



Nashoba Valley
Amateur Radio Club

SIGNAL

A club since 1992



Since 1993



Since 1996

de N1NC

January 2017

Volume 26 Number 1



K1NKR photos

This Month's Meeting

Short Subjects Night. What subjects? You decide. SSN is the second of two consecutive meetings that rely entirely on member participation. Have you been interested in some general or technical ham radio topic that doesn't fit into the "homebrew" category? Tell us about it now. (The floor is yours for 5-15 minutes.) We'll get on with the imported entertainment next month.

Last Month's Meeting

The forecast of frigid cold put a damper on attendance for our annual Home Brew Night. Still, there was something special about the get-together. There was lots of give-and-take, really appropriate for a HB night. Even those few (of the few who *did* brave the cold) who didn't bring something in offered a quick description of their 2016 projects.

The President's Corner

Welcome to 2017. I hope everyone had a great holiday season.

2016 turned out to be very busy and I had hoped to be more active on the air, especially in the National Parks On The Air event. It turned out that getting my mobile/portable station set up in van took longer than anticipated. I did make three activations helping to put NVARC in the top half of the listed Activators. Credit also to Bruce K1BG and Skip K1NKR for being other Activators.

This month's program will be Members Short Subjects and if you intend to present please contact one of the Officers or Board Members so we can plan for time and any A/V support you might need. Presentations should be from a few minutes to ten or so minutes. Remember this month's program depends on YOU.

For the January Tech Night Jim AB1WQ has volunteered to run a discussion/presentation on CHIRP with the thought of making it easier to prepare radios with a common set of frequencies (including those for the Boston Marathon and Groton Road Race). Maintaining a single frequency matrix that can be downloaded to many different radio manufacturers' models can simplify getting ready for events. Users must be aware that CHIRP may not support all the features of a particular model radio, but just by providing a common database it can save a lot of work. CHIRP seems to support both handhelds and mobile radios.

We still have a number of volunteer positions that need to be filled. I think the most important to fill are the Public Information Officer (PIO), Tech Night Coordinator, and the Field Day Coordinator (the only one with a real deadline). To describe just one, I'll take the Tech Night Coordinator this month. His/her task is to be the focal point for members who wish to lead a TN activity. This person would coordinate when each activity could take place. They would probably issue a monthly email to the reflector to let people know what is happening. The coordinator is not expected to provide the activities, though they could if they chose to. Therefore, we

actually need a coordinator plus five people to fill the February through June Tech Night programs. Since we have the space reserved through June we (I), or someone else, will need to close the building after each scheduled meeting because it will have been left open for us. I will take on the closer roll until June or until someone volunteers. We do need to have someone take on the TN Coordinator position before we renew the space for the fall.

73, Stan KD1LE

News and Happenings

Folks around the Table

Sometimes you find that the guy who seems to smile the least has the largest heart of gold in the crowd.



*K1NKR photo
(rare photo of Jim smiling)*

Jim N8VIM provides not just the generator for Field Day, but all the infrastructure power and communications. One year, when we held FD at a fixed site, Jim uncovered and corrected problems in the building's CAT-5 distribution system. Jim has provided a number of years' photography service for FD as well: sometimes using his own airplane to ferry KD1SM and a camera around, sometimes shooting occasional snaps from an RC aircraft.

Are you troubleshooting? Ask Jim for help. He's a darn good engineer with a great command of the analog, digital, IT, and mechanical worlds. He's also an expert in the networks, protocols, and messages that are going on under the hood of your vehicle. Now if we could only get him on the air more often...

Jim's got an endless supply of tools—and blood, sweat, and guts—to support any club

project (not to mention a half-built airplane in his basement.).

Here's a grand "highest regards" to NVARC member, Jim N8VIM.

de Skip K1NKR

January Tech Night

Jim AB1WQ has agreed to wave the Tech Night flag for a while. Our TNs have been successful for years as informal affairs but frankly, even informality doesn't happen without someone to keep the fires lit.

January's TN is going to be an information sharing and hands-on session about HTs, aka handy talkies: How to get one, how to program it (keypad or PC), how they work with repeaters, etc. Various features of various models; strengths and weaknesses. This is being done as an Elmering exercise, but we expect it will also help increase the pool of able volunteers for various public service events in which NVARC members have traditionally participated: the BAA Boston Marathon, the Groton Road Race, the Townsend Canoe Race, etc.

de Jim AB1WQ

And the 'Round Tuit Award Goes To

Paul NW1U, who got his station back on the air on 30 December after a 20 year, 3 month absence. All QSOs to date but one have been DX. Not a bad record!



