



# Dots & Dashes

*What*

*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*

The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Vol. 40, Issue No. 3 • Summer 2015

## SEA OF FIRE THE LOSS OF THE SS VOLTURNO

*Written for Dots & Dashes by MTC member Pat Kelly*

The Volturno was built at the Fairfield Shipyard in Glasgow, Scotland and launched on Sept 5th, 1906. She was of 3600 tons, 340 feet in length and was powered by a coal-fired triple-expansion steam engine that drove twin propellers giving a speed of 14 knots.

Owned originally by the Royal Shipping Line in Britain, she changed owners more than once and at the time of the disaster, was chartered to the Uranium Shipping Co., an affiliate of the Canadian Northern Railway.

The ship was named for the Volturno River in south-central Italy, that empties into the Mediterranean Sea just north of Naples. The vessel was on a regular run from Rotterdam to New York City with a stop at Halifax when westbound. In all, it took about four weeks for the round trip.

On October 2nd, 1913, the Volturno departed Rotterdam, bound westward again. She carried a very mixed cargo of oils, wines, burlap, straw and various chemicals. With a passenger list of approximately 564 immigrants, mostly in steerage class, and a crew of 93, the ship was fully loaded. Captain Francis Inch was the master and in the wireless room two operators, Walter Seddon and his assistant, Christopher Pennington, manned the ship's radio.

Soon after leaving the English Channel the vessel encountered heavy weather and rough seas as she entered the North Atlantic. Seven days out of port, on October 9th, early in the morning, a seaman discovered a fire in the forward hold. At once the alarm was given. All available crew were soon engaged in fighting this most terrible of ship disasters. In spite of their best efforts the

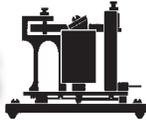
fire gained rapidly Captain Inch immediately ordered the SOS to be sent. The Captain and 2nd Officer Lloyd tried cutting a hole in the hatch cover to direct the hoses below to the fire. A loud explosion followed and the two men were blown back along the deck, burned and nearly blinded by the tremendous blast. Consideration was given to flooding the hold, but both the Captain and Chief Engineer decided against it as it would likely only hasten the sinking of the ship.

All boats were ordered swung out ready for lowering, lifebelts being given out to the passengers. Soon a second explosion damaged the steering mechanism and the engine room telegraph. The compass was blown out of the binnacle and flames forty feet high crackled and swirled above the vessel. The lines securing the radio antenna burned through, allowing it to ground on the metal work. The valiant 2nd Officer Lloyd climbed the mast and after twenty minutes of labour, succeeded in securing the antenna to the mast. Overcome by smoke and noxious fumes while descending, he fell to the deck being knocked senseless. He soon recovered and resumed his duties.

Meanwhile, the radiomen received a reply to their call from the British liner Carmania, 78 miles away. In spite of the weather, Carmania increased her speed from 16 to nearly 20 knots and arrived on the site at noon. Many of the immigrant passengers had to be driven forcibly out of the still unlaunched lifeboats. Some of them managed to drop a lifeboat containing 22 of the 24 first class passengers, with the chief steward, some stewardesses and a quartermaster. It soon

*continued on page 5* ➡

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The official publication of

## The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

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*Note: If possible, please include a copy of an obituary and other available information about his/her career and relationship to telegraphy and/or the telegraph industry.*

*Donations of telegraph instruments, telegraph ephemera, historical materials or requests for assistance with museum exhibits, telegraph demonstrations, or other consultation should be directed to:*

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*General correspondence, which doesn't fall into the above categories, should be directed to the International Secretary/Treasurer:*

*Position open to anyone interested*

**Local Chapter Members:** Members of local chapters should send all correspondence regarding address changes, membership renewals and similar information to their local Chapter Secretary/Treasurer. If you do not know your Chapter Secretary/Treasurer, please inquire with the International Secretary/Treasurer to obtain the necessary contact information.

**Your Articles and Stories:** MTC is always looking for original photographs, stories and articles about your experiences in telegraphy or radiotelegraphy. Please send articles and news stories to the Editor of *Dots & Dashes*.

**Telegraph Talks and Demonstrations:** If you or your local chapter should schedule any demonstrations, talks or other special events, please notify the International President so he can publish your event in our on-line calendar.

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The next issue of *Dots & Dashes* is scheduled for publication on September 30<sup>th</sup>, with submission deadline three weeks prior to that date.

➡ This ad runs routinely in the *World Radio News*:

## Morse Telegraph Club

### Landline Morse is Alive and well!

**Dots & Dashes newsletter**

**The Ace Holman national telegraph office & hub**

**Internet Telegraphy Railroad Telegraphy**

**Morse Telegraph demonstration**

**Learn more about the history of the telegraph or**

**simply enjoy using American Morse Code and**

**authentic telegraph equipment.**

[www.morsetelegraphclub.org](http://www.morsetelegraphclub.org)



## Sidewire

Comments from the  
Editor of *Dots & Dashes*

By Jim Wilson



The summer issue of *Dots & Dashes* is due in the mail by June 30th. Whew, we met the deadline again! For me, the month of June was packed with interesting activities including a lively

Morse telegraph demonstration, a four day conference on high tech communications, and annual amateur radio Field Day. I hope that your summer is also off to a good start with interesting adventures.

The telegraph was the first practical use of electricity. Since the inception of the electric telegraph about 175 years ago, the ingenuity of mankind has taken off with inventions never imagined by “Finley” Morse. (According to the book, “Lightening Man,” Samuel F. B. Morse did not go by Samuel; “Finley” was his most used nickname.) Morse could never have imagined cell phones, digital cameras, ipads, computers, television, or radio astronomy! What next?

We need to tell the world about the ingenious invention of the electric telegraph and how this simple invention started a revolution. We also need to recruit new members to the Morse Telegraph Club. You are the keepers of the fire; you carry the torch to the next generation. So if you have a friend who shows some interest, invite them to join MTC, the organization with a noble purpose. This summer issue includes fourteen Silent Keys and zero new members. I challenge you to turn these numbers around for the next issue. Add to the top of your To Do List: Recruit a new member to the Morse Telegraph Club.

Yes, keep that sounder clicking and continue to tell your friends about the value of the electric telegraph, the original email. Recruit a new member to join the fun.

*Jim Wilson*

## President's Line

Jim Wades, President  
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.



**H**ave you renewed your 2015 MTC membership? Historically, we have kept MTC members on the roster until the third quarter of the following year when those who had not renewed were removed from the membership roll. Therefore, those who have not yet renewed for 2015 may find this is their last issue of “Dots and Dashes.” If you have not yet renewed, please be sure to do so. A membership form is available on the MTC web page or you can contact the International President at the address listed in the front of this issue.

In the coming months, those Grand Chapter members (members at large) who have not yet renewed will receive a reminder letter in the mail. This is our way of saying we need you and we value your membership. By supporting MTC one receives much more than four issues of “Dots and Dashes.” One also receives the indirect benefit of being associated with the World’s foremost telegraph history organization.

Each year, MTC receives numerous requests for technical assistance with museum projects, documentaries and various research projects ranging in importance from simple high school term papers to genuine scholarly efforts. Walk into many important museums throughout the United States and Canada and one finds telegraph exhibits, which bear the mark of the Morse Telegraph Club. We have restored and donated numerous instruments, photographs and other telegraph ephemera to important public museums throughout North America. Our membership has offered professional guidance and hands-on labor to ensure such exhibits are accurate and interesting. We have designed and built interactive displays to explain telegraphy to current generations, some of which are featured in the foremost museums in North America.

The activities of MTC are designed to honor the countless historical contributions of the telegrapher and the employees of the railroad and telegraph industry. While such projects by themselves may seem of minor importance, the many projects we have supported, when taken

collectively throughout the U.S. and Canada, drive a narrative that leaves a lasting legacy, which honors our membership and those who have gone before us.

It may be true that the number of telegraphers in our organization is decreasing with each passing year. This is the nature of things. However, we also have younger individuals joining MTC because they are interested in the history of telegraphy. Some are radio amateurs, some are amateur or professional historians, and some are the sons and daughters of telegraphers. These individuals are asking for the opportunity and privilege to carry on our legacy. They need the support of those who have worked in the field of telegraphy and it is our duty to pass on our history and traditions to these individuals so that our story survives us. MTC exists for this purpose and it is our hope that our emphasis on telegraphy will long survive us. By paying your dues, you are preserving this legacy.

#### *Telegraph Demonstrations*

While we like to use the original American Morse Code whenever possible to demonstrate telegraphy, there is nothing to prevent a group of MTC volunteers from using the Continental Code to demonstrate “land-line” telegraphy. Provided one uses proper telegraph instruments combined with a suitable presentation and annotation that clearly explains the differences between the Continental Code and American Morse Code, one can demonstrate telegraphy using Continental Code while still doing justice to the history of telegraphy.

Each year, we receive numerous requests for telegraph demonstrations, which we cannot honor because of a lack of telegraphers with a background in American Morse Code. We need a new generation of individuals who are willing to

demonstrate telegraphy at historical events, civil war encampments, steam train excursions and the like. While it would be great if we could use the correct American Morse Code in this context, the reality is that telling the story of telegraphy is of primary importance, regardless of the code used.

