



# Dots & Dashes

*What*

*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*

The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Vol. 46, Issue No. 2 • Spring 2021

## IT'S OFFICIAL

**B**reak out the champagne, the party hats and the noise makers. The United States Library of Congress has assigned our Morse Telegraph Club publication, *Dots & Dashes*, official recognition as ISSN 2694-216X! This new number appears for the first time ever, in the upper right-hand corner of our cover.

Thanks goes to MTC International Secretary-Treasurer, Richard Williams, for filing the application and for shepherding the application through the bureaucracy. For many years, I mailed a copy of each issue of *Dots & Dashes* to the U.S. Library of Congress. But this was informal and those past issues were likely

tossed into the trash. Now We are official. This long-term goal is now a reality.

So, what does this mean? An ISSN is an International Standard Serial Number. An ISSN for serial publications is always eight digits long. It identifies a serial publication such as *Dots & Dashes* and it uniquely identifies a title, regardless of language or country in which publishes. This means that *Dots & Dashes* will now be available

to researchers world-wide. We now have an enormously expanded audience of readers. Feel proud that your stories will influence more people than just our members!



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
UNITED STATES



# Dots & Dashes

The official publication of

## The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

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*Dots & Dashes is published quarterly as a benefit of membership. Nonmembers may subscribe at prevailing membership dues rates. Articles in Dots & Dashes (unless copyrighted or are themselves reprinted from other sources) may be reprinted, provided proper credit is given. A copy of the publication would be appreciated.*

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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 PANDEMIC continues to rule our lives. As of mid-March 2021, the world recorded 123,924,888 cases with 2,727,640 deaths from the COVID-19 disease. By the time you receive this copy of *Dots & Dashes* in your mail, the number of worldwide deaths will likely exceed three million people. For safety's sake, please continue wearing your face masks in public.

Recall that the coronavirus first appeared in January 2020 in China. The approved vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna were the first to come to our rescue. These vaccines began to be administered in mid-December 2020.

THE MAIL continues to be slow. Because of the pandemic and USPS leadership issues, *Dots & Dashes* took about two months to be delivered to your U.S. mailboxes. Recently appointed U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, expects postal service to get worse. He also hints of a postal rate increase. I understand that the Canadian mail delivery takes about as long. Former MTC President, Lavina Shaw, always informs me when her copy arrives in Canada.

A FAMILY CRISIS reminded me of the value of each day and of the many blessings that we enjoy. My sweet wife, Becky, was hospitalized for ten days in mid-March by a seizure, something that had never before happened to her. Our son, Matt, and I spent every day at the hospital. Becky, is now back at home recovering.

THIS ISSUE includes interesting original stories, written for you. If you have a story to tell, please put it on paper and send it to me, or use an email attachment. Our members have fascinating stories to share. And now that we are part of the Library of Congress system, anyone in the world will now have access to your stories!

*Jim Wilson*

## President's Line

Jim Wades, President  
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.



### *COVID-19 and Outreach*

The World's year-long battle with the coronavirus pandemic brought a screeching halt to the MTC outreach process. Several presentations at historical societies, radio clubs and engineering societies were canceled during 2020. Likewise, museum projects were also pushed back. However, there were a few bright spots.

During 2020, your President provided telegraph instruments for two documentaries produced for "Curiosity Stream" and an Amazon funded movie. While these are small projects compared to Spielberg's Lincoln or the Disney Lone Ranger, they do provide an opportunity to educate individuals about telegraphy and they raise the profile of the telegraph as an important part of our nation's industrial, social, and economic progress.

Another recent development is the beginning of the first stages of moving materials to the Hesston Steam museum for the construction of a telegraph relay office. Using the replica 1880s Western Union relay office tables created for the set of "Lincoln," we will be able to create a complete relay office with positions for 8 operators. The furnishing will be combined with a moderate size switch board from the St. Paul, Minnesota relay office, the repeater equipment from the old KB telegraph hub, and other components to create a complete telegraph history display. A companion telegraph office has already been designed and built adjacent to the narrow-gauge railroad operating on the property.

Other plans for the summer call for finally implementing a relationship with Radio Relay International to collect telegrams originated from the museum on weekends for transfer to the national traffic system for final delivery to locations throughout North America. A special telegraph form will be created and made available or radio amateurs performing these delivery services.

*continued on page 7* ➡

# A RAILROADER'S LIFE

*Readers: As you will recall, I have invited each of you to send me your life story for publication in Dots & Dashes. Here is the story by Wally Footz of the Edmonton "MO" Chapter. ~Jim*

During the 1940s and 50s, I lived in a small hamlet on a Canadian National Railway branch line at Spedden Alberta, Canada, which consisted of one grain elevator, a railway station, a post office, a hotel and a few general stores, schools and two churches. The livelihood of this hamlet was mixed farming.

Once the boys finished high school and could afford it, they went to college to become teachers while others stayed in farming or trained as machinists, carpenters or other labor jobs.

The Canadian National Railway station was a bunkhouse with a one of the kind Train Order Signal. (see photo), and the Agent family lived in another bunk house. The local Station Agent was a very active volunteer community worker, including coaching the high school baseball and hockey teams.

My friend and I were both players on these teams. We spent a lot of our spare time helping the Agent with loading and unloading merchandise arriving on the trains for commercial use.

In 1950, the CN Railway employees went on a 40-hour work week, which resulted in the Railway hiring more workers, including Station Agents and Telegraph Operators. The local Agent, Jake Ruhl, asked us if we would like to become Station Agents. After discussing the proposal with our parents, we accepted the offer and became Trainees at \$90 a month. The training consisted of learning Telegraphy, Station Accounting and Train Order movement of trains.

In four months, we passed exams in sending and receiving Morse code at 25 words per minute, station accounting and the Board of Transport operating rules. In those early days, all branch line operations were by telegraph and the mainline operations used telephone and telegraph.

On July 13th 1951, as a "spare" employee, my first assignment was to relieve the Station Agent at Holden, Alberta, which was on the mainline with 8 to 10 trains per shift. Being "GREEN" to

mainline operations, it was a shock when I had to "HOOP UP" train orders to those fast-moving trains, while standing on the platform within a couple of feet from the speeding train.

During the next three years, Mr. Ruhl trained 17 young men. Four became Train Dispatchers, two were promoted into middle management, and the rest stayed as Operators and Station Agents.

With the influx of highway trucking, Railways started losing business and started closing stations and reducing manpower. In 1961 I was a small-town Station Agent with my station being on the list of closures. I decided to bid in a large Terminal Operators position with the thought of eventually becoming a Train Dispatcher. I qualified as a Relief Dispatcher in 1967 and worked in Prince George, Edmonton and Thunder Bay, returning to Edmonton to a permanent position, eventually being promoted to Afternoon Chief Dispatcher and in 1980 to a Transportation Planning officer for the Mountain Region in Edmonton. In 1987, Canadian Railroad decided to centralized many operations, including the closing of the Planning Office in Edmonton. I was then offered management positions in Montreal, Vancouver and London Ontario.

Being involved in baseball and hockey all my life, as a player, coach, umpire and numerous management positions, as well as



*This 1951 Photo shows Vic Zavaduk and Wally Footz at the Spedden Railway Station*

building ball diamonds, at age 54, I asked for and was granted an early retirement package.

Baseball took me to meetings in ten different countries, to World Championships and to umpire baseball at the 2009 World Master Games in Sydney Australia. As Vice President then President of the Edmonton International Baseball foundation, I was involved in organizing 8 World Championships in Edmonton.

If room permits, I would like to list the names of the 17 young men from a small mixed farming community that became well respected citizens in their community and helped CN Rail to be one of the most successful worldwide organization. These are: Wally Footz, Victor Zavaduk, Walter Zapitny, Tom Kerchinski, Fred Matwychuk, Walter Melnychuk, Bell Tchir, Henry Lyseyko, Henry

Media, Bill Melnychuk, Steve Matwychuk, Peter Syroid, Henry Filewich, Ed Maskiwich, John Belegaloka, and Bill Goy.

In 1962, we decided to spend our winters in warmer climate. We built a home in Mesa Arizona and have spent 5 to 6 months every winter for the last 26 years swimming, sun tanning, and trying to break 80 on the golf course.

My wife and family “put up” with my ventures life for which I am very thankful. I married my high school sweetheart, Olga, in 1954 and have two children: Warren, who followed in my footsteps and retired recently as a CTC Train Dispatcher, and a daughter Nona, who in a World-Wide Management Consultant, living in Scottsdale, AZ.

