



# Dots&Dashes

*What*

*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*

The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Vol. 45, Issue No. 2 • Spring 2020

## NEW TELEGRAPH EXHIBIT OPENS WITH FANFARE

The click-clack of a telegraph sounder could be heard throughout the small 1857 historic train depot in Herndon, Virginia. Nearly 200 people crowded into the depot for the grand opening of this new telegraph installation on Sunday afternoon March 1, 2020. A beautiful but chilly sunny day added cheer to the celebration.

MTC member Dr. Dale Lichtblau was the catalyst for this project. Dale instigated and largely financed this spiffy new telegraph system.

Adam Winsor, a product designer, put Dale's ideas into reality with a computer, monitor, key & sounder with resonator box, and KOB modem. Adam even used vintage cloth covered wires for this project, a detail that adds more realism to this live wire exhibit. Adam designed and built the historic looking



*This spiffy new Western Union sign was just installed*

wooden box to encapsulate the computer parts, monitor, and keyboard. He made this look like an old-fashioned cash register.

Another HHS member, Patrick Walsh, donated the computer equipment.

The new telegraph exhibit is located on the Station Master's desk by the bay window in Herndon's restored 1857 train depot.

Next to the new telegraph display are historic telegraph forms and envelopes, Station Master's ledgers, freight books and freight receipts, along with train tickets and a ticket puncher.

Nancy Saunders, President of the Herndon Historical Society, helped make it all happen.

*continued on the bottom of page 4* ➔

*The restored Herndon depot welcomes visitors.*



# Dots & Dashes

The official publication of

## The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

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**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 June 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.com](http://www.morsetelegraphclub.com)



## Sidewire

Comments from the  
Editor of *Dots & Dashes*

By **Jim Wilson**



The Corona virus, COVID-19, has put the brakes on most of our activities, not only in the United States and Canada, but around the world. This unprecedented pandemic has isolated us from one another. And at our age, we MTC members are most vulnerable. May this health crisis soon end without the dire consequences that are currently predicted.

On a happier note, the folks who visited my MTC table at “Fostfest” in Richmond, Virginia on February 1st were inspirational, intelligent, dedicated, curious, and unique people.

While promoting the Morse Telegraph Club with our “WA” Chapter’s colorful banner and offering passersby sample copies of *Dots & Dashes*, I heard stories of grandfathers who had been telegraphers on railroads or in the stock market, of fellows who had prized collections of telegraph instruments at home, and of scoutmasters who noticed that young boys were fascinated by Morse code.

Some of these amateur radio operators said they were avid CW operators on the ham bands, that in spite of the no code licenses, the amateur radio bands are alive with Morse code. One attendee described the barrage of rockets and bombs that he endured as he traveled across areas under attack during the Vietnam War fifty years ago. His job was to replace destroyed American communications equipment.

You will be happy to hear that I may have convinced a few of the fellows who attended “Frostfest” to put their stories on paper so that you, our readers, may appreciate their unique and inspiring experiences. Look for these stories in upcoming issues of *Dots & Dashes*.

You will be amused to hear that at Frostfest, after sifting through all the bargains and all the junk at this huge sale of stuff from people’s attics and basements, I found a few treasures. I purchased a 1914 KOB in its original box. While I probably paid too much for it, [\$110.00],

*continued on page 4* ➡



## President’s Line

**Jim Wades, President**  
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

As this is being written, much of the World is experiencing a pandemic. For much of our population, widespread infectious disease is something quite new and frightening. For the older generations, this undoubtedly brings back unpleasant memories of the past.

Growing up in the Detroit area, we were all familiar with Herman Kiefer Hospital. This 1450 bed facility was built in 1928 to manage infectious diseases, such as the repeated epidemics of diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio. One particularly memorable polio epidemic in the 1950s saw four bed wards filled with up to ten iron lungs and iron lungs lining the hallways.

Let’s hope and pray that this pandemic passes quickly and its impacts are diminished. In the meantime, it serves as a rather odd reminder that the “good ol’ days” weren’t always so “good.”

There were some good things about the old days, however, one of which was the telegraph! The railroad and commercial telegraph industry provided meaningful employment in a skilled trade for many men and women. It was a job that functioned both as a livelihood and, for those that appreciated it, an art form to be developed and constantly improved.

Through the telegrapher’s hands passed the important news of the day, important business transactions and, of course, countless small dramas ranging from the birth of a child to the death of a loved one. It was a ring-side seat at the drama of the human experience. In a sense, employment in the telegraph industry was an uncommon education. I am always impressed by former telegraphers. Through the MTC, I’ve met men in the 80s and 90s who are still engaged in self-education, whether it’s learning IT tasks or reading and keeping abreast of current affairs. Simply put; there’s something special about the telegraph fraternity that’s uncommon in other segments of society.

Perhaps this is why some in the younger generations continue to find telegraphy

*continued on page 4* ➡

*Sidewire Comments continued from previous page*

this historic telegraph key & sounder will likely be used at my next MTC event, June 6th in Alexandria, Virginia.

So, what did I learn that may be useful to you from Frostfest 2020? My advice to you is to join the fun at your next chapter MTC event, or create your own event as a one man show. You will be glad that you did.

Also, I recently acquired an original copy of a small book titled, Audels Fast Lessons in Wireless

Telegraphy. Printed in 1917, this book appears to have not been read in about a hundred years. I will handle this book with white gloves. You may soon hear a summary of this book in a near future issue of *Dots & Dashes*.

While isolated by the Corona virus pandemic, you will have plenty of time to catch up on long neglected chores. Please let me know what you are doing to cope.

*Jim Wilson*

*President's Line continued from previous page*

fascinating, whether it's American Morse telegraphy or the Continental Code. Ham radio CW organizations are seeing a surprising level of interest. Talks on commercial telegraphy are very well received. In the past six months, your International President has presented talks at the Soo Line Historical and Technical Society Convention and the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Both talks resulted in new MTC members. A third talk scheduled for March 27 was canceled due to the pandemic situation.

We'd like to thank Mike Yuhas of "Trains Magazine" for scheduling the Milwaukee NRHS meeting.

When COVID-19 is defeated and life begins to return to normal, please consider presenting a talk on telegraph history in your community. We can even provide the power point. Amateur

Radio Clubs and railroad organizations make ideal audiences. One needn't be an expert presenter. Simply tell your story and emphasize the importance of telegraphy to the technological and social development of the United States and Canada.

Lastly, it has come to our attention that Past International President Lavina Shaw recently celebrated her 91st birthday. If you have a moment or two, please send her a belated "happy birthday" card!

Lavina Shaw  
2267 Kelly Ave. Apt. 320  
Port Coquitlam, BC. V3C 6N4  
CANADA

Please stay safe in the coming months.

**-30-**

*New Telegraph Exhibit continued from front page*

Barbara Glakas, author of the book, Hidden History of Herndon, served as a guide at this well-furnished train depot. A "silent auction" offered many railroad items for sale, items dating as far back as the Civil War.



*The Herndon depot  
opened in 1857.*

Visitors read messages on the large screen as the telegraph sounder clacked away. American Morse code was instantly translated into letters on the monitor screen. And visitors had fun with the challenge of trying their hand at the telegraph key.

Our MTC International Vice President, J. Chris Hausler, was live on wire #5 from his home in Henrietta, New York. His American Morse code clacked away on the newly installed Herndon depot sounder as it instantaneously appeared on the computer screen. The Morse KOB computer program worked perfectly.

In another room, small scale toy trains chugged around an elaborate track. Children were especially drawn to the trains.

Dozens of bicyclists on the sophisticated W&OD rails-to-trails paved path whizzed past the depot. Within eyesight, a restored red caboose stood silently on the track for bicyclists and hikers to admire.

A newly erected sign, “Western Union Telegraph and Cable Office,” had just been installed outside the depot bay window.

Dr. Dale Lichtblau, amateur radio call sign KJ4VTS, summarized, “They’ve done a good job” with this Herndon railroad depot and telegraph exhibit. He hinted that a similar telegraph exhibit may soon be created at the General Store next to the Vienna railroad depot. Dale is also currently transcribing the diary of David Homer Bates, telegraph operator for President Lincoln. This transcription will soon be available on line for the benefit of our MTC members.

Dale noted that a third railroad depot, at historic Fairfax Station [<https://Fairfax-sation.org>] is interested in joining the telegraph network. Fairfax Station was an important supply and medical evacuation site during the Civil War, where Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, assisted with relief and



*MTC member Dr. Dale Lichtblau instigated and largely finance this spiffy telegraph exhibit.*

evacuation efforts during the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862.

This successful project can serve as a role model for other historic depots throughout the United States and Canada.



