

December, 2020 Issue of the Newsletter of the
Tri-County Amateur Radio Association

Los Angeles – Riverside – San Bernardino Counties – Since 1927

P.O. Box 75, Claremont, CA 91711

Web Site: <http://www.tcarclub.net> Email: k6agf@arrl.net

NEXT REGULAR CLUB MEETING DATE:

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020 HOLIDAY CELEBRATION! 6PM Zoom Video Conference

Invitations will be sent to all members to the email address on file. Guests are welcome to join us – please contact us at the email address above a few days ahead of the meeting so that we can collect your information and arrange to email you an invitation.

Summary of November Meeting Minutes:

1. Tim Adams N6DLC appointed as club V.P. for remainder of 2020 term.
2. Dave Wilkie K6EV appointed as club Program Manager for remainder of 2020 term and as QRM newsletter editor.
3. Kurt Dodge's Treasurer's report presented and accepted. Approximate available funds: \$4663
4. Dave Wilkie presented the draft program plan for 2020-2021. A full year calendar outlined with a considerable increase in program plans and more coming. K6EV has also committed to restore QRM to monthly publication.
5. Jim Eagon described plans underway with incoming Publicity Director Ken Mixon and to renew the public facing web page information.
6. Election concluded and 2021 Officers Announced (will be invested during Dec. meeting):

President: Bruce Bolton – AG6YS

Vice President: Kurt Dodge – KK6WGT

Treasurer: Ken Barto, N2HL

Secretary: Dave Wilkie – K6EV

Publicity Director: Ken Mixon – WC6WOK

Program Director: Open: To be appointed by Board

Past President: Brad Rachielles – KC6NNV

In addition, we recognize the key contributions going forward of:

K6AGF Trustee: Doug Barcon, K6AHT

Refreshments: Rick Shultheiss, KG6HLA

ARRL News and Board Advisor: Jim Eagon, K6JFE

QRM Newsletter Editor: Dave Wilkie, K6EV

7. Plans established for December 9th 'virtual' Holiday Celebration by Zoom. Raffle prizes and rules confirmed. Lively discussion of rules and members determined to divide prizes equally between 'must be present' and 'need not be present'. See below for details. Note that party begins at 6PM in December.
8. Members present assented unanimously to sharing club members email addresses with other club members. The renewal form will contain a reminder to that effect. We will not generally share phone numbers, but email addresses may appear in QRM rosters.
9. For 2021, beginning in January, our general club meeting time will shift from 7:30PM to 7PM. Still on the 2nd Wednesday each month and still via Zoom for foreseeable future.
10. Dave, K6EV did a live demonstration (on screen for attendees) of real operations using FT8. Questions and Answers.
11. Upgraded attendance at meeting – about doubled to 18 or 19 at peak. Some good back and forth on planning decisions. Great to have the participation - Thank you!

Agenda for the December Meeting: Holiday Celebration! (subject to modification)

Invitations to the Zoom session will be sent out a day or three ahead of time via email for security reasons. Do not post the link publicly.

1. Having Fun after a very challenging and difficult year for us all.
2. Introductory remarks by TCARA President Bruce Bolton AG6YS. Thanks to the outgoing board and welcome to the incoming officers.
3. Musical Interlude organized by our own Kurt Dodge, KK6WGT.
4. Costume and headgear review
5. **RAFFLE! \$500 IN PRIZES – MAKE SURE YOUR 2021 DUES ARE PAID/RECEIVED BEFORE DECEMBER 7TH!** See the holiday raffle rules below.
6. Roundtable – stories
7. General chat and closure.

NOTE: When TCARA is able to resume face to face meetings, our normal meeting place is the Pilot's Lounge within the Brackett Field Airport Administration Building. (Same building containing 'Norms Hanger' coffee shop). 1615 McKinley Avenue, La Verne, CA. 91750. See the map at the end of the newsletter.

