

News From...



# CVARC

Conejo Valley Amateur Radio Club  
PO Box. 2093 Thousand Oaks CA 91358-2093  
Web site: <http://www.cvarc.org>



February 2006

## President's Message – Visit to Berlin

By Steve Champion, AE6NX

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President's Message

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When Ben & I started to plan our visit to Berlin, we were determined to be more than just tourists. The primary purpose for our trip was to practice our German, and we thought that it would be nice to visit some of Berlin's ham clubs and to meet some of the locals.

The Internet was a great resource for planning, although we did use guidebooks as well. Online advertisements showed vacation apartments all over town. We narrowed our search with the aid of online maps and Google Earth's aerial photographs, and picked one near the city center and close to stations. Renting the apartment by email was very simple.

Online information about Berlin's public transport system was extensive, and it was clear that we would not need a car. Even before we left Thousand Oaks we knew how frequently the trains ran at nearby stations, what type of ticket to buy, and how to work the ticket machines. We could figure out when to use the above-ground train (S-Bahn), underground train (U-Bahn), the tram, or the bus, for a particular destination.

The German equivalent of the ARRL, the DARC, has a lot of information online. There are 27 affiliated clubs in Berlin, and we were able to easily find out when each one met and where. Our visit was to be in the first week of January (the post-Christmas lull) so we tried to confirm meeting times and places by email. We figured out which meetings could be reached relatively easily, and the best means of transport to each.

When we arrived in Berlin Tegel Airport we were surprised to find a baggage carousel and passport control officer right at each individual gate. So, we were through customs and waiting at the taxi stand in what seemed like seconds. We phoned the apartment manager to let him know that we had arrived and set off for the apartment to meet him. Berlin's airports are quite close to the city center – about \$14 by taxi.

We had arrived mid-afternoon on Monday, so after being handed our keys we were able to stock up on provisions at the supermarket across the street. Then we set out to our first

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## RACES Activation Planned For AMGEN Event

The City of Thousand Oaks plans to activate RACES to help in the efforts surrounding the enormous public safety and security efforts needed in support of the Amgen Tour of California professional bicycling race. The event has

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Ventura County Area 2 ARES/RACES members are encouraged to check in every Tuesday night at 7:00 pm on the Area 2 Check-in Net. Specific ARES/RACES times and frequencies are as follows:



Radio  
Amateur  
Civil  
Emergency  
Service

Area	Time	Mode	Frequency	PI	Repeater
County	7:30 - 8:00 pm	Voice	146.880 -	127.3	WA6ZTT
County	7:30 - 8:00 pm	Voice	224.020 -	127.3	WB6ZTR
County	Before 6:30 pm	Packet	145.710	No pl	Hospital Net
County	RACES Simplex	Voice	147.570	No pl	
Area 1	7:00 - 7:30 pm	Voice	147.930 -	127.3	WB6WEY
<b>Area 2</b>	<b>7:00 - 7:30 pm</b>	<b>Voice</b>	<b>146.850 -</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>Grissom K6AER</b>
<b>Area 2</b>	<b>Simplex</b>	<b>Voice</b>	<b>147.555</b>	<b>No pl</b>	
<b>Area 2</b>	<b>Backup Repeater</b>	<b>Voice</b>	<b>147.885 -</b>	<b>127.3</b>	<b>Bozo - N6JMI</b>
Ares 2	220 Repeater	Voice,	224.700 -	156.7	K6HB
<b>Area 2</b>	<b>Amgen Repeater</b>	<b>Voice</b>	<b>449.440 -</b>	<b>131.8</b>	<b>KE6SWS</b>
Area 3	7:15 - 7:30 pm	Voice	147.915 -	127.3	WB6ZTQ
Area 4	7:15 - 7:30 pm	Voice	146.970 -	127.3	WB6YQN
Area 5	7:00 - 7:30 pm	Voice	145.400 -	No pl	N6FL
Area 6	7:00 - 7:30 pm	Voice	147.975 -	127.3	N6AHI
Area 7	7:00 - 7:30 pm	Voice	146.985 -	127.3	WB6ZTX
Area 8	7:00 - 7:30 pm	Voice	145.280 -	100.0	KN6OK
6 Meter	6:45 - 7:00 pm	Voice	52.980 -	82.5	K6SMR

Net Control operations for the weekly ARES/RACES Area 2 check-in net is run from the ARES/RACE communications center at the East County Sheriff Station on Olsen Rd each Tuesday at 7:00 pm. Visitors are welcomed and have the opportunity to operate the station equipment. Contact Jerry Goldman KC6JSO (805) 241-9187 if you plan to attend. RACES members should remember that their RACES card is issued for only two years. When your card is due to expire simply call Jackie (805) 654-2551 at the Office of Emergency Services in Ventura to renew your card. For questions concerning ARES/RACES call Area 2 Emergency Coordinator Ken Larson KJ6RZ (805) 495-9435 or go to the ARES/RACES section of the CVARC web site at <http://www.cvarc.org>.