# CHAPTER NEWS

## Florida “FX” Chapter

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*Jan 11, 2020*

Florida Pioneer Museum, Dade City, Country Music Festival. Attendance was sparse during the morning hours, but increased considerably in the afternoon. Visitors to the old ACL Trilby depot, now located on the grounds of the Museum, could engage with the interactive telegraph exhibit to send their own names in American Morse Code and also listen to Florida Chapter member Don Andrus as he explained the symbiotic relationship between the railroads and the telegraph which powered the economic and geographic growth of the United States and Canada.

*Jan 25, 2020*

Central Florida Steam Punk event. Chapter member Don Andrus had constructed a SteamPunk engine that sent telegraphic messages utilizing a mechanical hand operating a telegraph key. The Morse messages were sent to the nearby mini telegraph office where the messages were printed out on a Morse tape register, drawing much attention, photos and videos of the entire operation.

*February 9, 2020*

HamCon 2020, Orlando, Florida. Florida Chapter president Robert Feeney, with an assist from member Don Andrus, hosted what turned out to be a standing room only forum on the history of undersea telegraph cables. Power point and a hands on dual cable key and register made for a very well received presentation to the many hams attending this large amateur radio event. The history of Morse in all its forms remains of considerable interest to the amateur radio community.

*February 29, 2020*

Civil War re-enactment, Florida Pioneer Museum, Dade City, Florida. A large number of

the visitors to the re-enactment found their way to the old ACL Trilby depot, now located on the grounds of the Florida Pioneer Museum. where Chapter member Don Andrus displayed replicas of Civil War period telegraph instruments, and demonstrated both wire tapping and enciphering techniques used during the Civil War. He also reminded visitors of the pivotal role played by the railroads and the telegraph during that conflict.

## Washington-Baltimore “WA” Chapter

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*February 1, 2020*

The Washington-Baltimore Chapter had its usual MTC booth set up for the annual “Frostfest” on February 1st in Richmond, Virginia. Hundreds of attendees passed by and many picked up sample copies of Dots & Dashes journal. Hopefully a few new folks joined MTC.

*March 1, 2020*

An unexpected opportunity brought out three members of the WA chapter to participate in the grand opening of a telegraph exhibit at the historic 1857 train depot in Herndon, Virginia. Read about this event on the front page of this Spring issue.

April 25th: Annual Morse Day is scheduled at the Railroad Postal Museum in Boyce, Virginia. Typically, several dozen members of the Morse Telegraph Club attend this annual event. However, concerns about the corona virus may cancel this event.

*June 6, 2020*

“Civil War Camp Day” at Fort Ward Museum & Park in Alexandria, Virginia typically draws hundreds of curious visitors. This year, the Morse Telegraph Club is scheduled to join with the Reenactment Signal Corps for a special featured event using signal flags by MTC member Walt Mathers during this Saturday extravaganza. Again, concerns about the coronal virus may affect this event.

# BIOGRAPHY OF A TELEGRAPHER

*This is one of a series of personal stories by our MTC members.  
Please consider writing your own story and sending it to me for enjoyment by our members.  
~Editor Jim*

Here is a story the “old” telegraphers will enjoy: This story takes me back to 1949 on my second job assignment with the New York Central. I am 92 years old now, but this assignment still sticks in my mind. This story begins with my first day on this job.

I was sent to Fort Erie to relieve the four-to-twelve operator. Upon my arrival, I was greeted by a little guy by the name of Vic, who unfortunately only had one arm. His other arm was shot off in a hunting accident when he was a boy. Seeing this poor guy getting around doing all the things that had to be done, with only one arm, caused me great concern.

In the process of my first day indoctrination, I learned that Vic loved to play cards. So, I think to myself that I would make Vic a card holder to make his life easier. I put together two thin slices of birch plywood wrapped around half moon-shaped base, sanded and varnished. It was actually a pretty nice piece of art work, if I do say so myself!

The next day I went in early and gave it to Vic. He looked at me and my fine piece of art work and said, “Shove it where the sun don’t shine, Russ!” He then invited me back to the baggage room where he went into a drawer and pulled out a deck of cards. He split the deck on the table then he proceeded to move the two half decks together, squeezing the deck of cards together with his little finger and thumb, then he reached up with his big finger, meshing the cards together. Then with a quick zip, he had shuffled the cards. Two or three more of these followed. I was totally flabbergasted! Those cards just meshed together like magic.

But this wasn’t the only lesson I learned that day.

As Art’s shift wound down, he still had a dozen or so telegrams to send to Saint Thomas. He sat down at the old #5 Underwood typewriter with telegram blanks laid out in front of him. Telegrams were hanging off the side of the resonator.

Vic moved over to the old telegraph bug and called, “DS, DS, DS, UR.” Instantly “DS” responded with “GA, UR.” With that, Vic started to send his messages. Holy Mackerel! I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. The dots and dashes were just a blur. When he finished, the man at the other end of the line just opened his key and signed, “OK A” (referring to his name, Art).

But that wasn’t all. Art had some telegrams for Vic “UR”. Vic said “GA” (go ahead), and away he went. When all his telegrams had been received, Vic just was able to type everything as he was receiving it. His blanks were laid out on the desk in front of the typewriter, and when needed, he’d grab a blank, jam it into the old Underwood, give it a spin, and catch up! Neither man needed to take a break. It was absolutely amazing to watch.

You also have to know that both of these lads were operating their bugs with all the wights off. They must have been sending and receiving between twenty-five and thirty works per minute. I asked Vic how he was able to send and receive so quickly. He responded that both he and Art used to work for CN/CP Tele-Communications in Toronto. That’s all they did all day long. I guess you might say that practice makes perfect.

I was truly humbled that day and was forced to wipe a lot of egg off my face!

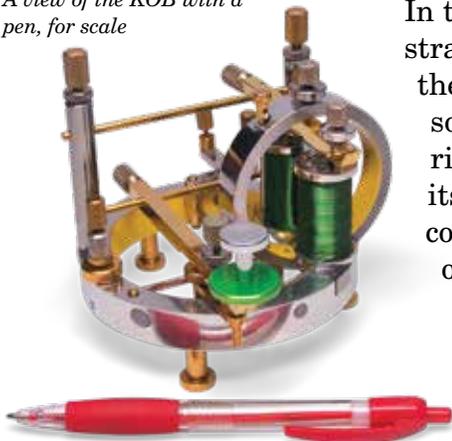
***Russ Nicholls of Huntsville, Ontario  
Canada.***

# A TORSION BAR KOB

by Ted WB3AVD

As a hobby-machinist, there's nothing I enjoy more than putting together another telegraphic 'experiment.' In several of my recent projects, I constructed straight keys using torsion bars instead of springs or magnets or trunnions to effect lever movement and tension. This concept, while not new, is nonetheless rather uncommon in telegraphy. Simply put, the key's lever is attached to a rod, one end of which is held tightly in a fixed position, while the other end is left floating (in, say, a simple sleeve bearing). This bar does NOT rotate when the key is in motion, nor does it bend; rather, it just TWISTS by a slight amount. This "torsion" provides tension for the key lever to operate during use, and as well returns it to neutral position afterwards. No springs or pivots are necessary! I didn't take me long to consider that a KOB (key and sounder) might be constructed using torsion bars; see Photo 1 which hopefully clarifies both the concept and the result!

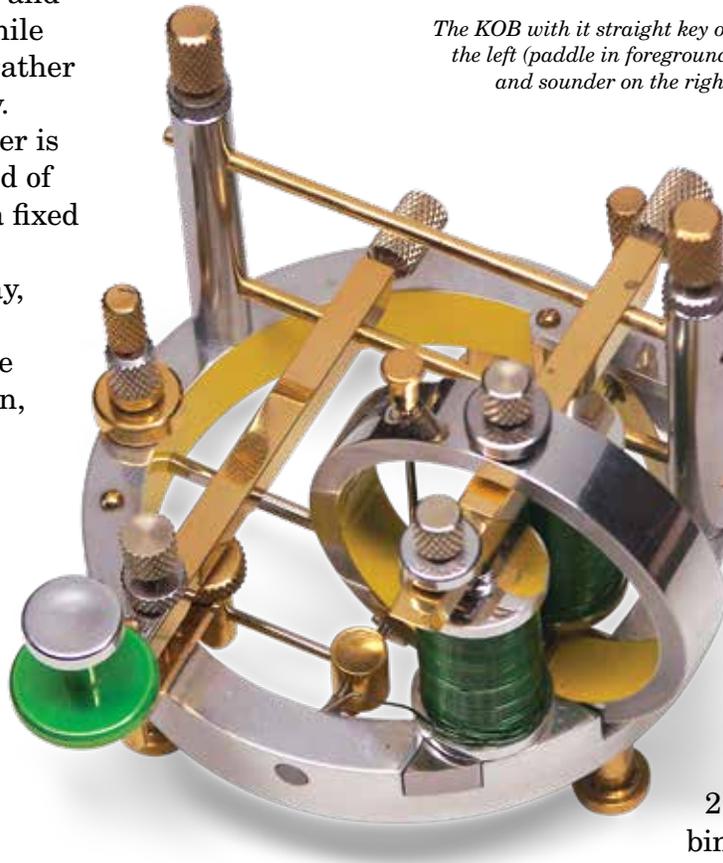
*A view of the KOB with a pen, for scale*



In this photo, the straight key is on the left, with the sounder on the right. Each has its own lever, of course, and each of those levers is attached to its own torsion bar. Photo #2 shows a

closer view of the rear half of the KOB. The two torsion bars are the two horizontal brass rods which appear, one above the other. The sounder lever is attached to the topmost torsion bar (on the right side of the photo), while the straight key lever is attached to the lower torsion bar (on the left side of the photo). Each of the torsion bars is solidly fixed in a vertical post at ONE end only (the end farthest from the lever); the other end of each torsion bar is free. When the straight key is pressed, or the sounder lever drawn by the electromagnets, these bars simply twist a little bit (again, they do not rotate, given that one end of each bar is solidly anchored in place). That's all there is to it!