K1NKR photo

Field Day – Step One

Just an FYI. I have applied for N1NC renewal. N1NC was due to expire on 2/12/17.

de Bruce, K1BG

December Tech Night

The December Tech Night meeting was used for planning 18/19 February's Thinking Day On The Air event with several area Girl Scout leaders. Skip K1NKR facilitated an open discussion by starting with the TDOTA presentation he has been giving to other clubs.



KD1LE photo

Girl Scout leaders representing Dunstable, Groton, and Harvard were there to learn about TDOTA, what they would have to do to run a local activity, and how we could support them. NVARC member Jill KB1SWV (who leads the Raymond NH group we have supported the past two years) was there to answer questions from the troop planning perspective.

In addition to local GS leadership, the following NVARC members attended: Skip K1NKR, Jill KB1SWV, Stan KD1LE, Ralph KD1SM, Jim AB1WQ, Bob W1XP, Greg WY1X, Tim W2JIG, and Tim's wife Rachael (also a GS leader).

The discussions were positive and it seems there is real interest in a local GS organization running an event activity.



KD1LE photo

This year presents both a positive and a challenging opportunity. The original thought had been that we might shift to a more local activity and the girls from NH would come down as visitors. Now it appears that the local activity might be fully subscribed on its own. That might mean we would also support the NH site for its own activity. The TDOTA international event takes place over the entire weekend so we could do an activity each day. Since one would be local with minimal travel, supporting an activity each day is possible—though we may need some additional participants. We will keep you up to date as we find out more.

Related to this, I am looking for a few more code oscillators and keys. The club has five MFJ code oscillator/keys and we borrowed an additional oscillator and paddle keyer for the last event. I would like to have eight sets (which is probably about the maximum noise and teaching that one person can handle). I would just like to borrow them for the weekend, unless you have one you don't want any more and wish to donate it to the club. They can be separate pieces as long as we can match them up into running units of key and oscillator.

de Stan KD1LE

Editor's Note

It's January. CTRL-ALT-DEL.

Well, maybe not. RESET? No.

But there is something "new start" to passing the rest of the world's annual calendar

demarcation. Except for NVARC. We live in a world of "add ins."

In September (the beginning of the so-called new program year), we kicked off by welcoming our local ARRL officials. October served up DX in the form of our W1-Bureau QSL sort. In November, Mack KC1EOB gave us a member's inside view of some specialized communications that occur outside the ham bands. December's Home Brew Night and this month's Short Subjects Night highlight our in-club talents and interests. We'll have visitors in February, and March regaling us with stories about historical operating challenges and about HF DXpeditioning. Then the better weather brings public service season, and maybe antenna repair season. Leading into sporadic-E season, member Joe K1YOW will tell us about VHF propagation. You might say that our meetings culminate with an end-of-program-year Field Day but we all know that the club has non-meeting night activities in the summer months, too. So, throughout the year we continuously "add in" one topic after another.

Lots of interests. Lots of activities. Lots of skills to share. Building, studying, operating, serving, contesting, fraternizing--it's all the mark of a healthy "full service" local club.

And the cycle goes on.

BTW, in an earlier issue of *Signal* I suggested a number of local places with radio, Amateur, or geographic themes that could be visited. The January-February issue of Yankee Magazine highlights the Mapparium in Boston. To read the article, go to <https://newengland.com/yankee-magazine/travel/massachusetts/boston/mapparium/>.

73, Skip K1NKR

Public Service

The Boston Marathon is the largest public service event for Amateur Radio in New England, possibly even in the country. The Boston Athletic Association needs nearly 300 Amateur Radio operators to cover positions from the Athlete's Village at the starting point in Hopkinton to the finish line in downtown Boston, to support the buses that

transport runners who cannot finish, and to operate the net control centers.

Due to the security procedures imposed on the BAA in recent years, volunteer registration closes well before Marathon Day. So if you are interested, please pose your questions soon so you can still decide to register before February 8. While the BAA Communications Committee has previously gotten some leeway in "getting people in" after the deadline, that window is decreasing.