A proficient ham “CW” operator can easily learn to copy Continental Code on a sounder in just a few days. A bit of time on NTS CW traffic nets can provide the experience needed to learn how to properly format and transmit or receive a basic telegram. By getting a few like-minded and enthusiastic CW operators together, one could easily construct a demonstration kit and form a team to promote the history of telegraphy. Those with “real world” experience in the field of telegraphy are here to answer your questions and provide the necessary technical assistance to support such projects.

Let’s leverage some of the talent and enthusiasm of our “radio brothers and sisters” to promote the history of telegraphy. The “living history” approach works quite well and the public is always fascinated when they see telegraphy at work, regardless of the code used. Instead of hiding a collection of telegraph instruments on a shelf in the basement, why not put them to work educating the public while having some fun in the process?

#### *The future:*

Please renew your 2015 membership if you haven’t done so already. Likewise, if you are a telegrapher, landline or radio, give some thought to helping out with telegraph demonstrations and exhibits. The opportunities are numerous and they are a fun and educational way to reach the public.

*73,  
James Wades,  
International President*

## DO YOU KNOW?

*Do you know any famous people who during their early careers worked as telegraph operators?*

To name a few people who began their careers as telegraphers and later achieved fame, there was inventor Thomas Edison, industrialist Andrew Carnegie, U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Actor John Wayne, cowboy singer movie star Gene Autry, and YOU.

capsized and the people were lost. Another boat was launched under command of the 4th Officer. It too disappeared in the waves. Next, No. 7 boat was safely water-borne only to drift under the Volturno's counter and be smashed to bits by the plunging hull, killing all the occupants. Captain Inch then ordered no more boats to be launched. A few desperate crew members sneaked into another lifeboat, but it too was overturned and all were lost. So far, more than 120 people had perished.

Most of the immigrant passengers were from eastern Europe. Many were Polish, Russian and other nationalities and many among them were Jewish. Few had ever seen the sea or a ship before. Over 400 men, women and children huddled as far aft from the fire as possible. Before leaving Rotterdam they had obtained a sacred scroll and a ceremonial ram's horn called a Shofar. Led by a rabbi they prayed, blew the ram's horn and recited the sacred scroll many times during the day.

On the Carnania, Captain Barr decided he would send a boat under Chief Officer Gardner, but after a desperate struggle to reach the Volturno, he was forced to turn back and return to the Carmania. The fore part of the burning ship had been destroyed by the fire and some of the crew in the focsle had been trapped and killed. Captain Inch and crew continued to fight the blaze, but it was a losing battle. In the radio room Seddon and Pennington had contacted several vessels who immediately changed course and were making their way to the burning liner at their best speed. The radio room was full of smoke and very hot but the two men continued their efforts to co-ordinate the now nearly dozen ships en route to the area. Captain Inch asked Captain Barr of the Carmania to try and get a line to him so perhaps a breeches buoy or boat could be pulled along it. But Barr realized a line would soon chafe and part in the storm. Barr dropped six boats and a buoy hoping they would drift to the Volturno, but these too disappeared in the huge seas. Two German vessels soon arrived, the freighter Seydlitz and the liner Grosser Kurfuerst. At six PM the Belgian ship Kroonland appeared followed soon after by the Minneapolis, Rappahanock, Czar, LaTourraine and Devonian. British, Belgian, American, German, French and Russian flags whipped in the gale. As requested by Captain Inch, Carmania swept a wide arc in search of Volturno's missing boats, her powerful searchlights sweeping the sea. Darkness intervened and nothing was found. As the night approached, Inch sent out a message to the

surrounding ships: "Come as quickly as possible. We may go down any minute. She is buckling." The Seydlitz put out a boat but it was forced to give up and return. Another despairing signal from Inch asked the vessels to "do something." Captain Inch himself was in a bad way. His uniform in rags, suffering from some burns, his hair and eyebrows singed and his shoes burned off, he was nearly blind from the heat, smoke and fumes. Again second Officer Lloyd took action. With a few men he launched a lifeboat and after a long, hard pull reached the Kurfuerst, showing that rescue operations, though hazardous, were possible. Captain Spangenberg of the Kurfuerst sent a boat manned by a double banked crew to the Volturno. Not being able to make fast they called for the passengers to jump into the sea. No one would risk it and the boat returned to the ship. The Volturno sent a message asking if a tanker was in the area. If so, it might be possible to spread oil and flatten the seas enough so that rescue operations could be carried out. The American tanker Narragansett answered and advised the Volturno they would likely arrive at dawn. Conditions aboard the fiery ship were now truly appalling. Deck and other steel work were coming loose and crashing into the inferno below. Captain Inch and his officers and men carried on doing what they could to contain the fire. During the night a huge eruption took place. A burst of flame towered skyward as the rockets and flares, stored on the bridge, were ignited by the flames and exploded. Several of the terrified passengers were sure this was the end and leaped overboard and were lost. One of Captain Inch's messages read: "For God's sake, send some boats or do something." The Minneapolis and Devonian each put out a boat approaching close to the fiery ship, but no one could be induced to jump. Five hours later, after battling the waves, the Minneapolis's boat, unable to regain their own ship, reached the Carmania, where the exhausted men were taken aboard. The flames had advanced further by this time driving out the wireless men from the radio room. They then helped the Captain and Chief Engineer building life rafts. Soon, Captain Inch directed all non essential crew members to take to the water and swim to the boats. One of these was radioman Pennington, who jumped and was soon picked up by the Kroonland's lifeboat.

The Devonian's boat picked up one man and managed to regain their ship.

Later, the Kroonland sent over several boats but could not induce anyone to jump into the sea, so returned after a long, hard few hours.

During the night, other ships sent boats too, and finally the Seydlitz broadcast: "Do not sent any more boats. The people wont come off."

Soon after, following some of the crew, 70 or 80 men jumped and with the exception of 5 or 6, were picked up by the nearby boats. One man, a German named Trentepol, swam two miles to the Carmania where he was taken aboard. At daybreak, the storm had abated to the point where rescue work could begin. Women and children were separated from the men and climbed down the ladders to the waiting lifeboats from several of the ships. The oil pumped from the Narragansett, did much to calm the seas and certainly aided in the rescue work.

Last to leave the ship was Captain Inch, with Operator Seddon and the other officers and a heroic cook who had stayed to make coffee and provide food until his shoes were burned off. All were taken aboard the Kroonland's boat. At 8 A.M.

Friday, October 10th the last lifeboat left the still blazing hulk. Inch, in addition to his other injuries, was blind for four days. Tragically, about one hundred thirty six lives were lost.

As the ships were bound for different ports such as Halifax, New York, Liverpool, Rotterdam Le Havre, and London, families were divided aboard the rescue ships that were bound for destinations on both sides of the Atlantic. Several months passed before all could be located and reunited. On October 17th the Dutch freighter Charlois came upon the still smouldering wreck. After boarding it and finding no one alive, Captain Schmidt ordered the sea cocks opened, allowing Voltorno to sink into the Atlantic.

Captain Inch was was later presented with the Freedom of the City of London. A well deserved honour! He retired from the sea and died about 1929.

As time passed, several other ships experienced the horror of fire at sea, but few had to endure the terrible ordeal that befell Captain Francis Inch and his officers and crew.

## HELP WANTED: INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY/TREASURER

The Morse Telegraph Club has a job opening for the position of International Secretary/Treasurer. This is a volunteer position in which the member is responsible for the following tasks:

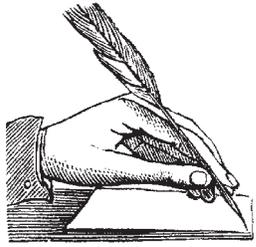
- Serves as primary point of contact for official MTC correspondence.
- Sends sympathy cards to families of deceased members as appropriate.
- Accepts notices of obituaries/death notices and forwards them to the Editor of *Dots & Dashes* as appropriate.
- Assists business manager with the maintenance of the membership database.
- Processes new membership requests, demits and membership renewals.
- Submits vouchers for payment of invoices owed.
- Assists business manager by reviewing books and financial statements to provides financial check/balances.

During the past year or so, some of the day-to-day functions of the International Secretary/Treasurer have been transitioned to a professional business manager/accounting firm. This lessens the work load considerably for the individual taking this position. However, the prospective candidate should plan on five to seven hours per week on average to deal with correspondence and other administrative tasks.

A background in bookkeeping, accounting, and administrative office skills are helpful for this position. Good communications skills, both verbally and in writing, as well as good computer skills are essential.

This position can be quite rewarding. It provides the volunteer with an opportunity to meet and correspond with many of our members throughout the United States and Canada.

If you can assist with this important International officer's position, please contact the International President, James Wades.



# Letters to the Editor

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## December 31st

The Railway Mail Service Library (RMSL) on April 26th hosted Morse Day celebration and telegraph demonstration at the Boyce Depot in Boyce, Virginia. Morse Day is always held on the Saturday closest to Samuel F. B. Morse's birthday, the man who is credited with developing the telegraph.

