



MTARA NEWS



| JULY 2020 | [Mountain Top Amateur Radio Association](#) |

President: Vic Marquez, KK6WKI

Secretary: Dave Esquer, K6WDE

Ed/Membership: Tracy Lenocker, WM6T

The Rim of the World ARES group is an ARRL affiliated organization and part of the Mountain Top Amateur Radio Association.

Vice President: Gary Johnson, AA6GJ

Treasurer: Patty Szychowski, KK6LWH

Past President: John Snedden, KT7P

President Vic's Message

Greetings from your President, Vic, KK6WKI.

This is our second newsletter and I hope that you are safe and secure, as best as you can be, in this day of the corona virus.

The Zoom virtual club sessions are still held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. The schedule is published on the front page of the [MTARA website](#).

Remember, wherever you see **BLUE** text underlined throughout this newsletter, you can click it and it will take you to the appropriate website or downloadable link.



If you need assistance putting Zoom on your computer or smart phone, you can contact Tracy, WM6T.

We welcome two new members to the club:

Assunta Vickers, KJ6FQP from Riverside and John Wolcott, KB6OVO of Cedarpines Park. Glad to have you!

As things begin to ease up, I hope that we can get back to 'reality' and

and our regular monthly club meetings soon. Remember, stay safe and as always, **if you see something, say something!**

73

- Vic

Editor's Update, Field Day Logging Update - K6WDE

Field Day is now over, we hope everyone had a great time last weekend!

Remember, the August newsletter will be filled with YOUR adventures during FD, send in those write-ups and, more importantly, your photos!

Quoting from the ARRL, "In addition, for 2020 only, an aggregate club score will be published, which will be the sum of

Field Day
Please write legibly. Make certain you have filled out this completely and have enclosed any required dupes sheets, photo bonus claims.

1. Field Day Call Used _____ GOTA Stat _____
2. Club or Group name Mountain Top Amateur Radio Association (MTARA)
3. Number of Participants _____ 4. Number _____

all individual entries indicating a specific club (similar to the aggregate score totals used in ARRL affiliated club competitions)."

MTARA is asking that you submit

your log, either [online](#) or via hardcopy ([print it out here](#)). **BUT, don't forget to include the club name in your entry form!**

You have until July 28 to submit your form directly to the ARRL, please don't forget!

Staying radio-active,

Dave

Monthly Club Meetings

Our monthly meetings are on the first Tuesday of each month. **They are cancelled until further notice, however.** The meetings begin at 7:00 and last until about 9:00 p.m. The meetings are located at the Lake Arrowhead Presbyterian Church located just south of Lake Arrowhead Village at 351 Highway 173, Lake Arrowhead, CA 92352. The phone is (909) 336-1502.

Our meetings are open to everyone, licensed amateur radio or just interested parties. The club is family oriented and meant to be educational and fun.

Our purpose is to provide educational opportunities, mentoring, radio communication training, and providing radio

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communications for community events.

Each meeting also has a technical presentation on some aspect of amateur radio.

Near the end of each meeting is our monthly mentoring session called an Elmer session.

Treasurer's Report - KK6LWH

We have two new members so our balance is now \$50 richer! Our income from membership dues is \$370.00 and no expenses for the month. The total funds on deposit in our account is now \$9,057.09!



73,

Patty

Emails

We have been sending out weekly emails to all club members. However, we get a lot of refused emails from those with 'hotmail' or 'msn' domain names. We cannot fix it from our end since the spam catcher is part of Microsoft's email system at the receiving end.

"A Lid" - don't be one!

Adding an S to 73. 73 by itself is fine, but pluralizing it (73s or 73's) is the equivalent of saying "best regardses", which doesn't make sense.

(Not...) Always use a repeater, even if you can work the other station easily on simplex -- especially if you can make the contact on simplex. The coverage of the repeater you use should be inversely proportional to your distance from the other station.

Gary's Gear, Gizmos and Gadgets - AA6GJ

We live in such a wonderful world of today's technology. We have Ham Radio Deluxe logging and rig control, the WSJT-X Software Family which includes FT8, FT4, WSPR and others; RT Systems Software for programming our radios; external sound cards; cameras; and the list goes on. All you have to do is plug these items into your computer via the now ubiquitous USB connector. It's all great until this happens.



computer.

All of the USB positions are taken!

