 2014, called the Centennial. This was an extremely popular event. The airwaves were packed all year long with people chasing or handing out points. I worked all 50 states twice. I also worked Guam, Puerto Rico, Washington DC, US Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. When we got to operate as W1AW/1 the pile ups were very intense. We tried to put Vermont on the air in as many band/modes as possible. We did get on criticism though. "Is RTTY illegal in Vermont?". We were not doing enough RTTY. I was one of the few operators that operated RTTY at the time. For digital modes, most local hams were into PSK31. I was not able to dedicate long hours to that one mode at the time. This was long before FT8 was invented.

Fast forward to the present. On Tuesday night I set up and tested my station to work 20 Meters RTTY right at 00:00z (8 PM). I thought I will not let them down this time! I had some time to kill, so I watched a little TV. At 8 PM, I pressed the F1 key on the keyboard and got silence from the station. I thought 'What the heck is it now?'. I checked and double checked everything. I restarted N1MM+. I restarted the computer. I turned the radio off and on again several times. I could not find the culprit. Then I noticed that during this whole time, when I pressed a button on the radio to send out a low power signal to check SWR and such, the radio stayed in transmit mode when I turned the function off. This eventually led me to look at the foot

switch on the floor. It looked kind odd and uneven. I picked it up and the whole thing was falling apart because a screw had fallen out. I unplugged the foot switch from the radio and I was back in business. It was now 8:20 PM. I called CQ and things were kind of quiet. I spotted myself on the DX Custer, and I started to hear signals too weak to copy. In fact, almost everybody was weak. In the next 40 minutes, I only worked 8 people. It was so quiet that I repaired the foot switch during this time. Did I mention something about FT8?

At 9 PM, I switched to 20 Meters FT8, and I immediately got a pile up, and I thought, "This is much better!". What a difference 9 years makes. Over the next 7 days, I worked as W1AW/1 on various bands and modes. Most of my operating was after dinner, from 8 PM to 10 PM. On Saturday, I got to work 40 Meters Phone for about 4 hours. Then on Sunday, I was happy to find some 20 Meter Phone slots available. Mitch W1SJ was in charge of recruiting operators, and he had an on-line spread sheet where people could sign up for 2-hour slots. If band conditions were not that great for a slot that was picked, we were encouraged to give up that slot and move to another band and/or mode. In fact, I had to do that a couple of times. The pile ups weren't not really there this time: not like 2014 anyway. I never had to work spit operation, even though I had stations calling me several at a time sporadically. It was fun, for sure. At one-point, former RANV member Phil W5ACC in Texas called me. I had to tell him who I really was, so I could say hello to him.

In the end, I made 1021 QSOs. The breakdown was: FT8 420, CW 77, SSB 516, and RTTY 8. I'm kind of surprised that the CW number was so low. But I've migrated to digital more and more lately, plus I saw several VT operators working CW throughout the week. All in all, it was a fun week, and a lot less stressful than 2014. I'm already looking forward to August 16 - the next time Vermont will be on the air as W1AW/1.

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## **W1AW/1 OPERATIONS AT K1ZK**

### **Zach K1ZK**

Honestly, I haven't been particularly motivated to participate in the VOTA event; it just doesn't seem as exciting to me as the NPOTA and ARRL centennial operations that we did nine years ago. Still, I'm glad to celebrate all the volunteers who make it possible for the ARRL to do everything it does, and I wanted to contribute to the effort to put Vermont on the map for the W1AW/1 operation.

I didn't plan to be on the air on opening night Tuesday, but my evening freed up when orchestra rehearsal was canceled at the last minute. So, when I got home from work I signed up for a slot, warmed up the amp, and got ready to make some QSOs. The higher bands have been doing pretty well recently, so I started by listening on 10 meters SSB just before 7PM. I heard W1AW/5 calling CQ and making QSOs, and after a while I realized that I had neglected to adjust the local clock in my shack for Daylight Savings Time and that W1AW/1's turn didn't start until 8pm local time. This was a confirmation of the best practice of spending some time listening before you start transmitting!