Visitors were treated to a cookout and conversations about the "original information superhighway." A few learned that the express lane for telegrams was faster than today's texting. Think of it as words in overdrive as two telegraphers communicate with each other over virtual land line wires with dots and spaces. Dots and dashes were used by radio transmissions and are just as speedy, but are different than the codes used at railroad depots, commodity and financial exchanges, or news wire prior to the introduction of teletype.

Amtrak's National Train Day on May 10th inspired an article by Valerie VanMeter in the Winchester Star. Visitors to the Boyce museum received a tour of the depot as well as a complimentary overview of Railway Mail Service history.

A presentation regarding Norfolk & Western (N&W) Railway Depot history was delivered at the N&W Historical Society annual convention in Roanoke, Virginia on June 27th. The RMSL purchased several N&W furnishings from Tom Akers, who retrieved them; they were excesses from the Roanoke General Office and Motive Power buildings two decades earlier. Sam and George delivered two restored wood library shelf units that were formerly at the Association of American Railroads offices.

The RMSL purchased a 1967 Highway Post Office (HPO) bus from the Virginia Museum of Transportation at Roanoke. Stabilizing this vehicle was required, repair of the doors and retarding of body deterioration. Two coats of UV blocking acrylic were applied to all exterior surfaces.

The Boyce Depot monitors Advanced Train Control System (ATCS) signal transmissions as well as Norfolk Southern train and maintenance radio communications. These are available as an Internet feed, enabling railroad enthusiasts anywhere to check on train movements at Boyce.

The RMSL has provided research assistance to the National Postal Museum (NPM) since its 1993 inception. An example is providing information about post office artifacts in the NPM collection for the Arrago project, which was completed in 2012.

*Dr. Frank R. Sheer,  
Curator  
Railway Mail Service Library*

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## April 25th

Hi and many thanks for another fine business job on *Dots & Dashes*, which I received yesterday. Please extend my congratulations and thanks to all the MTC guys who received those very nice award plaques for outstanding service. [This was the front page article of the spring issue]. The secret message for this quarter is, "Tell your friends about the magic of the electric telegraph."

We are so sorry to hear of the resignation of Ms. Cindy as our International Secretary Treasurer. Our club is going to miss the efficiency with which she did the job. We are sorry too about her health and family issues. Our prayers are with her and her family.

Oh, one more thing, reference to page 19 of the previous issue titled, "That Message to ET." I think the first message to ET should read, "I just saved lots of money on my car insurance." If they have cars on Mars, they should have insurance. But then, what do I know?

*30 & NM,  
William Egelston  
AT Ollie Blackburn Chapter*

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## May 15th

For your information, the attached article, "Telegraph Club Celebrates 30 years," was printed in the Council Bluffs, Iowa Nonpareil newspaper on April 26, the day after our April 25th annual meeting. They sent a reporter to our meeting.

*Richard Behrens,  
Secretary-Treasurer  
CD Combs Memorial "FN" Chapter*

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# FORT HUACHUCA BIDS FAREWELL TO MORSE CODE TRAINING ON NATIONAL MORSE CODE DAY

*by Tanja Linton, Fort Huachuca Public Affairs. Posted in Around the Command*

**F**ort Huachuca, Arizona – It's the beginning of the end of an era at Fort Huachuca. On April 27, National Morse Code Day, the last Manual Morse Code class begins here. In the future, the course will be taught by the Air Force at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas.

National Morse Code Day is celebrated on what would have been Morse's 224th birthday. On May 24, 1844, Samuel F. B. Morse dispatched the first telegraph message in Morse code, the message, "What Hath God Wrought?" sent from the U.S. Capitol to Alfred Vail at a railroad station in Baltimore, Maryland.

The military first used Morse code during the Crimean War. Both the Union and Confederate armies heavily relied on Morse code during the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln utilized it to get military intelligence as well as command and control of his generals in the field.

Even in our increasingly high-tech world, there is still a need for this old school mode of communication, explained David Germain, chief of Morse Code Training and sole remaining civilian Morse code instructor at the 304th Military Intelligence Battalion. "We train Morse code because the adversary still uses Morse code," Germain said. He and the other instructor for the course, Air Force Tech Sgt. Joshua Henrichs, are training two airmen to serve as Morse code instructors at the new course in Texas.

Air Force Tech Sgt. Ryan Kilcrease agrees there is a continued need for Morse code training. "It remains the cheapest and most reliable means of communication," added the instructor-in-training.

Senior Airman James Gosnell, also training to become a new instructor, learned Morse code at Fort Huachuca and upon completion of his training was assigned to Osan Air Force Base in South Korea for two years. He said the assignment was challenging.

"It took me nearly two months to get up to speed learning to keep up with some of the fastest transmitters in the world," he said.

The Army, in a memo signed April 5, 1985, became the executive agency for training the Morse Code Course at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. A few years later, Fort Devens consolidated the Morse code training into a joint learning environment providing

training to Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force. In 1993, the Morse code course moved to Fort Huachuca where it continued to be trained in a joint environment. The Army celebrated 30 years of being the Executive Agency to conduct Morse Code Training on April 5.

Over the years, the Navy and Marines reversed the training pipeline and started to send their students to Pensacola then to Fort Huachuca to attend the Morse code training. In 2006, the Air Force followed suit.

In late 2004, early 2005 the Department of Defense sent out a message stating there was no longer a need or requirement for operators trained in only Morse code. Based on that message, the Navy no longer sent their students to Fort Huachuca to be trained, deciding instead to conduct their own training in Pensacola, Florida. By 2007, the Marines also stopped attending Morse code training at Fort Huachuca.

That same year the training consolidated two separate courses, the Basic Morse Training course and the Advanced Morse Training course from 22 weeks of training down to 16 weeks of training. The cut in training time for the Army was due to the course not being considered as a primary Military Occupation Specialty, but as a secondary training for three Army specialties. In 1991, the course trained on average 1600 students annually for all the military services.

The current Morse code course is self-paced and 81 days are allotted to complete it. A student successfully completed it in a record 27 days. Master Sgt. Adella Creque, superintendent, 316th Training Squadron here, says the course is hard to because a student has to master one segment before moving on to the next and may fail several times before advancing.

In 2012 the Army stopped enrolling students in the Morse Code Course since it no longer has a requirement to train Soldiers. A cooperative agreement between the Air Force and Army allowed the training to continue here at Fort Huachuca until now.

"I think [Morse code] will always be out there. It's cheap, easy, effective and reliable to use. There will always be a need for it," said Germain about the future need for Morse code.

*Source: [www.tradocnews.org/fort-huachuca-bids-farewell-to-morse-code-training-on-national-morse-code/](http://www.tradocnews.org/fort-huachuca-bids-farewell-to-morse-code-training-on-national-morse-code/)*

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# RAILROADING IN THE 1950'S ON THE SPARE BOARD

*By MTC Member Andrew P. Puczko*

The life of a telegrapher –train Operator on the spare Board can be full of surprises, entertainment and boredom but not without tensions because we were involved with the movement of trains on single track, without automatic block signals. Control of trains was done by train orders issued by a dispatcher, dictated by telephone. An error in copying, repeating, recopying, etc., could result in a crash, a major disaster, and as a consequence loss of job, and possible criminal or civil charges. Some may recall an operator on the CNR during the Second World War was criminally charged when he recopied a train order meet and did not re-repeat the corrected copy to the dispatcher. It contained an error which resulted in two troop trains meeting head-on at Blue River B.C. The operator was exonerated when the defending lawyer pointed out to the court that the Operating Rules read, “should repeat”, and not, “must repeat” train orders when recopying. The Lawyer was none other than Diefenbaker, later Canada’s Prime Minister.

Besides having to be conversant with the rules and regulations of train movements there were other physical dangers. Operators were obliged to stand beside trains passing by to detect any malfunctions of the freight cars, such as hot boxes, which could be dangerous, particularly in the winter. Also hooping train orders to trains as they passed by, head end and tail end, required one to stand as close as a yard or so from the passing engine.

One incident occurred at Coalhust, the first station west of Lethbridge, where the Operator was hooping a west bound freight. There was a very strong wind blowing across the track and the operator was leaning into the wind to maintain his balance and as the front end of the engine passed him, it cut off the wind and sucked the operator into the drive wheels killing him instantly.

Another occasion an operator was attempting to hitch a ride on the caboose of a slow moving train, miscalculated or slipped, and fell under the wheels and was also killed immediately.

Many injuries occurred while unloading express from passenger trains. Unloading awkward and

heavy articles, not to mention the half sides of beef destined for the local butcher. Coleman was famous for sides of beef as the midnight passenger train delivered not less than six or seven carcasses daily for the local butchers. The miners of the Crowsnest Pass were heavy meat eaters!

There were compensations, however. Often, while unloading express, a water melon would “accidentally” fall to the ground and crack open. Of course, it couldn’t be delivered in this condition, and so as not to waste good food, the melon was devoured later by the station staff. In the summer fruit season, shipments abounded from BC in boxes of fruit that were consigned to relatives and friends on the prairies. Often these boxes also fell and good fresh fruit was had by all. If boxes didn’t break on the fall, the boards could be pried apart and a couple of apricots, or strawberries, could be retrieved.