Who said retirement is a bore?

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# BIOGRAPHY OF A TELEGRAPHER: RICHARD WORNAT

*Biography of a Telegrapher is a series of stories about our MTC members.*

My 4H Club leader was a train dispatcher for the Northern Pacific Railway. He urged me to become a telegraph operator for the railroad. Perhaps he realized that I didn't want to stay on the farm.

My Dad had friends who worked for the Railroad and it was known that a railroad job was a stable, good paying job. Consequently, a year or so after high school, I enrolled at the Spokane Telegraph School in Spokane, Washington.

At school, not only did you learn telegraphy, but typing, railroad accounting consisting of freight, passenger, baggage, Western Union, and the other jobs that made up railroad office duties.

In my typing class, using all mechanical typewriters, you learned how to use double-sided carbon paper to be used on Train Orders later. There was one train order sheet, one carbon sheet, two train order sheets, one carbon sheet, etc. to make up train orders for two or more trains. All of this was new and unique to learn and kept us wondering how this was going to be helpful until you got out on the job and had to utilize this training.

After a few months of training, I ran out of tuition. At that time, the Northern Pacific Railway had a plan that they would pay for five months of telegraphy training if you would work for them for

a year. I had planned somewhat on staying in the Northwest anyway, so that is what I did. Of course, after a year, a person certainly didn't want to give up that seniority, so you likely stayed with the NP. They had it planned all along.

After a one or two or more-week break-in period at a station, diversified activity proved that you could use your skills. Then you were assigned to your first job.

One of the Rocky Mountain Divisions of the Northern Pacific Railroad, Logan and Garrison, were choice spots to start your time on the railroad. The NP split at Logan and Garrison, one subdivision going over the Continental Divide to Helena and then Southeast to Logan. The other subdivision went South out of Garrison to Butte, over the Continental divide and then on through Whitehall to Logan.

One of my first jobs, after the break-in period at Garrison, was to West End, which was the west end of a tunnel on a pass between Bozeman and Livingston, Montana. It was double track up to the tunnel, single track through the tunnel, then double again. The operator controlled the interlocking plant, putting the trains through the tunnel as directed by the Dispatcher. Later, when CTC came, this was one of the stations eliminated. 🐾

Weather was very cold there in the winter and it was always a hazardous spot for huge amounts of snow. Switches froze shut and trains needed to be double headers to get over the pass. If you waited too long in a storm to call out the section crew to clean out the switches, then the train would lose its momentum and stop.

Then, it was very hard to get the engines started, even with helper engines the train might have trouble. Then you would have more problems switching out a car with pulled out drawbar or some other problem into a siding with frozen switches that the section would have to get to first to clear the switches. So, it was imperative that you did not stop these freight trains on the pass.

The other problem with West End was being able to access the parking area when it might be covered in two or more feet of snow. When I first hired out, I did not have a car and so relied on trains and freight trains and helper engines to get to some of the jobs. At West End, I could use the Greyhound bus from Bozeman, but in snowy icy weather, the bus could not stop for fear of not being able to start up again on the pass. So, back to riding helper engines again. Sometimes, I might be one or more hours early just to be sure I could get there on time. Telegraphers were never supposed to be late for their shift.

One of the things that was emphasized in Telegraph School was correctness in your Morse. Everything should be exact. When you started out working, you found that that was a farce. You found that each operator-agent had their own hand. Sometimes deciphering their messages was difficult. The word "Mississippi" could come out all sort of ways, especially when using the "bug." Quite often, you would get the M and then a thousand dots until the next word. After recognizing different operators' "hand", you could differentiate the message.

One last note. Lots of rules. Rule G of course, no swearing.

When relatively new, I was called by the dispatcher to 19 copy 7 to arrange a meet. The dispatcher, when in a rush, had a very hard to read hand. Of course, according to the rule, when you did not get the word, you would break the sender and send "go ahead word after," looking like this: BK BK ga wa (this would be the last word that you received correctly.)

Each time I broke the dispatcher, he sent faster and faster and more illegible. I continued to break him, giving him the last word received. It was

getting worse and worse. I was getting garble with the number 4, other letters, jc to h, other letters, Q with a number, other letters, etc. I was getting panicked as I couldn't understand anything he said. Finally, I got the dreaded letters. The letters no new operator wanted to hear. The dreaded "FN." FN, as everyone knew, meant go to the phone. Crap! Now I would get a chewing out as to how a poor operator I was. I was sweating and nervous as I put the headsets on and plugged into the Dispatcher circuit.

Well, he immediately started cussing me out, but the main gist of the conversation, if you wanted to call it that, was that the new operators now-a-days were so young that they (meaning me) didn't knowhow to swear even. He then went into a very descriptive tirade on what all his words meant. He went through jc to h, gdm, the number 4 and what another letter with it meant and he finished with what gth meant and he said, "That's what I wish you were right now." And then the phone went dead.

Well, the trains did get their orders and no one was delayed, but it was a good thing that I was at a Depot that had indoor plumbing because the necessity of needing one right then, well, if I would have had to run through the snow to the outhouse, I don't think I would have made it!

Much later, I had a chance to visit the dispatcher's office in Missoula and I was hesitant to do so. I found that dispatcher so friendly and helpful. He gave me a tour of the new CTC plant and explained how it worked. Well, I was happily relieved. No mention of that night when he taught me how to swear on the wire. Maybe when a person was in arm's length, he seemed friendlier. He was a lot bigger than me, so he didn't really have much to worry about.

So, I worked a lot of different jobs on the Rocky Mountain Division. And I got drafted into the Army. But, that's another story.

A good friend of mine, who went to Spokane Telegraph School at the same time as I did, hire out on the GN. I went to the NP but we kept friendships up with each visiting each other when not working on the Extra Board. We both got drafted on the same day and in Montana, all draftees went to Butte. I happened to be working a job at Butte at that time. Making this short, we got sworn in at the same time and we both went to Fort Ord, California.

We both took all the tests and maxed the "code" test. They sent the letters I, N, and T over

and over in 5 letter groups. Incidentally, those letters are the same in International Morse as in American Morse. We both envisioned ourselves in communications because of our high scores.

But...we were both sent to Advanced Infantry. Ha! We were both stationed in Germany together and when we got out of the Army, we both went back to work on our respective railroads. Later, he was the Best Man at my wedding.

There were lots of other incidents and experiences working as a telegrapher, which made me a bit proud because it was a unique vocation that was variable every day. I met a lot of people over the years and got to meet MTC International President Lavina Shaw. That will always be memorable to me.

We telegraphers have a unique craft that is now only history. I encourage all railroad telegraphers to write down their memories. In the current

computer run railroad, no one can understand the effort, organizing, dispatching, etc. that went into operating the railroads and keeping the trains moving via train orders, clearances, hooping up to fast moving trains, stoking the stoves to keep passengers warm in the winter, etc.

Telegraphers did a lot more than just send and receive messages. We were telegraphers, Agents, freight handlers, Ticket Agents, baggage handlers, freight rate clerks, demurrage clerks, damage claims adjusters, furnace maintainers, coal or oil stove duties, loading platform snow shovelers or sweepers, Interlocking or CTC plant operators, and the list goes on.

**Richard Wornath,  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Morse Telegraph Club  
Portland, Vancouver**

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*President's Line continued from page 3*

### *Wells Fargo Museum Closure*

The Wells Fargo organization is closing most of its museums throughout the United States. As a result, they are transferring their telegraph equipment back to the Morse Telegraph Club. Your International President will be conducting an inventory of this equipment when it arrives. It will then be made available for museum projects in other parts of the US and Canada. If you have a museum project planned, please let me know. We also have an archive of telegraph instruments and other materials for use in such projects.

### *Hendersonville, NC. Museum Project*

MTC recently provided telegraph instruments to two museums in Hendersonville, North Carolina. One exhibit has already been constructed in the historic railroad depot, and a second will be built at the Historical Society museum.

### *Business Affairs*

With a very competent International Secretary/Treasurer on the job, we are again moving into a phase where we have the capacity to do more than simply "hold" the organization together. We will be scheduling a board meeting to examine how we can remain viable and successful as we move into the future. With changing demographics and member interests, there will be challenges ahead.

One item of business will be the election of the International President. While I am willing to continue in the position, it is necessary to seek nominations for additional candidates for the coming years. If you know of someone you feel is qualified to assume the position, please let me or one of the MTC directors know.