Holiday Raffle Rules:

1. Eight Prizes: 2x\$100, 2x\$75, 2x\$50, 2x\$25 for a total of \$500 exactly in HRO gift cards or equivalent. A total of \$500 in prizes. The club felt that this form of prize is more flexible than, for example, giving away 'HT's' etc. when many of you already have those types of things.
2. Eligibility: One prize in each value category can go to ANY PAID TCARA member, present or not, provided that the treasurer has received their 2021 dues at PO box 75 on or before Dec 7th. The second prize has the same eligibility except that the winner MUST BE PRESENT (virtually) at the Zoom-video celebration on Dec 9th to win. New members who turn in a membership application and dues by the deadline are also eligible.
3. Prizes will be drawn in descending order of value (\$100 prizes awarded first). No one may win more than one time - once you win your 'ticket' will be withdrawn from the tumbler. Within each prize category, the prize for no-attendance-required will be drawn FIRST. The must-attend ticket will be drawn SECOND. If a ticket is drawn for a must-attend prize in the name of someone not in attendance, that ticket will be returned to the tumbler and a 2nd ticket withdrawn - repeating until the prize is awarded to an eligible member in attendance.
4. Dues remain ONLY \$20 per year.

December, 2020 Issue: QRM Newsletter of the Tri County Amateur Radio Association

5. Only one 'ticket' will be entered per paid membership.
6. Club President Bruce Bolton will establish and share a list of those names eligible for the drawing, making this list available to members for error checking. He will prepare the tickets and arrange the drawing, conducting it during the celebration.
7. No additional tickets are to be sold. All eligible paid members have an equal opportunity to win.

NEXT REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING DATE:

Wednesday, December 2, 2020 Location: Zoom Video Conference

Voting Members in good standing are welcome to join Board meetings. If you would like to do so please contact one of the officers several days in advance of the meeting so that an invitation can be emailed to you. The Board will be reviewing plans for the December Holiday Celebration and Raffle as well as thinking ahead to January and next year.

A THANK YOU TO THE ESTATE OF CLINT STONE KQ6NJ (SK)

TCARA wishes to express it's gratitude to the estate of the late Clint Stone KQ6NJ (SK) for the kind gift to TCARA. As noted in the November issue, Clint is much missed and warmly remembered.

BEST WISHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

After a fairly tough year for everyone, the club hopes that everyone is enjoying a very happy Thanksgiving and that the upcoming holidays are full of joy, health and happiness. And we are ALL looking forward to 2021!

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reminder – The Weekly Net Moved to a New Repeater in October 2020. Due to technical problems with the N6USO repeaters that had reduced coverage to some TCARA members, the club decided to move the weekly net to a new repeater. The net continues every week on the WA6FZH repeater located on Johnstone Peak in San Dimas. This repeater is at 446.400 MHz with a negative offset of 5 MHz (441.400) and a PL tone of 103.5Hz. Results have been great – Please join the net. We are also encouraging a more conversational net so bring your news, ideas, jokes and questions. We are VERY grateful to WA6FZH for maintaining this as an open repeater for the benefit of the local Amateur Radio Community.

TWO IMPORTANT CHANGES TO REGULAR MEETING TIMES

- **December Holiday Party starts at 6PM on Wednesday December 9th! (Not 7:30)**
- **Starting Wednesday January 13th, regular club meetings start at 7PM (Not 7:30)**

FEATURED STORES FOR THIS MONTH:

A MESSAGE FROM CLUB PRESIDENT BRUCE BOLTON, AG6YS: All of the club officers and myself continue to work hard at re-vitalizing the club. I'm really excited by some of the improvements in content and participation that we've already seen – and after only the first six weeks or so of concentrated effort. We continue to welcome YOUR ideas, input and participation. Remember that if you have ideas for the club, items you'd like to see listed or discussed in QRM, an interesting topic that might be worth a short (or a long!) presentation at a club meeting – let us know. This is YOUR club and the club officers are here to serve you – but we always welcome and need your participation. We are going to have a great year in 2021! And don't forget to get those renewal dues in before December 7th - we have some great raffle prizes and we don't want you to miss out.

