



# RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday April 13<sup>th</sup>

## Ham Radio Software Anthony Luscre, **K8ZT**

Join us for our April meeting as we welcome Anthony Luscre, K8ZT to present a talk on Ham Radio Software. Many of us are familiar with contesting software like N1MM and N3JFP, operating modes like WSJTx and web applications like DX Watch and PSK Reporter. But there are more software choices out there – a lot more! Other categories of software include radio/antenna control, digital modes, propagation, design, satellite tracking, training, clocks, testing, audio and remote control. Whew, that's a LOT! Anthony will introduce us to some of the more popular software items and provide links to connect with them. There is a ton of great material out there and we'll all learn some new tricks and techniques to be better hams.

## LAST MAN STANDING- GOING OUT WITH A BANG Mitch **W1SJ**



A month ago, Ron KK1L directed us to signups for the Last Man Standing special event. The plan was to put their call sign,

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Meetings: 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday • 7:00 PM  
Wheeler House  
1100 Dorset Street  
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Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

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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)

KA6LMS on the air from all call districts plus a few in Canada. So, I thought, “What the heck - I’ll work some pileups.”

If you do not follow the show, Last Man Standing is a 30-minute comedy (sit-com as they say in the business) about a guy named Mike Baxter who runs an outdoor shop, Outdoor Man (think: Cabella’s) and a cast of characters including a wife, 3 daughters, 2 sons-in-law and a zany bunch of employees. Mike is a ham operator, with the fictional callsign KA0XTT. He has a shack both in his house and in his office at the store. While the ham station was only used in the show 2 or 3 times in 9 years, it is always in the background in scenes taking place in the office, with the Icom station, QSL cards and an ARRL Handbook prominently displayed. This is a real station, licensed as KA6LMS with a vertical on the roof of the studio and has been operated by many visitors over the years.

The lead is played by Tim Allen, a veteran actor and stand-up comic who carries the show. He got his license 7 years ago and is KK6OTD.

After 9 years, the decision was made to no longer do the show. Nine years is quite a long run for a sitcom! The decision was made to do an on-air event in conjunction with the filming of the last episode. Hence the KA6LMS callsign was on the air from all over the U.S and Canada the entire week.

I didn’t really take this all too seriously. After all, KA6LMS/1 is a very long callsign and certainly not as famous as W1AW/1 which I did 7 years ago. But I figured I’d get on and have some fun. Complicating the matter was that I had to deal with a family medical situation. So, it was 3 hours on the air, and pack up and drive 6 hours to N.Y. But the on-air experience did not disappoint. I had a raging pileup on 20 meters all afternoon and it was a hoot. Every 30 minutes or so, I had to give my personal callsign, location and name, and tell a little bit about the special event. I figure that this would be it for my involvement. But like a good epidemic, (ugh – bad pun) this was only getting started.

So, I’m in N.Y. but with no HF radio – only VHF/UHF. But I read on-line that Saturday night, they were doing a “Digital Party” for KA6LMS, involving modes like Echolink, DMR, Brandmeister, DSTAR and others. This starts up and immediately takes the form of a major train wreck. No one has ever tried to run a pileup on Echolink before! Brandmeister was so clogged up that it crashed! Eventually, they worked people by call area and things proceeded at a snail’s pace. To keep sane, I watched the live stream from the shacks of the operators and chatted with a buddy of mine on 2 meters who was also chasing. Eventually I put KA6LMS /5, /0 and the rare /VE3 in the log. The event ran until 3AM!

But I was hooked! The event became a mission to collect all of the LMS stations, and the 6 1x1 special calls and also to put KA6LMS/1 on the air from Vermont. So, when I got back on Monday, it was major operating time. I got on 20 meters in the

morning to run Europe. Very quickly, I was hip deep in Italian stations madly calling in and it was a good old fashion pileup slugfest. While some ops recoil in horror from this, I live for it!

Around noon, the pileup started to subside, so I pointed west and worked the U.S. After an hour, that pileup started to sputter, but I still heard Europeans calling in. I put the beam back on Europe, and another crazy EU pileup ensued, even though it was pretty much dark all over Europe by this time. After 3 hours and 45 minutes and 505 QSO’s (half from Europe), I had all the fun someone could have, and took a break for a while to do some chasing.

I popped back on 40 meters for a couple of hours for a nice run. But I was not hearing anyone from New England, so I tried 80 meters. That was a disaster – few called. Then I had a thought – why not try some DMR? I popped on the New England net and worked a bunch. Unlike the 3 QSO’s per minute on 40 meters, this was 3 minutes per QSO on DMR – kinda like watching paint dry. But it was a different mode and experience.

The next day, I got on 20 meters and cranked the pileup up again, but I had to stop to go over to the fairgrounds to have someone stick a needle in my arm! My only concern was this would mess me up and I wouldn’t be able to effectively operate at the end of the event. To be sure, I got in my mid-afternoon nap and was ready to conquer any pileup at the closing.