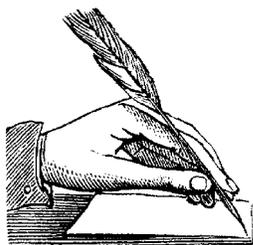
### *New Members!*

We are holding our own with new members joining. Most of these members are found through Facebook posts, comments placed on various Amateur Radio email reflectors, and through articles in various newsletters. Your International President spends considerable time promoting MTC using these methods. It is quite gratifying when one sees a report of a new member that was encouraged to join via one of these methods.

Please talk about MTC when you encounter maritime, military, or amateur radiotelegraph operators. Many have an interest in the historical antecedents of radiotelegraphy. Another great source of new members is those whose fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers worked in the telegraph field.

In the meantime, please stay healthy and let's all hope for an end to the pandemic.

**73,  
James Wades**



# Letters to the Editor

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## January 14th

I received a cheque for \$150 Canadian for MTC membership at three school libraries and herself. She wants extra copies of *Dots & Dashes* sent to herself along with her personal one. Apparently, a grandson is a history teacher someplace. Barbara is the widow of a prominent Indian Chief. Her son Neil was a member of MTC for a year. I read an article about him in the Vancouver Sun. He won several Canadian awards and distinctions. I asked Barbra to write an article for *Dots & Dashes* about indigenous history where she lives in a reserve on the CNR in Northern British Columbia.

**73, Lavina Shaw**  
**Former MTC International**  
**Secretary Treasurer**

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## January 18th

Right out of high school in 1953 at age 17, I started working in the B&O tariff bureau. At age 18, in May 1954, I transferred to telegraph operator. My Dad was a conductor for 40 years. My granddad and great granddad (a Civil War vet) both worked for the PRR for 45 years each.

With my 15 years, I broke off 150 years of railroad service when I left to go to college on the GI bill. Then I was drafted for two years (1958-1960) and was assigned to the U.S. Army railroad service at Fort Eustis, Virginia, operating steam and diesel engines. The one tower (Wye Tower) was used for training RR reserve units. I joined the Reserves after leaving the Army and stayed for 22 years, leaving as a CW3. I've been a MTC member for over 40 years.

**Lots of history,**  
**Richard Williams**  
**Current MTC International**  
**Secretary Treasurer**

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## January 19th

I'm just 82, a mere kid. I learned to telegraph somewhat during my senior year in high school and then hired on the MoPac right out of school in 1956.

I spent about six months there, then went to the Santa Fe, NM. During the next 13 years, I would work for the Santa Fe on three different occasions on different divisions, the Frisco once, and the Wichita Union Terminal twice. I tell everyone that I worked in the General Office building in downtown Chicago, a converted boxcar in New Mexico desert, and just about everything in between. That isn't far from the truth.

Went to college while working for the WUT then left for greener pastures. But I wouldn't trade those 13 years for anything. Keith LeBaron used to say that he was a railroader for a few years and just had a job the rest of his life.

**73,**  
**Don Reser**

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## January 20th

Sure, glad you are making sense of your secret CW Morse code messages in *Dots & Dashes* again. I translated the most recent secret message as "Avoid becoming a statistic." I enjoy deciphering them and it keeps me on my toes. Since they burned down Ferguson, MO, the Whistle Stop Depot closed down and our home has come down to just three or four guys operating from a high school park. Hope you have your COVID shot and have done your taxes.

**Stay safe & 73,**  
**William WOVWM**

*Readers: William always deciphers the "Secret Message" along the top of each page.*

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## January 20th

We now have a link to your website! On our website, we have posted a tribute to C.H." Bill" Williams, who was an agent-telegrapher for many years.

Your members might like to visit us at:  
[westboundstage.com/FriendBillWilliams.htm](http://westboundstage.com/FriendBillWilliams.htm).

Please change your current link to or website and we wish you a Happy New Year.

**Best regards,**  
**Jim Bartz**



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## February 9th

When I sorted my twelve feet high stack of photos, I came across pictures at the Moose Jaw, SK transportation museum. One shot was an OS station where they appeared to cut the telegraph wires at the pole, coil them up and place them on the roof. Then a large fork lift went under the station and lifted it onto a truck. At the MJ Transportation Museum, they unloaded it and placed it as is for the visiting public. If we have a WPG lodge member that could present a story of this station for Branchline, this would be a great first-person story.

**73 & Stay Safe,  
Robert Weare**

---

## February 9th

Did I detect a slight hint for readers to submit articles for inclusion in *Dots & Dashes*? If so, here are two that I came upon recently.

**Enjoy,  
Walt Mathers  
MTC Member  
Signals Reenactor in Maryland**

*[Read Walt's submitted articles on page 18 and 21]*

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## February 11th

A new article just published in EOS describes how ham radio is the new frontier in space weather research. All you need is a Personal Space Weather station to join a global network of scientists studying how solar activity affects our planet. Learn more during the 2021 HamSCI Workshop, held virtually using Zoom on March 19th & 20th.

**Zoom, Zoom,  
MTC Friend,  
Larry in Ohio**

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## February 15th

The Morse Telegraph Club has a software "Morse KOB" which can be run on a desktop or laptop computer. An electronic interface for telegraph instruments is the means for transferring digital Internet data to drive the sounders or to enable a telegrapher to send text to the hub. There are virtual wires that have content running on them so that even without an operator, a sounder can be activated while at the same time seeing the decoding of Morse on the computer screens.

**Best wishes, keep warm, and stay well,  
Dr. Frank Scheer**

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## Director of the Railway Mail Service Library Foundation

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## February 16th

Fortunately, a lot of telegraph publications up into the 20th century have been scanned and made available to either Google Books or the Internet Archive or both, as well as from a few other sources.

A couple of weeks ago, I bought two telegraph sounders on eBay, a mint condition 3C and a very good condition 17-A. I've already had both happily clicking away on one of the MorseKOB broadcast wires, as well as my little Arduino set. Both sounders were available at very low prices (about \$50 including shipping), so I couldn't resist and there's a very nice 15-B up in a couple of days for a very low price so I'm trying to slap myself silly to avoid buying it!

For the second time this year, I've given my rather long Morse telegraph talk to a ham group via Zoom. For this second time, to the Long Island CW Club (<http://longislandcwclub.org>). I've had to split it over two weeks and still have the second part to do next Monday. There were about 40 people on the Zoom meeting this past Monday, so it will be interesting to see how many members return for the second part.

In late January, I gave my talk to MARC ([www.w1nrg.com/website/Index.htm](http://www.w1nrg.com/website/Index.htm)) in its entirety and they recorded it. Their entire recording is about 2 ½ hours long because there was a lot of discussion after the talk. A link to that recording is: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wx-tzFAB80](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wx-tzFAB80).

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

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## February 23rd

Thanks for the magazine (*Dots & Dashes*) and the note. I will share with our current planning director Karl Moritz. I appreciate your note about Engin. He was a friend and advisor to me even as his health declined. I miss him.

**Take care and stay safe,  
Mark B. Jinks,  
City Manager of Alexandria, Virginia**

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## March 3rd

*Dots & Dashes* arrived today (March 3rd) and is an excellent job as usual. One thing I should point out is that when you mentioned receiving

donations from three to one hundred dollars. Cameron Wallace, from Red Deer, Alberta donated \$500.00 in Canadian funds which would include his 2021 membership.

I was sorry to hear of Jessie Kaye's "Silent Key." When I was Secretary-Treasurer of the Maple Leaf Chapter, I corresponded with her, not knowing what we had in common. We both had polio in our youths and I supported the same organizations that she did: Amnesty, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam and Tools for Peace.

Other Silent Keys I was saddened to hear about was Frances Therrien who was active with the Canadian Slow-Key sessions, and George Newell from Spokane who presented me with a lovely painted plate with the American flag on it when I attended a meeting of the Spokane Chapter.

I'll be 92 this month and find I am walking pretty slow with my blind cane. I hope this virus will be over soon as my senior's residence has been very strict in wearing masks all the time and keeping the six-foot distance. We haven't been allowed to go shopping for a year now and that's hard on a woman! I have had the second Pfizer shot with a few side effects, so am looking forward to more freedom soon.

**73,  
Lavina Shaw  
Former MTC International President  
Former Secretary-Treasurer,  
Maple Leaf Chapter**

### **March 3rd**

The Albemarle Amateur Radio Club [AlbemarleRadio.org] is pleased to announce that a course preparing students to sit for the General Class amateur radio license will be offered via Zoom starting Wednesday evening March 24th at 7 PM Eastern Time. This class is open to anyone interested in upgrading to the General Class License. It will run for 8 weeks on Wednesdays.