*The KOB with its straight key on the left (paddle in foreground) and sounder on the right.*



Also visible in Photo 2 are the KOB's three binding posts: two appear at the upper center of the photo, and the third stands at the left foreground of the photo. Thus, both single- or double-set use can be accommodated. Finally, note in Photo 3 (which shows the KOB from the rear) the thin vertical rod immediately adjacent to the electromagnets. This is the KOB's closing lever; it is a plunger which moves up and down, making or breaking its connection on the bottom of the device.

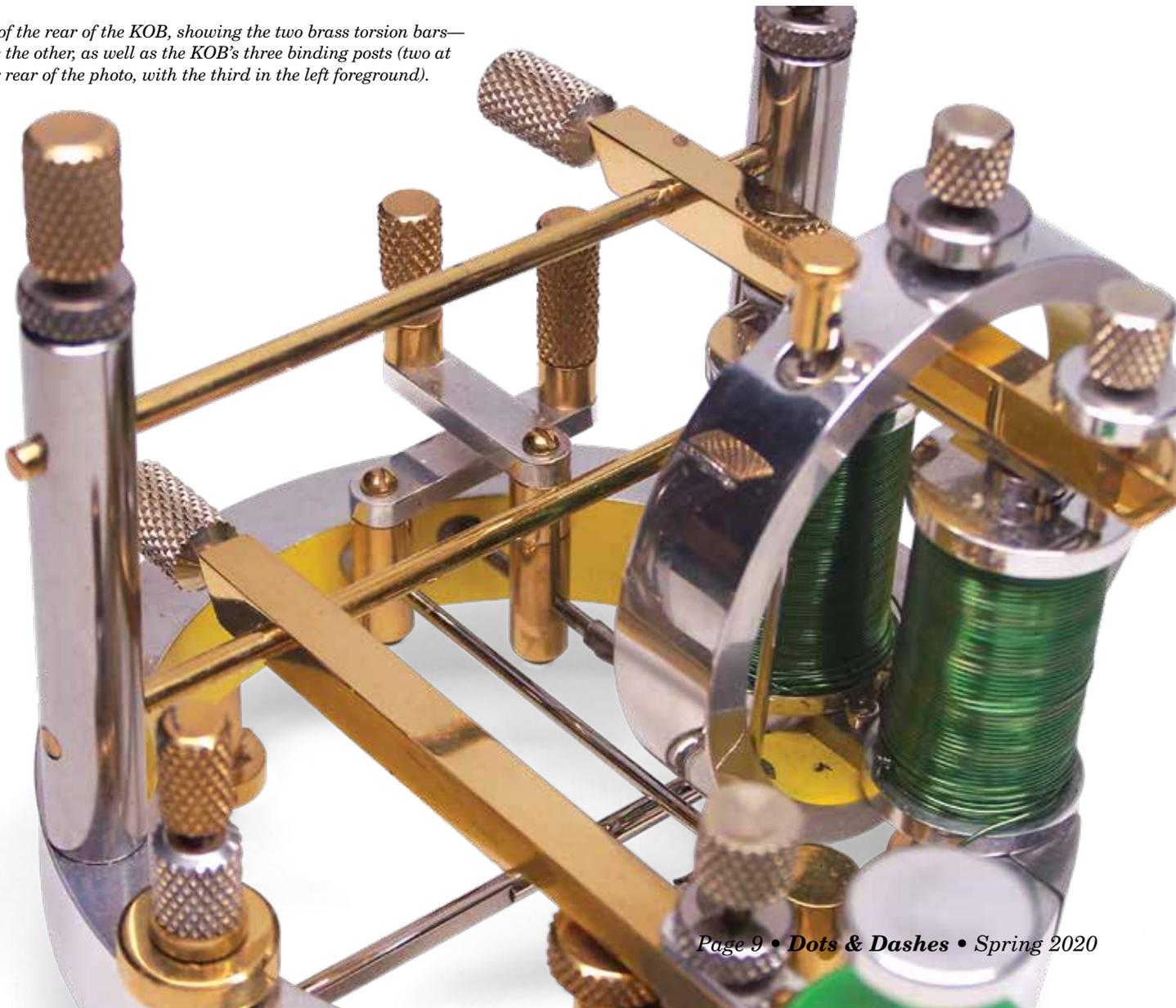
A few construction notes: the two "rings" which comprise most of the KOB's structure are slices of pipe, turned on a lathe, which I happened to have on-hand in the shop. The electromagnets are wound (slowly, on a small lathe) on cores cut from a cast iron rod. The colors—yellow on the inside of each ring, and green on the paddle—

are powdercoat finishes which were applied and cooked in a little toaster oven!

Now, you might wonder ... does it actually work? As a ham operator, I am at the moment only conversant in CW, so I connected the KOB up to a battery, using its own straight key to activate the sounder. And sure enough, there it was ... click, clack! I'll admit to some surprise (I'm not quite sure I expected it to work!), and

even a little excitement. Overall a success ... though I might contrive to make any subsequent version just a little bit louder! And if any readers should happen to possess photos or information relevant to older torsion bar keys, please let me know. I'd love to assay whether torsion bars were ever actually used in KOBs, and hopefully to see some 'original' examples of the same.

*Close-up of the rear of the KOB, showing the two brass torsion bars—one above the other, as well as the KOB's three binding posts (two at the center rear of the photo, with the third in the left foreground).*



# AMERICAN MORSE CODE AND THE MOCKINGBIRD

*Bob Houf, K7ZB*

Earlier this year I got interested in American Morse code as it was used by the railroad telegraphers from about 1850 until as late as the early 1980's on some remote railroads here in the US and Canada.

American Morse uses a lot more dits for some characters compared to the International Morse code. Some of the letters are the same for either but then others aren't.

Now, as a Novice ham radio operator I was taught Intl Morse by K8OUQ, Charlie, back in 1963. He was born in 1908 and was an old time railroad "lightning slinger" on the railroads and Western Union for his entire career.

So in memory of my friend Charlie, I decided to learn American Morse.

Which I did, then discovered there was a group of old time lightning slingers using their bugs on an internet connection to talk simplex to each other all over the country and Canada. Some of these old railroad telegraphers were also hams and knew both types of code, too.

I bought an antique telegraph "sounder" that had once been in use on the Great Northern Railroad many years ago, got an interface to connect the sounder to the internet and started chatting with these old timers in American Morse.

I made a video of sending on the Vibroplex Original bug my parents bought me about 1965 for a Christmas present. The sounder is clicking away on the shelf and it is what railroad Morse sounds like when you hear someone sending to you. Look closely at the sounder and you can follow the armature being pulled down when I key. The clicks are what you copy.

In the video I am sending the text of a poem "The Mockingbird".