## 2006 CVARC OFFICERS

President	Steve Champion	AE6NX	(805)493-2564	steve@stevechampion.com
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Member-at-Large	open			
Member-at-Large	open			



The Conejo Valley Amateur Radio Club is an ARRL affiliated Special Service Club. Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month, unless otherwise noted. Meeting location is at the Elks Lodge, 158 Conejo School Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA. Meetings start at 7:30 pm. with a pre-meeting social and technical assistance session from 7:00 to 7:30 pm. Meetings are open to the public, and members are encouraged to bring their friends.

## 2006 EVENT CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	COMMENTS
Jan 12	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Feb 9	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Feb 12	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Feb 13 - 17	School Club Roundup	ARRL School Club Contest
Feb 14	Introductory New Ham Class	Technician Class @ LDS, contact ke6wvz@aol.com
Feb 18 - 19	ARRL International CW DX	ARRL International DX Contest (CW)
Mar 4 - 5	ARRL SSB DX	ARRL International SSB DX Contest
Mar 9	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Mar 12	CLU CROP Walk	Annual CVARC/ARES T.O. Charity Walk
Apr 2	Westlake Street Fair	Radio support for Westlake Rotary Club (morning)
Apr 9	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Apr 13	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Apr 22	Arbor Day	CVARC/ARES radio demo at N. Conejo Creek Park
May 11	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
May 13	Cruisin' The Conejo Bike Ride	This is a major yearly CVARC field activity
Jun ??	Orienteering	Amateur Radio Direction Finding Competition
Jun 8	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Jun 11	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Jun 24 - 25	Field Day	CVARC annual field day event, don't miss it!
Jul 3	Moorpark Fireworks	Comm support for Moorpark's 3rd of July Fireworks
Jul 13	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Aug 10	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Aug 13	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Sep 14	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Oct 8	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Oct 12	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Nov 9	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting
Dec 10	FCC License Exam	Begins 8:30 am at East County Sheriff's Station
Dec 14	CVARC Club Meeting	General CVARC Club Meeting

If you have corrections, please email them to the editor at [kg6qel@yahoo.com](mailto:kg6qel@yahoo.com)

### Next FCC License Examinations On February 12th

CVARC hosts FCC License Examinations at 8:30 AM on the second Sunday of even numbered months at the Ventura East County Sheriff Station on Olsen Rd. (near the Reagan Library). The next exams will be held on Sunday morning February 12th. CVARC conducts exams for all license classes. Exam candidates must bring a form of government issued photo I.D., the original AND a photocopy of any existing license or Certificate of Exam Element Completion, a Social Security (or government issued Taxpayer I.D.) number, and \$14 ARRL VE Exam fee (cash is preferred). No advance reservation is necessary, walk-ins are welcome. Advance notice is needed for special circumstances, such as reading the exam to sight-impaired candidates. If you have any questions, contact CVARC VE Coordinator Jeff Reinhardt at 818-706-3853.

## **CVARC Club Meeting February 9th, APRS and GPS ON A BUDGET**

Have you been thinking about putting together an APRS Tracker, or APRS monitor station in your shack, or a GPS navigator in your car? Then you checked out the prices at the local Ham candy store. You found the current price for a Kantronics TNC is pushing \$200 out the door, or \$450 for a Kenwood TM-D700 combo radio/TNC, a top of the line Garmin GPS is \$700 plus, and another fifty bucks for prefabricated radio interface cables. And WinAPRS software is in the neighborhood of \$60. There are some GPS receivers only (no display) in the \$80-100 range. Using these prices one could spend anywhere from \$300 to almost a grand for a Tracker depending on the type of GPS and TNC used, and this does not include the cost of a radio. An in shack monitor setup can easily add up to around \$350 when you include interface cables, again not including a radio.

By now you are probably saying “no way” am I willing to put out that kind of money. Well, there are DIY alternatives that get the cost under \$75 for a tracker if you have an old HT or 2 meter mobile collecting dust in the shack. If you have an old laptop lying around, how about \$50 for an in vehicle talking navigation system. Or, using the internet you can follow trackers and get weather info for about \$20 using APRS Plus and a used copy of Street Atlas.