I fired up at 6:20 on 40 meters and already I knew things were different. New England and New York stations were coming in like gangbusters on a band which they haven’t been heard from for months. One loud station said he was in Manhattan. I asked if he was on the top of a skyscraper (a la King Kong). Nope, he was using a Buddipole on his porch! My friend Bruce W2SE from Joisey busted the pileup with a solid S-9 signal with his mighty 10-watt KX3. Along with the great local conditions, the quiet band yielded some great DX – well into Eastern Europe with places like Greece and Macedonia showing up in the log. The pileup was insane – just the way I like it. Finally with 2 minutes to go, I announced the 2-minute warning and everything stopped! So, I announced, “Hey, and we also got FREE STUFF – like certificates”, and the pileup started back up all over again. It perfectly ended at 23:59:59 (give or take) when I worked the last guy and said goodbye everyone. Yikes, what a ride!

What is the point of all this? We created a ton of fun and activity out of virtually nothing. After all, we are supposed to have fun on ham radio. It seems that with all the daily bellyaching we hear about; ham radio is a real chore. Tune across 20 meters most days and you hear little to nothing. That special week, the bands were filled with stations running pileups and other stations fretting over the fact that they still needed KA6LMS/3 (I finally worked him on the last day). We found interesting conditions, like the late European opening on 20 meters and the short skip opening on 40 meters. And we

included ALL the modes, all the digital stuff, and got Technicians into the mix. Just like the W1AW event in 2014, this was a boatload of fun. We need to more of it. Someone even suggested that Executive Producer AA6JA start another show about ham radio, so we can do this again! Ultimately, with 88,000 QSO's in the logs in a week of activity, you can't go wrong!

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## **Last Man Standing Special Event** **Ron [KK1L](#)**

Wow! Operating this event was some of the most fun I have had with ham radio in a long time! Big pileups. Thankful operators. Great camaraderie. Seemingly endless stations waiting to be worked.

Sometime in February of this year Marty, NN1C, reached out about operating a special event commemorating the final episode of the TV show "Last Man Standing". For those not familiar the show stars Tim Allen as marketing director of an outdoor gear store chain who is an avid outdoorsman, a bit of a "prepper", and a ham radio operator. There are several hams on the production staff and a working ham radio station on the set.

The event was to be organized similar to the 2014 W1AW 100-year anniversary event lasting a full week, March 24th through 30th. Knowing the popularity of show and how much fun I had with the W1AW anniversary event I signed up for some operating slots including the first 3 hours on 40m SSB using our shared Google sheet. As the event start got closer, we organized a Discord channel (internet chat tool) to coordinate on/off times and any other tactical things.

Stations were organized from each of the 10-call area plus a few in Canada along with some "bonus" calls, and the station at the Hollywood studio, KA6LMS. Each of the call areas would simply add a "portable" to the studio call. The bonus stations were W6L, M, & S (Last Man Standing) and K6L, M, & S. The goal was for hams to work all of the portable stations and spell "LMS" by working the bonus stations to earn a certificate. Each of us portables were assigned a bonus call which we shared. We needed to coordinate to make sure only one of the calls was on any band-mode at any one time.

Working a special event is different than working a contest or activating a DX entity. There are plenty of folks who don't know what the event is, or would like to chat and share something about the show, or just ask questions. This is part of the fun of the event, and gives it a less serious nature. I was happy to stop and chat. I had written a short script for myself to read on occasion describing the event and sending folks off to "google KA6LMS for certificate information". So much for planning!

I turned on the rig 15 minutes before my first scheduled slot to find a frequency in the general area of 40m and started rag chewing. At 00:00 March 24th I self-spotted KA6LMS/1 and called CQ. The response was bigger than I expected. I figured it might take some time for the event to become known and catch on, but that was not the case. The callers started off quite manageable maybe 4, 5, or 6 callers deep...pretty easy to work at a good rate. That quickly grew to more like 30 callers deep where the response to "QRZ" is a solid wall of white noise. The kind of noise you hear when a full stadium cheers. Wow. Awesome. You might think with so many stations you could really fly and work stations faster and faster. Not the case. Anyway, this is not a write-up on how to handle a pile-up though. At the end of my first 3 hours, I had put 385 contacts in the log. I had stopped on occasion to give info about the event, mostly when asked. There was some pressure I put on myself to get the folks in the log, so they could get the certificate.

When I signed up for Last Man Standing - Out with a Bang, I figured I would operate the first bit and just some here and there through the week. I am working full time and had my weekend all booked up with other stuff. The first hours changed my mind and I found more slots to work. I played hooky for periods of time I did not have meetings scheduled. The bonus stations were not as active and were "needed" by folks playing the game to get enough 1x1 bonus to spell "LMS". I switched to W6S for most of the week. The shorter call did save some time and my voice a bit. On 20m my best rate was 343 stations in 2 hours...172 per hour average nearly 3 per minute. Yeah baby!! Such fun. All I needed to do was spot W6S on the cluster and had a massive pile up in about a minute CRAZY!

