



Smoke Signals

Newsletter of Fullerton Radio Club

April 2024

President's Column

It's soon going to be May, and around here, that means it's time for Fullerton Radio Club's annual spring event: Antennas in the Park.

This year, the event will be held on Saturday, May 4 on the lawn in front of the Izaak Walton Cabin at Hillcrest Park in Fullerton (see page 3 and 4 for directions and a map of the park).

Joe Moell K0OV and Marvin Johnston KE6HTS will stage an Amateur Radio Direction Finding event. There will be antenna building for this who would like to do so and practice transmitters for those less inclined to run up and down hills.

Albert Solomon AG6OF has graciously volunteered to perform chef duties. Burgers and fixins will be free for club members and we'll ask for a voluntary \$5 donation for our guests. April will bring a delicious cake. Tradition has it that ARDF participants will get first servings!

If you want to set up a radio and antenna, you're encouraged to do so. You can hunt for hidden transmitters or sit around and catch up with friends. Rumor has it we look thinner and younger in person than we do on Zoom. You might want to bring a lawn chair as seating is limited.

Vi Barrett W6CBA SK

Violet "Vi" Barrett W6CBA passed away in Park Vista of Fullerton on April 16 at age 94. Vi grew up in south Los Angeles with an early interest in ham radio. She got her first license in 1948, the year that she graduated from high school, and kept her first callsign for the remainder of her life. Soon after, she became the first woman to serve as a radio dispatcher in the Los Angeles office of the FBI.

In 1954, she married Malcolm "Don" Barrett and left the FBI to start a family. It was twenty years later that Vi finally got Don to get his ham license, KA6DJK. The two became very active volunteers for Whittier Police Department, were leaders in Los Angeles County Disaster Communications Service, and helped provide communications backup for Whittier hospitals.

We first met Vi and Don at a transmitter hunt of the Rio Hondo Amateur Radio Club. They were regulars in these mobile T-hunts and Vi was using her excellent CW skills teaching ham radio beginner classes. Their performances in the Wouff Hong ritual in the ARRL Division Convention at the Sheraton Anaheim hotel were unforgettable.

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FRC April 2024 Board Meeting Minutes

The monthly FRC Board Meeting was called to order by President Bob Houghton AD6QF at 5:33 PM on Wednesday, April 3rd, 2024. All Board Members were present.

Prior to the Board discussion we heard of Gene Thorpe's son who is a motorcycle police officer in Texas whereby Matthew had been hit by a vehicle broadside on his motorcycle. His left leg is broken in multiple places, with metal rods inserted to aid in the repair.

The March Board Meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

Treasurers Report:

- Bank balance \$6318.50 as of the March 31 bank statement.
- New deposits: \$60: Larry Bennett, Mike Rhey, Ray Rounds memberships
- New expenditures: None
- Bob's records show 31 paid memberships and 1 life member as of 3/30/2024.

Old Business:

- Swap meeting & breakfast was very well attended.
- Follow up needed regarding possible charitable donation – scholarships.

New Business:

- Starting plans for AITP on May 4. Note date change.
- Verify Albert's availability for AITP.
- Need for authorization of food expenditures for AITP.
- Need an additional activity day – maybe FM deviation clinic?
- HamSci Solar Eclipse QSO Party. This coming Monday. <https://hamsci.ORG/eclipse>.

Final discussion or announcements:

- Brief discussion regarding a potential club repeater.
- Still working on potential club newspaper article.

There being no further discussion the meeting was ended at 5:54 PM.

Submitted by Secretary Paul Broden K6MHD



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After retiring, Vi and Don traveled the USA, including Alaska, in a succession of three motor homes. They finally settled down in Morningside of Fullerton, where Vi soon had antennas installed on her apartment balcony and in the building's attic so she could continue to pound brass on the HF bands.

Don passed away in 2021 and Vi moved into assisted living with a VHF/UHF antenna outside her window to monitor local repeaters. In 2022 and 2023 she operated 20 meter SSB at the Morningside Field Day station, as you can see in the photo.