Okay, so how do we get APRS and GPS on a budget? Well, there are surplus new in box OEM twelve channel GPS receivers modules available for under twenty dollars, GPS antennas with a built in amplifier for \$4, and a special purpose APRS encoder for \$27 in lieu of a full blown \$200 TNC. For a Tracker you will need a GPS and a TNC, a basic tracker can be built for under \$75. Using a surplus GPS module, a \$27 Byonics Tiny Trak encoder, and twenty bucks to connect it all up and package it in a nice little project box. Pick up a used copy of Street Atlas for under \$5 on Ebay, twenty four bucks for a surplus GPS module and antenna, throw in another fifteen or so for wire and a project box, and you have an in car navigator for around fifty dollars.

For a full up APRS monitor station in your shack you will need a full blown TNC, APRS software, and a two meter radio. There are several versions of APRS software out there, but if you are cost conscious it is hard to beat APRS Plus (also referred to as APRS + SA) and a used copy of Street Atlas. APRS Plus registration is only \$15, and a few dollars for a used copy SA keeps the software cost around twenty dollars. An alternate to a \$200 dollar Kantronics TNC is the Elcom micro TNC for under \$130, and it is USB compatible. With a TNC/MIC switch you can multi task one radio for APRS and normal communications.

Want to see the actual ‘on a budget’ hardware up and running – join us at the February meeting for a live demonstration. If you have a Tracker or GPS hardware please bring it to the meeting and share your experience. If you are new to APRS, I have likely created more questions than I have answered. I found the [www.byonics.com](http://www.byonics.com) and [www.elcom.gr](http://www.elcom.gr) web sites very informative. CVARC will sponsor a workshop or group purchase if interest merits.

Hugh, KF6HHS

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attracted the top stage bicycle teams from around the world, and is expected to attract as many as a million spectators along its over 700 mile route, and another million television viewers. The event will end its next-to-final stage near Amgen, in Thousand Oaks and is expected to draw large crowds and extensive television coverage locally.

The race will run from February 19th through the 26th, with the stage ending on the 25th ending in Thousand Oaks, and starting from Thousand Oaks “sprinting” to Redondo Beach the next morning. After the bike racers cross the finish line at Amgen, they will load their bikes into their support vehicles and DRIVE down to Redondo Beach. Sunday morning they will begin in Redondo Beach and race on a course set up in and around Redondo Beach as the final leg in their race.

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club meeting. At the U-Bahn station we used the ticket machine to buy 7-day tickets which covered all types of public transport for the week. These were a bargain at about \$30. The public transport is exceptionally easy to use, and is made even easier by a complete absence of turnstiles or barriers. Ticket enforcement is solely by the use of plain-clothes ticket inspectors wielding a hefty \$720 fine for non-compliance.

We set off across town by S-Bahn and Tram. The trains and trams run every few minutes, so the timetable that we had downloaded was not strictly necessary. However it did allow us to figure out where to change and, most importantly, the directions to take. In Berlin trains, trams, and busses do not indicate “Northbound” or “Southbound” but rather the endpoint of their journey. This means that you have to be a bit familiar with the routes, especially as some services terminate at stations other than the “end of the line”. We arrived at our first club destination, only to be told by the proprietor of the café (more of a pub really) that the ham club was not meeting that week. Oh well, that was one that we had not been able to confirm by email! So, back on the tram to our apartment for a bite to eat. We had now tested our skills at getting around by public transport, so it seemed more adventure than disappointment.

The next day, the first part of our mission was to go to the gym. We have a membership at the Thousand Oaks Gold’s Gym and a nice feature is that it is valid for visits to any Gold’s. Having figured out that the Gold’s in Berlin was in the same neighborhood as one of the ham club meetings, the day of our gym visit was decided! So after a good workout and a sauna, a visit to a Thai restaurant, and our first experience of an Internet café, we arrived at a small pub-restaurant for the meeting of Club D17: Central Berlin. We joined them at a long table in the basement and ordered from the menu. They made us very welcome and told us a bit about the history of the club. This meeting was relatively early – 5pm – so we had decided to try to make it to a second club for their 7pm meeting. The second club was on the far southern outskirts of the city, but having previously made contact by email we thought we would try to make it there. Although we had to make a couple of changes and use both U-Bahn and bus, it turned out to be very easy. The folks at club D03: Neukölln made us very welcome at their meeting, which was held in a school. After exchanging QSLs and chatting for a while we went by car to a restaurant where we talked some more while some members ate, and we all had a beer. Thomas, DL7NJ, very kindly insisted on driving us home even though it was out of his way. He took us through Central Berlin, so we were able to see a lot of the important sites and hear about them from the perspective of a local.

