THE
# JUNKBOX

## The Official Newsletter of The Albemarle Amateur Radio Society

Post Office Box 1217 | February 2006 | Elizabeth City, NC 27906-1217

http://www.taars.us
WA4VTX Repeaters 146.655/444.300 PL 131.8 APRS 144.39

### Next TAARS Meeting

Our next scheduled TAARS meeting is slated for Thursday, February 16th, 2006 7:30 at COA. Our dinner location is the Golden Corral at 6PM

### Minutes from January Meeting

Ron, N4WYR called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM with 9 members present. George, KE4NBR presented the monthly treasure's report . Our balance is $2799.17 and we had 2 expenditures one for 15 dollars for our web domain and 20 dollars for our yearly membership dues to SERA.

Ron discussed ARRL membership and agreed to report back at a latter meeting. Ed, W4RVZ discussed ARES activity in Perquimans county reporting that Greg, N4QLD, Champ, K2IUN, and himself participated in 2 meter simplex test. Ed W4RVZ reported he will be the guest speaker at the Columbia meeting held on February 11th. Motion was made and carried that Herman purchase equipment insurance for our repeaters and associated equipment. A discussion took place on getting more interest in TAARS. Herman, NO4Y is to send out an email asking members for input. Some suggestions were member hosted contest, a meeting at the ECSU planetarium, and restarting dinner meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45PM

### From the President

Once again, time for another meeting. We will be discussing plans for Field Day, and for the Tar Wheel Bike Ride. Hope to see you there.
73,
Ron N4WYR

### Testing Session Report

TAARS held our regular scheduled quarterly test session on January 21st. There were only 2 candidates. One came away with a brand new Technical license and the other with a pending General upgrade. VE's present were N4WRY, W4RVZ, KD4CEB, and NO4Y Thanks for the support of everyone.
Herman, NO4Y

### Upcoming Events

Our next big TAARS sponsored event is the Tar Wheel bike event to be held in April.

The 2006 NC QSO Party will take place on Sunday February 26th. Times are 1700Z to 0300Z (Sunday 12 noon until 10PM). More information can be found at http://w4nc.com/pages/6/index.htm If you will be on the air for the QSO party, let them know where you will be operating from. They are trying to find folks to activate all 100 counties (they've been one or two counties short each of the last five years).

### Columbia APRS Digi Problems and ATV SWR

A few weeks ago, we took down the TNC and Radio used for the Columbia KB4TOH-4 digi for reprogramming. We were hoping for an improvement in reception, but it did not appear to hear any better. Mike, KB4TOH went "upstairs" last week to tend to our pesky ATV suite. He found a high reflected power in the ATV repeater transmit antenna system so he turned off the transmitter until we can get it fixed. He also brought down the "skycam" stack for additional troubleshooting. With skycam down, he moved the APRS radio to the Diamond DX 50 antenna located below the 1200-foot platform. This normally is used on the VHF side for ATV control radio inputs and audio aux input (exotic cross band rag chew) on 145.750, and the UHF side is used for the 442.750 repeater for the Outer Banks link. With APRS on this lower position, below the dreaded RF mess on the platform, we are hoping it will hear better. All of you APRS nuts could help out with this experiment by monitoring packet activity through KB4TOH-4 and see if you think the radio receiving better. The WX station is still down. I hope to get that back up soon so I can monitor your WX in Maine! 73, Dave "Road Warrior" N1DP

## Around the Bands.

Slow. Slow. Slow. Did I mention SLOW. That's what the bands have been like for me lately. I did manage to work TZ9A in Mali last weekend on 15m for a new DX contact on that band and I even snuck in a couple of quick qso's on 6m that I feel sure were weather induced. Other than that, SLOW.

Recently we tested our simplex capabilities from the E-911 center in Hertford. Several rovers headed out and we were able to cover several areas of Perquimans Co. and we were able to cover all of the areas with no problem. That was good news since our antenna at the E-911 is lower and also in an area where I was afraid power line interference might make comms difficult. Thank goodness that didn't wind up being the case.

