

Washington Amateur
Communications, Inc.
c/o Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI
60 Carl Avenue B-2
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829

The WACOM

HAM

FEBRUARY
2006



Prez Says

The Washington County Sports Show will be Feb. 2, 3, 4, and 5, 2006 at the Washington Crown Center. We will be there again with our Special Event Station using the call W3C. Come by and help operate — everyone welcome. Contact Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI for more information.

As you all probably know, the regular meeting will be on Wednesday, Feb. 1st at 7:30 p.m. in Room 103 of the Washington County Building. Remember that the garage is open on the upper level for free parking in the evening.

We will be having a Technician level class again this April. The dates will be announced as soon as possible. Please let Bob Ketzell KB3IN, know of your interest so he can arrange for books for the class.

Dues are due for 2006. Please be sure we have your correct address and contact information. Looking forward to seeing you all soon!

— 73, Jacqué Gosselin N3ZEL
President, WACOM

SuitSat 1 About to Launch	2
Idaho Telecommunications Utility To Drop BPL	3
Coming Events	3
FCC To Require Vanity Fees On Renewal	4
Hamfest Announcements	5

W3C SPECIAL EVENT STATION

February 2, 3, 4 & 5, Washington County Sports Show,
Washington Crown Center — All Welcome to Help Operate!

UPCOMING MEETINGS!



Next WACOM Monthly Meeting:
Wednesday, February 1, 2006, 7:30 PM
 Room 103, Washington County Building,
 Downtown Washington.

Next WACOM Board of Directors Meeting:
 Thursday, February 23, 7:30 PM
 Krispy Kreme, Washington

All Welcome!

ISS Crew Prepares for Suit-Sat 1 courtesy of the American Radio Relay League

NEWINGTON, CT, January 27, 2006 — Preparations for a walk in space are taking center stage onboard the International Space Station. The Amateur Radio community will be paying closer-than-usual attention Friday, February 3, when Expedition 12 Commander Bill McArthur KC5ACR, and Flight Engineer Valery Tokarev exit the ISS. That's because one of the first things they're expected to do is place "SuitSat-1"— a surplus Russian *Orlan* spacesuit that's been outfitted with an Amateur Radio transmitter — Into Earth orbit. SuitSat is a project of the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program.

"SuitSat is a Russian brainstorm," ARISS International Chairman Frank Bauer KA3HDO, explains in an article about SuitSat on the Science@NASA Web site. Bauer works at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. He credits ARISS-Russia's Sergei Samburov RV3DR, and his colleagues with coming up with the concept of turning the old spacesuit into a novel satellite. SuitSat is a first test of that idea, Bauer says.

The uninhabited space suit will contain a one-half watt radio transmitter, three batteries and internal sensors to measure temperature and battery voltage. "As SuitSat circles Earth, it will transmit its condition to the ground," Bauer says. SuitSat's 145.990 MHz signal should be able to be heard with a handheld transceiver or a scanner with a modest antenna. It will identify itself by saying "This is SuitSat-1 RSØRS" in several languages.

SuitSat's telemetry will include mission time, suit temperature and battery voltage (28 V is nominal). It will beam down a single Robot 36-format slow-scan TV image, similar in resolution to a cell-

phone quality picture. The image takes 36 seconds to receive.

Plans call for configuring the NA1SS Phase 2 station aboard the ISS as a crossband repeater and retransmitting the 145.990 MHz signal on 437.800 MHz FM. The Phase 2 transceiver runs 10 W.

SuitSat's temperature controls will be turned off to conserve power. This means the suit, which may spin once McArthur and Tokarev let it go, will be exposed to the sun's intense heat with no way to regulate its internal temperature.

"Will the suit overheat? How long will the batteries last? Can we get a clear transmission if the suit tumbles?" wonders Bauer in the Science@NASA article. Lessons learned from this inaugural SuitSat deployment will help ARISS in planning future SuitSat ventures. At least one more surplus Orlan space suit remains aboard the ISS.

If all goes as planned, SuitSat will transmit its voice messages, telemetry and SSTV image on a nine-minute cycle as it orbits Earth. Its batteries should hold out for about a week after deployment, and SuitSat's free-floating, decaying orbit should cause it to re-enter Earth's atmosphere after some six weeks in space.