Here's an excerpt from an email that was sent on 4 January:

[QUOTE] Volunteer registration is open for the 2017 Boston Marathon! Sign up today on the BAA's web site.

<http://www.baa.org/races/boston-marathon/event-information/volunteer-information/volunteer-registration.aspx>

You don't need to specify any group name or passcode. Just make sure you request at least one ham radio assignment in your preferences. Once you get your application confirmation number, you're all set.

If you're a returning volunteer, you'll be asked to provide your BAA Volunteer Loyalty Number. You should've received that in a separate e-mail from the BAA today. There's also a tool to look it up on the BAA volunteer site. If you still have trouble finding it, e-mail us <mailto:contact@hamradioboston.org> and we can help you out.

If you have any questions about volunteer registration, or the 2017 Marathon generally, please get in touch <mailto:contact@hamradioboston.org> anytime. Volunteering at the Marathon is a big job, and we appreciate the time and effort everyone puts into it. We're happy to do what we can to make your work more comfortable or effective. [END QUOTE]

de Ralph KD1SM

Outbound QSLs

The Board of Directors discussed the increased cost of the ARRL's Outgoing QSL Service at its January meeting. In the past, NVARC has paid the fees for members to send cards to the outbound bureau. This significant member benefit was initiated spe-

cifically to encourage more operating activity among the membership.

Effective January 2017, the ARRL increased the charge for this service from \$0.80 per ounce to \$1.15 per ounce plus a flat \$7.00 charge per shipment. After some discussion, the BoD decided to continue this benefit for club members but to limit the number of shipments to two a year. The last shipment went out in August 2016.

Members having QSL cards for DX stations that are serviced by a bureau can bring them to the monthly club meeting and give them to me for shipment. Sort your cards alphabetically by prefix and include proof of ARRL membership. I'll do the rest.

de Rod WA1TAC

Treasurer's Report

Income for December was \$75 from membership fees and \$36 from the December meeting book/hardware raffle. Expenses were \$18.80 for newsletter postage leaving a net income of \$92.20 for the month.

Current balances:

General fund \$2,924.76

Community fund \$4,886.41

As of 5 January we have 51 members who are current with their dues and 9 renewals outstanding. Thank you to those of you who hand in your dues before I come to you. Please check your renewal status on the roster circulated at the monthly meeting or ask me.

de Ralph KD1SM

Board Meeting Notes

Board meeting 1/5/2017

Attending: Stan KD1LE, Jim N8VIM, John KK1X, Ralph KD1SM, Rod WA1TAC, Ed N1YFK, Jim AB1WQ. Observing: Bob W1XP, Skip K1NKR.

Club Services

Elmering

Extending the thought from the comments in N8VIM's highlight above, we should all remember that NVARC has a multitude of members with experience in virtually all aspects of the hobby. For digital modes, see KK1X or K1YOW. For circuits, try KW2T, W1XP, or K1JEB. K1LGQ and KK1X are our QRPers. K1BG and N1SV for contests and DX. And on, and on.

Field Day

The club's premier operating event. Heck, every club's premier operating event. Traditionally held on the next-to-last inclement weekend in June, FD is a little bit contest, a little bit EMCOM practice, a little bit publicity, a little bit socializing—and a great way to conclude the program year.

ARRL Renewals

If you are joining ARRL or renewing your membership please consider letting Ralph send in the paperwork for you. The Club will buy the stamp and will get a commission from ARRL. ARRL membership checks should be made payable to NVARC; Ralph deducts the Club commission before forwarding your paperwork to Newington. As an Special Service Club, the ARRL expects a majority of Club members to also be ARRL members.

Calendar

Upcoming Events

January

21 WARC Flea market, Whitman MA

February

4 CVFMA Flea market, Springfield VT

18/19 NVARC's support of Girl Scout Thinking Day On The Air (maybe here!)

18 AARC Flea market, Marlboro MA

March

5 NEARC Antiques XLVIII, Westford MA

April

17 Boston Marathon

20 NVARC election night

20-23 Eastern VHF Conf., Manchester CT

Upcoming Operating Activities

January

21-23 VHF Sweepstakes

February

13-17 School Club Roundup

18-19 ARRL DX - CW

March

4-5 ARRL DX – phone

April

16 Rookie Roundup – phone

Are you a “contest nut?” See <http://www.arrl.org/contest-calendar> (Contest Corral) for month-by-month listings of both ARRL and non-ARRL contests.