This class is based on the ARRL General Class License Manual (Ninth Edition). This can be ordered at [www.arrl.org](http://www.arrl.org) and also at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). There will be a license examination (VE) session following the course, details of which are being worked out.

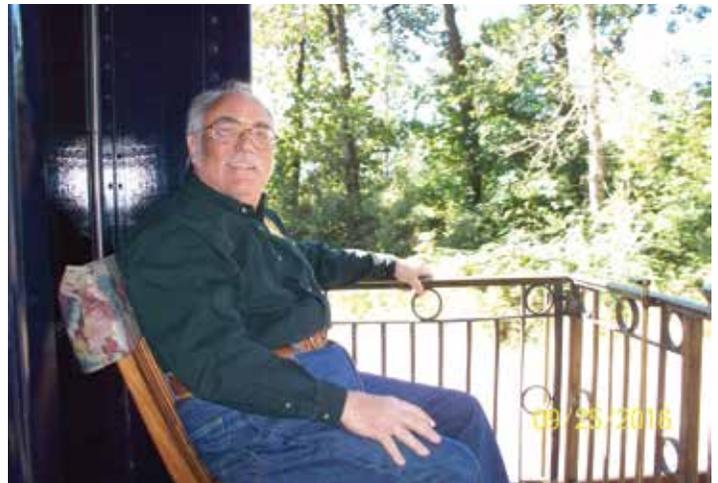
The class will offer an overview of General Class privileges, procedures and practices, rules and regulations, components and circuits, radio signals and equipment, digital modes, antennas, propagation, electrical and RF safety, items that are needed for the test.

There is no fee for this course, but students are required to obtain the textbook that is being used to register. You can register by following this link: [www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0D4BAAAB29A6F85-aarc](http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0D4BAAAB29A6F85-aarc).

**Bob Pattison,  
K4DU,  
Chair of the AARC Education team.**

*Readers: You will only be one week behind when this issue comes to you, so go for it!*

### **March 5th**



I very much enjoyed the article in the winter edition about the Tacoma telegraph operators at McCarver Street station. Although I've never been in Tacoma long enough to visit, I have passed through the area on several occasions. I was particularly saddened to read of the re-routing of passenger trains away from the "waterfront route".

I attended the 2016 AAPRCO convention in Spokane and after the all private car train broke up in Spokane, my friend's private car "Federal", a 1911 Pullman business car on which I was riding, was put on the back of that section of the Empire Builder traveling over to Seattle, WA where we spent several days parked while touring the area. We then departed Seattle on the back of the Coast Starlight heading for Portland, OR, again where we spent several days parked right at Portland Union Station, touring that area.

On our way to Portland we of course passed through Tacoma on the waterfront route. This route passes the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum which also celebrates the Northern Pacific Railroad and includes a telegraph display installed and maintained by the Evergreen Chapter of the MTC. The route continues northwest past the location of the former McCarver Street Station and then through the curved Nelson Bennett Tunnel under

Ruston which bends the right-of-way around to the south. It then follows right along the Tacoma Narrows waterway under the now paired Tacoma Narrows bridges. You might remember this as the site of the Tacoma Narrows bridge failure on November 7, 1940. The original suspension bridge, nicknamed "Galloping Gertie" failed spectacularly due to aeroelastic flutter. You can find videos of this failure on YouTube.

The rail route then continues southbound for about 20 or so more miles right beside the water. It is a very picturesque ride and I'm sorry to hear that it will no longer be available to rail passengers. On our way to Portland a little later that morning I was sitting out on the open back platform of Federal enjoying the view of the rails receding behind me when a fellow passenger took my photo as shown. According to the GPS we were doing about 80 MPH at the time. A rail fan friend upon later seeing the photo said, "It's going to be hard to wipe that smile off your face." I would have agreed with him but a year and a half later in spring 2018, Amtrak decided to no longer operate all private car trains. The 2017 AAPRCO trip to Burlington, VT was the last operated by Amtrak. This change has both messed up AAPRCO and my pleasure, and thus my smile, at riding on these trains.

**73,**  
**J. Chris Hausler**  
**[jchausler@earthlink.net](mailto:jchausler@earthlink.net)**

### **March 6th**

I appreciate the wonderful box of old issues of *Dots & Dashes* you sent to me. Since talking with to you, I have been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease that is rapidly destroying my muscles and will eventually kill me. It has already affected the muscles in my back and legs making walking very difficult. I'm trying to keep going as best I can, but it's becoming an uphill battle.

With the advent of the virus, most all ham activities have just about stopped. The few of us that are still operating CW aren't having much luck interesting others in learning International Morse much less American Morse. I will probably begin sorting through my ham related equipment in the near future, trying to decide what to do with it. I somehow thought this day would never come. I'm going to put it off as long as possible. Best of luck with *Dots & Dashes* and keep the wonderful newsletter going for future operators.

***Sincerely yours,***  
***George Averill***  
***MTC Member***  
***Cataula, Georgia***

### **March 7th**



I am new to *Dots & Dashes*, have only been a member for a couple of years. I look forward to getting my copy of *Dots & Dashes*; all the articles are very interesting. Since I was a young boy, I had an interest in trains and telegraphy. During the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) days, my father was in California. He had come all the way from Kentucky in 1933. Dad was a telegraph operator. I assume he arrive in California by train.

My real memory of trains was the steam locomotive that I rode from Louisville, KY to Bowling Green, KY to attend college in 1962. As a child, I remember my father taking my brother and I to the Franklin, KY train depot. Dad worked for the L&N.

When dad got word that I was born, he headed to Franklin to see his wife and new son. His train was side tracked due to trains carrying WWII soldiers headed to Europe. But dad passed away when I was only 10 years old so I don't have many memories of him. However, I do remember when he took my younger brother and me to the Franklin Depot. That is where I first saw the telegraph key and relay in the sounder box stretched out from the wall. The only other memory is the smell of the depot, 🐾

a pleasant smell with the heat from the pot belly stove. These are pleasant memories.

I have my dad's telegraph key, a speed key and buzzer mounted and on display in my Ham Radio shack in the basement, along with a copy of his Discharge from the CCC. Also in my radio shack is a display of relays and keys and antique radios and ham radios.

Even though I passed the 5 words per minute test to get my Novice license, CW is not my thing. I do admire those who have accomplished this mysterious means of communications with the key. That part of my Dad did not rub off with me or my brother, who is also a ham.

I need some help in identifying the box in the picture. Also, I am looking for a sounder box and the arm that extends it from the wall. Any help is appreciated.

**John D. Harris,**  
**Retired USAF, KC4JVJ**  
**678 575-8446**

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### March 25th

I received a copy of a February 2021 newspaper in the mail from Orville Larson, a long-time member of MTC. Orville is 91 years old. His article is so interesting that I cut it out, scanned it and am sending it to you for publication in *Dots & Dashes*. Hope you like it.

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

*Readers: see this article on page 15*

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### March 25th

My buddy Bill Neil was a member of MTC many years ago. Bill has some great railroad stories and I asked him to write one for you. Bill said he is working on it. He also thinks he has a bunch of the old newsletters from when he was a member. He has many boxes that he has not gone through and when he finds the one with *Dots & Dashes*, I said I'd pay to have them shipped to me and I'll scan them.

**73,**  
**John Springer**  
**MTC Member**

*John has regular Zoom presentations by retired railroad engineers*

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### March 30th

Now 96 years old, I learned telegraphy while working as a messenger for Western Union in the 1930's. While a senior in High School, I was a student telegrapher at the local railroad depot. After high school, I was inducted into the Navy and became a Morse radio operator aboard a ship. After my discharge, I worked on the railroad as a Morse telegrapher until the 1970's when telegraphy became obsolete.

**Glen Paulson**  
**West Fargo, Nebraska**

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# FLASH UPDATE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY TREASURER

Contributions for 2021 have surpassed \$2,000, including a \$500 contribution from a Canadian member. On behalf of the Morse Telegraph Club, thank you for your contributions. Your commitment to the Morse Telegraph Club supports the publication of *Dots & Dashes*. The cost of publication exceeds funds collected from membership dues.

Morse Telegraph Club, Inc., is a nonprofit organization as defined by IRS Code 501(c)(3). Contributions may be tax deductible according to IRS regulations. If you need a letter confirming your contribution, please notify the International Secretary Treasurer at the address located in *Dots & Dashes*.