*In the beginning:*

I broke in as an operator with the CPR on the Lethbridge Division on third trick on March 20, 1951 at Bow Island on the Taber sub, a villiage some 60 miles west of Medicine Hat on highway No.3. I was so nervous that I now can’t recognize my signature on the first train order that I copied. That date established my seniority date as an operator.

I worked relief at many stations on the Lethbridge Division but one episode I remember well was an event that occurred at Bow Island. Pusher engines were stationed at Bow Island to assist freight trains up the hill toward Medicine Hat and the company maintained a bunkhouse for the engineers and firemen stationed there. I was assigned for a week, and since several bunk beds were available at the bunkhouse I hunkered down there. I worked the third trick (12:00 to 8:00 am) and this one morning, after eating my breakfast along with other crew members who were not on duty, I cleaned up and prepared for bed. Sliding into my bunk I felt something under the covers at the foot of the bed. Thinking the sheets were crumpled I pushed harder and then felt something cold moving at my feet. In a panic, much to the delight

of the crew, I jumped out of bed rolled back the sheet to discover a snake curled up and much annoyed at being disturbed. The chuckles and laughter in the room soon indicated just how the snake got there! Thereafter I always checked for snakes.

#### *A memorable Christmas:*

The Christmas period of 1951 was a hectic one for me. I was working Burmis third trick from November 28 to Dec 22nd when I was called to Lethbridge Yard Office to work the third trick commencing the next day, Dec. 23rd. This lasted until January 1st at which time I was sent to work third trick the next day, to relieve a sick operator at Fort Macleod until Jan. 5th after which time I was sent back to Burmis to start on the Swing shift Jan. 6th. Travelling between these assignments was done by freight, in the caboose. I missed my turkey dinner that year but I remember, however, that the paycheque covering this period was well worth it!

Another Christmas lost was when I was relieving the agent at Coleman, in the Crowsnest Pass, from Dec 7, 1952 to January 21, 1953. Of course, we were obliged to stay open until 5 PM on Christmas Eve. I, along with two assistant agents, was living in the company bunk house with no cooking facilities. After closing we wandered down town to have supper but found all the cafes and grocery stores closed. We finally roused a corner store owner, but all he had to eat were canned goods and stale bread. So we had sardines and unbuttered bread and then to early bed.

#### *Promotion Lost:*

Some assignments on the spare board usually lasted two weeks to relieve a station agent on his annual holidays. Arranging for accommodation for these stints was sometimes difficult. If the town had a hotel one could rent a room at a discounted price. Many small towns, however, did not have hotels so quite often I had to sleep in the back seat of my car. On one occasion, before I had a car of my own, I used a corner of the freight shed as my sleeping area. This was in August 1953 at Granum, the first station north of Fort Macleod, on the Macleod Sub. Not having access to hot water meant shaving was not part of my morning routine (electric shavers were not in vogue at that time). It was not a busy station so I was not unduly concerned about my appearance. So with a four day beard, and scruffy blue jeans, a very creased shirt

the day started early with a visit by the Official Car carrying the Superintendent and guests. Normally, they just drive on through but on this one occasion, wouldn't you believe it, they decided to stop and chat! What they encountered was one young unshaven, unkempt whippersnapper. I don't know who was more embarrassed, they or I. Thereafter, I never wondered why I did not get any promotions.

#### *On the lone prairie:*

Another assignment was to relieve the agent at Manyberries, Alberta. Now Manyberries is hell and gone from nowhere—right in the middle of the bald prairies – rattle snake country. It is 180 miles south east of Lethbridge on the Manyberries sub. This branch line ran right up to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan (in those days) but has since been discontinued. To reach Manyberries I had to catch the weekly mixed train which left Lethbridge at 7 AM. All the shunting at the various towns on the way was done when running eastward, so when we reached Manyberries it was sometime passed 7 PM, and it was dusk. Upon arrival I hastened to the Station Office to OS our arrival and put the train to bed for the night. I got up at 6 AM the next morning to prepare the running orders for the mixed train to return to Lethbridge. For those not familiar with train operators and telegraphers, most of us were not really professionally proficient with Morse Code or copying train orders by wire. Most lines on the CPR were serviced with telephones and therefore copying trains orders by wire was not usual. We didn't get much opportunity to use the code and were woefully short of practice. There was no telephone service on this sub and to make matters worse the Lethbridge dispatcher on duty that morning was known for his horrible hand at sending Morse – using his feet as they say. Anyway I couldn't read him and I began to panic. I remembered, however, that one copy of each train order, at all stations, was kept on a hook under the desk. I reached under and low and behold, there they were the previous train orders that were needed - they were identical for every run from that station. I just changed the date and the engine number and repeated the order. No Problem – the mixed train departed on time and arrived at Lethbridge that afternoon without incident!

However, fate wasn't done with me yet. When morning light arrived at 8 AM I happened to glance down the platform and lo and behold, what did I see? It was the express wagon loaded with express

and freight. The crew had unloaded the express on to the wagon the night before and left it on the platform. It was cold enough that night to partially freeze the pop destined for the local restaurant. I quickly rolled the express wagon into the freight shed and into the heated room. By the time the goods were delivered it looked like everything was normal. In any case I heard no complaints about the pop.

*Saskatchewan blizzards:*

Another assignment was in the winter of 1953 – January 24th to February 19th. I was to relieve the agent at Consul Saskatchewan, some 50 miles east of Manyberries on the Red Coat Trail (Highway 13 in Sask.). Consul was on the Manyberries sub. Since no trains ran from Lethbridge to Consul, the only way to get there was via Maple Creek, my home town. I borrowed my Dad's car and drove south over the Cypress Hills to Consul, some 70 miles distant. This was the longest, dullest two weeks of my life—I saw neither trains nor customers. The snow was piled high and road traffic was at a standstill. It was bitterly cold and I had to store the car battery indoors. I wanted to make sure I would get out of there! Most of that line on the Manyberries sub has since been pulled up.

*Sugar beet Trains:*

Southern Alberta is known for its farms that grow sugar beets. A sugar factory is located at Taber Alberta to process these beets. Today the beets are trucked directly from farm to factory, but in those days, when the crops were harvested the beets were transported and dumped on piles at various locations along the branch lines in southern Alberta, i.e., Manyberries, Cardston, Sterling, Turin and Lomond subs and then loaded into gondolas by front-end loader. Trains were then dispatched to these subs to pick up the loaded gondolas and moved them to Taber via Lethbridge. This was usually done in the evenings and presented a very busy time for the second trick operator in the Lethbridge yard office with several trains running back and forth at the same time. As I recall, this operations lasted about two weeks.

I was layed off at Claresholm, as an assistant agent, on November 14th, 1950 and was called back to duty to Taber on December 15th to process the hundreds of sugar waybills and prepare them for collection. This sojourn lasted until January 15th,

1951 and I can't remember where I spent Christmas that year.

To reach Taber I was instructed to catch the first drag west to Medicine Hat from my home in Maple Creek, and then catch the evening passenger train from there to Taber. The first drag I caught happened to be a cab hop (engine and caboose only) going home to Medicine Hat and they were in a hurry, so much so, that they decided to beat a superior eastbound train to the next station with hardly enough time to make it. Well, we didn't quite make it as the superior train was waiting for us, the block signals having held them up for our arrival. The railroaders in those days, however, laughed it all off, as this was apparently a common occurrence, but not for me. I was left shaking at what I thought was a close call!

*Strong winds of the Crownest Pass:*

I was stationed for a month in November 1951 at Hillcrest, situated at the east side of the Turtle Mountain slide on the five PM to one AM shift. This was a temporary position, at this station, in the winter months to accommodate the local junior hockey team, The Crowsnest Pass Lions, to telegraph the home game results to the various newspapers. As stated elsewhere the westerly winds through the Pass was often and very strong. The midnight westward passenger train was soon due and I was preparing for it. I trundled the express wagon unto the platform and hearing the dispatcher's bell calling for me I left the wagon and rushed to the office. When done with the dispatcher, I returned to the platform to finish placing it, and to my chagrin I could not immediately spot it. I then realized that the wind had rolled it down the platform and I found it straddled across the tracks. These wagons were very heavy and sturdily built and I knew I couldn't lift it back onto the platform. Fearing that the passenger head end crew might not be able to see it in time and if they hit the wagon there would be hell to pay. So I ran back to the office and grabbed my lantern (battery operated) and ran down the track to flag the train. I got it in time and the head end crew helped me get it back unto the platform. Whew!

This assignment has particular significance to me as this is where I met my future wife who comes from Bellevue, just up the hill from Hillcrest.

# CHAPTER NEWS

## CD Combs Memorial FN Chapter

The C D Combs "FN" Chapter held their 30th annual meeting from 11am to 230pm on April 25, 2015 at the Pizza Ranch in Missouri Valley, Iowa. Twenty members plus thirteen spouses/guests attended this Morse Day meeting. New members attending, who joined the club after last year's meeting, were: Bob Everett, Ron Kollmann, Russ Weaver, Nina Head, and Brian Zdan. Jim Kilby, a HAM operator from Omaha, came as a welcome guest. The meeting was called to order by President McMillan at 1130am. Each member introduced themselves and their spouse or friend, and gave some of their history. One surprise was that Nina Head is a descendant of Samuel Morse, being his great (many times) granddaughter. Both she and her brother have Morse as their middle name. She discovered there was a telegraph club after an article about the club and chapter was published in the Omaha World Herald on April 26th of last year. She then joined the club. This has to be a rare small world occurrence.