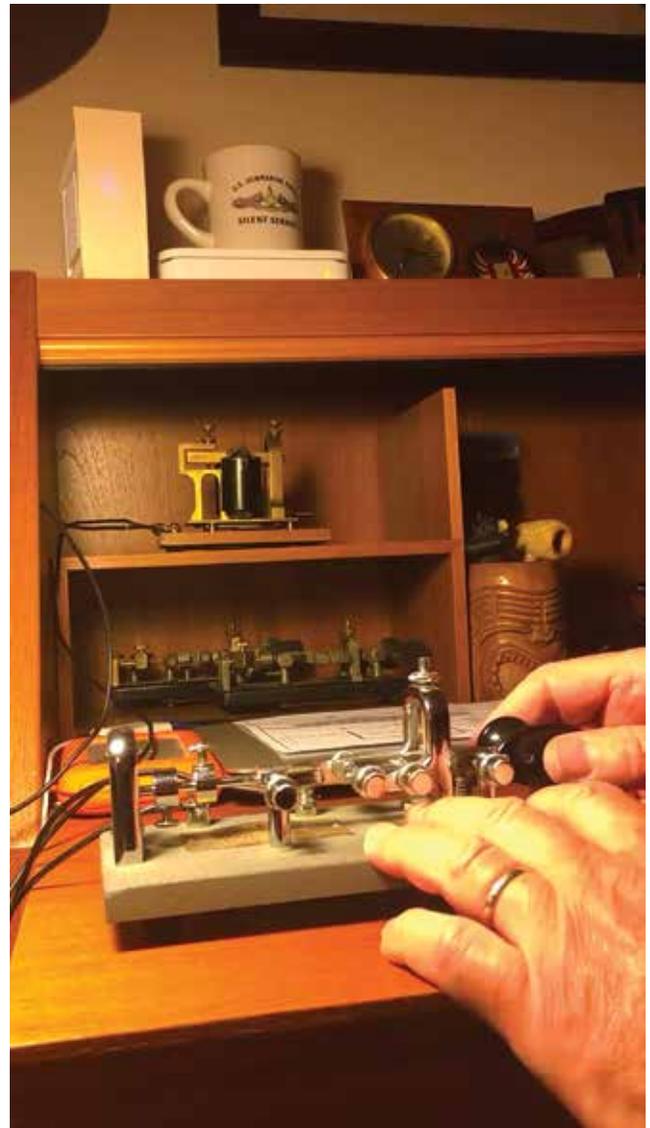
It turns out I had the window of my office open a lot last Spring and we have lots of those birds around us here in Arizona.

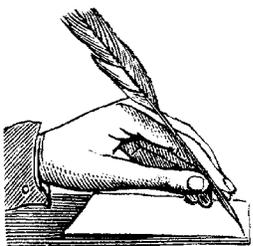
Well, one of them must have listened closely because one morning I was lying in bed and heard one start sending American Morse in his bird song!

## THE MOCKINGBIRD

*by Maurice Lesemann*

The mocking bird is the talkingest bird  
That ever you'll meet in the month of May.  
He teeters and totters high in the tree,  
And he talks all night and he talks all day.  
He hardly ever has time to sing  
Because of having so much to say.





# Letters to the Editor

---

## January 16th

Bob recently sent me his entire story with permission for me to distribute it, but if you're going to print the chapters in D&D I should hold back. Understand, you've printed just the first chapter and there are 16 total chapters, so at one chapter per issue its going to take 4 years of D&D's to get it all out there!

The total story is 65 pages long. Bob organized the chapters along with some images into a pdf file. Anyway, I will hold off distributing it until I discuss the issue further with Bob to find out what he wants me to do. All that said, it is a great story!

(Readers: Read chapter 2 of Bob's story "Nate Goes To War" on page 12.)

**73, J. Chris Hausler,  
MTC International Vice President**

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## January 17th

Yes, I have written antenna and contest-interest articles for CQ magazine, been published in QST within an article on JOTA for the boy Scouts of America years ago and have put articles up on eham.net occasionally. Here is one that is CW oriented: <http://eham.net/article/41054>.

Also, I have been published in the K9YA Telegraph newsletter: <http://www.k9ya.org>.

Here is my background: I learned International Morse code as a 13-year-old in 1963, taught by a railroad telegrapher, Charlie, K8OUQ (now a Silent Key). My Novice license was WN8KEK. That year I continued studying and became WA8KEK, a General Class licensed ham.

In 1967 I joined the U.S. Navy and spent the next 6 years serving in the Silent Service on a Polaris missile submarine. In addition to my duties as a Missile Technician, I qualified as Radioman of the Watch and copied TACAMO CW in the boat's radio shack while on patrol. Unrelated to CW, I was also a Navy SCUBA Diver.

After military service, I earned a BSEE degree from Ohio State University, spending my next 40+ years in the electronics industry. My jobs range from design engineer to General Manager of

Electronics Controls for an \$18B corporation.

About a year ago, I decided to learn the American Morse code as used on the railroads long ago. I have communicated with other old time "lightning slingers" on the Internet Morse KOB system. On Wire #11 I used the call sign "PX" in Phoenix, Arizona, using a vintage Great Northern Railroad telegraph sounder.

Morse code in its various forms has been part of my life for going on 57 years -- with no end in sight. I still "pound brass" up to 45 words per minute and am particularly fond of the Vibroplex. Originally my parents gave this to me in 1965. But I usually send at about 20 words per minute because "twenty is plenty."

**Bob Houf, K7ZB**

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## February 28th

The winter issue of *Dots & Dashes* arrived in A-1 condition. We seem to be the last persons to receive it. Enjoy the postcard photo of the London and Port Stanley Railway, snapped in February 1957 as passengers on a special L&PS excursion train stop to inspect a flag stop at Yarmouth. (Bob's note was sent on the back of a photo postcard.)

**73, Robert Weare  
Saint Thomas, Ontario  
Canada**

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## March 11th

Awhile back you asked about the youngest MTC member. I am certain that Albert Naveen of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is our youngest member. Naveen is an 18-year-old student at the University of Pennsylvania. He is studying computer engineering at the School of Engineering. Naveen states that his interest in Morse code stems from his general interest in landline telecommunications. Naveen adds that he is interested in both hardware and software. Naveen says he hopes to learn the American Morse code.

**Richard Williams, MTC International  
Secretary-Treasurer**

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## March 14th

During my first year of graduate school, I was almost drafted into the U.S. Army. Finally, I accepted the inevitable and enlisted on a delayed entry program. This allowed me to choose my Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). (Recall the slogan: Choice Not Chance.)

I first went for medic, but upon reflection, switched to clerk typist. Off to Fort Dix in July 1969 I went. But after a couple of weeks, the Army pulled me out of AIT and sent me to the Pentagon Staff Communications Division, Army Chief of Staff. In 1972 they were drawing down the Army, so I got an “early out.”

Back to Ohio State University I went. Although I never wanted to see the Pentagon again, I spent the next 22 years working for the Institute of Defense Analyses. I worked in the Information Technology and Systems Division of IDA.

Now I’m hoping to learn American Morse. I already have one of Skip’s nice oak junction boxes, so I’m able to copy via Morse KOB. (Readers, you can order this from Morgan’s Elk Creek Enterprises, as seen in our Want Ads.)

*Dr. Dale Lichtblau,  
Member of the “WA” Chapter*

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# NATE GOES TO WAR: DECEMBER 26, 1941 CH. 2 FLAGSTAFF

Engine 3773 chuffed to a stop, steam escaping and condensing, creating a cool fog and mist in the clear air at 7,000 feet above sea level in Flagstaff. It was 1035 on a Sunday morning, December 23rd, 1941.

Nate Miller and a few others walked through the car and dropped to the platform and stretched their legs.

Since leaving Chicago and winding day and night across the country they finally had the chance to take a break and spend the next several hours while the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company took care of coaling the train and replenishing water. And a hotbox needed attention – maybe repacking - that would keep them in Flagstaff longer than anticipated.

It was a crystal-clear day. Nate looked over the tracks and above the hotel across Route 66 and took in the view – the peak of Mt Humphrey was snow-capped and brilliant, towering nearly 13,000 feet at the summit and the first real mountain he had seen.

When they passed through the central plains and prairie then dropped down into New Mexico it was too dark to see mountains but the vast scale of the Arizona scenery in the early morning light coming across the top of the Grand Canyon State kept him riveted to the window.

That was a lesson in cinders and smoke from No. 3773 as he quickly learned which was the best window seat to crack open for fresh air and keep cinders from blinding him.

But he turned down the suggestion of his new friends, also headed to Boot Camp in San Diego, to walk down Beaver Street and see what the town had to offer. Nate was headed into the depot and made a beeline for the operator.

TJ had been on the day shift for years and wasn’t about to give up his position for any other operator or even a promotion to dispatcher.

He had the best job on the division and now it was getting even better with all of the war traffic being handled by the Santa Fe after the war started.

TJ had kicked around the country as a boomer on many divisions in the Southwest after starting out as a telegrapher for the lumber barons from Michigan, who came out to log the tall Ponderosa Pines of northern Arizona after they clear-cut the forests of the lower peninsula.

No one who hadn’t been there to see it would believe just how fast a lumber operation could lay track for a new stand of pine, put up telegraph wire, cut timber then pull the track and do it again 10 miles away.

As a boomer, TJ packed light and one of his prize possessions as well as working man's tool was his bug.