SuitSat's payload also includes a CD containing hundreds of school pictures, artwork, poems, and student signatures.

The February 3 space walk may last up to six hours, NASA says. It will begin at 2220 UTC, and SuitSat should be released into orbit within the first hour of the event.

Idaho Utility Subsidiary Dumps BPL courtesy of the American Radio Relay League

NEWINGTON, CT, January 27, 2006 — IDACOMM, a telecommunications subsidiary of Boise, Idaho-based IDACORP, has bailed out of BPL. While the company has not been providing BPL service on a commercial basis, it has been cooperating with IDACORP subsidiary Idaho Power in a Boise test, and it had partnered with IBM and electric utility CenterPoint Energy to help design, install and operate a BPL pilot project in the Houston, Texas, area. IDACORP Chief Executive Jan Packwood says the company has "fully explored the BPL opportunity" and believes that it has "significant long-term potential," but utilities have not been flocking to adopt the technology.

"Commercialization . . . will require widespread adoption by electric utilities, and we do not see signs of that happening anytime soon," Packwood said in a January 25 announcement. "We have good assets in three of the West's fastest-growing cities, and we believe that concentrating on our home markets and core products of voice and fiber optic transport will achieve profitability much more quickly."

ARRL CEO David Sumner, K1ZZ, says he views IDACOMM's abandonment of BPL as just part of a larger pattern. "BPL proponents said that 2005 was going to be a big year for the technology," he commented, "but in fact there were exactly as many commercial deployments at the end of the year as at the beginning--two--and the pilot projects are disappearing as companies cut their losses."

IDACOMM says it started exploring BPL because it was a "natural interest" for a telecommunications company already offering broadband and affiliated with an electric utility. The company was said to be consulting with

several other utilities across the US on how to implement the BPL, but it planned to focus its initial commercial forays in states like California and Texas that have statutes promoting BPL.

The company has been working with BPL equipment manufacturers Ambient, Amperion and Mitsubishi. All supply DS2-based hardware which, in some BPL field trials, has proven difficult to effectively "notch" frequency ranges--such as the Amateur Radio bands --to avoid interference.

IDACOMM had touted itself as "the premiere company to offer a comprehensive, turnkey BPL solution stretching across the spectrum of the BPL value chain." The company now says it "will focus exclusively on building its existing competitive local exchange carrier business in Boise, Las Vegas and Reno, and phasing out the portion of the business previously dedicated to exploring the potential of using power lines as the conduit for high speed Internet service, commonly referred to as BPL," although it will fulfill any outstanding BPL-related contracts with other companies.

As a result of the change in corporate strategy, IDACOMM will take "a non-cash charge related to impairment of goodwill of approximately \$10 million" in the fourth quarter of 2005, the company said. That's approximately 24 cents per share at IDACORP. The company has declined to disclose how much money it had invested in BPL.

It's not known if there's any connection between IDACOMM's BPL pullout and the recent departure of its CEO Chris Britton. IDACOMM has said Britton "left the company to pursue other interests."

Do you know someone who has really stood out in their service to amateur radio? That service could be in: technical abilities; public service; training; education, you name it.

Wouldn't it be an honor for that individual or group to be recognized by their peers for their time and talents spent in good service to others?

Why not nominate them for one of the Atlantic Division Awards that they qualify for?

Atlantic Division awards are presented annually to the hams who make us proud to be part of the Amateur Radio Service. Nominations are taken from the ham community. Selection is made by an Awards Committee chaired by the Division Vice Director.

The awards are conferred at the annual Division Convention. Amateurs of any license class may be nominated for awards

Nominations must come from within the Atlantic Division.

The Awards Committee may, at their discretion, shift a nomination made in one award category to another award category, in order to honor a larger number of worthy nominees.

AMATEUR OF THE YEAR

The Radio Amateur in the Atlantic Division whose record merits recognition for outstanding contributions to the Amateur Radio Service.

He or she is active on the air and in Amateur Radio organizations. The Amateur of the Year is an all-round Amateur, whose activities, attitudes, and achievements may serve as an example to others. Devotion to Amateur Radio is balanced with attention to work responsibilities and family life. The Amateur of the Year exemplifies the "Amateur's Code."