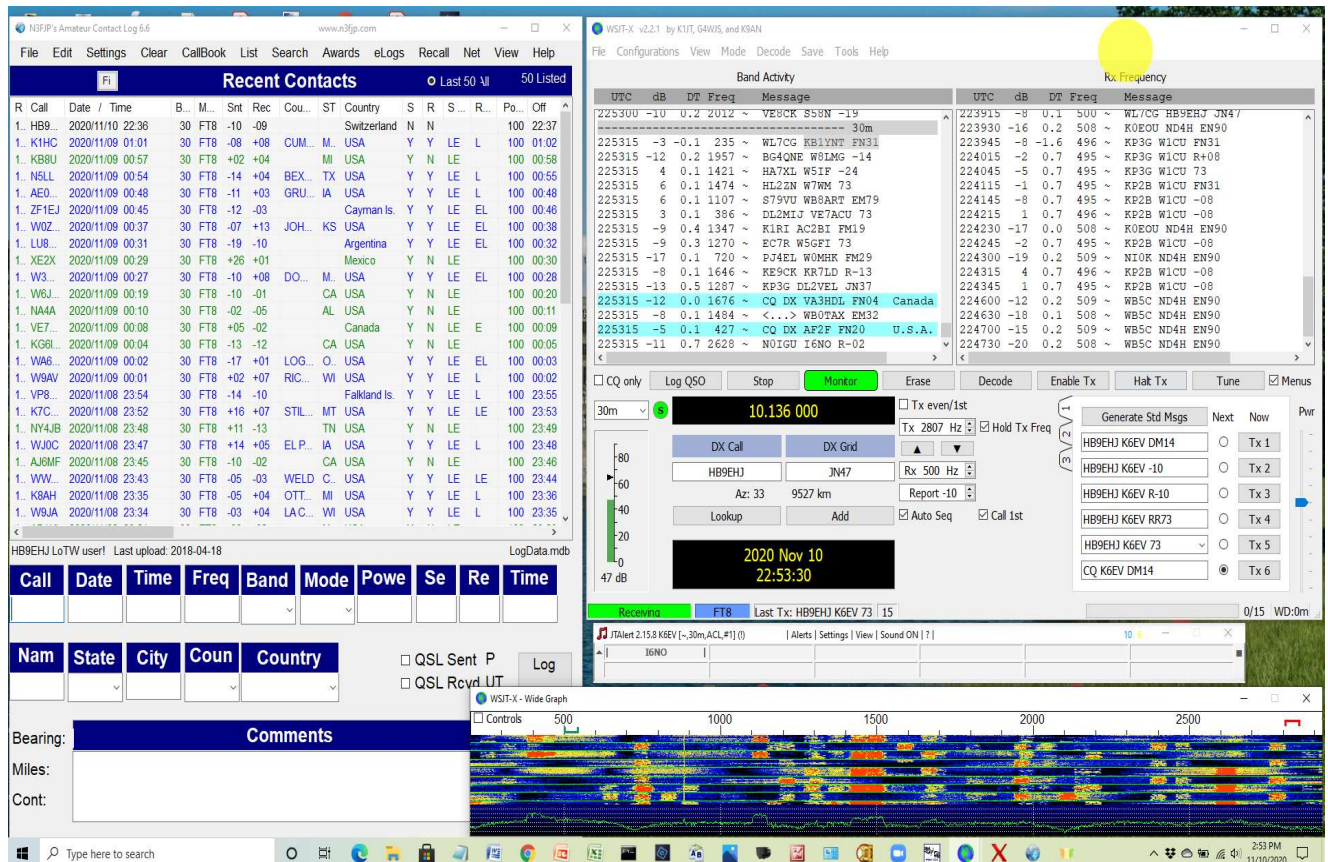
CHECK OUR MEMBERSHIP ROSTER IN THIS ISSUE! Please take a look at the club roster summarized towards the end of this issue of QRM. If you think you belong there and are missing, please contact Dave Wilkie, K6EV our incoming club Secretary. Similarly, if you find your contact information is incorrect – please let Dave know. With so much of the club's business being done electronically as we move towards our second century, it is really important that we have a correct email address – and hopefully the correct telephone number. Dave can be reached at d33wilkie@gmail.com If email just is not an option, you can leave a message on Dave's home phone at 909 625 5921. Please include your call sign and a callback number. For privacy reasons, we've not published addresses and phone numbers – but if you think those may have changed please send us updates for that info also. The dues-renewal reminder form that was emailed to everyone is one easy way to update our records. **THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO PROVIDED UPDATES AFTER THE NOVEMBER QRM!!**

WELCOME & CONGRATULATIONS TO RECENT NEW MEMBERS AND LICENSE UPGRADES:

Congratulations to Kathi Mixon, KD6CAF on her successful upgrade to Extra Class in November.