By Joe and April Moell



Hillcrest Park Directions

From the north (preferred route), go south on Lemon St. (from Brea Blvd.) to the park entrance on the right, at the crest of the Lemon St. hill. Turn right to enter the park and follow the road to the right, curving left around the reservoir to a T-intersection stop sign, then turn right at the stop sign and continue (curving left) to the Upper Parking Area. Enter the parking area to the left and park. The cabin is reached by walking down the driveway at the south end of the parking lot (there might be a locked cable across this downward-sloping driveway). Walk down the driveway, curving left about halfway down, then continue to the rear of the cabin.

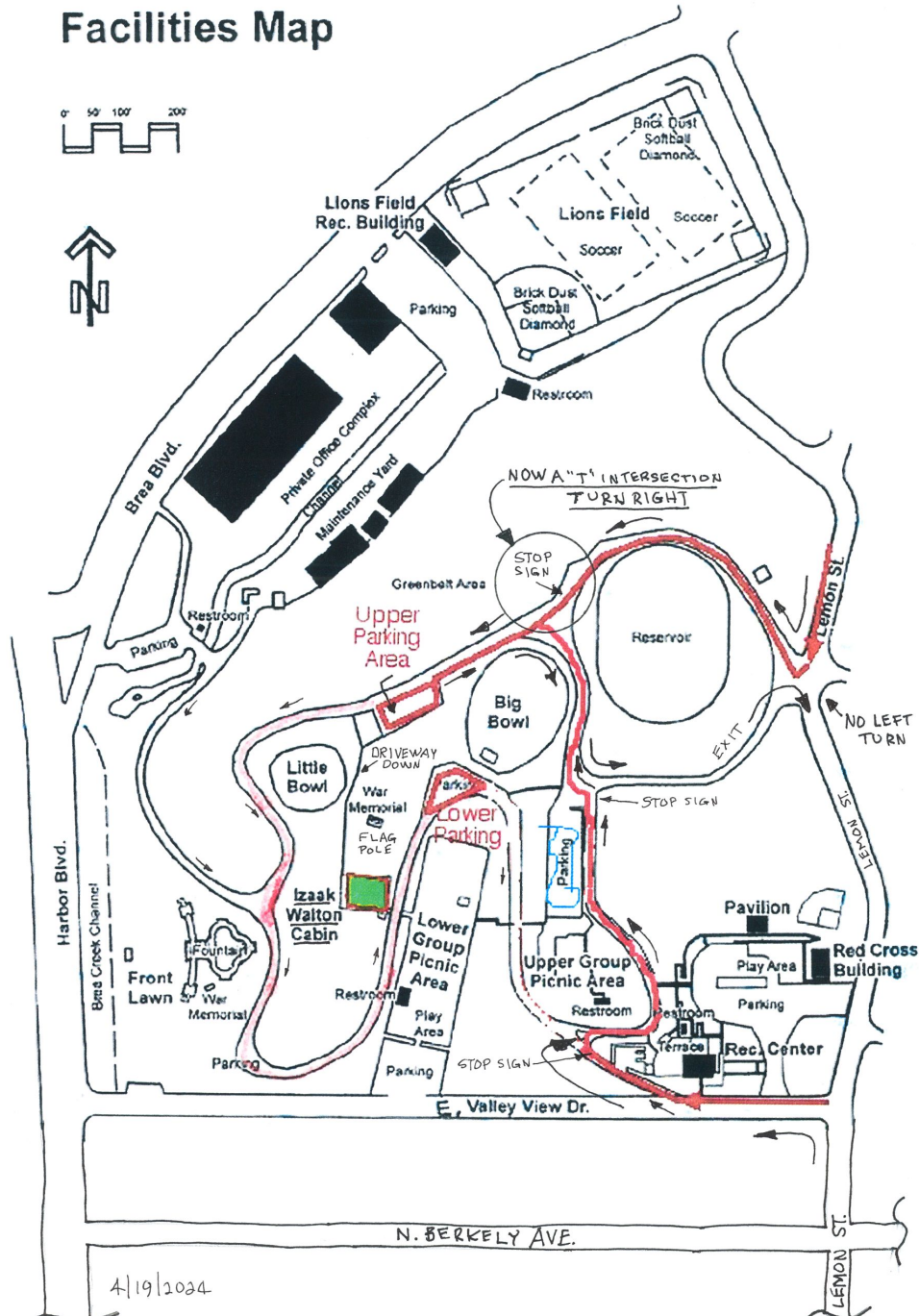
From the south (alternative route), go north on Lemon St., turn left on E. Valley View Dr. and turn right into the second park entrance (The first entrance near Lemon St. goes to the Rec Center only; be careful not to turn there.). Follow the road a short distance to a first stop sign, turning right nearly 180 degrees. Continue up on the road to a second stop sign, jog left and continue straight, then follow the curving road left at the intersection near the reservoir to the Upper Parking Area. Enter the parking area to the left and park. The cabin is reached by walking down the driveway at the south end of the parking lot (there might be a locked cable across this downward-sloping driveway). Walk down the driveway, curving left about halfway down, then continue to the rear of the cabin.