Front row L to R; Carol Behrens, Jean Weaver, Wanda McMillan, Ruth Tucker, Lorraine Peters

Second row L to R; Mary Diersen, Jennifer London, Judy Butler, Alinda Lager, Sandy Zdan, Darlene Albin, Nina Head, Rose Kollmann

After lunch, Ron Peters entertained the group with his accordion and mouth organ. At the business meeting, the minutes of last year's meeting and a financial report were given by the Sec/Treas. At the first of the year, our chapter membership was 38 the same as the previous year. The current officers' were reelected for another year. They were Charles McMillan as President, Donald Tucker as Vice President and Richard Behrens as Secretary/Treasurer. The date for next year's meeting was set for the same place and time on April 23, 2016.

## First Canadian GO Chapter

New Board members from the First Canadian Chapter have accepted the job to work on behalf of MTC members. These are President: Mr. Jacques Drouin and Vice Presidents to include M. Maurice (Moe) Auger, M. Robert R. Seguin, and M. Robert Lariviere.

## Washington-Baltimore WA Chapter

Two members of the WA Chapter spent their day demonstrating and explaining the early telegraph to hundreds of visitors at Civil War Day on June 13th at Fort Ward Park in Alexandria, Virginia. Although the thermometer hit 90 degrees, a cool breeze made the day tolerable and our telegraph table was situated under the shade of a mighty oak tree. And speaking of being hot; we were wearing authentic wool telegrapher attire of the Civil War era.

WA President Hubert Jewell, age 90, proved he



Front row L to R; Ron Kollmann-Newton IA, David London-Newman Grove NE, Delmar Gifford-Boone IA, Paul Green-Boone IA, Roger Sogard-Ames IA, Roger Hinz-Manning IA, John Albin-Valparaiso NE

Second row L to R; Russell Weaver-Omaha, Jim Kilby-Omaha, Nina Head-Omaha, Dennis Bruns-Omaha, Charles McMillan-Omaha, Richard Behrens-Omaha

Third row L to R; Brian Zdan-Omaha, Robert Everett-Omaha, Lowell Diersen-Boone IA, Donald Tucker-Omaha, Ronald Peters-Lincoln, Robert Lager-Logan IA, Paul Butler-Omaha, Tom Batten-Valley NE

The meal prayer was keyed by Ron Peters. A buffet lunch was started shortly after noon. The meal fee for those attending was again \$9 this year. The cost of each meal was subsidized from the chapter by 41 cents and the tip.

# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*



is still going strong as he told the crowds about the importance of the telegraph and as he tapped out individual names of visitors for them to hear. WA Secretary-Treasurer Jim Wilson (your editor) had fun at the table next to Hubie as we both told the important story about the first practical use of electricity to our captivated listeners. At hearing for the first time ever their names tapped out in Morse, some of the younger visitors seemed almost flabbergasted.

*Telegrapher Hubert Jewell stands in the background as three Civil War era ladies chat about the terrible living conditions in Union occupied Alexandria, VA. Look for a PBS television series to be aired during February 2016 about this hard times period in U.S. history.*

## **Florida FX Chapter**

The trains were running, model trains that is, at the annual H. B. Plant Model Railroad regional show held on the Plant City campus of the Hillsborough Community College. The Chapter had the mini-telegraph office set up, along with a display of various railroad telegraph items. Our participation in this year's event was dedicated to Tom Bjorkman, our late Chapter's president who recently became a Silent Key. The Plant City model train show was one of Tom's favorite events and was the beginning of our Chapter's long history of public telegraph demonstrations which is still going strong today. At this year's event, we met a lady whose mother was the village telegraph operator in Italy, a member of the Florida Railroad Museum who would like help in installing an interactive telegraph display at their new museum building in Parrish, FL, and a retired Western Union engineer who told us about his work on W.U.'s once secret Cold War 'Bomb Line'; and how the W.U. time signal continued to be a negotiating point for the automotive industry unions for many years. It is the little things we learn each time we do a public demonstration that make doing them so interesting.

The DeSoto County Historical Society's annual Pioneer Day this year celebrated the long forgotten International Ocean Telegraph Company telegraph line in Florida. The event drew a large turnout, thanks to advanced advertising. Florida Chapter members pooled their tequipment and talent to demonstrate vintage telegraph operation for



*Civil War era Telegraphers, Hubert Jewell and Jim Wilson tap out Morse coded messages for curious visitors to "Civil War Day" at Fort Ward Park in Alexandria, Virginia.*

A six part PBS television series is currently being filmed about Union occupied Alexandria, Virginia during the four years long American Civil War. Recall that the first two men killed at the start of the American Civil War were killed in Alexandria. MTC has offered to help the PBS producers accurately portray any telegraph scenes. This PBS series, "Mercy Street," will air nationwide during the winter of 2016.

# CHAPTER NEWS *continued*

the many visitors. By 1872, the Western Union connection from the TransAtlantic cable had reached Lake City in northern Florida. The IOTC line was constructed south from that point, through the central part of the state, including through Arcadia, to Punta Rassa, near Fort Myers. From there, the undersea cable reached Key West and Havana. Many areas of Florida still have road names "Wire Road," indicating the road built to construct and maintain the telegraph line, although most residents are unaware of the historic connotation. The International Ocean Telegraph Company line and undersea cable, built by British and Spanish investors, provided the only telegraph link between Europe and the islands of the Caribbean, and eventually many countries in Central and South America, for seven years until more direct cables were laid. Finally, European countries were linked telegraphically with many of their colonies in the western hemisphere.

The planes were flying, the wood-burning steam locomotive was rolling and the BBQ was cooking, as the Florida Chapter's mini-telegraph office was set up in the waiting room of the city's reproduction train station in Tavares. Although the number of visitors seemed to be down from previous years, demonstrators were kept busy answering questions and demonstrating the art and skill of telegraphy, while at the same time educating visitors on the history and role of telegraphy in the development of railroads in the U.S. and Canada, and thus in the economic development of the two countries. Chapter members Don Andrus and Warren McFarland were pleasantly, and agreeably, surprised when the International President of the Morse Telegraph Club, Jim Wades, showed up early in the day and participated in the demonstrations for most of the day. Good help is always welcome.

Amidst a current World War II exhibit and a natural history display which included a triceratops dinosaur and an ice age era Saber Cat skeletons, the sound of a telegraph sounders clicking away in American Morse could be heard as Florida Chapter members gathered at the Plantation, FL Historical Society Museum to celebrate the birthday of Samuel F. B. Morse. Several chapter members who were unable to be present in person, joined in the activities over the Morse KOB Internet wires. A CW (radio) key from the WW II exhibit, along with

a straight key and a bug, were set up to allow the many visitors to try their hand at sending Morse code, an activity which proved to be very popular. Throughout the day, Chapter members were kept busy demonstrating the equipment and answering questions from visitors as part of the continuing effort of the Chapter to educate visitors on the role of Morse telegraphy in the history of the United States and Canada. After lunch and birthday cake, provided by Cathy Feeney, a short business meeting was held to elect officers for the coming year. Robert Feeney was elected President, Don Andrus Vice-President and Clyde Francis Secretary-Treasurer. Warren McFarland was designated to continue as Webmaster for the Chapter's website: [www.floridamorse.com](http://www.floridamorse.com).

The sound of American Morse, resonating throughout historic Tampa Union Station on National Train Day, attracted a large number of visitors to the site where Florida Chapter members had set up a telegraph circuit along with a display of antique and replica telegraph instruments and equipment. Interested visitors, both young and old, were instructed in the proper method of hand sending and then given the opportunity to try their hand at sending their own names. Several boys and girls in the 10-12 year old range showed exceptional interest and were given extra attention by chapter members. Who knows, some of them may be future MTC members?

Discussions are being held between members of Friends of Tampa Union Station and Florida Chapter members concerning the establishment of a permanent, working, telegraph office exhibit to be part of the restoration of Tampa Union Station. Funding appears to be the major hold-up at present.

Florida Chapter members furnished and interactive simulated telegraph office and a Morse Code generator to the Winter Park, FL Historical Museum last year as part of an exhibit, The Trains of Winter Park, which was scheduled to end in May of this year. However, the exhibit has proved so attractive that it is being held over until the Spring of 2016. The sound of Morse Code will continue to be a part of that exhibit.

*Thanks to Warren McFarland for his detailed news from the Florida Chapter*



*MTC International President James Wades and other loyal members of the Morse Telegraph Club again set up a telegraph exhibit at the Dayton Hamvention in mid-June. Thousands of people saw and marveled at the MTC displays. Thanks to President Wades for these photographs*

# “30” SILENT KEYS

*News of our brothers and sisters who have closed the key*



## Edmonton MO Chapter

**LORNA JWASZKO** of Alberta, Canada passed away on December 8, 2014.

*Thanks to the BMO Trust Company, Co-Executor for Lorna's estate, for this brief notice.*

**RAYMOND J. STRACHAN** of Grimshaw, Alberta, Canada passed away on December 2, 2014.

*Thanks to Bill Tchir of the Edmonton Chapter for this brief information.*

## Saskatoon KN Chapter

**ALLAN AMERUD** of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, age 86, passed away peacefully on February 12, 2015. Allan was born in Dunblane, SK on March 29, 1929. He worked for the Canadian National Railways for 38 ½ years. Al was a frequent volunteer at Morse Telegraph Club weekly demonstrations at the Western Development Museum during the summer months. He also loved golfing and bowling until his health declined. Due to poor health, Allan was housebound for his last 14 months.