In selecting the award recipient, emphasis is placed on service to others rather than self, diversity of Amateur Radio interests and activities, evidence of continuing self-challenge, and outstanding

contributions to Amateur Radio in the year preceding nomination.

TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT

The Radio Amateur(s) in the Atlantic Division whose technical excellence exemplifies "continuation of the Amateur's proven ability to contribute to the advancement of the radio art," and whose attitude exemplifies the highest dedication to service to others and to science, rather than self.

Particular value will be placed on evidence of continuing contributions to the Amateur Radio Service. Groups of two or more Amateurs may be nominated for a joint award in this category. Technical achievement may be demonstrated through activities such as the following: publications, research and development, creativity in hardware/firmware/software, systems design and implementation, technical instruction, application of advanced technology to public service communications. This award is presented at the discretion of the Awards Committee, not necessarily every year.

NOMINATIONS DEADLINE

The nomination period closes March 18, 2006 for this nomination.

AWARD NOMINATION FORM

To display the award nomination form, go to the web site <http://www.atldiv.org/AwardNominationForm.htm>

Then send the form to your printer or save it to disk.

If you can not get the form via the web, feel free to send a request to:

Tom Abernethy W3TOM
Atlantic Division Vice Director
PO Box 73
Accokeek, MD 20607

Upcoming Events

- February 2, 3, 4, 5 — W3C Special Event Station at Washington County Sport's Show
- February 18 — Breezeshooter's Groundwave Contest (CW)
- February 18, 19 — ARRL DX Contest CW
- February 26 — WASHFest 2006
- March 4, 5 — ARRL DX Contest SSB
- March 18 — Breezeshooter's Groundwave Contest (SSB)
- March 25, 26 — CQ WPX Contest SSB
- April 16 — WPRC Quarterly Meeting, Washington PA
- April 30 — 2 Rivers ARC Hamfest, Boston PA * New Date *
- May 19, 20, & 21 — Dayton Hamvention
- June 4 — Breezeshooter's Hamfest
- June 24, 25 — ARRL Field Day

FYI Networks

For Your Information needs

Make FYI Your Internet Service Provider
CONTACT FYI AT 1-877-FYI-4NET OR WWW.FYI.NET
MENTION THAT YOU ARE A WACOM MEMBER FOR A SPECIAL PRICE OF \$18 / MONTH.

"If you see rust on your shaft, your tower is too short"

— George Fremin K5TR

JOIN WACOM ON THE AIR

2 meter net: Every Tuesday at 8:30 PM on the W3CYO repeaters 145.49 and 443.3 MHz

YL Net: Every Wednesday at 7:30 PM on 146.79 MHz (OM's are welcome too!)

10 meter net: Every Tuesday at 9:00 PM on 28.340 MHz

FCC Requires Payment of Vanity Fee At Renewal, Too

NEWINGTON, CT, January 26, 2006 — As the window approaches to renew the very first Amateur Radio licenses issued a decade ago through the vanity call sign program, the question on many lips is, "Do I have to pay a vanity call sign fee again when I renew my license?" The answer is, "Definitely yes, if you want to keep your vanity call sign for another 10 years." The FCC has steadfastly maintained from the very start of the vanity call sign program that payment of the vanity call sign regulatory fee would be required for renewal applications as well as for new applications.

"Some commenters believe that the fee for a vanity call sign should be charged on a one-time basis only, and that no fee should be required when the license is renewed," the FCC remarked in its December 23, 1994, *Report and Order* in PR Docket 93-905, "Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules to Implement a Vanity Call Sign System." The Commission continued, "The ARRL believes that a one-time fee is more appropriate because the Commission's additional workload occurs at the time of the initial processing of the vanity call sign."

Under the provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, however, "we cannot provide a one-time fee for processing vanity call sign applications," the Commission concluded in 1994.

The FCC reaffirmed that stance in 2002 when it responded to two radio amateurs who had commented on its annual fee schedule proceeding, MD Docket 02-64. Both hams supported the payment of a regulatory fee to cover the initial administrative cost but questioned having to pay the fee upon renewal. The FCC responded that because it continues to incur costs related to vanity call signs even after their issuance or renewal, it believes the regulatory fee at renewal is appropriate.