# A DIFFERENT KIND OF MORSE CODE TELEGRAPH SETUP

*John Pezzano, Apple Valley Model RR Club (AVMRC)*

The Apple Valley Model RR Club is located in the 1902 Hendersonville, NC Depot, restored in the 1980s. We are free and open to the public and have a large indoor HO Scale layout and an outdoor G Scale layout between the Depot and the tracks. As part of this, we maintain a museum of railroad memorabilia as well as old pictures of the Depot and of the local historic district. In 2019, one of the members came up with the idea of having a telegraph display that people could use and I took on the project of designing the system while he built a cabinet with suitable layout that looked “historic”.

We had multiple criteria for our system. Unlike other telegraph systems designed to communicate but not to help those who have never touched or possibly even seen a telegraph, we wanted ours to be one where a user could learn in minutes and have fun. We also wanted to avoid a problem often encountered where teenagers would think it was fun to send crude or obscene words. Lastly, security of the system, the ability to get instantaneous feedback, ease of use, and simple self-help were critical.



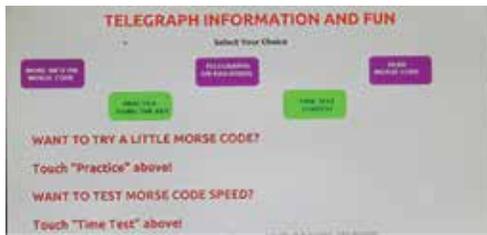
*Telegraph system - electronics (normally hidden) at top, login screen with on-screen keyboard only seen at login, key and sounder on “period” layout. Note a different touchscreen system to right is an exact duplicate of telegraph system disk but uses different login.*

The design I came up with employs a telegraph key and sounder (both donated by Morse Telegraph Club), a touchscreen monitor, and an inexpensive \$35 high performance Raspberry Pi (R-Pi) computer incorporating a locked down Linux operating system and custom designed Python programs and shell scripts to allow the user to see the everything graphically as well as hearing the output on the sounder. The only additional hardware required is 5V power supply for the computer and power supply for two electronic optoisolator circuits which isolate any “noise” fed back from the key or sounder to the computer, Monitor power and 12V power for the sounder. Note that outside of using the computer’s programs, the key and sounder do nothing. The R-Pi uses a micro-SD card (like the one in most cameras and smartphones) as its disk drive. The original core of the telegraph code was contributed by another developer who came up with a simple text-based (like used on old computer terminals or teletypes) display of just what was keyed in but which could send the output words to Twitter. There was no error correction so you sent the message as is or started all over. I dumped all the Twitter stuff and used only the inner core of the program and built all the graphics output, the system configuration and the design concept. In all, it was a couple of hundred hours of volunteer work.

For security purposes, no keyboard or mouse are used (but they can be plugged in to the hidden computer by an administrator to update or modify the system). When first booted up, the system requires a login (done by a docent using a displayed on-screen keyboard with nothing but lower case letters) and no password. With an attached keyboard and mouse, an administrator can login to a passworded account that allows full use of the system. Once the docent logs in, there is no ability to shut down the system (other than power-cycling it) or inputting anything other than what is requested by the system. Mostly, that involves selecting choices on the screen or keying in code. The computer, upon boot, momentarily connects to the local internet wi-fi to get the current clock time from the National Bureau of

Standards then disconnects until the next reboot so no external access to the computer is enabled. No data leaves the computer. It is all internal.

Once the system has been logged into, the user is presented with two (touch button) choices, one to practice entering Morse Code and one to time themselves and see how they did



Initial user screen - auto returns to this screen when user finishes or times out



Speed selection screen.

against others that preceded them. After their selection, in both cases, the user is then given a choice of “slow” or “medium” speeds (“fast” has been disabled but any number of speeds can be set by a configuration file). Unlike real use of the key, the speeds set are artificial and not relates to the standard international Morse Code timing requirements. This allows the user to vary the timing of dots, dashes and spaces between words as would happen with rank amateurs.

While selecting their speed and while entering code, the user is given a screen which, at the top has a button which allows them to quit using the system (taking them back to the main screen), a 5 minute timer (after which they are cut off and automatically returned to the main screen) and a Return button, which allows them to go back to the speed selection screen to start over – but which continues the timer. So no matter what they do, they have only 5 minutes.

Below the top section, the main section shows them (from bottom to top), the phrase desired (picked at random from a large preset list of mixed RR terms and non-RR terms added to increase

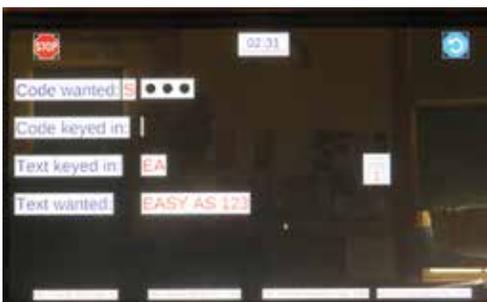
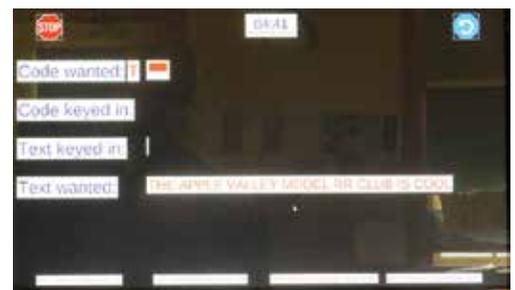


Figure shows Code Wanted in black because user got letter wrong previous

the number of lesser used characters) for the practice portion or one longer fixed phrase for the timer test. Above that display is the characters they have successfully entered from that phrase. Above that is the code for the current letter (dots and dashes) then at the top is the letter desired followed by the code that they must match. As the user tries to match the presented code, they see what they keyed in vs what they were asked for. Should they make a mistake, stopping will tell the computer they have finished the letter and then the presented code will go from RED to BLACK to indicate they erred and they have to keep trying until they get it right.

At the bottom of the screen are the values for the timer settings they have previously selected (minimum time for a dot, minimum time for a dash, minimum time for end of letter and minimum time for end of word).

The only other difference between the practice and the test are that the practice shows them the number of completed



Test phrase - single long phrase timed.

phrases to the right until they quit or hit the five minute limit whereas when they complete the test, they are presented with their time (from the first key to the last letter completion) an then offered the opportunity to save it. If they agree, then like a video game, they are given the opportunity to enter their initials (with an on-screen keyboard) and then shown the best times in the last 30 days and the last week. After 0 seconds, the screen goes back to the main one. If in fact, they are really doing badly while entering the code, they can use the Return button to start again but the 5 minute limit counts. Typical users have done the test in anywhere from 50 to 150 seconds so it's not hard.

That's the whole system in a nutshell. Many things can be configured by the administrator such as position and sizes of displays (to adjust for different monitor sizes), the total time allowed, the speed selection values, the ability to add or delete phrases, the selection of the test phrase and more by editing simple configuration files without having to modify any programs or scripts. 🖱️

We have built two of these systems, one at the AVMRC has been in use for a year and a half and another just recently finished is being installed at the Henderson County Heritage Museum. Both these systems are mirror images of the software and operating system with slightly different configuration files so if one is updated, the other is just copied from it and then the unique configuration files restored.

As to use, we find that kids as young as 8 have done very well, often better than adults. In fact one of the best was an 8 y/o girl who had never seen a telegraph – and in fact, I had to tell her it was the kind of texting her great-grandfather would have done. Women have generally been more likely to try it than men possibly because men are more sensitive to “looking bad” when trying it for the first time.

# SENIOR PERSPECTIVE

By Crystal McNutt

*Permission to reprint this newspaper article was granted by journalist Crystal McNutt and Jim Palmer, Publisher.*

With snow blanketing the harvested fields, Orville Larson, along with his dad, noticed an ad placed in the Willmar Tribune. It was January 1948, and Gale Institute of Minneapolis was promoting a trade program for telegraph and station agents on the railroad. Just eight months out of high school, Orville could sense his career calling was on the horizon of the prairie.

Growing up on a small farm outside of New London, Orville was the third of seven kids. He attended country school through eighth grade and recalls using horses for field work throughout his childhood.

“I remember driving a tractor for the first time when I was about eleven,” said Orville. “Just before World War II.”

As a teenager, Orville went to New London

High School, loved chemistry and dreamed of being a pharmacist. Following his high school graduation in 1947, Orville worked for his uncle Oliver on a nearby farm until the completion of harvest. Not only did that fall mark an end to the growing season but also a new beginning for Orville’s future. He had decided against farm life for himself, as it was too difficult to get started on his own.

