



RADIO AMATEUR NEWS & VIEWS

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An ARRL Special Service Club

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HAM-CON'S HOT HITS!

Mitch **W1SJ**

The March 17th RANV Meeting
Join us Tuesday for HAM-CON's Hot Hits – a
survey of the best of HAM-CON 2026.

We have some 4 hours of recorded forums from the
show and I'm sure many of you have not seen all of
it. We will present a 5–10-minute snippet of each
presentation for your viewing pleasure. We might
discuss or rate each presentation for fun.

Please be sure to attend in person. We will have an
on-line meeting going, but videos rarely come out
all that good when sent through Zoom. Local
members should always attend live. The on-line
meeting is more for the benefit of those who are far
away (more than 45 minutes) or those who cannot
travel.

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

Repeater: 145.150, PL 100; WB1GQR

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HAM-CON 2026 A GREAT SUCCESS

Mitch W1SJ

We pulled it off. Not only that, we knocked it out of the park. HAM-CON 2026 was a tremendous success, as relayed to me by many attendees. The paid attendance was 214. This number included folks on site, folks on Zoom and folks who bought tickets to watch later on. This was the best attendance we have had since before COVID. It has taken a long time to get everyone back in the habit of attending the show. These days, just maintaining attendance at ham radio events is tough. You might have noticed that everyone is getting much older, and with that comes the inability of old people to attend events. Sadly, young people are rare DX at most ham events. With the tireless promotion and progressive ideas in our ticket pricing, we were able to make money which will be used for future events.

With the improved attendance, all events were better attended and just seemed better. The flea market was a mobbed early on. I couldn't even get into the room! Many folks from distant locations expressed satisfaction with the sales.

The pop-up talks and demonstrations were quite busy all day. We had a talk set up for Emergency Preparedness and the Hospital Net. I was concerned that they would not draw people in (based on past attempts with this topic years ago). Their table was mobbed all day! Great job by John and Kate! It is good to see that hams are once again interested in emergency preparedness. The other tables: W1V, DMR, AREDN and Tech were also quite busy all morning. We had a veritable "3-Ring Circus" of events with the tables, the two forum rooms and the Flea Market all vying for the attention of attendees.

The forums were well attended and excellent. Despite a tiny staff and multiple technical issues, we pulled it off. At the ARRL forum, President Stew was presented with the ARRL Special Service Club recognition, something we have been working

on for a while. I noticed that the Elecraft forum did not have a large number of people in the room. But when I looked on the stream, there were even more people on-line than in house. With eight different things all happening all at once, there was a lot for everyone to take in.

The new Kahoots ham trivia game show was successful as 20 people were trying to correctly answer all the weird questions I was throwing at them. Most got the rules and regulations questions wrong. The FCC has been notified!

We gave away 18 door prizes both on-line and live. A big thank you goes to Joe K2NWS who donated a dual band mobile radio and HT. I heard back from the winner of the HT, whose old HT died just before the Convention. Now there's a story with a happy ending!

COMING UP IN RANV

Mitch W1SJ

With HAM-CON behind us, what is next? Some would say Field Day, but that is 3 ½ months off. And then the Holiday Party is 5 months after that. We should have other things going on.

To be perfectly blunt, outside of these major events, not much went on last year. The picnic was tiny. Club meetings averaged around 10 – even with on-line attendees. No one gets on the repeater anymore. Activity on the reflector has dropped. As the largest and most active radio club in Vermont we could be doing better. We must be doing better to keep amateur radio in Vermont strong.

This year, 2026 is the "Year of the Club" sponsored by the ARRL. We should embrace this. What should we be doing? Here is an idea.

We already know that some of our key operators at Field Day will not be with us or have limited available time. At the same time, some of our GOTA operators are in a position to be promoted to the main station. To remain competitive, we need to

bring these operators up to a higher level of performance. And we need to bring new amateur operators into the GOTA operation. And by increasing performance, I mean on SSB, not digital! FT8 has its uses, but it builds little operating skill beyond moving a mouse. There have been a good number of new hams who have been licensed in Vermont over the last few years. Where are they? Most exist only as a listing on QRZ.

Here is the proposal. Everyone raves about park activations. I do several each year by myself from very remote locations. Instead, let's do club-based activations from close by parks. The purpose is twofold: build operating ability and build group camaraderie.

We are looking at the time period from late April, when the weather gets nicer, through early June. There are several nearby parks we could activate. Some are available before Memorial Day, while others are not. One idea is to activate Knight Point State Park for the New England QSO Party May 2-3. This would be a combined activation along with a contest. It is busier than a normal activation, but a lot less busy than Field Day. Or we could activate other nearby parks, on non-contest weekends. The goal is to get a sizeable number of people operating on phone making contacts, dealing with QRM and accurately logging. Between equipment Bob and I can provide, we can easily put 2-3 stations on the air, making room for everyone.

April 19, 20, 25, 26, May 8, 9, 30, 31 and June 6, 7 are good dates for this. Weekends we avoid are those including NEAR-Fest, Dayton and the Vermont City Marathon. An activation generally runs from 10AM (park opening) until around 4PM. The goal is to plan to active for this entire time and not just "pop in" for an hour. You want to allow time to operate and watch others. Time spent on the air means you get better at your craft.

So, do this. Get on the reflector and tell us what dates you are available. If you have a preference of location, mention that too. But the key point is to make the commitment. Nothing gets done – you

don't learn, you don't get better, and you don't have fun, unless you participate. We'll plan to do activations on the most requested dates and plan to have a boatload of fun!