Wednesday, we did some sightseeing and shopping, and we were able to check out one of the Turkish kebab restaurants. A friend had told us that these were not to be missed, and we heartily agree. Wednesday’s meeting was a combined meeting of D18 & D26 at Ostkreutz. It was held in a Technical Community College, in an old but imposing building in the eastern part of the city. The security guard at the gate gave us directions to the meeting room. When we went up the stairs we seemed to have arrived in the roof space, where there was evidence of a lot of renovation going on. We wondered if we had misunderstood the directions. We could hear voices so we looked around and found a room full of radio equipment and another one full of guys drinking beer. Aha... the right place! The roof-top location was a great place for club rooms... providing rent-free accommodation for a permanent shack as well as a small room to meet. And being a college... a high-speed Internet connection. We spent a very pleasant evening talking and we learned that there was to be a big DXers meeting in town later that week. We were also invited to visit the home of one of the members at the weekend.

Thursday’s club meeting was in an unusual location. The listing on the DARC web site gave an address and said “shop” in parenthesis. We expected perhaps a meeting room over a shop... but it turned out that Club D11: Wilmersdorf rents a small shop as their clubhouse. The shop window held a display somewhat like the CVARC display in Agoura Library, and behind this was a club room in what would have originally been the shop itself. Behind the shop was another room that served as the shack, and there was also a small workshop and a bathroom. Again, the club provisions featured a generous supply of beer, so we passed another pleasant evening chatting.

On Friday the DXers meeting was held at our local restaurant. The S-Bahn mostly runs above street level, and at

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many stations there are small shops and restaurants under the arches beneath the railway. Our nearest station housed a Croatian restaurant, and that was where the meeting was held. It turned out that the planned speaker was unable to attend, so we spent the evening eating enormous plates of barbecued meat, talking to the DXers, and listening to the rumble of trains above us.

On Saturday we did some more sightseeing and then went out to the eastern suburbs to visit Sigi, DL7DF, and his XYL Sabina. They fed us handsomely (twice) and we talked and watched some of Sigi's movies of his DXpeditions to various exotic places. Sigi was on the eastern side of Berlin and had made good use of his retirement since Reunification and the Wall coming down.

So... what did we find out about the Berlin clubs, other than that the German hams drink beer? Well, the clubs worry about an inability to interest youngsters in the hobby, just as we do. Most of them meet every week, or at least twice a month. They have a mixture of formal meetings with speakers and informal get-togethers for a few beers and maybe a meal. Some of the clubs are lucky enough to have a permanent shack so that operating evenings are possible. Rooftop HF beams were evident, but we were told that the city noise, especially trains, made serious DXing from these locations difficult. All of the clubs were very welcoming to us and wanted to know about our interests and club activities.

I don't consider myself to be particularly adventurous, so backpacking across Nepal or the like has never been on the cards... but this kind of low-risk urban adventure was a lot of fun. I see that I have more than filled my space this month, so if you want to know more details about our trip we will have to chat about it one-on-one. Perhaps, over a beer!

73 de AE6NX



## News From The World of Amateur Radio News Items of Interest to Hams

Typically we will not reprint ARRL notices that are available on the web, but both of these were topics of conversation at the last club meeting and there was broad interest in both topics:

### MINING DISASTER SURVIVOR RANDY MCCLOY, KC8VKZ, REPORTED IMPROVING

There's encouraging news this week on the medical condition of Randy McCloy, KC8VKZ, the sole survivor of the January 2 Sago mining disaster in West Virginia. Rick Robinson, W8ZT, reports he spoke with McCloy's brother-in-law, Rick McGee January 18, and received an upbeat report on the 26-year-old miner's progress.

"He was sitting up in bed and eating ice chips," he said. "His dialysis treatments have been reduced to every other day as his kidney function [is returning]." Other reports say McCloy's heart and liver functions have improved, his muscle deterioration has abated, his neurological condition is stable and he's been breathing on his own. His doctors say McCloy exhibits "purposeful movements" and appears to be responding to his family.

Robinson says McGee told him that McCloy's wife, Anna, expressed appreciation from the outpouring of good wishes from the Amateur Radio community and elsewhere.