The fun was definitely not all about how fast or how many stations were worked. There were conversations with fans of the show and some really nice operators who had good things to say. Ham radio does not show up on prime time very often. The folks I worked recognized that, and were sad to see it end. The other fun aspect was the camaraderie with the other operators. The chats on Discord were way more than "I am starting W6S on 20m", or "done on 40m FT8". We got to know each other a bit...ops from West Virginia, Alberta, Ohio...heck I even sold my 250' roll of copper strapping to one of them ☐.

One of the perks of being an operator for the event was a Zoom meeting with John Amodeo, AA6JA, operating KA6LMS...the real call of the studio station...from the stage of Last Man Standing. John is one of the producers and was running the studio station at the time. We were all given a chance to work the studio ahead of the MANY hams waiting patiently listening to us work John on 14.345MHz. 20m to California at 20:45 local time is not ideal, but I did complete a QSO with him. A KA6LMS studio contact is not quite as rare as North Korea, but it is pretty darn close and now is dismantled and impossible. I would do an event like this again

in a heartbeat. Super rates. Super partners. Super connection to other hams.

KA6LMS/1: 1051 QSO's in 9 hours all SSB.

W6S: 989 Q's in 7 hrs SSB, 50 FT8 in 1.2hr, 96 FT4 in 1.4hrs.

73 es God Bless de KK1L, Ron &&&

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## Field Day Plans

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

Field Day is a little over 2 months from now. This is a good time to start taking a look at how we will conduct festivities this year. At this point, nothing is cast in stone. I'll throw out ideas and listen for responses.

We are being told that everyone (who wants it) will be vaccinated by July 4th. That is only a week after Field Day. The expectation is that everyone in RANV will be fully vaccinated well before that due to our age demographic. We then can back off on some of the restrictions we operated under last year.

A big restriction was the number of people allowed at each station. This prevented us from having second operators present in Phone and CW. And even more importantly, it prevented us from having the GOTA coach present, which left the GOTA operators to fend for themselves and it directly affected the bonus. This will probably not be an issue this year, especially if we have fans running (which is most of the time).

It was mentioned earlier that we need a shakeup at the GOTA station. There are two issues. First, finding operators has become extremely difficult. And when we have the operators in place, they struggle mightily at times when conditions are not ideal. The proposed solution is to operate GOTA on FT8 and FT4 most of the time. These digital modes (especially FT4) can typically produce better point totals than what GOTA produces on phone, without a lot of pain and struggle. We'll continue schedule phone operation in the early evening hours, when phone contacts are plentiful. Why digital? First, a lot more operators can embrace it. Once you know your way around the software, little skill is needed. You don't have to listen to all that awful band noise (the speaker is muted). We are hoping to have 10-15 operators on digital instead of the usual 3-4 on phone. And if you introduce folks to digital, they are more likely to try phone at sometime in the future.

To make all this happen, we need a solid digital station set up. In the past, the digital operation was an afterthought. More often than not, it just did not happen because something did not work. The design needs to be simple so that the operator can switch between digital and phone easily. In addition, the operators need to be trained on the FT modes – how to start the program, how to CQ, how to log and how to call stations. This is all quite easy once one gets used to it.

The other big issue at Field Day last year was requiring individual headsets. This was certainly a big PIA as there were different configurations which had to be accommodated. Do we share this year? I don't know about that. If we do not, we need a better system to plug each operator's headset in effectively. We lost much of the social aspect of Field Day last year with the removal of communal food. I'll also point out that we also lost a lot of hassle over dealing with food! What do we do this year? Takeout?

More than anything else, Field Day requires participation. We want to get as many people back at the site as previous years. To do this, everyone needs to feel safe and comfortable. I've thrown out a number of ideas here. Be sure to discuss these so that we can come up with a plan which meets everyone's needs.

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## RANV Meeting Minutes March 9th, 2021

Duane Sherwood, Secretary [WL7CVD](#)

There were about 12 in attendance via Zoom including one club officer, Secretary Duane WL7CVD. Secretary, Duane WL7CVD called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Official Business There were no items of official business.

### Announcements

QSO Today online ham fest coming up soon. Hope to have Parks on the Air going again by June, pending vaccinations. The issue of finding a new RANV president was discussed, someone who is willing and able. The idea was floated to combine our RANV with BARC. Ham Con was discussed. The full attendance was unknown but we receive \$180 in donations and gained five new members. Mitch gave away the last door prizes from the event.

### Presentations

Bob Henneberger K1BIF showed three videos on the ARRL and station W1AW.

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## NEWS & VIEWS

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### NEXT MEETING

Tuesday • April 13<sup>TH</sup> • 7:00pm  
Via Zoom

Meeting Topic  
**Ham Radio Software**

### 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; 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)