He kept it with him at all times, tucked away in the slick carrying case Vibroplex made. The other operators could pick him out of a crowd when he walked into town with it in hand. Train conductors knew what he was when they saw him walk through a car carrying the case.

The case carrying his Vibroplex Original was battered from his lumber days, but the precious cargo was in pristine condition – it was the tool he made his living by and he maintained it with pride of possession bordering on obsession. No one else touched TJ's bug.

As he turned around to answer a question from the ticket window, he saw a tall young man with dark hair and brown eyes looking at him with intense interest. TJ correctly guessed this fellow had some Indian blood and he was right – although it was quarter Shawnee, not a western tribe. There were still some, but very few, descendants from the Shawnee tribe that populated southern Ohio from earlier centuries. Nate Miller, had he known it, could have traced his heritage back to Tecumseh, the most famous of the Shawnee Indians.

“Mister, can I talk with you for a minute?”

TJ looked over at the sounder which was mute, which was unusual, then glanced back at the young man and said, “Just one minute and that's it – we are mighty busy nowadays.”

As rapidly as he could get the words out, Nate explained he was on the troop train loaded with new inductees and headed to San Diego for boot camp in the Navy. He rushed through the explanation of his father's work in Musselman Station back in Ohio and asked if TJ might be able to pass along a message to his Dad.

TJ shoved a note pad toward Nate, and he jotted down a brief message in the railroad Morse code shorthand for his father.

It read, “GM POP GUD TRIP NW FLG MRI XMAS WL RITE SN 73 ES 88 MOM NATE” which translated into conversational English read, “Good morning, Pop. Good trip, now in Flagstaff, Merry Christmas will write soon. Best regards and love and kisses to Mom. Nate.”

Time is money and the telegrapher's shorthand kept the message to a bare minimum and every telegrapher, either wired on the railroad or with Western Union or wireless knew the abbreviations.

TJ looked at the message and narrowed his eyes as he looked the youth over more closely.

“Did you work for the railroad in Ohio, too?”

Nate explained how he became involved in both railroad telegraphy and amateur radio and TJ listened with keen interest – impressed that he had planned to join the railroad as an operator. But he fully understood a young man's need to serve the country in war time.

“So, what do you plan to do in the Navy, young man?”

This led to a short discussion on Nate's intent to become a Radioman and if he could, ship out to the South Pacific. He wasn't sure what his options would be, but he figured once he got there and the Navy recognized his skill, they would put him where he could do the most good. And he had read plenty of books on sailing the ocean blue – especially in the South Pacific – as a young boy in land-locked Ohio to whet his appetite for the sailor's life.

Little did he know what was in store for his future afloat.

TJ looked up at the ceiling and pondered what lay ahead for Nate, thinking back over the years he roamed the country as an itinerant telegrapher, a “boomer” – dropping in to pinch-hit as an operator for a stay of weeks to months until the wanderlust grabbed him and he had to move on, bug in hand, to the next place.

When he met Sally in Flagstaff as a fill-in for a sick operator on the night shift, his peripatetic nature was changed for good and he decided to stay.

Actually, Sally made the decision easy for him – it was her father who was sick, and TJ spent a lot of time getting to know both her and her dad when he would visit them in the afternoons before his shift began.

TJ had a weakness for willowy blondes and Sally was in every way a perfect specimen of the type.

Nate had taken a seat by the operator's desk and TJ was just beginning to imagine the places Nate would see in the Navy when the sounder interrupted his thoughts.

While acknowledging the traffic with “I I” and “TJ” he pulled a new Form 19 down and nodded to Nate that he would see to it that his Dad got the message.

Nate looked around the tidy station and for the first time, began to feel homesick – the stove in the corner, the smell of the office, TJ's Original on the desk now steadily sending 22 words per minute.

He walked out the door, swallowing the lump in his throat and looked back at 3773 – slowly ticking over as he stepped up to his coach.

# MAGNETIC EXPLOSION ON EARTH'S DOORSTEP

*Submitted by Larry Wilson, Friend of the Morse Telegraph Club*

Yes, there are explosions in Earth's magnetic field. They happen all the time. Gusts of solar wind press against Earth's magnetosphere, squeezing lines of magnetic force together. The lines criss-cross and reconnect, literally exploding and propelling high energy particles toward Earth. Auroras are the afterglow of this process.



*Auroras sparked by a near-Earth magnetic explosion on Dec. 20, 2015*

On Dec. 20, 2015, such an explosion occurred closer to Earth than anyone had seen before. It has taken researchers 4 years to fully wrap their minds around what happened, and the results were published just this

week in the Jan. 13, 2020, edition of *Nature Physics*.

Lead author Vassilis Angelopoulos of UCLA explains: "Usually, these explosions happen at least 100,000 miles from Earth, far downstream in our planet's magnetic tail. On Dec. 20, 2015, however, we observed a reconnection event only 30,000 miles away—more than 3 times closer than normal."

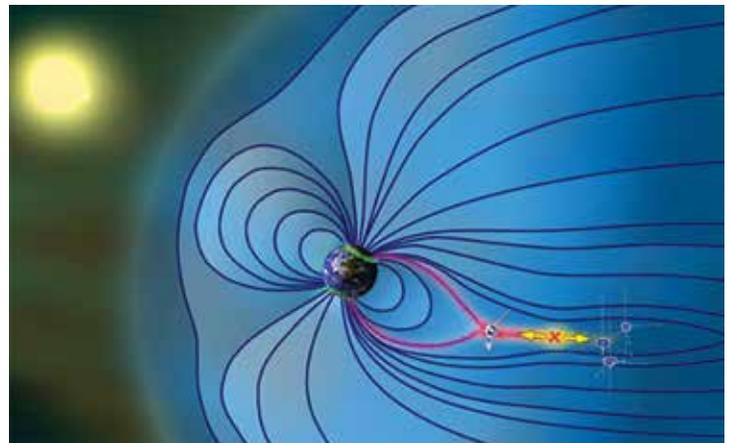
It was a case of good luck and perfect timing. NASA's swarm of three THEMIS spacecraft were passing through the area, and they were able to pinpoint the explosion's location "right on the

doorstep" of the geosynchronous satellite belt. This showed reconnection events may pose a previously overlooked threat to Earth-orbiting satellites. The nearby blast caused a strong G2-class geomagnetic storm and intense auroras around the Arctic Circle.

Angelopoulos estimated the energy involved. "The explosion and subsequent storm delivered as much as ~88 PetaJoules (88 x 10<sup>15</sup> Joules) of energy to the near-Earth environment. That's more than 10 times the energy of the largest US nuclear bomb and about 20 times the energy of a magnitude 7 earthquake."

Before this event, many researchers felt that reconnection at such proximity was impossible. Earth's nearby magnetic field was too stable for such explosions ... or so the thinking went.

"Now we know better," Angelopoulos says "The THEMIS multipoint observations are iron-clad. It really happened, and this is going to make a big impact on future studies of geomagnetic storms."



*"X" marks the spot of the Dec. 20, 2015, near-Earth magnetic explosion: more.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Do You Know why you were born on your birthday? Why you were born to your specific parents? Why you were born during this century rather than 5,000 years ago or 2,000 years from now?*

Very puzzled lifelong by these issues, I invite you to send me your answers to these philosophical questions.

*~Editor, Jim Wilson*



# Welcome Aboard!

## NEW MEMBERS OF MTC

*Lawrence Appelbaum of St. Louis, MO*

*Ricky Bush of Buffalo, WV*

*Joey Ferguson of Pawleys Island, SC*

*James Hull of King George, VA*

*David Krueger of Kirksville, MO*

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## RADIO AMATEURS TEAM UP TO HELP UNIVERSITY DESIGN LOW-COST VENTILATOR

Amateur radio volunteers from around the world have volunteered to assist University of Florida Professor Sam Lampotang and his engineering team in their quest to rapidly develop an open-source, low-cost patient ventilator that can be built anywhere from such commonly available components as PVC pipe and lawn-sprinkler valves. The amateur radio volunteers are developing Arduino-based control software that will set the respiratory rate and other key parameters in treating critically ill coronavirus victims.

Multiple volunteers responding to a call for help from Gordon Gibby, MD, KX4Z, included

noted software developer Jack Purdum, W8TEE, and uBITX transceiver maker Ashhar Farhan, VU2ESE. University of Florida physicians are working to address the critical legal aspects as the design moves closer to fruition.