You run out of USB inputs on your

Now what!? Well ... remember when Tracy was telling us about an inexpensive USB sound card device to use with our computer to convert the audio tones to digital when we run FT8 and packet, etc.?

That same company, Sabrent, makes this inexpensive gadget to add more USB ports to your computer or laptop.

- ▶ Instantly add four USB 3.0 ports to any compatible Device
- ▶ LED indicators display power status for each port
- ▶ Supports transfer speeds up to 5Gbps (USB 3.0), 480Mbps (USB 2.0), 12Mbps (USB 1.1)
- ▶ Easy Setup: No installation; plug-n-play and hot swappable

[Sabrent 4-Port USB 3.0 Hub](#) with individual LED power switches
Price: \$9.99 on Amazon.



So, you might want to check this out. I have one and it runs

all of my gear, gizmos, and gadgets simply great. Until, next time,

73 de AA6GJ



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Greetings from points north - WB6RCK

More specifically, the high desert. I thought I would share some of the amateur radio activity going on out here.

Besides MTARA, I also belong to the VVARC ([Victor Valley Amateur Radio Club](#), K6QWR). We meet at the Sitting Bull Academy, 19445 Sitting Bull Road in Apple Valley on the second Tuesday of the month except in July (when there is no pandemic restrictions). We sometimes have a hard time finding topics and presenters for our club meetings. With the wealth of knowledge and experience in MTARA, I have even thought of asking if someone from MTARA could spare a second Tuesday night some month and share some of it with VVARC.



They have VEs in the club that have testing for all classes of

licenses on one Saturday every month, sometimes on the third and sometimes on the fourth, depending on the time of year. Details are on the web site. They are held at the Spring Valley Community Center, address: 12975 Rolling Ridge Drive, Spring Valley Lake in Victorville at 12:30 p.m. This is how I got my license back in 2017 when I retired, after I let it expire in 1973.

We also have a weekly club net that meets every Sunday night at 7:00

p.m. on our club repeater which is up on Quartzite Mountain, WA6EFW on 146.940 MHz output, standard offset, PL 91.5 MHz. Visitors are always welcome to check in. You don't have to be a member of the club to be a member of the net. Its NCOs are usually Dick, KI6IXL or Christy, KB6LTY (who happens to be one of the VEs).

The website lists a number of other test sites and schedules along with a lot of other information, including a list of local nets, schedules and repeaters (although I don't see MTARA there. MTARA2 comes in very well out here, and so does MTARA5).

Even though I live in the high desert, the reason that I joined MTARA is partly because I lived in the mountains for 23 years since 1977 and I consider it my old stomping grounds. I lived in Twin Peaks for 13 years and worked at the Calvary Chapel Conference Center, now called the Twin Peaks Christian Conference Center. Then, starting in 1990 I lived in Crestline for about 10 years when I commuted to San Bernardino while working for the County. I moved to Victorville in 2002 and retired from the county in 2017. I was not a ham for all those years. I first got my license in 1966 and worked up to Advanced by 1968. I let my license expire in 1973 although I was inactive since 1971. I did enjoy SWLing after that and had a portable short wave radio and listened to hams as well as shortwave broadcasts. I also had a few scanners too (I'm a big

listener). After I retired I looked on line for a killer full spectrum, all mode communications quality receiver to really SWL right. As I was looking at prices I thought "if I'm going to spend that kind of money I might as well buy a 2-way and get my license back." I then got connected with VVARC and went to one of their testing sessions and got my general back and later, as a vanity, my old call. They don't issue Advanced licenses anymore.



I don't remember how I first heard about MTARA but when I first heard about a ham club in the mountains I thought it would be a good way to reconnect with my old stomping grounds. The people in the club are great, it has a wealth of knowledge and information, and the club has been a good way to catch up with all the radio technology that has emerged since I got started in the hobby years ago.

I might hear some of you on the VVARC Club net sometime.