“I could have stayed working for my uncle through the winter,” Orville said. “He offered to pay me \$30 per month, plus room and board. In 1947, that was pretty good.”

But, a device allowing the transmission of printed information by coded signal over wire? Orville thought the idea of telegraphy was very interesting. So instead of farming, and for only the second time in his life, Orville caught a bus to Minneapolis – taking with him the distinct lessons and work ethic developed from a rural farm lifestyle. That foundation served him well for his forty-three years as a telegrapher.

Gale Institute was located on the corner of Lake and Hennepin in Minneapolis, and the school had existing partnerships with local homeowners who rented out rooms to students. For nine months, Orville and another telegraph student shared a room, used a common bathroom in the house and ate their meals at restaurants. The telegraphy training curriculum included telegraphy, station accounting, typing, railroad operating rules, whistling code and more.

“I worked days at Western Union installing automatic relay equipment and went to school in the evening,” said Orville. 🖱️

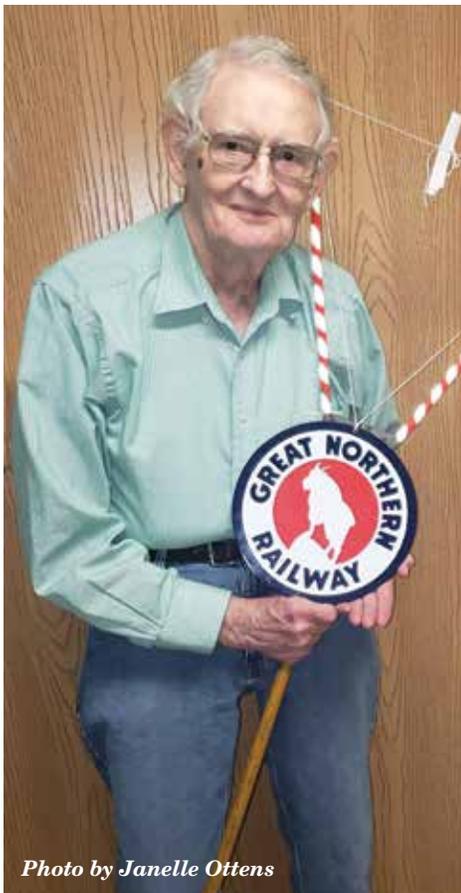


Photo by Janelle Ottens

In November 1948, Orville was hired by Union Pacific to work in Fort Lupton, Colorado, as what he described as a break-in student. One month later he began working as a telegrapher. He was first assigned to Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, then had a one-time overnight in Sharon Springs, Kansas, and last served as an operator in Denver.

It turns out his experience in Kansas was a test of courage.

"I rode the train over to Sharon Springs, and the four to midnight operator says, 'Well, here's what you do. This, and this and this.' I said, 'I'm going to have to break in for a day.' And she said, 'Oh no, you're going to work at midnight,'" Orville remembered. "Not getting any sleep didn't bother me. But not knowing what I was doing did," laughed Orville.

Preferring the peaceful Minnesota prairie over the majestic Colorado mountains, in April 1949, Orville was happy to transition back to his home state and work for the Great Northern Railway.

Thinking about working in Minnesota again, Orville chuckles as he recollects that before leaving for Gale Institute in 1948, he talked to the depot agent in New London. The agent offered to teach Orville himself and encouraged him to not go to Minneapolis.

"Sometimes I look back and wish I would have done that," Orville said. "It would have saved me a lot of money, and I would have been able to stay in the New London area. But that's all water under the bridge now."

His career with the railroad took a two-year pause in March 1951, when he was drafted for the Korean War. Because he was a telegrapher, they sent him to the third core artillery to be a radio operator in the states. Throughout his time in the army, he served in Nevada (where scientists were testing atomic bombs), Washington State and California.

"At Camp Desert Rock in Nevada, I served as a dining tent orderly for the high-ranking visiting officers," Orville said. "When we got to Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Washington, we were asked, 'Who can type?' Our unit had about one hundred soldiers and three of us could. And we were all telegraph operators. I was assigned an intelligence clerk position where I kept track of filing intelligence papers. And my station at Fort MacArthur in sunny San Pedro, California, was tough duty, but someone had to do it," joked Orville.

In March 1953, Orville was released from active duty. He transferred to active army reserve and

began working for the railroad again. In March 1959, he met a beautiful young woman, Phyllis, on a blind date set up by his sister. The two married in 1960 and later had two girls, Kari and Laura.

"My wife was always very, very supportive of my career," Orville said.

Throughout his forty-two-year career with the Great Northern, Orville worked at several stations, on various shifts and in differing roles – interacting with freight trains and passenger trains.

"I would say early on about sixty percent were freight and forty passenger," said Orville. "Now it's mostly freight."

Other than a four-month stint in White Fish, Montana, all of his work was in Minnesota, with longer stays at stations such as Willmar as an operator for six-and-a-half years, Appleton as a depot agent for eight years, and Fridley and Arden Hills at the division office as chief clerk for 10 years.

A typical day as a telegrapher included communicating with other train stations via the telegraph device. Early in Orville's career, he would also receive message for local businesses or community residents that he would pass along over the phone or deliver in person. In 1981, telegraphy was phased out and telegraph operators became clerks.

"We still did communications, but using a phone," Orville said. "I used to call myself a 'phoney' operator," he added with a laugh.

On Oct. 25, 1991 Orville retired from the Great Northern Railway at 62 years old. When asked what he enjoyed most about his time as a telegrapher, Orville said the telegraph itself. Just sitting down and communicating with dots and dashes. He also liked being a depot agent and communicating with customers – doing what he could to help them and selling tickets to passengers.

"People were usually excited because they were going somewhere," said Orville.

In 2000, Orville and his wife, Phyllis, moved to Rochester to be closer to their daughters and help with their four grandchildren. In 2017, the two moved into a senior living facility in Onalaska, Wisconsin. And although he hasn't used a telegraph machine in many years, Orville still communicates with others daily, keeping in mind the rich life experiences that have shaped him for 91 years.

# “30” SILENT KEYS

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



## C.D. Combs “FN” Chapter

**KENNETH BAUMAN**, in his mid-90’s, passed away on December 4, 2020. Ken worked as a telegrapher and Agent/Operator on the Union Pacific for nearly 40 years, retiring in 1991. Ken was a long-standing FN Chapter member and he often bragged that he was the oldest living telegrapher in Northeastern Kansas. Ken and his wife Maxine, celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in February 2020. Maxine passed away in October 2020.

Ken’s memoirs include a story familiar to every operator. While working the midnight shift, Ken copied a “19” train order, installed it in the string slip knots and attached the string loop snugly in the train order hoop. When Ken estimated the approaching train’s speed at 60 miles per hour, Ken was attempting to hoop the orders up to the Engineer, shakily holding the hoop up. The hoop struck the front of the engine. The engineer missed the orders.

We know what happens then. The train engineer applies the brakes and goes about a mile down the tracks to stop. The operator must then walk to the front of the train to take the orders to the engine crew member who is walking back to meet him.

Bad day!

***Thanks to Ken’s daughter, Cheryl Schinze, for this information.***

**ALBERT H. GUTZ**, age 99, of Columbus, Nebraska, passed away on February 12, 2021. He was born on January 8, 1922 at Osmond, Nebraska. Albert spent his career as a Telegrapher/Agent with the Union Pacific Railroad. He also used Morse code in the Navy during WWII.

***Thanks to Greg Gutz, son of Albert Gutz, for this information.***

*Greg also notes that his Dad passed around his copy of Dots & Dashes to his children for their enjoyment after he finished reading it. Greg says he plans to continue membership in MTC so his family can continue reading future issues. Greg is listed on page 19 as a New Member.*

## Edmonton “MO” Chapter

**DONALD HARVEY YOUNG**, age 88, became a Silent Key on Wednesday, February 10, 2021. Don was

born on March 25, 1932 on a farm at Arran, Saskatchewan. Donald studied telegraphy at Sprott-Shaw Radio School in Vancouver from November 1, 1949 to February 28, 1950. At this time Don returned to Arran and was taught how to run a station by Agent Mel Burr. On June 29, 1950 Don was hired as an assistant agent at Pelly Saskatchewan. He worked with Agent Ray Dawson, who allowed him to enter figures in the cash book, a task not many agents trusted to an assistant agent. In April 1951 he wrote the rules and took the tests. On May 21, 1951 Don was sent to Wekusko, Manitoba to relieve the agent. This was his first job as an Agent-Operator. He worked at a number of Canadian National stations in Manitoba, Ontario, and Saskatchewan.