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If the **Upper Parking Area** is full, continue following the road down the hill, curving to the left and going back up the hill to additional parking in the **Lower Parking Area**.

Additional parking (marked Parking on the map) is entered off E. Valley View Dr. but this requires some walking uphill to the cabin area.

Hillcrest Park Facilities Map



TAG Activity Report for April 2024

Your host broke this swing in June and it served as a continuing inspiration to lose weight. I've lost 25 lb. on the Keto diet and so it now stands as a monument for success. I intended on bragging about it at the TAG meeting but every single person there was thinner than me.

- Bill Webb
- Larry Bennett
- Bob Houghton
- Dick Bremer
- Ray Rounds
- Dick Palmer
- Larry McDavid
- John Mock
- Walter Clark, host



There was some discussion on weight and health for guys our age but that evolved to the earthquake in Taiwan and engineering practices. It was noted that one of the buildings didn't collapse but was very much tilted. Building codes have saved many lives but that doesn't mean the building itself can



be saved. Bob Houghton said that the first major bridge in the world to be made of iron is still standing because it was over built. The pattern it followed was that of a wooden bridge which of course was thicker than iron

needs to be.

Walter tried to remember a wise saying about how engineers are constrained by the cost of material. We also talked about A-I and of course it seemed appropriate to try out ChatGPT to locate that famous quote. Here's what I asked it: "I need a quote about bridges. Anyone can build a bridge that stands a long time, but it takes an engineer to make it cheap to just barely stand."

ChatGPT:

"Building a bridge that barely stands is a feat of engineering prowess, but crafting one that stands strong is the mark of true mastery."

It missed the point. In a quote you want a few words to have impact by saying something startling so the reader is compelled to think deeply about the subject. Google Search turned up the right quote:

"Any idiot can build a bridge that stands, but it takes an engineer to build a bridge that barely stands."

It sounds like an insult but an engineer recognizes that it is the duty of the engineer is to make it affordable.

"DALL-E" is ChatGPT for images and Bill Webb brought pictures it generated with the following input:

Make a cover for a book with the theme Vampire Santa. Here's one of them →



To bring the meeting back to ham radio and electronics, Bill asked ChatGPT . . .

"Hello, I am in a ham radio club meeting and we are discussing

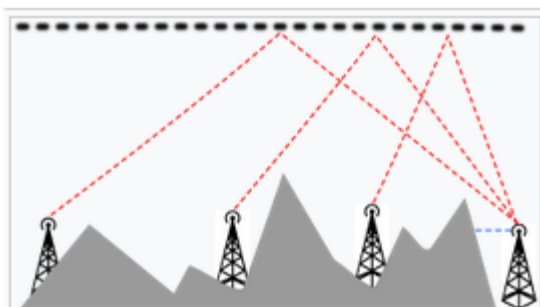
LoRa (spelled L-O-R-A). What can you tell us about LoRa?"