73
de WB6RCK, Dennis

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Upcoming Calendar of Events

Activities that MTARA will be participating in or supporting during the upcoming summer months:

- ▶ ALA Fourth of July – Still on the schedule for Saturday, July 4th.
- ▶ Mountain Top Days - The Parade has been canceled. In its place there may be another event but probably not requiring any ECS or ARES radio operators.
- ▶ Tour de Big Bear – Rescheduled to September 19th.
- ▶ Kodiak 100
John, W6GC, will be sending out information to MTARA members and former radio operators. The event will be on September 11-12 starting at 6:00 pm. The event will be limited to just one 100 mile race and limited to 100 runners.
- ▶ Kids on Public Lands
KOPL has been canceled due to Corona virus safe social distancing concerns.
- ▶ Big Bear Gran Fondo – Still on schedule for September 26th.
The Gran Fondo mountain bike ride will be held once again in Big Bear. MTARA members will be located along the mountain area trails, aid stations and in SAG vehicles providing communications to support the event.

Upcoming VHF/UHF and HF Ham Radio calendar of events

A few fun events that club members can participate in and/or sharpen their communication skills with!

- ▶ [RAC Canada Day](#), July 1
- ▶ [North American CW QSO Party](#), August 1-2
- ▶ [Maryland-DC QSO Party](#), August 8
- ▶ [North American SSB QSO Party](#), August 15-16
- ▶ [Hawaii QSO Party](#), August 22-24
- ▶ [Ohio QSO Party](#), August 22-23
- ▶ [International Lighthouse Lightship Weekend](#) - ILLW, August 22-23
- ▶ [Kansas QSO Party](#), August 29-30
- ▶ [Colorado QSO Party](#), August 21-September 1
- ▶ [Tennessee QSO Party](#), September 6-7
- ▶ [Texas QSO Party](#), September 12-13
- ▶ [ARRL September VHF Contest](#), September 12-14
- ▶ [California QSO Party](#), October 3-4
- ▶ [Pacificon](#), October 16-18, hopefully!

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Echolink Update

For those who are away from their radios during our MTARA nets, you can always check in using [Echolink](#) from your computer, smart phone or tablet. Setup is easy and fast but you must be verified to make sure only licensed amateur radio operators are using the system.

Echolink is always up on MTARA2. The node is **WM6T-L**. Our Tuesday night 220 net is on Echolink as well but you need to use the Keller Peak node. This node is **KE6TZG-R** and it is only available from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. during our net time.

Membership Information

Membership in the Mountain Top Amateur Radio Association® is open to any person interested in learning more about Amateur Radio. Members do not have to be a licensed Amateur Radio Operator to be a member but licensure is recommended. Members must be active in club activities which includes trainings, events, club meetings and Field Day. Membership is on an annual basis and is from January 1 to December 31 of each year. There are no prorated memberships. The annual membership is \$20 for a single member or \$30 for an entire family. The membership form can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Dave's Devices - DIY for FREE

Do you have a spare HDMI monitor or TV, a spare Raspberry Pi (RPI) (you know, that tiny computer) and a spare 16Gb SD card? If so, you can have your very own, FREE, tailored Ham Clock for your shack. The same rebranded setup from [Gigaparts](#) is \$300.00 for the plain Jane version or \$400 with the [cherry wood frame](#).

Using the RPI and the open-source Raspian operating system, and [Ham Clock software](#) developed by



WB00EW (a genius by the way), you too “can build a desk clock that shows accurate time, geography,

time zone, solar activity, sunrise and sunset times, Maidenhead locators, beam heading, Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF) beacons, news headlines, and other timely information in one small device.” No desktop or laptop required and it runs 24/7-365 days a year.

For those of you interested in satellite work, the software will display your favorite ‘bird’ as it tracks overhead for that VHF/UHF contact. In the view above, you can see the track of the International Space Station as it is approaching my QTH. This is my old 24” computer monitor!

The setup is really quite simple and [DL1GKK has outlined the steps](#) required to get you up and running in no time.

Since the setup is SO SIMPLE, send me your SD card (micro or standard-size, depending on your RPi) and I will send it back to you with the RPi operating system and Ham Clock already installed. A small instruction sheet will accompany the SD card, this will walk you through the connection to your WiFi network. Plug-n-play and you will be up and running!

The original article describing Ham Clock appeared in the [October 2017 issue of QST magazine](#), check it out for more details.