At Minitonas, Manitoba he met and married his sweetie-pie, Florence Pawlinsky. Don worked for a year at Dauphin, Manitoba then transferred to the Edmonton Division, where he worked at Calder Yard and the MO office. He left the railroad in 1963 when he secured a teaching position with the Edmonton Public School Board. He taught in Edmonton, Calgary, and Fort Chipewyan Alberta and retired on June 30, 1999.

***Thanks to Bill Tchir, Secretary-Treasurer of the MO Chapter and to Don’s wife, for this information.***

**WALTER MELNYCHUK**, age 87, passed away on June 26, 2021. Wally began his railroad career with the Canadian National on September 20, 1952. He began his telegraph career working the spare board and as a relief agent in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 1962, Wally bid a permanent position as an agent operator in Paynton, Saskatchewan. In 1965, he bid for an agent operator position at Maidstone, Saskatchewan. In 1987 he bid for an agent operator job at Vermilion, Alberta. Wally retired after 37 ½ ears of service. With free time, he then did volunteer work, served his church and the enjoyed the sport of curling.

***Thanks again to Bill Tchir, for this interesting information.***

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## Grand "CG" Chapter

**ROY C. BROWN**, WA2TWS, age 93, became a silent key on January 10, 2021. Roy was born in Irvington, NJ on June 9, 1927. In 1996, Roy retired from the Department of Business at DeSales University. In 1946-47, Roy served in the Third Army's 97th Signal Battalion, with duty in Germany. While stationed in Germany, he purchased a camera at the PX and used it to record the aftermath of war. Over the course of seventy years, Roy snapped thousands of photographs. He became the president of the Hunterdon Camera Club.

Other talents included his playing the electric mandolin with the Sons of the Whiskey Rebellion,

a ragtime band popular in the 1960's & 70's. Roy also became an accomplished landscape painter and he helped found the New Jersey Astronomical Association. Their observatory, housing a 26-inch reflector telescope, became the Buzz Aldrin Astronomical Center.

Licensed in 1962 with the amateur radio call WA2TWS, Roy became active in numerous public service events, becoming the Radiological Defense Officer and Instructor. He was a member of ARRL and of QCWA and his specialty was CW Morse code.

*Thanks to Galen Johnson, WA6SBB, for this information.*

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# EXPERIMENTS IN EXPLODING FIELD MINES BY ELECTRICITY

The editor of the *Washington Chronicle* gives the following description of some experiments which he recently witnessed with field mines, which were exploded near the forts on the Virginia side of the Potomac by means of electricity.

Arriving on the ground, we learned that his Excellency the President was there, accompanied by the Secretary of War, General Heintzelman, General Barnard, General Abererombie and many other officers of less note. Soon after there was a great explosion immediately in our front; the earth opened and vomited forth stones, shot and shell, vertically, horizontally, and, in fact, in all directions.

Immediately around us were a number of the officers of the signal corps, busily engaged in connecting the wires of a field telegraph to its support, and among them we saw Professor Beardslee, the inventor of the telegraph apparatus now used in our armies. From him we learned that he was exhibiting the application of his new electro-magnetic machine to the explosion of mines, and that he was now ready to fire another.

Quick as the wires could carry the spark there was another explosion even greater than the first, and the air was again filled with earth and smoke,

stones and exploding shells; some of the latter falling in uncomfortable proximity to our person.

A third mine was exploded in the same manner. In fact, we should judge from appearances that the ground in front of our forts had been extensively mined, and it is only necessary for Professor Beardslee to connect his apparatus with them, pass the word and they will be exploded.

An order was now passed from Colonel Alexander, of the Engineers, who appeared to have charge of the operations, for the crowd to fall back to a greater distance, as a fougasse was about to be fired.

Taking up our position close to the President, we watched for the fougasse. We heard a heavy explosion, as if some of the internal fires of the globe were escaping, and the earth belched forth a volcano of smoke, stones and exploding shells even more fearful than before. It rained stones for acres around and in front of it, and must have carried annihilation to any assaulting column in the neighborhood. Immediately after this explosion, there was a rush of the soldiers to see the fougasse. but a heap of ruins only showed where it had been placed.

# CHAPTER NEWS

**B**ecause of the coronavirus pandemic, everyone has become isolated. All planned chapter events have been cancelled. But some chapters have begun meeting via the Internet using the Zoom program. Check with your chapter to see if this is a possibility for you.

*~Jim*

*PS: It's a new world out there.*

## *Welcome Aboard!*

### NEW MEMBERS OF MTC



*Frederick Carslick of Saint Louis, MO*

*Greg Gutz of Colon, NE*

*Julian Hamer of Ashland, OR*

*John Lewandowski of Aurora, CO*

*Ronald Lee of Cary, NC*

*Robert Montgomery of Eagles Mere, PA*

*John A. Pezzano of Hendersonville, NC*

*Thomas Yant of Stillwater, OK*

*Robert Schwer of The Villages, FL*

## DID YOU KNOW?

*Do you know if the earth is in danger of being struck by a large asteroid anytime soon?*

**I**n late March this year (2021), NASA concluded that Earth is not likely to be hit by a life-threatening asteroid within the coming 100 years.

The 1,100-foot diameter asteroid named “Apophis” was a big concern. This large asteroid is scheduled to pass close by earth in 2029, 2030, and 2068. However, telescope observations and supercomputer calculations now rule out a collision. Whew, that is one less thing to worry about.

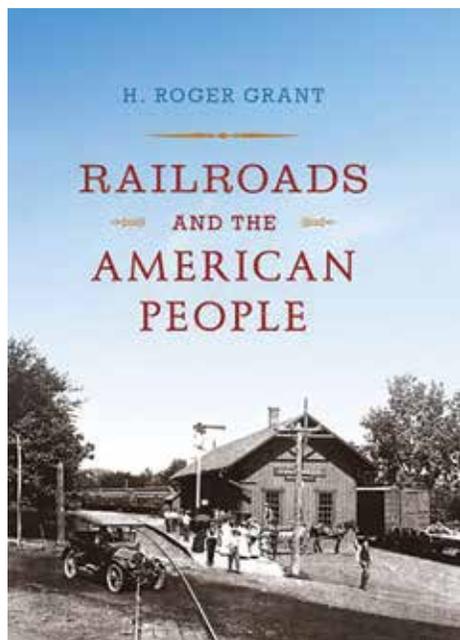
But our worries still include the global pandemic, the world economy, nuclear war, and domestic relations and more.



# J. Chris Hausler's BOOK & MOVIE REVIEWS



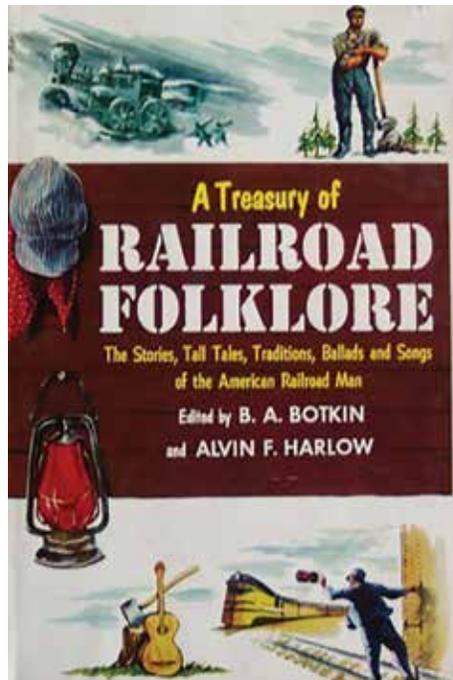
For this column I'm looking at a couple of books which, each in their own way, examine the impact of the railroads, and by inference the telegraph, on North American society in the first hundred years of their existence. The first is a scholarly study titled, *Railroads and the American People*, by H. Roger Grant. This book is available in a number of formats, hard cover and paperback, as well as Kindle and audio formats. The ISBN 13 for the paperback version is: 978-0253023797. Mr. Grant has made a serious and long term study of the social impact of railroads. In the spring 2017 issue I already reviewed his book, *Living in the Depot*, *The Two-story Railroad Station*, and neither of these are the first books he has published on these topics.