Allan is lovingly remembered by his wife of 58 years, Theresa, his brother, four children, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

*Thanks to Len Solomon, President and Secretary-Treasurer of the KN Chapter for this interesting information. Len adds, "We will miss his happy smile."*

**SHIRLEY UHRICH** of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, age 85, passed away peacefully on February 19, 2015 after a 19 year battle with cancer. Shirley was born in 1930 and grew up in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When her father went off to WWII and was wounded, Shirley had to grow up fast and go to work to help support the family. She met Ken at age 17, and after a long distance relationship, they married in 1954. Their marriage resulted in four children, three grandchildren, one great-grandson, and one great-granddaughter.

Shirley worked as a telephone operator, but after the children arrived, she dedicated her life to their care. Many fun times were spent camping and

fishing and being at the cabin at Weyakwin Lake.

After her children were grown, Shirley worked for nine years at the Army and Navy Department Store in downtown Saskatoon. After she and Ken retired in 1983, they developed many hobbies together and enjoyed travelling and exploring the roads of Saskatchewan.

When Ken developed a passion for carving ducks, Shirley supported him by learning to paint them. Their ducks won many awards across Western Canada. When Ken developed another passion, documenting grain elevators and T. Eaton Houses, Shirley traveled with him on research trips. A thermos of coffee and a sandwich or two was all they needed. After Ken passed away in 2009, Shirley became involved in the church at St. Martin's, became a Red Hatter, and enjoyed time with her girlfriends. She also became a member of the KN Chapter of the Morse Telegraph Club. Ken had been a Canadian National Railways train dispatcher.

*Thanks to Len Solomon, President and Secretary-Treasurer of the KN Chapter for this information about Shirley. Len adds, "Shirley's passing leaves a huge hold in many people's lives."*

**HEREBERT FRED DRESSLER**, formerly of Elim Lodge in Saskatoon, age 88, passed away on February 25, 2015 in St. Paul's hospital. He was predeceased by his parents, John and Ida Dressler, stepmother Hildgarde, four brothers, his son Leslie, granddaughters Zuri and Joy and wife Madeline. He is survived by his daughter Charlotte (Bernie) Dombowsky, son Gordon, sister Darlene Pageot, brothers Francis and Myron and their spouses, four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, special niece Kathy, and many loving nieces and nephews.

Herebert was born on November 8, 1927 in the same house that his grandfather had built in the early 1890's near Churchbridge, Saskatchewan. His employment included farm hand, working in the bush camps in Ontario, and mining in B.C. In the 1950's, Herebert began his career with the Canadian National Railways. During his 34 years

of service to CNR, he moved 26 times.

In 1950, he married Madeline Vandenamee. After retiring in 1985, he took up caretaking for another 15 years. His hobbies included biking, coffee row at Burger King, McDonalds and A&W, plus restoring and driving his Amphicars. In 2003, he purchases his second Amphicar and enjoyed entering it in many parades and car shows.

Church was also an important part of Herebert's life. At the age of 84 he was baptized. His body was interred in the Dressler Cemetery, Churchbridge.

*Thanks to Len Solomon, President and Secretary-Treasurer of the KN Chapter for this information about Herebert. Len adds, "Herb was a modest, humble man, and we will miss him very much." And, "Only a few years ago, Herb took me and fellow KN member Dennis Ogresko for a ride down the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon in his 1962 Amphicar convertible. As we motored downstream, an approaching riverboat gave a couple of blasts of its horn in greeting, while the passengers on deck watched with delight as they waved and took photos."*

**GARY WAYNE GRAHAM**, age 73, of Saskatoon, passed away peacefully in the arms of his savior on April 28, 2015 after a brief illness. He was born on June 3, 1942. Gary was the eldest son of Redvers and Gladys Graham of Clair, Saskatchewan. He is survived by his brother Gordon of Creighton, Sask., by his Aunt Beatrice Wultzke and several cousins.

Gary was an agent-operator, starting first with the Canadian Pacific Railways and then the Canadian National Railways. He worked in Wadena, Sask. and also on the Graham Subdivision in northern Ontario around Atikokan and Thunder Bay. He later moved to North Battleford, Sask., and then to Saskatoon. Gary retired in 1997.

*Thanks to Len Solomon of the KN Chapter for this information about Gary.*

### **CD Combs FN Memorial Chapter**

**ROYAL F. WENTWORTH**, age 85, of Mason City, Iowa, passed away on March 19, 2015. Royal was born on March 12, 1930 in Cresco, Iowa to Myrtie and Royal Wentworth. He graduated from Cresco High School in 1948 and then began his 42 year career with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. He

learned telegraphy at a school in Chillicothe, MO.

On September 21, 1950, Royal and Beverly Konicek of Belle Plaine were married.

They moved to Mason City where they raised their four children. Besides his work on the railroad, where he would sometimes work double shifts, he worked as a film projectionist at the local movie theaters. He was a hard worker and instilled this trait into his children.

Following retirement in 1991, Royal and Beverly moved to Ogden, Iowa where they lived for several years. In 1999 they moved back to Mason City to be closer to their families. They would have been married 65 years this fall. Royal loved watching sports, especially watching his children and grandchildren play. He was an avid fan of the Iowa State Cyclones and Green Bay Packers. He was also a member of the Fraternal Order of Train Dispatchers and a faithful member of the Catholic Church that they attended. Royal also enjoyed yard work, landscaping, gardening and feeding the birds and squirrels.

*Thanks to Richard Behrens, Secretary-Treasurer of the FN Chapter for this interesting information.*

### **Maple Leaf ON Chapter**

**JACK ELWOOD WAGER**, age 81, of Brockville, Ontario, became a Silent Key on April 21, 2015. He was born in Tweed, Ontario on July 17, 1924. Jack learned telegraphy in Frankford, Ontario in 1943. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in WW2 as a mid-upper gunner. Following his stint in WW2, Jack became a CNR Operator and Agent at various places on the Belleville Division. In 1964 he became a Terminal Traffic Manager at St. Lawrence and Southern Ontario points until his retirement in 1981. Deceased by his wife, Betty, he is survived by two sons and several grandchildren. Jack was active in the Maple Leaf Chapter since 1968.

*Thanks to W. Donald Laycock for this information about Jack. Don adds, "Jack will be missed by all."*

**JOHN HANN**, of Guelph, Ontario, passed away on February 28, 2015.

*Thanks to Donald Laycock for this brief notification.*

**ARTHUR LEO PAUL MELOCHE**, of North Bay, Ontario, age 90, died recently. His wife, Claire,

predeceased him. In 1943, Leo became a wireless operator in the Royal Canadian Air Force, then a wireless navigator in England in 1944, where he trained fighter bomber crews. Following his RCAF service, Leo became a teacher and was a member of the Knights of Columbus (4th degree). Leo had only been a member of the Maple Leaf Chapter since 2012.

*Thanks again to Don Laycock for this information about Leo.*

### **Twin City MS Chapter**

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**CORLETT JOSEPH ESS**, age 89, of Hopkins, MN passed from this world peacefully on April 2, 2015. Bud was preceded in death by his wife, Marian, “the love of his life,” and by his son-in-law, Vernon Steppe. He is survived by his daughters, Victoria Steppe and Heidi Hammond, by grandchildren Nicholas (Michele) & Peter (Deborah) Steppe and Laura (Jason) Hammond Laux, and by his great grandchildren Cody, Grant, Addison, Claudia and Sophia Steppe.

Corlett left high school early to join the Navy. He received training at Northwestern University. While in the Navy, he spent a lot of time as a Navy Lieutenant on Kwajalein. During that time, his sweetheart wrote to every single day that he was away. When he was discharged from the Navy, he returned home, completed high school, and married his sweetheart, Marian.

*Thanks for this information from Heidi Hammond, Corlett's daughter, who serves as an Assistant Professor at St. Catherine University at St. Paul, MN. (Heidi even sent me a copy of her father's honorable discharge papers from the U.S. Navy).*

### **Members at Large GC Chapter**

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**JAY GAYNOR** of Williamsburg, Virginia passed away in February 2015. His spring issue of *Dots & Dashes* returned marked “deceased.”

*If anyone knows anymore about Jay, please send me that information. ~Editor Jim*

**MACALEE (LEA) HIME** passed away on June 19, 2015. Lea became a Santa Fe Railroad Telegrapher at age 16. He later became Proprietor of a successful DFW area Court Reporting Firm and was an A1 Operator, founder of NCS of the “Queen Bee” CW net. He was a friend to amateur radio operators worldwide. Lea’s call sign was AB5TY.