The ventilator's valves would precisely time compressed oxygen flow into patient breathing circuits under Arduino control, allowing exhausted patients with "stiff" lungs impacted by viral pneumonia to survive until their body can clear the infection. The software design team is also adding simple features such as an LCD display, encoders to choose parameters, and watchdog safety features. -- Thanks to Gordon Gibby, KX4Z

# MORE FUN RECOLLECTIONS BY YOUR EDITOR

*Feedback from my page of Fun Recollections in the previous issue drew such positive comments that I have thought up 34 more recollections to add to the previous list of 21 items [page 21, Winter issue].  
[If you have even more suggestions to add to this list, please send them to me.]*

Do you remember when most houses were heated with firewood and coal and that each house had a coal bin?

When Barnum & Bailey's circus came to town?

When electric street cars were popular?

When school kids carried metal lunch boxes?

When school began at age six; when there was no such thing as pre-school or kindergarten?

When the races were segregated? (This was our loss.)

When an ice cream cone cost 10 cents?

When movies cost 25 cents?

When birthday cards cost 35 cents? (Now they cost \$4.00 - \$7.00!)

When blimps used hydrogen instead of helium? (hydrogen was extremely flammable)

When most houses were painted with lead-based paint? (Leaded paint is now outlawed)

When most rural folks had an outhouse and a well?

When airplanes were powered by propellers instead of jet engines?

When most folks traveled by Greyhound bus instead of airplanes?

When a wrist watch had to be wound every other day?

When the annoying sound of a wind-up alarm clock woke us from slumber?

When you first saw the movies *Gone with The Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*?

When you eagerly poured over a Sears-Roebuck catalogue? (Often called "the Wish Book")

When most folks attended church on Sundays?

When fathers spanked their children to redirect their misbehavior?

When a person would stop to pick up a shiny copper penny found on the sidewalk?

When a dollar was worth a dollar?

When nobody knew to use or could afford protective sun tan lotion?

When it was rare that a person had earned a college degree?

(Now it seems like everybody has one or more degrees.)

When there were only four television channels? (ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS)

When television screens were about the size and shape of a small goldfish bowl?

When many families kept caged parakeets or canaries in their living rooms for pets?

When the guy on a date paid 100% of the cost of their date?

(And probably brought along a box of candy or a bouquet of flowers).

When elementary school students were taught there were nine planets in our solar system?  
(Now the number is only eight planets. In 2006 Pluto was demoted to "dwarf planet" status.)

When people depended for directions by using a paper map?

When the cost of lunch was less than the typical TIP expected by restaurant servers today?

When students in public schools were taught how to write using cursive lettering?

When college students made calculations with a slide rule instead of a computer?

When whole milk was promoted as healthy?

When almost everyone could view the stars in the night sky, before light pollution  
blocked our view of the stars and Milky Way?

# “30” SILENT KEYS

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



## Members at Large “GC” Chapter

**EZELL. M. BOYCE**, age 94 passed away of bone cancer on June 1, 2019. He was born on March 24, 1925.

“Dad was an entrepreneur and banker for most of his life, but he started in the work world with the MKT (Katy) railroad, following his father’s path.” States Ezell’s son Steve. He adds, “My grandfather was Katy depot agent at a number of places, but was the Dunlap and Hartford, KS, when my dad was growing up.”

“My dad loved the railroad more than I can describe. One time my collegiate daughter, Hallie, and I were traveling with my dad from a baseball game. Hallie was in a bad mood; we were supposed to take her home (She usually had to ride the team bus) and we forgot her! About halfway home we saw a train and dad started to expound on the engines, number of cars and other specifications. When Hallie saw the train she said, ‘Oh no,’ because she knew we were in for a train monologue whether she wanted to or not!”

“Dad served in the Army in WWII, then worked for the Katy at several depots in Kansas and Oklahoma, with his railroading career ending in the early 1960’s when Katy closed the little Stark, KS depot. He became proficient in telegraphy during his work in Coffeyville, Kansas. I met his old boss in 1963 and he remarked how fast and accurate my dad was and what a quick learner he was.”

“I have a vivid memory of dad at the Stark depot. Stark is a town of only 100 people and had a small depot. I’d go there with dad on Saturdays and I still remember the smell of the old coal stove and the pungent odor from the tracks.”

“On Saturday Morning a local farmer in his 90’s was coming toward the uncontrolled railroad crossing and the train was getting there at the exact same time! Dad ran out of the station yelling, but to no avail.”

“The farmer crossed the tracks as the train sounded its horn, but the train barely clipped the back bumper of the truck, sending it fish-tailing after it crossed. Dad had me jump in his car and we headed to the coffee shop to meet him. When we got inside, the old man looked calmly at my dad and said, ‘Ezell, you need to get somebody to fix that crossing; it’s getting too rough to drive across.’ You should have seen the man’s face when dad told him

he had just been hit by a train!”

***Thanks to Steve Boyce, Ezell’s son, for this brief information***

Steve adds these comments, “Dad was so excited to join your club and get to converse with all of you. In his last few years, your club was really fun for him and he was really happy that he could participate. Thanks for keeping the craft alive and thanks for being so kind to my dad and taking the time to read this. I’m dad’s only child. I’m 66 and retiring on April 3rd after a long career as a labor lawyer. I have five children who adored him, and eight grandchildren who are too young to have know him.

**HARRISON LEON CHURCH**, age 78, of Lebanon, Illinois passed away on November 8, 2019. A colorful character with numerous life experiences, Harrison considered himself a writer, editor and photographer all his life. Harrison published articles and photographs in a variety of newspapers and magazines worldwide including “73” Amateur Radio magazine and Pravda in Moscow.

Although deathly afraid of water, he became a certified water safety instructor for the Red Cross. With several degrees from the University of Illinois, Harrison served as associate professor at Dickinson State College in North Dakota, teaching journalism, freshman composition, photography, and business law. Harrison eventually took over the family newspaper.

in 1956 Harrison earned his call sign K9GCC. Later, he owned his own amateur radio television station. His interest in electronics stemmed from his winning first place in a sixth-grade science fair project on the electrolytic refining of copper. He often said that no education is lost or waisted. The Boy Scouts of America and amateur radio were lifelong interests.

For 31 wonderful years, Harrison was married to Harriet Louis Church. Always the editor and always feeling lucky, he considered the probably element of divine intervention to explain his run of good luck. He later established and funded thousands of dollars’ worth of scholarship for worthy students.

***Thanks to Schildknecht Funeral Home for this obituary information***

### Maple Leaf “ON“ Chapter

AUSTIN J. GIBBONS, age 95, of Brampton, Ontario, passed away on November 17, 2019. In 1943, Austin learned telegraphy in Guelph Commercial CNT. He then continued in commercial telegraph for many years, eventually becoming Chief Clerk in Toronto CNT.

Austin and his wife Joan enjoyed 70 years of marriage. He is survived by many nieces and nephews.

Austin joined the Maple Leaf Chapter in 1965, making him one of the oldest members. He will be greatly missed by members of the Maple Leaf Chapter.

*Thanks to Donald Laycock, Secretary-Treasurer of the Maple Leaf Chapter for this information.*

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# MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL EXCERPTS

### Excerpt From Donald Fernholz's Membership Renewal Form

*Epitaph of Telegraphy on the GN Railroad:*

I started on the Great Northern Railway as an agent-telegrapher in April 1957, I worked on Dakota Dion from St. Cloud, MN to Minot North Dakota on several branch lines. The only means of communication with the train dispatcher was via telegraph. I transferred to Relay Service in March 1965 at Willman, MN. In 1968, I bid on a telegraph jog in St. Paul, MN Relay Office. While there I learned the work of Wire Chief where I bid on and got the job as 2nd Trick Wire Chief. Then in the Spring of 1979, I transferred to the relay manager job at Superior, WI and worked there until the relay manager job at Willmar MN came open. Eventually the micro-wave took over all communications via phone or radio. That was the end of telegraphy on the railroads.

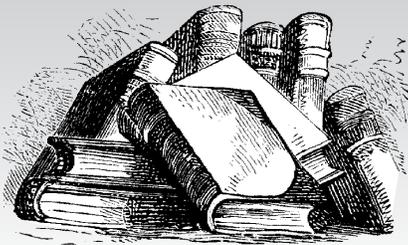
### Excerpt From Don Girton's Membership Renewal Form

Don Girton, Alexandria, KY Call Sign: W4YVV Amateur Extra Class Licensed in 1952. Don's father was a telegrapher/operator starting in the early 1920's working for Postal Telegraph, Western Union and various railroads.

### Excerpt From Edwin Gallant's Membership Renewal Form

*My work history:*

I graduated from High School in 1944, too young to be drafted. I hired out as baggage and mail handler while learning telegraphy at night on the Portland Terminal RR. I qualified as a telegrapher in May 1945. I worked two days as a telegrapher before joining the US Navy to work in communications for the remainder of WW II. After the war, I returned to the Portland Terminal RR/Maine Central RR working various jobs including interlocking tower operator, station agent and at a relay office. I was promoted to Train Dispatcher and then to Chief Dispatcher. Guildford Industries took over the RR and moved the dispatcher's office to Billerica, Massachusetts. I commuted for three years before retiring in May 1989 with 45 years' service. I will be 93 years old in May 2020, but keep very busy with volunteer work.



