



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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Telephones and Travel and Snow, Oh My! The March 9th RANV Meeting

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

Join us at the first regularly scheduled meeting of 2023! We have a number of items on the agenda and I'm sure at least one of these will interest you.

1. Starting off, Jeff N1YD will recreate his telephone demonstration he had running at HAM-CON. You may joke that it is old fashioned, but much of our telephone network still connects to the plain old 2-wire phone system. It will include a wide assortment of phones, a description of how a phone does all of its functions through just two wires, a miniature phone exchange, tones and ringing voltages shown on a scope, and a little bit about what is in today's cell phones.

2. Next up, Mitch W1SJ will share some pictures and stories of his week-long cruise to 6 DXCC countries in the Caribbean. Not too much ham radio to speak of, but the pictures are pretty.

3. There has been a lot of talk about a ham radio in the snow event this season. This would be an excellent time to put a plan in motion as the trend this month is for the snow to go away.

4. Last year, we made plans to build several compressed air launchers. As the weather is

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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:
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warming up, it is time to put a plan in place to get these built so that they are ready for antenna season.

Finally, we have a plan for a two-park activation on May 6-7 and we will share details so that you all can plan your calendars and join us at this event. Wow that's a lot of stuff! Be sure to attend the March 9th meeting and join in on the fun, 7PM Thursday, March 9th at the Holy Family Parish Hall, 30 Lincoln Street. Essex Junction.

HAM-CON 2023

A Great Show, Despite All Odds

Mitch [W1SJ](#)

This year's HAM-CON was one of the most challenging ever. We were faced with a 50% increase from the Hampton, which would have been a killer. A lot of whining and crying got that down to a 25% increase, but I'm sure we will be back at the high-level next year. We had already announced ticket prices, so we could do little with that. The ultimate goal was to promote the hell out of the show and to sell as many on-line tickets to folks outside the area as possible. There was also a lot of back room praying for reasonable weather. Back in 1981 when we set up this show, the last weekend of February was typically a slack weather time and we were very fortunate over many years. As we all know, the weather patterns are changing, and we have had too many close calls in recent years. A close call is snow on Friday like we had last year, which pretty much kills out of town attendance.

When all is said and done, HAM-CON 2023 was a successful event. We returned to pre-pandemic live attendance numbers, in addition to a good number of on-line viewers. The event was mildly profitable even after the venue increase, which was an added plus.

The forums had both live and remote attendance. Some forums exceeded 30 people in the room. It appears that around 40 people made use of the remote access at one time or another during the day. The tech to set up 2-way streaming is somewhat complicated and that took up a lot of time Friday night. The result was that the forums were great and very informative. If you missed any part of them,

they are now online. Attendees and club members received the link to view them. Please do!

We moved the W1V Special Event Station to the entrance lobby and it was a hit. Ron's remote station setup worked perfectly and not having to put up an antenna in the snow was great. We had several operators work stations all over Europe and there was a crowd gathered around all morning.

At the other end of the lobby were the Tech and DMR tables. Most of the day, Mike had a radio on the service monitor and I'm sure was giving its owner all the good (or not so good) news about it. The DMR table had a small display and a lot of people gathered around discussing DMR, I presume. And Jeff N1YD set up a demo in the lobby involving the use of land-line telephones (I still got one of those).

Sadly, the Flea Market was disappointing, and that is what we expected. The reality today is that few vendors want to travel to flea markets anymore. The owners are older, have family issues and shy away from long travel. The sales are not enough to even warrant the travel. Many do much better selling on line. Fewer hams are bringing boat anchors to sell anymore. Even fewer are buying such boat anchors. The Flea Market, even at NEAR-Fest is smaller than many years ago. This is the trend and there is not much we can do about it. We make up for it with a comprehensive forum and demonstration program.