*Thanks to George J. Nixon, Jr. for this brief information about his dear friend.*

### **Montreal/Ottawa GO Chapter**

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**S. MIKE BARLUK**, age 88, of Beaconsfield, Quebec, passed away on March 27, 2015. Mike started his career as an agent-operator for the Canadian Pacific Railway on April 27, 1945 on the Sudbury division. In 1951, he became a dispatcher, also on the Sudbury division. Later, Mike became the chief dispatcher on the Schriver, Sudbury and Smith Falls divisions. From 1972 to 1984, he was assistant superintendant on the Toronto, Lakehead and Moose Jaw divisions. In 1984, he became director of planning of the Grain services in Montreal and he kept this job until his retirement in 1990.

*Thanks to Luc Bonneau, Secretary-Treasurer of the Montreal/Ottawa Chapter for this information about Mike.*

**ROLAND “ROLY” LAURIAULT**, age 85, of Woodstock Ontario passed away on April 22, 2015. Roly was born in Bearn, Quebec on June 6, 1929. He worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway from 1947 to 1973 as an assistant agent, freight clerk, operator, and relief agent, mainly of the Sudbury division, Cartier subdivision, North Bay division (17 years in Chalk River), Parry Sound, Webwoods Thessalon, Temiscaming, Nickel and Current subdivisions.

Roly retired in 1973 and joined the Morse Telegraph Club in 1986. He was a regular member of the telegraph team at Exporail in St. Constant, Quebec during the summer season. He also devotedly served the GO chapter for years as Secretary-Treasurer.

*Thanks again to Luc Bonneau for this valuable information. Luc adds, “To his wife Marguerite, children, family and friends, we send our sincere condolences.”*

### **Members at Large GC Chapter**

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**PAUL ROBERT JACKSON**, age 83, of Kirksville, MO died on March 18, 2015. Paul was born to Irma Snyder and Charles Jackson. He graduated from Paris High School in 1949. He married Norma Dean Cole and spent 42 years (1951-1993) working for the railroad, retiring from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

Paul was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting and fishing. His beloved mule was named

Charlie and his loyal dog was named Dixie. He also had a passion for politics and at different times belonged to the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Paul had many joyous laughs with his twin brother, Charles Richard Jackson. He is survived by two sons, seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Thanks to Roger A. Edge, Sr. for sending this interesting information about Paul. Roger adds that Paul was Wire Chief at Brookfield, MO and Hannible, MO. Roger

continues, noting that Paul spent 42 years on the CB&Q-BN and BNSF Railroads. He says that Paul was "an excellent Morse man" and that Paul's station call at Brookfield was "B."

**First Canadian "GO" Chapter**

PAUL E. BOULAIS of Sur Richelieu, Quebec, age 87, passed away on June 20, 2014.

Thanks to Paul's wife for this brief notice.

FORM 31 Stationers Form 4140 R. B. Co. FORM 31

**BURLINGTON LINES**

TRAIN ORDER NO. 18

To CB&E Westbound trains At Orrella Oct 25 1905  
 To CB&E Helper Eng 590 At Orrella  
 To \_\_\_\_\_ At \_\_\_\_\_  
 X \_\_\_\_\_ Opr.; \_\_\_\_\_ M.

Indians reported on warpath on right of way between Ardmore and Rumford

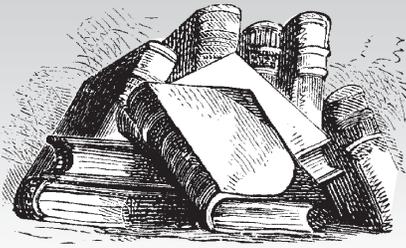
Ardmore train order office closed regardless of indication of train order signal

WPC

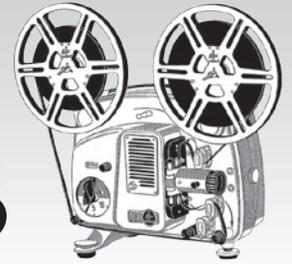
CONDUCTOR AND ENGINEMAN MUST EACH HAVE A COPY OF THIS ORDER

Repeated OK at 3:13 PM

CONDUCTOR	TRAIN	MADE	TIME	OPR.
<u>Burright</u>	<u>70108</u>	<u>Comp</u>	<u>5:15 pm</u>	<u>Smith</u>
<u>Witowank</u>	<u>Helper Eng 590</u>	<u>Comp</u>	<u>5:15 pm</u>	<u>Smith</u>



J. Chris Hausler's  
**BOOK & MOVIE  
 REVIEWS**



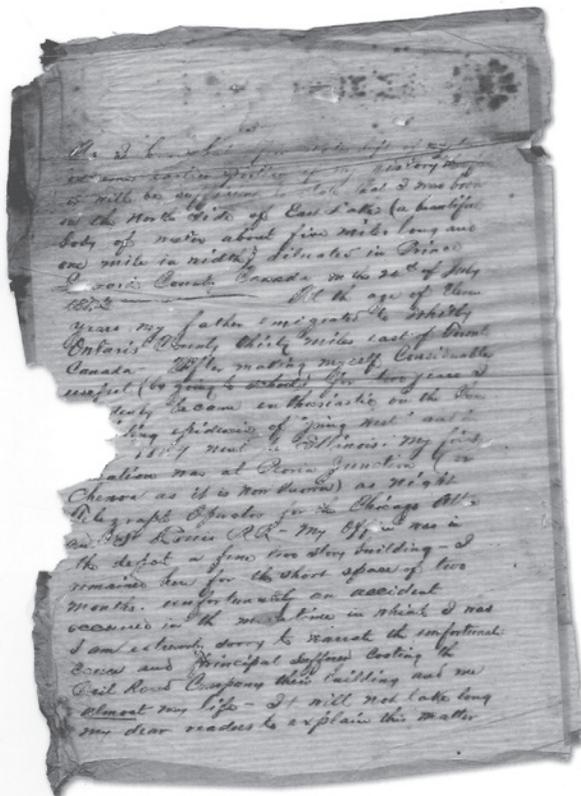
One hundred and fifty years ago, the U.S. Civil War had just ended. Before letting it go completely I thought I would do one more review column on the subject. This was facilitated by one of our members making me aware of a publication by the Kentucky Historical Society, *The Register*, Volume 108, numbers 1 & 2 bound together (winter/spring 2010). The major part of this book is an article titled, *Everything is Fair in War: The Civil War memoir of George A. "Lightning" Ellsworth, Telegraph Operator for John Hunt Morgan*, edited by Stephen E. Towne and Jay G. Heiser. All the previous Civil War books I have reviewed, such as those by Plum, O'Brien and Bates. were written by northern operators and/

or mostly about northern operations. The record of the south's use of the telegraph was much in absence. This article, at least in some way, corrects this imbalance.

Confederate Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan was a daring cavalry commander, a guerrilla warrior, making raids into Kentucky, Tennessee and other areas frequently without much effective opposition. He accomplished this in part with the aid of his skilled telegraph operator George A. Ellsworth. Ellsworth would tap Yankee wires and not only glean important information about troop locations and movements but also would send false and confusing messages to mislead the northern commanders. The editors point out that his efforts acted as a force multiplier giving Morgan the advantage of surprise even against numerically superior opposition. Both Morgan and Ellsworth initially became famous due primarily to Ellsworth's report of his activities during Morgan's first raid into Kentucky in July 1862 which detailed his wiretapping efforts and their effects. This report was widely published in both the southern and northern newspapers of the time. Later, beginning in the 1880's as the horrors of the Civil War faded in popular memory, increasing interest in the war led many of the combatants to write memoirs which were widely published. Arguably the above mentioned books by northern operators were inspired by this interest. Ellsworth's memoir was first published in the New Orleans "Times-Democrat" in a series of articles in early to mid 1882.

Editors Towne and Heiser have pulled together these materials in this fascinating article. They note that outside of his Civil War actions, not much is known of Ellsworth's life. After the war he apparently settled down in some manner as a telegraph operator, apparently even working with a young Tom Edison at one point in time. It is even suggested that Ellsworth may have influenced

**THE REGISTER**  
 of THE KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



VOLUME 108, NOS. 1&2 | WINTER/SPRING 2010

Edison's development of his "Quadruplex" system of telegraphy. However, as skilled a telegrapher as Ellsworth was, he was also somewhat of a boastful rogue. Further, after the war he apparently became an occasional criminal, although not a very successful one being captured several times. So the editors have checked his writings against other sources of information where possible in an effort to verify Ellsworth's reports of his own activities. Further, the article is heavily footnoted providing even more depth and breadth to the provided information. If you have any interest in either the Civil War or telegraphy, I highly recommend this article to you.

To buy your own copy, contact Dana Caldemeyer at 502-564-1792 extension 4421. The price is \$15 plus shipping which cost me \$3. Although not wanting to deprive the Kentucky Historical Society of any income from this fine publication, in the introduction to the issue it is mentioned that beginning with that issue, the material in it was going to be put on line. It took a bit of searching but I found the article itself available for free download in .pdf format from: <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/2495/Everything%20is%20Fair%20in%20War.pdf>.



However you acquire and read it, once again, I think it is well worth reading.

**F**inding films with any telegraphic content is not easy. Telegraphy usually only plays a minor part, as a plot device or something, and is frequently poorly represented as well.