The railroad and the telegraph were pervasive, as they grew with North America they permeated all aspects of society. They manifested their impact in the trains and travel, the stations, the communities through which the tracks, and wires, ran and

the people who worked on and with them. These impacts left a trace on American society that continues to this day. Popular sayings such as something being “on track” or “derailed” remain in the lexicon. As I was in the hump yard business I used to joke with my railroad customers that maybe they should be worried because I have a “one track mind”. Place names, both towns and

counties, particularly in the mid west and west came about because of the railroad. How many towns all around North America still have a “Railroad Avenue” or a “Depot Street”. In fact even though the names remain, the small town depot and the tracks which once served it are frequently now long gone and mostly forgotten. On the odd chance that it does still exist, most folks no longer go down to the depot just to watch the trains run though, sometimes without stopping, as they once did. This book is broken into chapters which examine in detail the many aspects of this continuing impact even though first appearances would seem to indicate that railroads today have little direct impact on the average individual. I think you will find this book a very interesting read.



The second book I'm reviewing examines this impact in the stories, the folklore, that came out of that first hundred years and frequently still resonate today. It is titled, “A Treasury of Railroad Folklore” edited by B. A. Botkin and Alvin F.

Harlow and first published in 1953. Its current ISBN 13 is 978-1199398802. It is a collection of such stories from earlier publications spanning the time period addressed and edited together for your enjoyment. From what I can tell these stories range from absolute truth to embellished truth to

just plain good storytelling. In addition it contains many mostly forgotten railroad jokes. Apparently the Erie RR tired of hearing all the jokes from its commuter passengers about poor service started collecting them and printing them in its timetables until these very same passengers begged them to stop. And then there's that old Pullman sleeper equivalent of the "Who's on first" joke about the lower being higher than the upper and the upper being lower than the lower, and many more. It also includes a number of railroad songs.

After finishing with the folklore, the lengthy appendix discusses a number of issues. Some early steam engine designs and manufacturers are examined. The naming of things railroad: locomotives, passenger trains, sleeping and parlor cars, freight train names and nicknames, RPO route nicknames and various mostly derogatory

railroad names made from their initials. I have never previously heard many of these. Finally it looks at what it calls, "The Tangle of the Gages", I had never realized there were so many and finishes off discussing railroad standard time, the "Official Guide" and even early passenger train paint schemes. This all before dull Pullman green seemed to take over on most roads up until the light weight stream liner era which just began shortly before this book was written.

Although neither of these books is about telegraphy, the telegraph is mentioned in various ways in both of them as, after all, it was widely present during the time frames referenced. I found both were enjoyable reads and think, in particular as many of our members once worked, or still do, in the railroad industry, you will too. Enjoy!

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## MILITARY TELEGRAPH

The army telegraph now consists of over one thousand miles of wire stretched through the different camps, from the headquarters of Gen Hooker on the left, running toward the right wing till it reaches Hancock, Md. One hundred and ten operators are in the employ of the government. There is a separate line to the headquarters of each General commanding a division. Gen. McClellan can sit at the table in his private house, and talk to the different Generals, all at one and the same time, and independent of one another. When any division moves the line can also be extended, as each division has a corps of builders, and a supply of wire, poles and insulators always ready.

In several divisions, each Brigadier General has an instrument upon the line, and is in direct conference with his immediate commanding General the whole time. Large wagons have been provided for the operators and their batteries to travel in, with sleeping apartments, tents, equipage and everything necessary, thus making the telegraphic department the most efficient and thorough branch in the whole army; and in connection with the balloon corps of Prof. Lowe, will, should the army move, prove invaluable to detect the operations of the enemy.

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## EINSTEIN'S ECLIPSE

*Spaceweather.com, March 26, 2021*

On May 29, 1919, the moon slid in front of the sun and forever altered our understanding of spacetime. It was "Einstein's Eclipse." Using the newly developed theory of relativity, the young German physicist predicted that the sun's gravity should bend starlight--an effect which could be seen only during a total eclipse. Some of the greatest astronomers of the age rushed to check Einstein's prediction. He was right!



# 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:** Telegraph Set with hook-up box. Asking \$75 Canadian. Contact Carmen Wallace at carmenwwlc@aol.com



**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 chocked 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:** The equipment is part of a very large collection gathered over 60 years. It was from a family member who has passed but was a very long time and well known MTC member. I have included three pictures of the hardware. I would like to sell it as a collection. There are several rare west coast as well as many early rare pieces. \$12,500. Dave Ball (408) 805-0065



## REPRODUCTIONS & OTHER ITEMS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND DISPLAYS

### Turnkey MorseKOB Interface

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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.

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

PO Box 181591, Coronado, CA 92178  
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(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**

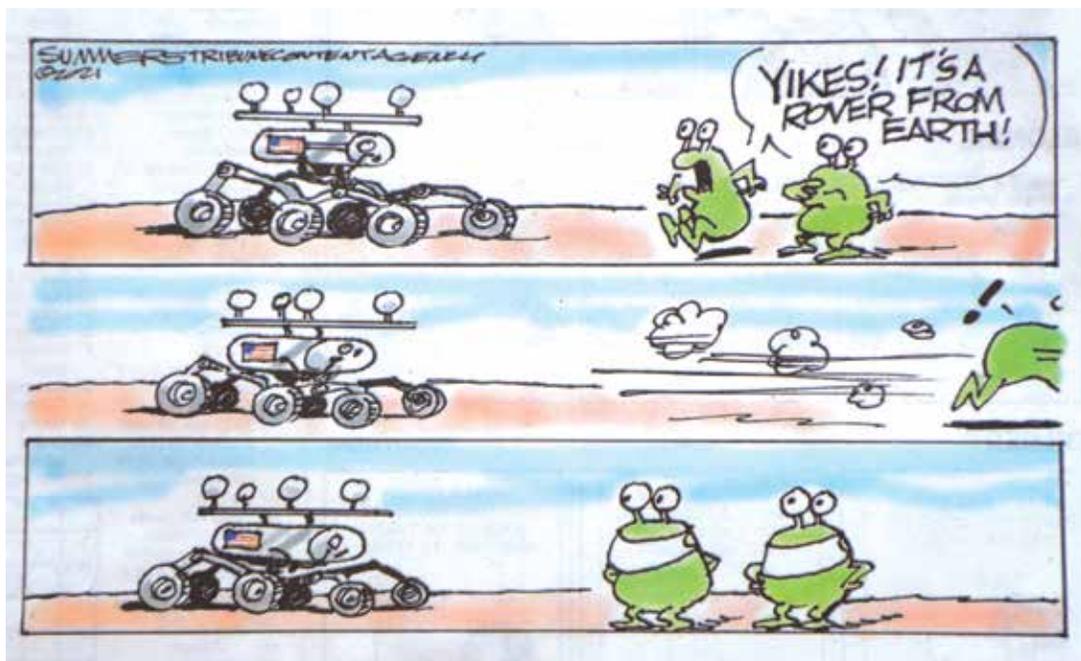
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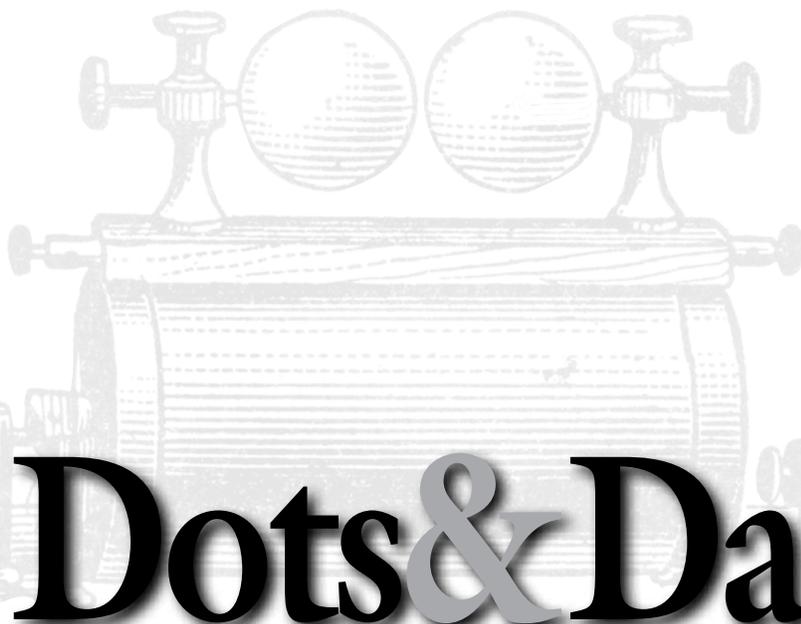
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# Dots & Dashes

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*Hath*

*God*

*Wrought*