Shows like this are very difficult to sustain as we face rising costs and declining attendance. Participation follows a pyramid scheme. At the top are the attendees who are at the show all day. Then we have attendees who attend, but only for a short time, like less than an hour. Next are the folks who support us either on-line or with donations. And finally, there is the largest group - those who do not attend in any fashion. For us to be successful, we need to shift this latter group up the pyramid. The fact is that 50% of the membership of RANV did NOT attend the show. The big question: What should we provide at the show to turn this trend around? I don't know that answer. That is for all of the non-attendees to determine and let us know about. We certainly want to continue HAM-CON,

as it is the only ham radio event of its kind within many miles of here. Ultimately, we need everyone's help. That being said, HAM-CON 2024 has been scheduled for February 24. Mark your calendar be sure be there!

HAMCON Photos

Bob **K1BIF**



Camel's Hump SOTA

Andy [KC1PRO](#)

The weather looked favorable the night before. The NOAA Peaks forecast for Camel's Hump showed the cloud cover dropping from 100% to 40% shortly before I planned to start operating. I was concerned that the overnight snowfall would make snowshoes necessary and the going slow on the Burrows Trail up the west side of Camel's Hump, but one of my teammates, who works for the Catamount Trail Association, reminded me of the popularity of the trail. "It's a highway, we might have trouble finding parking, but not climbing" he warned. Sure enough, there was one parking spot left for us and the trail was well packed.

Indeed, the limiting factor was my fitness, not the trail. We arrived at the clearing, about .25 miles from the summit, 45 minutes before my planned activation and the beginning of the winter VHF contest. To stay warm, we walked in small loops in the clearing, and when the time came, headed up the trail to the summit.

Summits On the Air is what drew me into ham radio. I had always loved hiking, and less than two years ago I had passed my technician test in order to stay in compliance while operating my FPV drone. After watching a few of my favorite ham YouTubers discuss and demonstrate a SOTA activation, I got excited to combine my old and new interests.

For those unfamiliar, SOTA is a contest in which activators and chasers receive points for activating from certain designated summits. They range from the one-point Mt. Philo to the ten-point Camel's Hump. There is a three-point bonus for the higher summits activated during the winter.

I started with Mt. Philo with my HT and a roll-up J-pole, getting Bob and Al on the Bolton repeater and a few others from the Burlington repeater to QSY to 146.52. Then in January 2022, I went up Bolton Mountain on what I later learned was the winter VHF contest and experienced my first pileup. I ended with 13 QSOs, including a 60-miler over to Essex County, VT. I was hooked.

Later that winter I dragged my friends up Mt. Ethan Allen (just south of Camel's Hump) during a snowstorm. During a family summer vacation on Lake George, I was the first activator of a one-point summit overlooking the lake. In the fall, I took a two-element Yagi up Spruce Mountain in east-central Vermont, and made QSO's all over northern Vermont and NH. I was very excited about the range I could get, and looked forward to trying the Yagi on a very high summit on a contest day.

That day came this past January, and the summit was Camel's Hump. Before leaving the clearing and making our final approach to the summit, I swapped out my base layer and put the hand warmers in my gloves to avoid operating with frozen fingers as I had on Mount Ethan Allen the year before.

Unfortunately, the cloud cover stuck around longer than the forecast had indicated, and we arrived on the summit to light snow blowing at fifteen miles per hour (see the attached pictures). I got to work putting together the Yagi with gloves on (as I had practiced; never try anything for the first time on a summit in the winter), and got myself to the small rock ridge that is the highest point on the mountain. Anticipating another pile-up, perhaps worse due to the gain of the Yagi, I pointed it north east and called CQ. Alas, the Yagi was not operating as I expected, snapping between full-quieting to barely breaking the squelch. Perhaps it was the icing on elements, or the cold loosening a connection. I got seven QSOs, barely, and with mild frustration, disassembled the Yagi and headed down the mountain. It was a successful activation, but not the one I imagined.