"Section 9 of the Communications Act, as amended, provides for the recovery of the Commission's costs associated with its enforcement, policy and rulemaking, user information, and international activities," the FCC said in its *Report and Order*. "Every day, Commission staff are engaged in activities involving amateur vanity call signs, such as protecting the assignment of vanity call signs, investigating complaints on the improper or illegal usage of call signs, requests for call signs that are already assigned to someone else, and all related research that is

necessary to insure the proper assignment of call signs."

The first batch of vanity call sign renewals is expected to start showing up as early as this March. Part 97 provides that Amateur Radio licensees may apply for renewal only within 90 days of the expiration date of their licenses. Those who wish to retain their current vanity call signs will have to pay the vanity call sign fee, now \$21.90 for the 10-year license term. The fee could change, however, by the time the licenses of the greatest number of Amateur Radio vanity call sign holders come up for renewal this fall.

The ARRL VEC, which handles routine Amateur Radio license renewal applications as a service for League members, notes that it does *not* plan to process Amateur Radio vanity call sign renewal applications. ARRL VEC Manager Maria Somma, AB1FM, says that's because the VEC is currently not equipped to handle the regulatory fees that vanity renewals will require.

The vanity call sign fee has fluctuated over the years, but it's far lower than the \$70 the FCC first announced in its 1994 *Report and Order*. The fee subsequently was reduced to \$30 for the initial rounds of vanity call sign filers in 1996. Over the 10 years of the program, the fee has varied from a low of \$12 to a high of \$50.

The FCC's Part 97 rules are a bit more vague on the topic. §97.19(b) says, "Each application for a modification of an operator/primary or club station license grant, or the renewal thereof, to show a call sign selected by the vanity call sign system must be filed in accordance with §1.913 of this chapter." Part 1 references filing forms and fee schedules.

All Amateur Radio licensees filing renewal applications, whether or not they hold a vanity call sign, must have an FCC Registration Number and use it on the application. Vanity call sign renewal applications may be filed via the FCC's Universal Licensing System (ULS), and payment may be made online using a credit card. Filing is also possible on hard copy forms.

License application and renewal information and links to the required forms are available on the ARRL Amateur Application Filing FAQ Web page. The FCC's forms page also offers the required forms.

Straight Key Century Club

Have you ever wished that Straight Key Night would go on and on and on?

Have you ever wished for other incentives to dig out your old straight key or old bug and knock the dust off?

Ever wished they had a Straight Key Night more than once a year?

That is a light you see at the end of the tunnel!! Recently, a group of hams have decided to make their wishes come true and founded the Straight Key Century Club – a/k/a "SKCC". Yep, a Straight Key club - where you can dust off your straight key or old bug, and get on the air and torture other ops with your straight key fist ...

Here's how it will work:

- A) Open to any interested amateur
- B) Membership is free, there are no dues and it

Tom Peterson KC9ECI and Melinda Alsobrook KI4CIA

shall stay that way as long as practical.

- C) SKCC numbers are issued for life. Once you get it, it's yours. Take care of it. Above all, USE it.

The first day of each month, at 0000Z will be designated as a monthly operating event that allows SKCC members or non-SKCC members to work each other for credit. Contact with 100 SKCC members will qualify that person for a certificate of accomplishment.

Suggested operating frequencies are: 1.820, 3.530, 3.720, 7.055, 7.120, 10.120, 14.048, 18.080, 21.120, 24.910, 28.170, 50.090, & 144.07 MHz

For membership, please email Tom, KC9ECI, at tom@galesvillefiredepartment.org, or visit the web site at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/skcc/>



WASHfest 2006

The South Hills Hamfest

Sponsored by the Wireless Association of South Hills Amateur Radio Club, Inc.

Sunday, February 26th, 2006

8:00 AM until 3:00 PM Rain or Shine (or Snow!)

Castle Shannon VFD Memorial Hall

3600 Library Road (State Route 88), Castle Shannon, PA

Talk-In on 146.955(-) and 443.650(+) 131.8 PL



(800) 545-8881

**Breakfast & Lunch
provided by Jack's
Catering
of Peters Township**

**FREE Coffee for the entire Hamfest
courtesy of HAM RADIO INSURANCE ASSOCIATES
of Canonsburg, PA**

**Now in our
ELEVENTH big year!**

MAIN PRIZES — You've Got to play to WIN!