Also I was asked to give a talk at the recent Columbia Area ½ meeting on Disaster Relief, The NC Baptist Men and Emergency Communications. During the 2005 Hurricane Season, the NC Baptist Men, known worldwide for their Disaster Relief efforts, also were involved in emergency comms to our relief teams in MS and LA. We sent a ham operator in with each of the initial relief teams as well as provided operators in the first few teams that relived the first-in team. An example would be that after Katrina, the NC Baptist Men sent several teams to Meridian, Leakesville and Gulfport Ms. While they were in MS. They passed traffic to a station in NC (me) who then passed traffic to our offices in Cary NC by phone or via Echolink. For 10 days, from about 6am to 9pm, I monitored 7260 in order to catch our teams on the air. While we had a sked of 8, 12, 4, and 8, there were still periods of time that info was needed real-time. Using some other radios that were VOX capable, I was able to set these additional rigs up as a monitoring post and when traffic came over the "working" rig, I was able to copy it even when outside working on different antenna designs.

So that's my summer adventure and now for the winter adventure. Join me on Sunday Feb 26th at 1700z thru 0300z on the 27th for the North Carolina QSO Party. It will be a lot of fun…if you participate. Heck, just fire up the rigs and find me and give me a contest point. I'll probably be on 40m most of the time if past history holds true but 10, 15 and 20 are possibilities if they open up. And then as night falls, I'll wrap it on 80m.

So remember, this stuff is fun…but only if you fire up the rig and call CQ.

Ed/w4rvz

## SarSuit-1

Released into Earth orbit February 3, the novel SuitSat-1 Amateur Radio transmit-only spacesuit turned satellite has been heard around the globe, but those hoping to hear it using a hand-held transceiver or scanner have been disappointed. From the start, SuitSat-1 has been quite weak, and reports this week indicate its already-puny 145.99 MHz FM signal may be getting even weaker. Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS), the project's sponsor, remains very interested in obtaining any valid voice telemetry reports (post to SAREX@amsat.org).

"The telemetry is transmitted about 30 seconds after the SSTV image stops," explains ARISS Ham Radio Project Engineer Kenneth Ransom, N5VHO. Ransom says the transmission order is SSTV image, 30 seconds of silence, voice identification, mission time, temperature and battery voltage. "The battery voltage is of most importance," he added.

At week's end, SuitSat-1 was reporting a battery voltage of 26.7 V. Based on that figure, Lou McFadin, W5DID, of ARISS and AMSAT, has calculated that SuitSat-1 is likely to last a little more than nine days total. That means it could stop transmitting as early as February 12. ARISS Secretary Rosalie White, K1STO, says the ARISS team is especially interested in telemetry reports "near what we think may be the end, to help us track battery power and how the suit will finish up life." Consisting of a discarded Russian Orlan spacesuit equipped with ham radio gear, SuitSat-1 was released by International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 12 Flight Engineer Valery Tokarev as he and Expedition 12 Commander Bill McArthur, KC5ACR, began a space walk. The crew had stuffed some of its laundry into the spacesuit to help it to keep its form as it orbits Earth. AMSAT-NA has designated SuitSat-1 as AMSAT OSCAR54 (AO-54). "Seldom has an Amateur Radio event captured the public's imagination and evoked so much positive news media coverage as SuitSat has," said AMSAT-NA's Bill Tynan in announcing the AO-54 designation. Several reception reports on the SuitSat Web site <http://www.suitsat.org/> indicate SuitSat-1 audio has been retransmitted via the NA1SS cross band repeater aboard the ISS. While the NA1SS Phase 2 station has been configured to retransmit SuitSat's 145.99 MHz signal on 437.800 MHz, Ransom says he tends to discount the validity of the signals heard via the UHF repeater. "Since it hears everything, people are reporting every little squeak and whistle," he said, adding that any reports posted are "very hard to verify" at this stage. Several reports mention hearing packet signals, but SuitSat-1 carries no packet gear. All telemetry transmissions are by digital voice. Ransom urged all Earth stations not to transmit on SuitSat-1's 145.99 MHz frequency--which is also the normal packet uplink channel--until the SuitSat-1 experiment ends IS Commander McArthur remained upbeat about a future SuitSat mission. "Where there's a will there's a way," he philosophized during a post-space walk contact recorded by Scott Avery, WA6LIE. "We've got more suits that need to be jettisoned."