The next challenge was Jay Peak, where my family and I spent last week while the kids were on break. It was the perfect opportunity to bag an 8-point summit, but I didn't think it would be easy. While in that part of the state before, I had tried to raise other stations via the Jay Peak repeater, unsuccessfully. I was doubtful that a mid-week, mid-afternoon VHF activation would find enough chasers to make the required four QSOs. Having passed my general this past November, and with a QRP HF radio and antenna in hand and operational, I planned to attempt my first HF SOTA activation. Jay Peak happens to be both a SOTA summit and in Jay State Forest, which is a Parks On The Air

(POTA) location. This allowed me to spot myself on the quite active POTA website. Despite this, I was not hopeful that I would be successful as it was my first attempt at an HF activation, I was going to be running QRP, and it was a mid-week afternoon.

On a snowy, windy day, I got away and took the tram to the summit. Just outside the tram house I set up and tuned my loaded whip, ran the feed line to a slightly more protected spot, and found an open frequency on 20m. I called CQ for about twenty minutes then decided that any longer would be futile (never try anything for the first time on the summit of a mountain in the winter!), and my hands were getting cold. Since I had my VHF gear in the backpack, and the only time limit being my hands, I gave it a shot on 2 meters. Sure enough, I quickly made a QSO to Derby Line, then Morrisville, then Essex Junction, and finally Laval, Quebec. My 2m gear and my fellow hams came through and made my activation successful. As I was breaking down, I noticed that my HF antenna was covered in ice and lying prone in the snow. (See the two previous parentheticals!)

I am permanently hooked on the challenges of activating summits in the winter. I plan to keep doing it as long as my body permits. For those reading this with whom I've made QSOs, thank you, you make the planning and the effort worth it! Recently, a group of outdoorsy hams have gotten organized to do some summit activations together. Let me know if you are interested in joining us!

(Photos courtesy of Greg Maino).



Technician Grade Class

Eric NJ1S

**March 11th 2023 from 2 to 3 pm we are doing
Technician grade classes in Shelburne, VT.
Location the Pierson Library**

Interested in Amateur Radio? Emergency Communications?

The St. Albans Amateur Radio Club (www.starc.org) will conduct a series of classes to help prepare those interested in obtaining a Technician Class amateur radio license.

Why should I get an amateur radio license?

- Learn about radio technology and electronics.
- Assist in emergency and disaster communications.
- Space communications via satellites and even the ISS. The International Space Station.
- Talk with other amateur radio operators locally and internationally.
- When all other modes of communication fail, amateur radio will get the message through.

Most of all - it is now easier than ever; there are no Morse Code requirements, only a 35-question multiple choice test.

**Interested - Classes and exams will be held at the: Pierson Library, 5376 Shelburne Road.
Shelburne, VT 05482**

The class schedule is as follows:

Saturday, March 11, from 2 pm - 3 pm
Saturday, March 18, from 2 pm - 3 pm
Saturday, March 25, from 2 pm - 3 pm
Saturday, April 1st, from 2 pm - 3 pm

At the end of the fourth class, the Technician Class exam will be administered on-site by volunteer examiners certified by the American Radio Relay League (www.arrl.org) for \$15.00. There is no cost to attend the classes.

Those taking the exam will need two forms of ID, an FCC FRN number, and an email address. Please keep in mind that the (FCC) Federal Communication Commission does have a \$35-dollar fee after you pass your exam! None of the Volunteer member are paid in any way this is a community service!

Successful exam completion results in issuing an amateur radio license and call sign.

In addition to attending the classes, we suggest those interested use www.hamstudy.com to prepare. There is no cost to use the web application, and we encourage those interested in signing up and beginning practicing for the Technician license. Additional study resources are offered by the ARRL here: <http://www.arrl.org/tech-prep-resource-library>

Mask will not be required however they are optional.

Those interested in attending the classes are asked to register by filling out the contact page at: <https://www.starc.org/contact-us/>

For more information or to register, please contact NJ1S Eric Lessard at Lessarderic29@yahoo.com Or call(802)497-9000



**St. Albans
Amateur Radio Club**



NEWS & VIEWS

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NEXT MEETING

March 9th 2023 7:00pm
Holy Family Parrish Hall

Meeting Topic

Telephone Caribbean Cruise DX Upcoming Events

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