NOTES FROM LIVE FT8 DEMO DURING NOV. CLUB MEETING – from Dave Wilkie, K6EV



Please feel free to contact me with any questions. The software programs we discussed were:

1. WSJT-X, the main application on the right. This is the essential starting building block. You can download this amazing free program at <http://physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/K1JT/wshtx.html>
2. We discussed the need to use a precision time sync utility. There are many. I use Meinberg NTP downloadable at: <https://www.meinbergglobal.com/english/sw/ntp.htm> It takes a few minutes after booting for the computers time to really lock in. You can tell how it's doing by watching the 'DT' column in the FT8 data stream in the WSJT-X windows (either side). When the majority of them are showing values like 0.1, 0.2 etc, your time clock is agreeing with most other stations. It will not be zero and it WILL vary due to differences in radio signal propagation time from different locations, as well as the remaining errors in everyone's computer clocks. Once the utility is installed, it starts itself at boot and is pretty much invisible. I never think about it.
3. I chose to do external logging using the ACLOG product by N3FJP marketed by his family business, Affirmatech. It costs about 30 dollars including lifetime free upgrades. For 50 dollars you get lifetime access to his whole array of logging products including many specialized versions for Field Day and various contests. (I originally bought only the basic log but 2 years later wanted the package – all he would charge was the 20 dollar price difference. I recommend his product – phenomenal and friendly support. If you do use ACLOG, then you need to use JTALERT or something like it to 'pipeline' the data from the WSJT-X application over to ACLOG. ACLOG itself can be found at: <https://www.n3fjp.com/aclog.html> I didn't illustrate how easy it is to upload my log to LOTW, QRZ, eQSL and/or Clublog but would be happy to do so

December, 2020 Issue: QRM Newsletter of the Tri County Amateur Radio Association

if anyone is interested. AC LOG is the only software I purchased. I can also use it for non-FT8 logging very easily.

4. The QSL reporting environment you choose (ARRL's LOTW, QRZ, eQSL) affects not only what 'awards' you can seek, but also how your QSO partners can use the credit from their contact with you. I've chosen to report to multiple systems to make contacts with me as useful to other hams as possible.
5. JTALERT is another free package and can be found at: <https://hamapps.com/>
6. That website we referred to to look at who was hearing what around the globe is found at <https://pskreporter.info> That can be a lot of fun and very useful, as we illustrated.
7. It can help to have a good size computer monitor, but you can do this with a laptop – as we probably demonstrated on your own display during the demo. You can add a monitor later.

For background, the station components used in our demo were an ICOM IC-7610 and a Hustler 6-BTV ground mounted trapped vertical for six HF bands. I have about 33 ground radials pressed shallowly into my lawn, now covered by the grass roots and out of the way. In about 4.5 months I've worked over 75 countries on FT8 alone with this combination and the bands are just getting better recently

I want to emphasize that the approach above is NOT the only one. You can run WSJT-X stand alone (though I still recommend a clock sync utility) and use its built in logging. That's easier to set up but probably more work when it comes to backing up your log's and obtaining/acknowledging contacts via QSL systems. (Especially if you want to support multiple systems such as LOTW, eQSL and QRZ).

Technician class operators CAN operate HF FT8, though ONLY on the 10 meter band. The good news is that band is really coming to life again now during the daylight hours. Also, I didn't emphasize enough that the FT8 creators and community have standardized on a single center frequency on each of the HF bands. WSJT-X will install with that set of standard frequencies ready to use, though you can readily find them on the web. Theoretically you could use other frequencies legally, but you aren't likely to find people to talk to at random frequencies and you lose the ability of WSJT-X to monitor that full 3Khz spectrum where folks are likely to be found. On the other HF bands the frequencies are available to General class operators and above. There is also VHF/UHF FT8 Activity on 6 meters and above that may be interesting to Technician users, but you need a radio capable of SSB mode. An ordinary FM radio will not do it.

I also wanted to mention that one of the fun things that happens as you make a lot of FT8 contacts is that you get a much better 'feel' for propagation trends on the various bands. You can make (or attempt) so many contacts so quickly in so many areas that your own success and failure as well as the information from sources like PSKREPORTER.INFO begin to really give you a feel for what works at what times of day, and eventually, which days are really better than others. You can get that operating a lot of sideband and CW, but this all happens rather quickly and that is fun.