A Final Thought

I was reading a recent story about a school that had a “contact” with the ISS and it reminded me of the event we supported for the Hawthorne Brook Middle School in Townsend in 2005. Bob W1XP, Larry W1ESR (SK), Gary K1YTS, and I set up at the school the end of November with snow on the ground (though the parking lot was clear) to make that contact.



N1SV photo

But not all schools get the same idea or impression of what it means to make a space contact and what it takes to make that happen. In our case the tower trailer with antennas on AZ-EL rotators were visible out the window actively tracking the ISS. We also had a second independent system with antennas several hundred feet away connect to a second transceiver. In the recent event the contact was by Telebridge. In that case, the school calls a ham on the phone or via the Internet and he basically sets up a phone patch using his equipment. To me that does

not demonstrate what it takes to talk to space and reduces rocket science to a phone call. I guess I'm just glad that NVARC could, on short notice, give a group of kids the full picture of a space contact. Like many activities of this type we all learned something in the process.



W1ESR photo

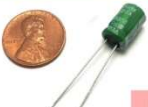





While it was good that the kids in the recent event got to make the contact via Teledridge, wouldn't a "real" contact have been better for outreach and STEM? Almost anyone can provide a service over the Internet, but it was a lot more fun being there.

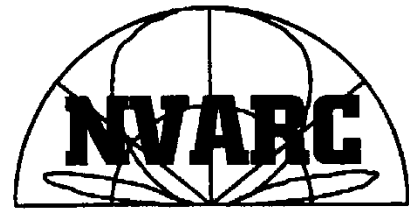
...Somewhat related, because it takes similar equipment, would be a club project to work together through a series of Tech Nights or other meetings and plan out and build a station for EME or satellite tracking and make a group contact or series of contacts.

de Stan KD1LE

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Amateur Radio Club**

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 Rod Hersh WA1TAC, 2015-2018
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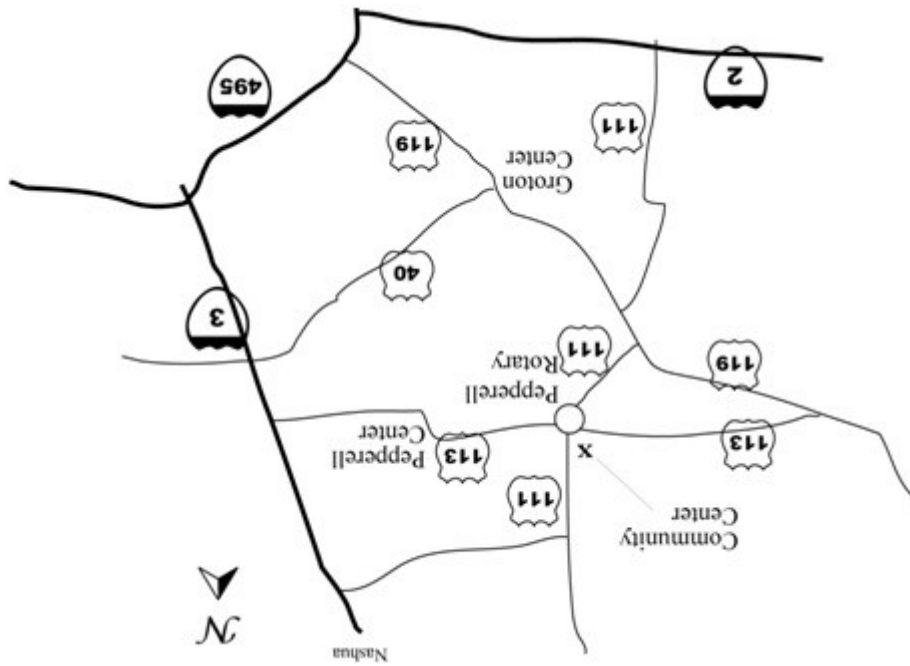
Join NVARC! Annual membership dues are \$15; \$20 for a family.

Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Pepperell Community Center.

Contact us on the N1MNX repeater.
 442.900 (+), 100Hz
 147.345 (+), 100 Hz
 53.890 (-), 100Hz

This newsletter is published monthly. Submissions, corrections and inquiries should be directed to the newsletter editor. Articles and graphics in most PC-compatible formats are OK.

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