Dave, K6WDE

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Local weekly nets

| | Repeater | Time | Activity | Purpose |
|----------|-------------|------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Monday | MTARA-2 | 7:00 p.m. | Weekly Check-in | MTARA news |
| Monday | 144.330 Mhz | 8:15 p.m. | 'Gordo' net | Simplex readiness |
| Tuesday | MTARA-5 | 7:00 p.m. | Weekly Check-in | Tech discussions |
| Thursday | HF | 10:30 a.m. | 14.240 Mhz | Band(s) status |
| Friday | MTARA-5 | 5:00 p.m. | XYL Happy Hour! | It's Friday! |
| Daily | CBARC | 7:00 a.m. | Technet | Elmer sessions |

Simply turn the knob. An icon overlay will appear in the upper right of your screen showing the current setting. After about 2 seconds it disappears until accessed again. Turning the knob causes the volume to increase or decrease depending on the direction you turn it. If you want to mute the audio then press the knob and the audio will be turned off. To reinstate the audio you can either press the knob again or just turn it. When muted the numerical display will turn into an "X".



It is available on [Amazon for \\$23.](#)

On the lighter side ...

A ham is driving up a steep, narrow mountain road, his antennas flopping in the breeze and flopping into the other lane. A YL is driving down the same road.

As they pass each other, the YL narrowly missed the antennas and leans out of the window and yells...PIG! The ham immediately leans out of his window and replies, "WITCH!!"

They each continue on their way, and as the man rounds the next corner, he crashes into a pig in the middle of the road.

If hams would only listen!

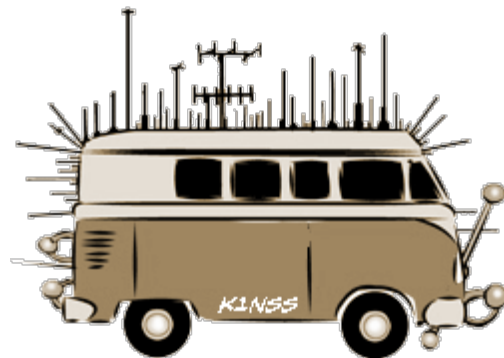
Control Your Computer Audio - WM6T

Have you ever wanted to have a volume control knob for your computer? Maybe when you were listening to a WebSDR, attending a Zoom session or a YouTube video and wanted to lower or raise the volume or even quickly mute the audio. It can be hard to find that little speaker icon and then move the slider with your mouse.



Well there is a slick fairly low cost solution to put a real volume control on your desk. It is a USB device and does not require any special drivers to be loaded.

It works with Window versions from XP to 10 and all Mac's.



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MTARA Amateur Radio Exams During COVID-19 Conditions - WM6T

A number of club members and others used the shelter in place to consider studying for their Technician license or to upgrade to Amateur Extra. MTARA members were asked if they would like for us to provide a testing opportunity before the end of June. We had two replies and so we had planned to do the testing on the front porch and driveway. But



after two weeks we had eight who were interested and the final number interested was 13.

In order to make a testing

session of that size, we contacted Paula, KK6LWW, to see about using the Masonic Lodge for the venue. Paula told us the venue was ours. All of the potential testers were told that June 6th would be the test day. Paula went beyond her usual self and had the room all laid out with everyone 6 to 8 feet apart. On the day of the test, yes you guessed it, Paula was there early and had 3 dozen of the best tasting cherry turnovers you could imagine.



Prior to the exams and in order to help the testers prepare, we scheduled three Zoom sessions for the Extra, and one

each for the General and Technicians. Each session was two hours long.

When the big day came the weather decided to make it look like a bit of winter. Fog on the entire rim and wind and temperatures in the low 40's. We were so glad that we had an indoor venue.



Those who were planning on taking the test were given the rules based on ARRL, W5YI, the State of California and the

County of San Bernardino rules regarding groups getting together. Everyone had to wear a mask and the VE team also wore gloves.

Ten individuals showed up for the testing. There were seven for Extra and three for Technician. Everyone passed and one person got 100%.

Those testing for Extra were: Ken Decroo, KK6LWN; Debbie Johnson, WB6LVC; Dede Hermon, K6DDZ; Jo Stringfield, N6NTJ; Bill Herrera, KE6SDF; Mike LeClaire, KD6HME, and Greg Gerovac, KN6CUO. Ken, Debbie, Dede, Jo, and Bill are club members.

Those testing for Technician were Patrick Pirtle, KN6JID; Jose Gonzalez, KN6JIE, and Ken Carreon, KN6JIC.

We would like to thank Tina, W6TNA; Dave, W6DVE; Jodi, WA6JL; Michael, AE6MO, and Tracy, WM6T, for volunteering to be the VEs for this testing session.

Tracy