HAM CON PICTURES

Bob **K1BIF** Mitch **W1SJ**







Chittenden County Region FM Simplex Net Zachary **K1ZK**

QST: The March 2026 edition of the Chittenden County Region 2m FM simplex net will be at 8:00pm EDT on Monday, March 23, 2026, on 146.55 MHz.

We have several stations running good antennas in the area, so chances are good that you'll be able to work us on simplex. All amateur radio stations are welcome to join.

73 de **K1ZK**

Adam Koeble - **KD2YFY**



**WARREN COUNTY RADIO CLUB
HAM RADIO SWAP MEET
APRIL 11TH 2026 10AM UNTIL 2PM**



**INSIDE THE COMMON AREA
AT THE AVIATION MALL
QUEENSBURY, NY EXIT 19 OFF I-87
ENTRANCE NEAR 99
RESTAURANT/PLANET FITNESS**

**ENTRY IS FREE \$10 FEE PER TABLE TO SELL
RAFFLE TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE**

**LICENSE TESTING
WILL BE HELD AT
9:00AM IN THE OLD
AMERICAN EAGLE
STORE**





**WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
AMATEUR RADIO?
CHECK OUT OUR PUBLIC INFO TABLE OR
DISCOVER MORE AT WWW.W2WCR.ORG**

We are looking for lots of sellers this year! All it costs is \$10 and you can do some spring cleaning! [Sign up here](#)

<https://www.w2wcr.org/events/swapmeet>

Door Prizes are starting to show up, and we're excited for this year's rounds of prizes! Bioenno, N3FJP, and more are starting to show up!

Head Copy with the CW Academy Advanced Course

Peter N1KJ

This past week I graduated from the CW Academy Advanced Course and thought it might be useful to write down some thoughts to share with you.

My motivation for taking the course was to bring my CW skills back up to 20 wpm or better to make me more useful as a POTA and SOTA operator. I passed my Extra license in 1999 when there was still a requirement for copying code at 20 wpm, so I had some residual knowledge, even though I'd been mostly inactive for the past two decades. After Christmas I looked around for on-line courses and found good reviews of the CW Academy. The courses they give are free and run by volunteers. I tested into the Advanced level, and the formal courses started in late January.

The course lasted eight weeks, with two online sessions per week each lasting two hours (one hour tutorial and another hour of practice) and three separate days of homework assignments between each session. The homework assignments were all head-copy practice, starting at 20 wpm in the first weeks and ramping up to 35 wpm in the final week. The practice included listening to on-line audio files of common prefixes and suffixes, short phrases, short QSOs, and short stories of several minutes of code. You aren't expected to copy everything, but if you can copy perhaps 50%, then you know you're on track. My instructor eventually told us that it's probably unrealistic to expect to copy at 35 wpm by the end of the course, but to try it anyway and push yourself outside of your comfort zone. We were also encouraged to turn on the radio every day and make contacts and have zoom practice sessions with classmates. However, we were reminded it's just a hobby. You should enjoy it. Don't stress out over it.

The tutorial material included recommendations for good paddles, how to adjust and care for them, how to be a considerate operator and adjust your speed accordingly, how to sustain an interesting rag chew,

how to tune your radio for the best reception, and aspects of RF safety. There were also recommendations for good books, notably "The Complete DXer" by Bob Locher. A huge emphasis was placed on building friendships amongst classmates and across the membership of CWOps, the parent organization of the CW Academy.

Although the stated goals of the Academy include bringing operators up to 25 wpm, the class emphasized good technique, rather than high speed. Most of the practice sessions were done at speeds below 20 wpm, but with emphasis on sending correctly: sending the spaces (not just the words), and keeping consistent timing between letters.

I had previously arrived at 20 wpm by writing everything down, and it came as a shock to learn I had to put down my pen to copy at higher speeds. That was really difficult. I found if I wrote everything down, I could copy almost everything up to about 20 wpm, but when I switched to head copy, I was initially missing quite a lot unless I backed down to 15 wpm or slower. I made my own audio files of common words, I used ebook2cw to create longer audio files, and I kept up with the sessions.

We were told that at about 25 wpm we'd need to start switching over to a mostly "phonic" approach to head-copy, where we're no longer stringing letters on a blackboard in our brain, but composing words from their letter sounds; this saves a mental step of converting letters to sounds to form meaning. I still haven't quite mastered that. I did master a reasonable vocabulary of easily identifiable words and a moderate ability to head copy at 20 wpm, but not quite enough to decode the short stories at higher speeds. That will take a while longer. My CW skills are certainly better than they were at Christmas, and for that I'm grateful.

If you're interested in learning CW or improving your CW skills, I would strongly recommend the CW Academy. I had a very good experience with them. I have great respect for my instructor and the co-instructors. Their heart is in the right place and I'm grateful for them making me a better operator.

Peter Lawson, N1KJ, CWOps #3905



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NEXT MEETING

Tuesday March 17th 7:00pm
Holy Family Parish Hall
30 Lincoln St, Essex Junction, VT 05452

Meeting Topic

HAM-CON Hot Hits
Analog Computer Demonstration

Upcoming, Notices, & Misc

- Steering Wheel: 3rd Tue Noon; JP's Essex, Vt
- VE Exams every 2nd Friday;
- Contact AB1WG for information
- Dues due? Pay online at www.ranv.org/ranvpay.html