After that little hiccup everything went very smoothly. My first QSO was with K8TE in New Mexico, and my second QSO was with ZL1BQD in New Zealand. Ten meters was open! It was well after our local sunset, but I continued working USA stations out west and ZL1KEN made my log right around 9PM local time. I was also pleased to log K5WEZ, who was running just 10W from New Mexico. I only logged about 30 QSOs on the first night, but it was a good warm up. I also had a brief warm up run on 160 meter CW on Wednesday night, adding about 25 more QSOs over the course of two hours, including "big DX" W1ZU, KE1VT, and K1MZM! I got a bit more serious on Thursday evening, racking up some decent runs on 40 meter CW, and then switching to run simultaneous FT8 stations on 15 and 40 meters, being careful to transmit on the same time slot with both transmitters so that I didn't wipe myself out.

I had more time for radio Saturday and Sunday and I had some good runs on 10 and 20 meter phone. I logged a fair number of European stations and several stations in the USA who were mobile or QRP. One particularly memorable QSO on Sunday was with KE5GLZ, who mentioned that I was his very first HF contact! I worked KF7NP on Sunday, who was activating a SOTA summit with 10 watts, and I also worked K2CPT on 2 meter FM, who was activating a SOTA summit in New York. It was also neat to work the Voice of America Museum station WC8VOA, and to work K7MS in Montana, who was transmitting with just 1 watt!

I would have worked more SSB except that I was battling a sore throat and cold, so I wasn't in great shape for voice QSOs. I ended up working quite a lot of FT8, which was fairly boring but there was plenty of demand for FT8 QSOs. I was still sick on Monday so I stayed home from work and hammered out a bunch more FT8 QSOs, mostly on 10-20 meters, but with an occasional 6-meter QSO sprinkled in. I worked a number of JA stations on 15-meter FT8 right around sunset on Monday. I was well enough to go to work on Tuesday, and orchestra rehearsal went ahead on Tuesday night, so I missed the grand finale. But I contributed 1,000 total QSOs over the course of the week and had a great time; I count that as a success!

## **W1AW/1 FROM SOUTHERN VERMONT**

### **Randy N1SP**

Being my first time in this activity, I committed to four operating slots on three different bands. It was great fun to see bands that seemed to be void of much activity come alive in response to my calls! Between slowing down for slower stations, band conditions and spells of calling CQ with no replies, I still managed to eke out an average of one QSO every 3 minutes. There were times of pileups, and slow times when other stations liked to exchange names, etc. The experience was akin to contesting, while being a good ambassador for the W1AW/1 call.

I had a lot of fun and was honored to participate.

RANV meeting. 3/9/23

George [KC1JGM](#)

The meeting began at 7:00. We decided to proceed with the build of 3 tennis ball launchers. The approximate cost will be between \$125 and \$150 for parts. If you are interested, contact K1BIF (@arrl.net) – parts must be paid for in advance.

There was a discussion on possible Parks on the Air activations the 1<sup>st</sup> weekend in May at Knights State Park.

Mitch showed slides of his recent Caribbean cruise. The weather appeared warm and pleasant, much different than here in Vermont. They visited multiple islands and had a very enjoyable trip.

The main presentation was Jeff's demonstration of a classic telephone system, including ringers, and phone exchanges. The demonstration was very "hands-on" as attendees were able to measure voltages and test the system. Jeff demonstrated the different electrical characteristics of the signals and how to access a single phone on a multiple phone system. It was interesting how the old crank phones used a built-in generator to initiate a ring signal and then used the same lines for voice.

The meeting ended at 9:00

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### NEXT MEETING

April 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 7:00pm  
Holy Family Parrish Hall

#### Meeting Topic

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF PORTABLE OPERATION

### Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- Steering Wheel: 3<sup>rd</sup> Thur Noon; Ninety-Nine Restaurant, Taft Corners, Williston
- VE Exams every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday; Contact [AB1DD@arrl.net](mailto:AB1DD@arrl.net) for information
- Dues due? Pay online at [www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html](http://www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html)