- 1st Prize: Yaesu FT-857D
- 2nd Prize: Yaesu FT-8800
- 3rd Prize: Yaesu FT-60R

Additional Hourly Door Prizes!

Main Prize tickets are \$2.00 each, or 3 for \$5.00 — All Prizes Subject to last-minute changes

For reservations, or information, Contact:

Steve Lane, W3SRL at (412) 341-1043 or Bill Hill, W3WH at (724) 746-1776

E-mail us directly at washarc@yahoo.com Check out our website too! www.n3sh.org

Hamfest Table Reservation Form—Please PRINT LEGIBLY ALL INFORMATION

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Phone: () _____ - _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Call Sign: _____

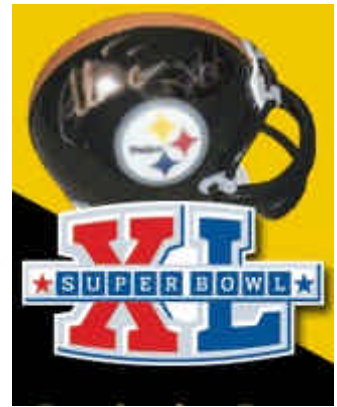
Tables WITH Electricity: _____ X \$15.00 = _____

Tables WITHOUT Electricity: _____ X \$10.00 = _____

Please make all checks payable to:
WIRELESS ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH HILLS
897 Lovington Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15216-1725

We reserve the right to resell any tables not occupied by 8 AM, unless prior arrangements have been made!

Washington Amateur Communications, Inc.
c/o Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI
60 Carl Avenue B-2
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829



We're On the Web!
www.wacomarc.org

Opinions expressed in the WACOM HAM are those of the author and not necessarily those of Washington Amateur Communications, Inc.

Copyright ©2006 by WACOM, Washington Amateur Communications Inc.

Reproduction of material from The WACOM HAM is permitted if credit is attributed to the author and The WACOM HAM.

The editor welcomes articles and timely information of interest to members and the general amateur community.

The WACOM HAM

Editor: Ron Notarius WN3VAW
412-572-6723 wn3vaw@njdx.org

WACOM Officers

President: Jacqué Gosselin N3ZEL
724-746-9235 n3zel@fyi.net

Vice President: Joe Caldwell N3XE
724-663-5708 joecaldwell.jc@gmail.com

Treasurer: Ed Oelschlager N3ZNI
724-746-9235 n3zni@arrl.net

Secretary: Susan Robishaw KB3JHQ
sracer318@netscape.net

Board of Directors

Elmer "Bud" Plants N3TIR
bnelectronics@starband.net

Dave Demotte N3IDH
724-228-8178 n3idh@hotmail.com

Bob Ketzell KB3IN
724-228-0425 kb3in@yahoo.net

Repeater

Sam Mayberry, W3CYO
724-222-0367 zammy@pghmail.com

PLEASE SEND YOUR 2006 DUES AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

Annual WACOM membership dues are only \$15 .
A couple pays only \$22.50.
Send your check payable to WACOM to:

Ed Oeschlager, N3ZNI,
Washington Amateur
Communications Inc.
60 Carl Avenue B-2
Eighty Four, PA 15330-2829



WACOM e-Mail Reflector

An e-mail reflector has been set up for WACOM members.

What's a reflector? It's a mailing list which lets you send one e-mail message to the list address — wa3com@yahoogroups.com — and have it "reflect" to all members of the list. Unlike a personal mailing list, you don't need to know all of the e-mail addresses for every single member of the list. Only group members can send e-mail to other members of the reflector — no spam allowed!

E-mail reflectors are being used by many area Amateur Radio clubs as a means to facilitate news and information at a moments notice. Yahoo! Groups (formerly eGroups) provides this service for free to anyone who wants to avail themselves of their list server. Yahoo! also provides calendar, file storage, & additional services.

To join the WACOM reflector, simply send a blank e-mail to:

wa3com-subscribe@yahoogroups.com