# J. Chris Hausler's BOOK & MOVIE REVIEWS



The book I'm reviewing this time, although the telegraph industry is at the center of it, is not so much about the telegraph itself but about the rise of industrial corporate capitalism in the late

19th Century.

Its title is *Union and the Creation of the American Corporate Order, 1845-1893* by Joshua D. Wolff. The ISBN of the paperback version is: 978-1107480902 and the book was first published in 2013.

At the beginning of the time span referenced in the book's title,

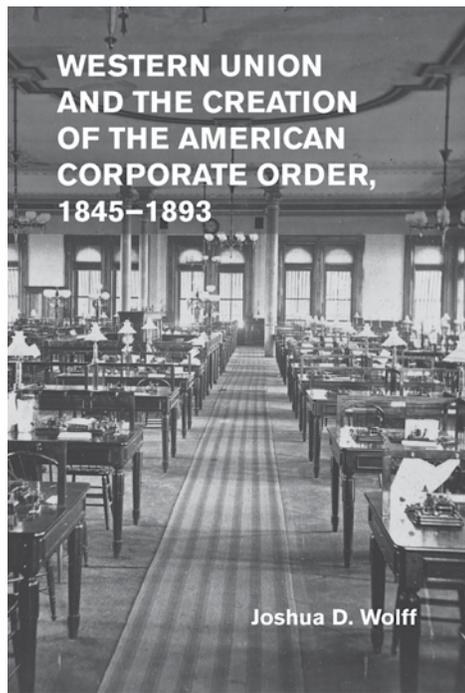
most businesses were small, local and proprietary. The introduction and growth of the telegraph network which began at this time, as well as the already expanding railroad network, enabled these local businesses to extend their territory and reach. It is said that the railroads were the arteries of the Industrial Revolution and the telegraph was its nervous system and these new transportation and communications technologies fostered the creation of new businesses as well. However, all this business creation and expansion required capital, ever larger amounts of it, and it was no longer likely that a budding businessman could raise such amounts from local business associates, friends and family. The book explains how the need for greatly expanded financial resources along with these improvements in the communications and

transportation networks seeded the beginnings of today's corporate capitalism. The telegraph companies and the railroads were, in turn, themselves beneficiaries of this expansion, which of course required them to also broaden their financial and territorial reach. It was the beginning of what today we call globalization.

This process, however, was not a straight forward one. The financial markets at that time were not well, if at all, regulated. As an ever larger percentage of the population was being impacted by the effects of this corporate expansion, the varying needs, desires and demands of the public became a challenge to the politicians of the day. Lawmakers were forced to address the balance between what was necessary for the good of the public as opposed to the financial self interests of the investors who were providing the indispensable capital. The subject of the book is how this all played out with Western Union as the focus of the study, as over the addressed time frame it essentially became America's first corporate monopoly.

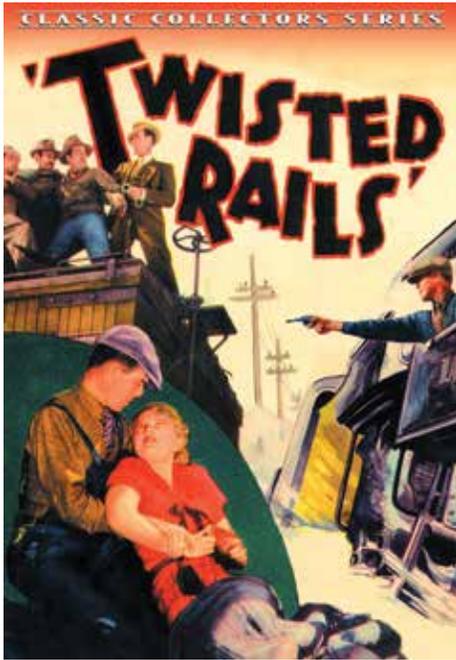
The book is heavily footnoted with pointers to the resources the author used in his research and to develop the conclusions he reaches. Along the way the book is filled with stories of behind the scenes manipulation, payoffs to politicians, and just general intrigue. Prominent players including of course Jay Gould, the Vanderbilt's and many others are mentioned, and their activities examined. In describing the initial rise of this corporate order, the book makes for a fascinating look at the trials and tribulations of economic life during that time, the battles fought and the wins and losses.

These developments, and the problems associated with them, have continued beyond the end of the period discussed in the book into modern times. Ever larger combinations in both the transportation and telecommunications industries, as well as in others, are still ongoing. It therefore makes for a very timely read as these are some of



the very same issues with which we all still live, argue about, and besiege our politicians with today. Although I wouldn't call it a light read I think you will find this well written book interesting, educational and entertaining.

The film I'm reviewing this time is actually a DVD with three programs on it. The primary film, and the name of the DVD, is: *Twisted Rails*.



Released in 1934, the basic plot is that a gang of “bad guys” headed by *The Wrecker* are wrecking trains to steal their contents. The film starts with an almost comical destruction of a model railroad train crossing a bridge. The top brass is not pleased

and we see the local superintendent receiving a telegram threatening his job if he doesn't quickly address and correct the problem. In this scene we see what looks like a home brew KOB being used. Then an employee runs into the office saying he knows who the wrecker is but a gloved hand appears through the window holding a gun and shoots the man dead before he can announce the name.

A train arrives at Santa Fe's pre-1939 LA station, “La Grande Station”. Getting off the caboose is the conductor and a passenger, played by Jack Donovan, apparently a railroader from “back east”. He got a free ride by helping the conductor deal with some hobos. Jack then approaches the superintendent looking for work and is told he has a job if he can find out who the wrecker is. It turns out Jack's character, Jim Conway, is more than he appears. We also learn that the conductor has a son and daughter, the daughter played by Alice Dahl. Jim and the daughter become quickly attracted to each other. The son had developed some gambling debts and to pay them off has been passing information to the wrecker. With

the murder of the informant he wants no further part of it. The bad guys seeking a new source of information are shown climbing a pole to tap the telegraph lines and then running wires along the ground to their hideout, a shack in the woods. There we see another telegraph set which appears to be the same one we saw in the super's office. I guess the film's set dresser was lazy that day. I'm not going to further reveal the plot, you'll have to view the film itself to learn how all this plays out, but of course in the end the good guys prevail.

What is more interesting is that in addition to the shots taken at La Grande Station, a popular location for films at that time, a number of scenes were filmed at Santa Fe's large roundhouse at Redondo Junction in LA. It would appear that the film crew had the run of the roundhouse and surrounding grounds and yards and we see many Santa Fe steam engines, enough for any die hard steam rail fan. There are also some good action scenes on top of a moving train. In addition to this DVD this film is available for free download from a number of sources including YouTube and the Internet Archive.

There are two other programs on this DVD. One is a 1911 silent short, a “one reeler”, directed by D. W. Griffith and written by Max Sennett titled, “The Lonedale Operator”. It stars popular silent film star Blanch Sweet in her first well known roll as the operator's daughter. The film starts with an engineer making romantic approaches to Sweet's character. Rebuffed, but in a friendly way, he gets on his engine and steams out of town. The operator, Sweet's character's father, becomes ill and he leaves the Lonedale office in charge of his daughter. A payroll is loaded onto a train to be sent to Lonedale. When it arrives, Sweet takes the payroll into the station for safekeeping. However, we also see a pair of hobos who were riding the rods witness this and get off the train intending to steal the payroll. Sweet's character realizing her danger locks the station door and then locks herself in the office, turning out the lights as well.

The thing which most impressed me about this short film is that we see Sweet using the telegraph several times, finally calling for help and having to try several times to wake the sleepy operator at another station to get his attention. In all cases to do this we see Sweet open the circuit closer lever before sending and close it after sending (although her sending technique leaves much to be desired). I don't recall ever seeing another film portrayal of the use of the telegraph where we actually see the

correct use of the circuit closer lever. This alone to my mind makes it worth viewing.

Anyway, the boyfriend/engineer is made aware of her peril and he races his steam engine back toward Lonedale to save her. Meanwhile the hobos eventually break through the station door and then break down the office door to confront Sweet. But in the darkness she holds them off with what appears to be a gun. Only when her boyfriend/engineer arrives with a real gun do we find out that she was just holding a monkey wrench. In addition to this DVD, "The Lonedale Operator" is available for viewing on YouTube.