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"His family wants to thank everyone for the cards and letters that arrive daily in the large plastic postal bins," he said. "The mail keeps his wife occupied and gives her consolation that so many think of her and her husband and family." Randy and Anna McCloy live in Simpson, West Virginia, and have two young children. A Technician class licensee, McCloy is a relatively new radio amateur, according to Robinson.

Well-wishers have been sending cards and QSLs to Randy McCloy at PO Box 223, Philippi, WV 26435.

### SUITSAT" TARGET DATE NOW FEBRUARY 3

Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) has announced another change in the "SuitSat" deployment date, which has been a bit of a moving target. The latest target date is late Friday, February 3 (UTC). That's when the International Space Station crew is set to perform its next space walk. According to informed sources, the crew is scheduled to open the hatch for its excursion around 2200 UTC, and SuitSat should be put into orbit within the first hour.

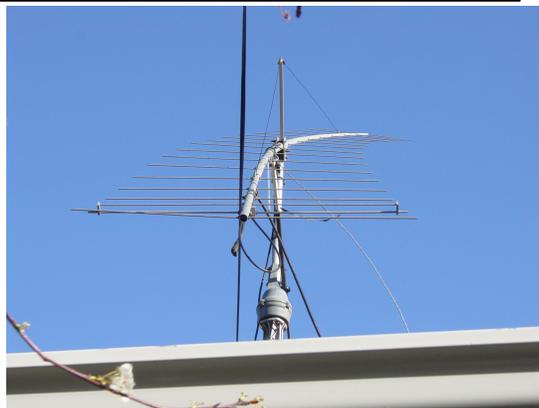
Possibly the most unusual Earth satellite ever, SuitSat consists of a surplus Russian Orlan space suit converted into a transmit-only satellite with an FM downlink frequency of 145.990 MHz. Using the call sign RS0RS, it will transmit voice messages, telemetry and an SSTV image on a nine-minute cycle as it orbits Earth.

The batteries powering the satellite are expected to last 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. The SuitSat signal should be strong enough to hear using a VHF transceiver or scanner and a simple antenna--thus making it an ideal project for students to monitor and track.

SuitSat's payload also includes a CD containing hundreds of school pictures, artwork, poems, and student signatures. For more information, see article "This is SuitSat-1 RS0RS" by Frank Bauer, KA3HDO, on the AMSAT Web site <<http://www.amsat.org/amsat-new/articles/BauerSuitsat/index.php>>.

Now that is windy!

Pete, N6ZE's, M-Square Co. 33 ft long yagi for two meters shows its cross wind capability on January 23, 2006 when winds gusted to over 60 miles per hour. The antenna was aimed perpendicularly to the Santa Ana winds. He has used the M-Square Co. "2M5WL" yagi to work over 100 grids on 2 meters from his Ventura Co., CA home QTH. Tropo, EME, and Meteor Scatter modes have been used.



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More information about the RACES plans should be available during the weekly area 2 RACES net check-in, and the next club meeting. More information about the event is available from <http://www.amgentourofcalifornia.com> and <http://forums.roadbikereview.com/showthread.php?t=44993>

News from CVARC  
Neil Waybright KG6QEL  
4818 Avedon Road  
Moorpark, CA 93021

## Membership Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Call Sign: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, ST Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (\_\_\_\_) - \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

ARRL Member expiration date (on QST label) \_\_\_\_\_

RACES # \_\_\_\_\_ ARES# \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Update Roster Only? \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Names/Calls \_\_\_\_\_

Send Information/Application to:  
Conejo Valley Amateur Radio Club  
ATTN: Michael Pershing, treasurer  
P.O. Box 2093  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91358-2093

New    Renewal  
Single Membership - \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Multi-year \_\_\_\_ years @ \$20 = \_\_\_\_\_  
New Ham, New Member - \$10 \_\_\_\_\_  
Single Membership, Full-Time Student \$10 \_\_\_\_\_  
Family Membership - \$30 \_\_\_\_\_

ARRL Membership Renewal (include ARRL form) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
AD Space (2x3) One Year (member) - \$35 \_\_\_\_\_  
AD Space (2x3) One Year (non-Member) - \$75 \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cash \_\_\_\_\_ Check Number \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in License Upgrades? \_\_\_\_\_

Joining ARES/RACES? \_\_\_\_\_

Disaster Action Team? \_\_\_\_\_

Obtain a HAM License? \_\_\_\_\_