A modest vertical antenna can do fairly well, especially if you put in a good ground radial or counterpoise system as required for your antenna. While the omnidirectional antenna does pick up a lot of noise, it works in your favor in that you can hear and work stations in any direction quickly without waiting for a rotator. Also, the generally lower take-off angle of radiation is well suited to far DX work – and that plays well with WSJT-X. Of course, if you have a large tower and can get HF beams and other horizontal antennas high enough, they will really work wonders. But a vertical might play well if you are height restricted but still want to 'go for some distance'.

You can use older radios for FT8, though it is much easier to control modern radios with CAT interfaces and USB ports. If the radio does not contain a 'built in sound card' you'll probably need something like one of the SignalLink boxes. On the oldest radios you may need to manually set frequency from the radio panel. Don't think like old-time CW and sideband – keep those narrow bandwidth filters turned off. Let WSJT-X see that full 3Khz or so of bandwidth so that it can decode ALL of the signals audible in that space. Don't distort the audio with compression, etc. There is great info on the web. Detailed setup info and cabling will vary by station, but this is all very do-able. Try it!

I hope you enjoyed the show. I realize it probably bored some of you who've already used FT8 but perhaps it was interesting to others. We will be actively looking for more (and better!) program content for future meetings. And hopefully when conditions improve, we can do some hands-on activities in the latter part of 2021. Again, happy to help with any additional questions. Happy Holidays, 73, Dave



Club Email Address Up and Running Again

The club email address: K6AGF@ARRL.NET is alive and well again. Messages sent to this address will flow to the club Secretary and, from there, to the appropriate club officer(s).

TCARA CLUB INFORMATION:

TCARA General Contact Information:

Business Address: Tri-County Amateur Radio Association, PO Box 75, Claremont, CA 91711

Web Site: WWW.TCARACLUB.NET

Club Email: k6agf@arrl.net

Weekly Net: Sundays at 7PM Pacific Time. 446.400 MHz, (-) PL 103.5

2020 Officers (Until Dec 9 2020):

President: Bruce Bolton, AG6YS	626-335- 5606	1bcbolton@gmail.com
Vice President: Tim Adams, N6DLC	626-203-3315	tim@wnbnet.net
Treasurer: Kurt Dodge, KK6WGT	909-593-1772	kwdodge1@msn.com
Secretary: Keith Reeves, KM6AVK	909-576-0944	keithhreeves@gmail.com
Publicity Dir: Jim Eagon, K6JFE	951-212-1970	jeagon@gmail.com
Program Dir: Dave Wilkie, K6EV	909-625-5921	d33wilkie@gmail.com
Past President: Brad Rachielles, KC6NNV	909-816-7333	bradrachielles@gmail.com

2021 Officers (Starting Dec 9, 2020):

President: Bruce Bolton, AG6YS	626-335- 5606	1bcbolton@gmail.com
Vice President: Kurt Dodge, KK6WGT	909-593-1772	kwdodge1@msn.com
Treasurer: Ken Barto, N2HL	909-908-0155	numbrpushr@gmail.com
Secretary: Dave Wilkie, K6EV	909-625-5921	d33wilkie@gmail.com
Publicity Director: Ken Mixon, KC6WOK	909-917-4450	kc6wok@gmail.com
Program Director: TBD board appointment		
Past President: Brad Rachielles, KC6NNV	909-816-7333	bradrachielles@gmail.com

Appointed Offices:

Net Control: Bruce Bolton, AG6YS	626-335- 5606	1bcbolton@gmail.com
K6AGF Trustee: Doug Barcon, K6AHT	714-393-8238	dougbarcon@gmail.com
Refreshments: Rick Shultheiss, KG6HLA	626-327-4134	schultz204@msn.com
QRM Editor: Dave Wilkie, K6EV	909-625-5921	d33wilkie@gmail.com

Membership:

TCARA welcomes new members. Dues are \$20 dollars per year (\$10 for the balance of the year if joining after June 30th). Spouses and children are also members. Voting members are those holding active amateur radio licenses, and whose dues are not in arrears. Payment is due by January 1st of each year. Make checks payable to TCARA. **Note: Pay 2021 dues before Dec 7 2020 to be eligible for Holiday Raffle!**

QRM Monthly Newsletter CONTENT WELCOME:

The club is always looking for suitable and interesting materials as well as news and announcements for the newsletter. If you have something, please contact the QRM editor. The newsletter is emailed monthly to all members in good standing.