The final program on this DVD is a "coming attractions" preview of a film starring John Wayne as an early airline pilot whose father is a railroad engineer. The film, released in 1932 as a twelve part serial, is titled, "The Hurricane Express". Once again that popular bad guy, "The Wrecker"

is at work. At the beginning of the preview we see a telegraph message being received saying that the wrecker is going to destroy the Hurricane Express being run by Wayne's character's father. Wayne, seeing the pending head-on meet from the air, lands his plane and tries, unsuccessfully, to prevent the collision which kills his father. I just happen to have this entire film on another DVD and as typical with such serials the film is short on plot and long on cliff hangers to get the kiddies back into the theater the following Saturday afternoon to see what happens next. From what I can tell they took all the good scenes from the film and put them into this short preview making this preview better than the entire film itself.

In any case this DVD, with all three programs on it, is presently available from Amazon for \$11.90. However you view any or all of these programs, enjoy!

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## 136-YEAR-OLD LOCOMOTIVE SHOP TO CLOSE

**T**his locomotive shop opened in 1883 in Roanoke, Virginia as the Roanoke Machine Works. The Norfolk Southern Railroad says the closure in May, 2020 will impact 104 jobs. At least 85 of these workers will likely move to Altoona, Pennsylvania to the companies one remaining heavy-duty locomotive repair shop.

The Norfolk Southern railroad reported a 48% decline in coal shipments since 2008, a major reason for the closure. At its height, nearly 5,000 people worked in Roanoke for the railroad.

Railroading was once king, but time moves on.

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## THE SPANISH FLU OF 1918

*This telegraph story by MTC member Robert Weaver may astound you. ~Editor Jim*

**I**n 1918 there was a city upstream from two unnamed railway stations. An unmentioned Canadian town discharged raw sewage into the river that flowed downstream past the two agencies.

One of the railway station agencies had a telegrapher who taught his son how to copy the telegraph. Similarly, a railway agent at the second location also taught his daughter how to copy the wire. The two agents allowed their children to send on a slow wire until they became proficient, well-practiced telegraphers.

When the Spanish flu hit, both fathers became so sick they could not man their telegraph stations and no relief telegraph operators were available.

The two children came on line to man the keys to keep the stations operating, sending vital messages for their communities.

The locals were puzzled as to why the two children did not catch the Spanish flu. The conclusion was that the boy and girl had become immunized by swimming in the sewage discharged river!

The Spanish Flu lasted 1917 – 1921, killing an estimated 17 to 50 million people worldwide.

# 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.

**WANTED:** Re-enactors for Locust Grove, the Samuel Morse Historic Site in Poughkeepsie, NY. Please contact Andrew Stock, Curator of Education and Public Programs at a.stock@morsehistoricsite.org or (845) 454-4500 x13 if you are a Signal Corps re-enactor who may be interested in participation in history of telegraphy, including the annual Civil War weekend.

**AVAILABLE:** Period attire for telegraph operators of any era. Authentic reproduction hand crafted clothing will be made to your exact fit by a certified seamstress at reasonable prices. Several MTC members already have attire provided by this talented and well educated lady. Contact Valerie Mathers at (410) 768-3162.

**AVAILABLE:** Pen & ink railroad drawings on stretched canvas, frame print, art print and greeting cards. See these on the website of *Dots & Dashes* member Peter Hamel at Peter Hamel Fine Art American.com. Telephone (705) 472-8860.

**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](http://www.frandp.org). The price is only \$25.15 postage paid.

**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](mailto:j.gaw@bell.net), or (613) 258-0243

**AVAILABLE:** Six "bugs" including 2 Dow and 3 Vibroplex, (one old with no markings), all working well, two sounders – relay, resonator box – many blank, train order forms, defunct Northern Alberta Railways schedules and many other Railroad items. These will make an excellent start or an addition to any museum or personal collection. Price \$500 Canadian. Contact Al Renflesh in White Rock, British Columbia at (604) 531-1082.

**AVAILABLE:** Book titled *Principles of Telegraphy* by the Department of the Navy. Teletype – Printing Telegraph Systems. Description and Adjustments, Signal Distribution Test Set Teletype – general description and theory or operation for Model 28 printers. Teletype Adjustments (2) Type Bar Printer Page Printer Models 15 & 20. Maintenance Track Bulletin #248. Parts Transmitter Distributor Bulletin 1041. Tele printer Circuits and Equipment by the U.S. Army. Call Hubert Jewell at (540) 423-1014 and make him an offer on these rare items

**WANTED:** Any information about the Texas and Red River Telegraph Company formed in 1853/4. This author is completing a book on the company. Contact MTC Member D.M. Roth via email at [roth.durrell@gmail.com](mailto:roth.durrell@gmail.com).

**WANTED:** Old telegraph keys to be restored. I restore vintage telegraph keys from the 1800's to the turn of the century, no cheap or contemporary keys and you must have all of the major parts. No steel lever Triumph keys please. Donate your old key and I will restore it for my own use. If you send a photograph of your key, and you want to sell it to me, let me know the asking price. Edward D. Biter, Jr., 320 Walker Road in Dover, Delaware 19904.

**WANTED:** A Vaughn automatic telegraph instrument which runs off a reel to reel tape recorder. This gadget causes the sounder to click away with no operator present. Years ago, Sid Vaughn, a professor from Iowa, made a batch of these. If you have one available, I would like to purchase it from you. Donald Mahoney Telephone (608) 444-0898, 1237 North Westfield Road in Madison, WI 53717.

**AVAILABLE:** A collection of telegraph, Western Union, and Postal Telegraph items. These include paper, instruments, self-winding clocks, and other items related to telegraphy. I would prefer to sell these items as a group, not individually. Contact Gene by email at [k4mog@bellsouth.net](mailto:k4mog@bellsouth.net)

**AVAILABLE:** WD-1 commo wire, steel insulated wire in coils, about a mile long. Good for telegraph demos. FREE! Contact Walt Mathers by phone at 410 768-3162 or by email at [Whirlygigger@msn.com](mailto:Whirlygigger@msn.com).

## REPRODUCTIONS & OTHER ITEMS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISPLAYS

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## KEEP IN TOUCH...

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, Editor**  
*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:*

**Richard Williams**  
*International Secretary-Treasurer*

PO Box 181591, Coronado, CA 92178  
runnerrichard@hotmail.com  
(619) 818-9017

*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.**  
**Dial-Up Information**

**U.S. (KB) HUB**

1-269-697-4506/4508/4513  
(Michigan-Ace Holman)

**CANADIAN (HN) HUB**

1-888-822-3728 (toll free)

**MORSE KOB PROGRAM**

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

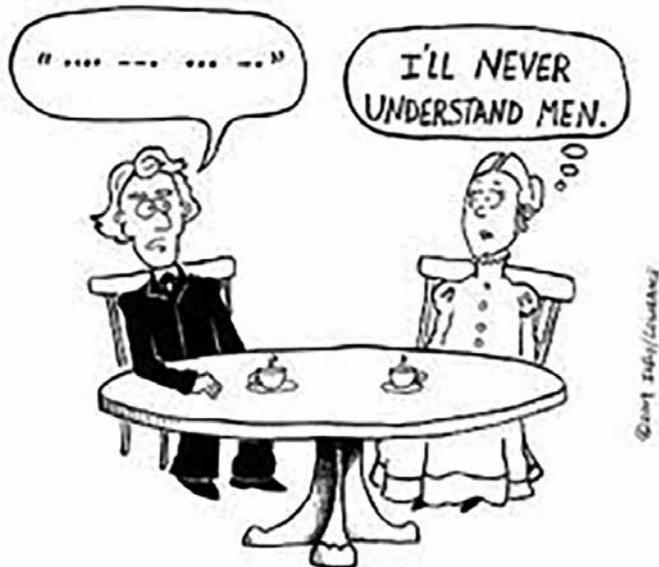
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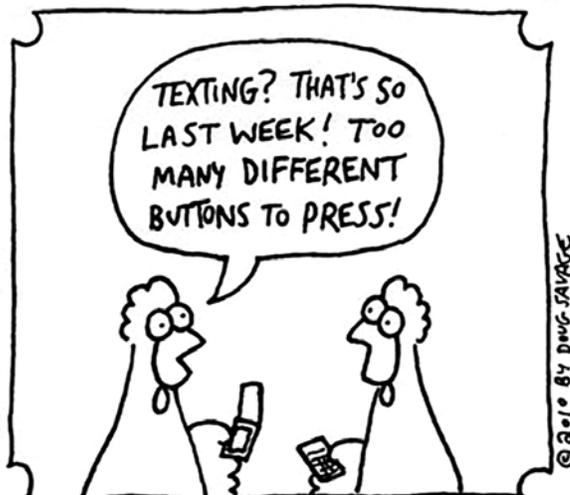
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# Dots & Dashes

*What*

*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*