After a wait of 2 microseconds Bill was reading its answer. Bob had his cellphone open to the Wikipedia article on that subject and it seemed to him it was word for word. So sometimes ChatGPT is just quick version of Google. And it is reported, that Google is taking on some A-I ability.

The discussion about weight, age, and longevity kind of depressed **Dick Bremer** because what he reported on as activity was attending lots of funerals. That led to a discussion on the price of homes (his neighborhood now has vacancies) and how that is changing the kind of folks moving into our area and the need for affordable housing.

John Mock talked about walking with a friend in his neighborhood which isn't far from the old Hughes campus. Walter talked about his walking the trails every day and his fear of falling down. A walking stick was suggested and Larry McDavid made a good case for a walking stick that is tall enough for the arm-pit to grip. John described where he was (Lancer Way, Barrett Park) which led to a discussion about the Fullerton Radio Club ham shack in what is now Raytheon. There seems to be no employee left to use it. But it is indeed still there. Rich Belansky was making a habit of using it when he was commuting from that Raytheon facility to another. But now that he's retired he doesn't have access to it anymore. There are two repeaters in that ham shack which are used every day by Joe, April, Bart, Larry, Bob and others.

Then the discussion got technical. John Mock or was it Dick Palmer talked about making several contacts in Moab Utah some 538 miles away; probably using NVIS on



10 MHz which he said was on the edge of MUF. Here's what those acronyms mean. (I had to look them up.) The NVIS is Near Vertical Incidence Skywave is a propagation path that involves reflecting off the ionosphere when the ground wave is not available because of nearby obstructions. The MUF (pronounced emm-you-eff, not muff) is the Maximum Usable Frequency that can be used for transmission between two points on Earth by reflection from the ionosphere. (The ionosphere is most reflective of the lower frequencies.)

Ray Rounds will be taking the ham radio license test in La Habra shortly. He said that in practice tests he gets 50% on the general class questions and with a bit more cramming he thinks he can pass both the technician and the general class exams. His present interest is in electronic products that don't involve soldering. He likes the Apple software framework and communication protocol referred to as "HomeKit". There are also "Ring" brand cameras and lights which he is trying to integrate with HomeKit. His interest seems to be security-based things that interface with the cellphone. Bob mentioned "Sidewalk" which all agreed was kind of scary in that it uses your neighbor's WiFi without their permission. But gosh a mesh network can be very useful for purposes such as finding a lost pet. That led to a discussion about text searches being spied upon so as to present ads to you.

Larry Bennett uses hotel WiFi where he likes to use Express VPN for safety reasons. He also told us about a talk the Fullerton Police gave to his Kiwanis group.

Dick Palmer since the last TAG meeting has been using WinLink and has worked RMS Stations. He built a 4 watt transceiver to use FT8 on 80 meters to work 20 states and 2 countries.

The next discussion was about A-I on Zoom. What that does is write text summaries of conversations that went on. Holy mackerel. Walter thought what's next? We just show up and the A-I thing will carry on the conversation for us. We are there just find out what we have to say.

Larry McDavid brought two things to show us. A deviation meter and an old 60 Hz digital display clock. (I thought he meant 60 KHz WWVB signal clock. But nope.) Larry talked about olden days when the Edison company had to keep their turbines synchronized. Not only for the kitchen clock above the door to the living room but so the interstate power grid can work together.

He also told us about his ordeal with his San Antonio Texas trip to see the eclipse in totality. It was clouded over, but he said it was rewarding to some extent in that it was darkest ground experience of the eleven expeditions he's been on. He said that former member Tom Gaccione was also in Texas and drove to visit Bill Preston further east and so did get to see and photograph the eclipse. Weather is a local phenomenon and not easy to predict years in advance when eclipse viewing is arranged!