Monthly Club Meeting:

Beginning in January, 2021 the Monthly club meeting will now begin at 7:00PM (not 7:30) on the second Wednesday of each month, except for the December Holiday Celebration. Normally the club meets in the Pilot's Lounge at Bracket Field Airport, 1615 McKinley Avenue, La Verne, CA. (Building containing 'Norms Hanger' coffee shop). However, during the pandemic the club meets via Zoom video conference and invitations are sent to members via email. Visitors are welcome. Contact the club Secretary a few days ahead of the meeting to obtain an invitation.

Board of Directors Meetings:

Board meetings are held to plan general meeting activities and other matters consistent with the by-laws. Board meetings are open to members who wish to attend but please advise the board a few days in advance so that any modification to the venue can be arranged to assure adequate space or other capacity. During the pandemic the board meets virtually via Zoom video conference.

Zoom at Noon – Every Saturday:

Each Saturday at noon the club holds an informal social and technical chat via Zoom Video conference. Invitations are emailed to all club members. Drop in for a moment or for the whole session. Tell us what you've been up to or just say hi and listen in.

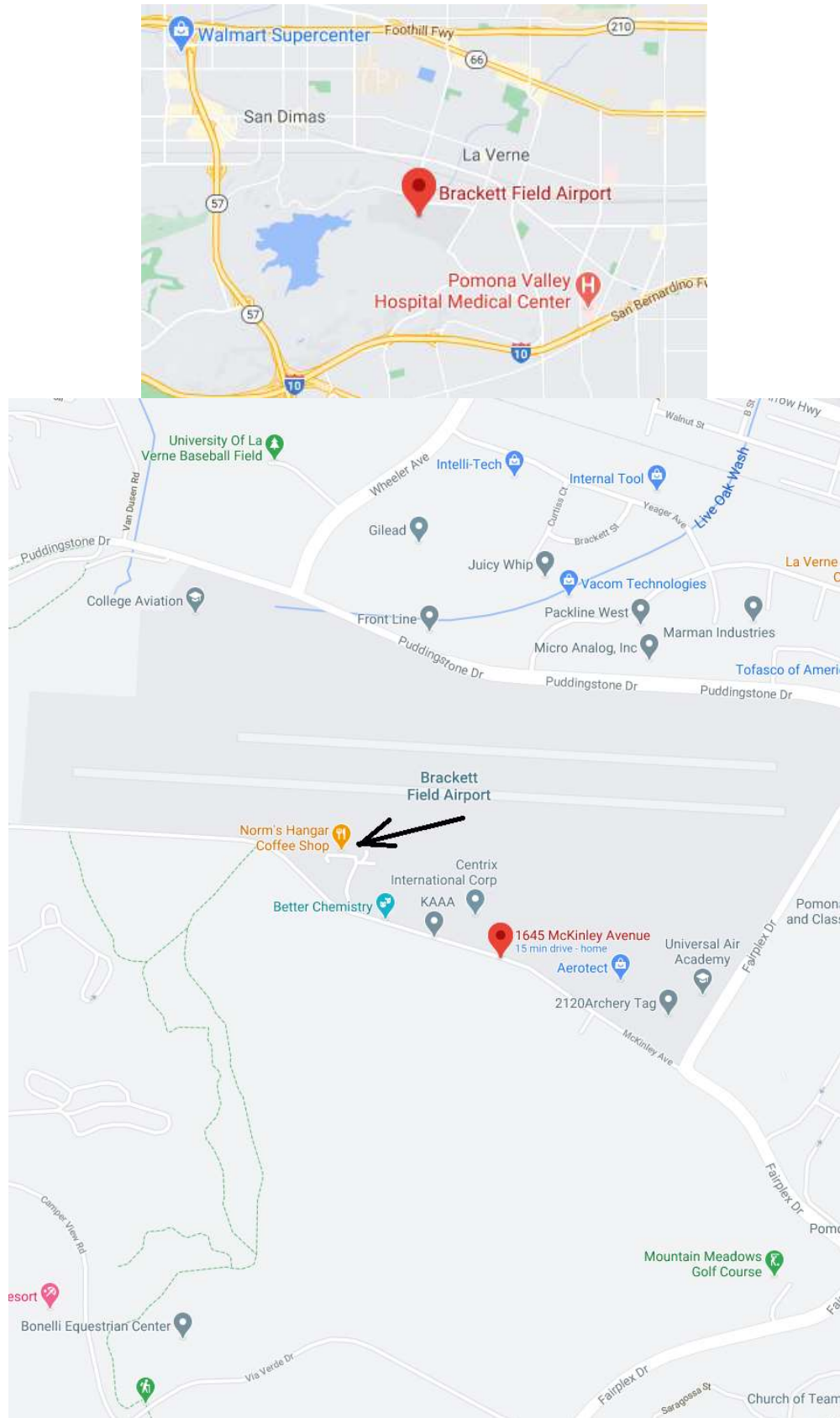
Field Day:

The club generally plans and executes a Field Day operating plan at a site and in a configuration developed by the members. ARRL Field Day is Amateur Radio's signature annual operating event and is a lot of fun. Field day occurs on the last full week-end of June. Planning generally begins in the fall and winter of the previous year.

Amateur Radio License Testing

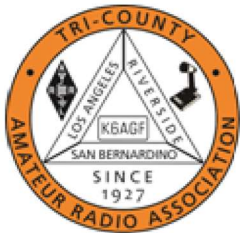
TCARA sponsors an ARRL VEC testing team that provides license examinations for all classes of Amateur Radio License (Technician, General and Advanced). Testing is generally on the last Saturday of each month and is at 1PM. The testing location is held at the Bracket Field Airport Administration Building, 1615 McKinley Avenue, La Verne, CA. 91750. (The same building that holds 'Norms Hangar' coffee shop). While walk-ins are usually accepted, we recommend that you contact Mr. Frank C. Westphal in advance and advise him of what license level you will be testing for. You may contact Frank by email at k6fw1@verizon.net or by phone at (909) 257-7205. Frank will advise you as to what to bring or not to bring to the testing session. Testing fee is \$15.00. TCARA members are also available to help you as you study for your license. To date, testing sessions have been suspended during the pandemic. Contact the club or an officer for information about remote test sessions that may be available to you on-line. **Testing is available!**

Map to Club Meeting and Test Session Location at Brackett Field Airport in La Verne



Membership Roster: PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU ARE PRESENT AND YOUR INFO IS UP TO DATE. IF YOU SEE ERRORS OR OMISSIONS PLEASE CONTACT DAVE WILKIE AT: d33wilkie@gmail.com

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – WELCOME!

***REQUIRED FIELDS – PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY**

*Date: _____ *Call Sign or 'None': _____ *License Class: _____

*First Name: _____ *Last Name: _____

*Street Address: _____

*City: _____ *State: _____ *Zip: _____

*Email: _____ *Phone: (_____) _____

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF:

***APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP YEAR:** _____

Memberships: ARRL____ ARES____ RACES____ MARS____ OTHER_____

Interests: DX____ VHF/UHF____ HF____ DIGITAL____ CERT____ PROJECTS____ CW____

SATELLITE____ MICROWAVE____ FOX HUNTING____ EMERG. PREP____ Are you a VE?_____

Other Interests/Skills/Goals: _____

Other licensed Spouse or Children (Names/Callsigns) _____

Membership Dues: \$20/Year Due upon joining, renewals due Jan 1. \$10 if joining after June 30.

Note: Only licensed members with dues not in arrears may vote. Only members with valid amateur radio licenses whose dues are not in arrears may vote. There are no age limits. **Make checks payable to TCARA.**

By signing this application I agree to abide by the By-Laws of the Tri-County Amateur Radio Association. I agree that the club may share my stated email address with club members and in the monthly QRM newsletter.

*Signed: _____ *Date _____

PLEASE Include required initial dues payment (\$20 or \$10 after June 30th) so that we can process your application.

FOR TCARA USE ONLY:

TREAS: Dues Received \$_____ Date: _____ By: _____

TREAS: Form of Dues (Cash, Check, etc.) _____ Date App. Forwarded to Secty. _____

SECRETARY: Date added to Member DB _____ New Member Packet Emailed _____

You may hand deliver your application at any TCARA meeting (see web site for details) or mail it to the P.O. Box above. Feel free to contact us at the email address above or per the contact info on our website with any questions about the club, membership or Amateur Radio in general. Visit us during our weekly net or at any meeting.