If you know of any films with telegraph content I might review, please let me know. With that caveat, the film I am reviewing this time is *Kansas Pacific*, released in 1953.

In 1854 the Kansas territory had been opened for settlement and there was a question as to whether when it became a state, which it eventually did in 1861, it would come into the union as free or slave. There were strong sentiments on both sides which led to open antagonism frequently resulting in bloody battles between the factions. As a result the

territory became known as "Bleeding Kansas". The film presents the story of the building of a fictional Kansas Pacific Railroad (there was a real Kansas Pacific RR but it came along well after the Civil War) right before the start of the Civil War right in the middle of this ugly situation. As the movie begins southern sympathizers are trying to disrupt this effort as its completion will aid the north. By various acts they have scared off the workers and construction has essentially halted.

The film stars Barton MacLane as railroad construction superintendent "Cal Bruce" and Eve Miller as his daughter "Barbara" who is also one of the telegraphers in the film. Bruce sends a telegram to the railroad president "Sherman Johnson", played by Jonathan Hale, requesting protection so construction can continue. The scene moves to Washington, DC in the office of "General Winfield Scott", one of the real persons portrayed and played by Fred Graham, where Johnson is asking Scott for troops to protect the railroad. It turns out that the Kansas Pacific is a U. S. military railroad project intended to supply the western forts. Scott refuses because he does not want to further inflame the situation as the war had not yet started. Instead he sends out a lone soldier "Captain John Nelson", played by Sterling Hayden, an army engineer but in civilian guise to see what can be done. Johnson then telegraphs Bruce that Nelson is coming out and is to be in charge.

Receiving this telegram, Bruce is incensed that Johnson apparently doesn't trust him to complete the job. Further, his daughter Eve argues that he should leave and go back east where he can find plenty of work and will also be appreciated. However, railroad engineer "Smokestack", played by Harry Shannon, with whom they've worked for years, refuses to join them saying he has never quit anything and isn't about to start. Bruce is thus convinced to stay too, although his daughter remains very much against it.

The southern sympathizers are lead by "William Quantrill" played by Reed Hadley (the other real person portrayed, who actually led a bloody raid at Lawrence, KS in 1863). Interestingly one of Quantrill's henchmen, "Stone" is played by Clayton Moore during a brief hiatus from his roll as the Lone Ranger in the long running TV series.

When Nelson arrives, Eve takes an immediate dislike to him because she feels he is there

to replace her father. However, as the movie progresses, Cal Bruce comes to understand why Nelson is there and who he actually is, and daughter Eve comes around. When the film ends, after a long embrace with Nelson, Eve is dreamily watching the departing train as he leaves for other duties. What did you expect? There had to be a romantic aspect somewhere in the film. Well, as you might also suspect, in the end the “good guys”, headed by Nelson and Bruce, win, and the “bad guys”, headed by Quantrill loose. To see all the action in between you’ll have to watch the film.

There are two telegraph scenes in the film worth mentioning. In one the camera follows a wire (with musical beeping tones in the background) to Quantrill’s secret hideout. There he has set up a telegraph office having tapped the railroad wire and is monitoring what Nelson is doing. As we pan over the “office” we see a sounder in an Acme pedestal resonator then a steel lever key. So much for historical accuracy as both instrument designs came along decades after the Civil War.

The second scene, however, is what made the movie for me. It occurs near the beginning of the film just after Nelson arrives in the fictional town of Rockwood, KS, a little east of end of track. As he approaches the railroad office building, he sees a chalked sign which reads, “Construction Suspended til Further Notice”. He then steps into the office where he, and we, see somewhat elderly agent/operator “Casey” complete in sleeve guards, vest and visor, with his feet up on the desk reading a magazine with the title, “Railroading”. “Casey” is played by veteran character actor Irving Bacon who had a reputation for playing comical, sometimes befuddled “average guys”. The dialog then proceeds as follows:

Nelson: “Good Afternoon.”

Casey: (not looking up from his magazine, hands Nelson a form) “Fill out the application, we’ll let you know.”

Nelson: “Your bulletin board says no construction until further notice.”

Casey: (still not looking up) “It’ll be all changed when the boss gets here.”

Nelson: “It should be changed now. I understand track layers are hard to get.”

Casey: (finally looking up in disgust) “Mister, do you want a job or don’t you?”

Nelson: I’ve got a job, my name’s John Nelson.”

Casey: (looking back down, thinking) “John Nelson... name sounds familiar. I knew some Nelson’s in Providence, (looking up) but they had red hair. Different Nelson’s I expect.” (looking back down at his magazine)

Nelson: “I’m sure they are. I’m the new construction Engineer.”

Casey: (slowly) “Oh... I see.” (turning to look up) You must be the man that Mr. Johnson telegraphed about.”

Nelson: “That’s right.”

Casey: “Have a chair.” (once again looking back at his magazine)

Nelson: “Where will I find Mr. Bruce?”

Casey: “Oh, he’ll be along any minute. You’ll hear the engine.”

Nelson: “Thanks.” (turns to leave the office)

Casey: “You figuring on making some changes around here I expect.”

Nelson: (pausing and turning back) “Very possibly.” (turns to leave again)

Casey: (turning to look at Nelson) “Telegraph operators are even harder to find than track layers.”

Nelson: (going out door) “I’ll remember that.”

Anyway, at the end of this scene I was laughing out loud. So I think, despite the historical inaccuracies, you will enjoy this film. I got my copy from the \$5 bin at Walmart some years ago but copies are available, some for even less, from Amazon. However, if your monthly data allowance will stand it you can actually watch the film for free on YouTube and/or download it from the Internet Archive site at: [archive.org/details/KansasPacific](http://archive.org/details/KansasPacific). Enjoy!

*The SLOW MORSE  
sessions on the Canadian  
Hub will pause for the  
summer season.  
It all goes well, we  
shall resume on Monday,  
September 14th.  
73, Dan Kolesaich*

# HOUSE TRACK **Want Ad Section**

For Morse Telegraph Club Members

**AVAILABLE:** Book *Tales of the American Telegraph*. Issue #3 includes a photo layout. John B. Ryan, 11017 E. Sprague Avenue, Spokane, WA 99206.

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**AVAILABLE:** 2015 Railroad Calendar. The Inland Empire Railway Historical Society offers a stylish 2015 wall calendar of historic railroad events. To order a calendar, write to the IERHS at P.O. Box 471, Reardan, Washington 99029. Their annual membership is \$25.00 which includes a calendar. The IERHS is a 501-c nonprofit corporation, so all donations are tax deductible

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**AVAILABLE:** Book. Hubert Jewell, President of the Washington-Baltimore Chapter, offers us his biography titled, *Working on the Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad*. This book is chalked full of facts and descriptions of railroading and of Morse code communications. Hubert's book is available from the RF&P Historical Society, Inc. PO Box 9097, Fredericksburg, VA 22403-9097 or from the web site www.frandp.org. The price is only \$25.15 postage paid.

**AVAILABLE:** Crests, "Order of Railroad Telegraphers" with emblem in the center, \$12 each. Email Mary Roy at terttu@shaw.ca or mail Mary at 3874 Winlake Crescent, Burnaby, BC V5A 2G5, telephone (604) 420-1292.

**AVAILABLE:** Vintage Rule Books of North American Railroads, at least 30 volumes, as far back in time as 1890. To purchase this valuable set of historic documents, call, e-mail, or write to James Gaw at 54 Colonial Drive in Kemptville, Ontario, Canada K0G 1J0, j.gaw@bell.net, or (613) 258-0243

**AVAILABLE:** A Frisco RR time book showing that Gene Autry worked as a telegrapher at Madill, Oklahoma on three occasions during 1926 and 1927: \$45 postpaid. Also for sale are the last employee's timetables issued by the Frisco RR before they were taken over by the Burlington Northern RR. These are unused and dated April 22, 1979 and include all 7 Divisions plus 6 Terminal Timetables: \$55 plus shipping cost.

Write to: Gene Wood at 104 Sunset, Madill, Oklahoma 73446. No phone calls please; no emails.

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Your participation in *Dots & Dashes* is important. We need your stories, club news, announcements and reminiscences to keep it lively and interesting for everyone.

**Jim Wilson**  
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*Dots & Dashes*

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*For membership changes, address updates, dues and other information dealing with membership or with chapter operation, contact your local Chapter Secretary or:*

*International Secretary-Treasurer*

*Position currently open to anyone interested*

*Please do not send address changes for Dots & Dashes, dues renewals, etc., to the Editor. All mailing lists and membership rosters are prepared through the office of the International Secretary.*

## Ham Radio Web Sites

For those of you who are amateur radio operators, here are four current web sites that I find useful:

[www.arnewline.org](http://www.arnewline.org)  
[www.usrepeaters.com](http://www.usrepeaters.com)  
[www.qth.com](http://www.qth.com)  
[www.qrz.com](http://www.qrz.com)

## NOTICES & INVITATIONS

**Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.**  
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(Michigan-Ace Holman)

**CANADIAN (HN) HUB**  
1-888-822-3728 (toll free)

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on the web at [www.morsekob.org](http://www.morsekob.org)

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