



Dots&Dashes

*What**Hath**God**Wrought*

The Official Publication of the Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

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MY LIFE

By Lavina Shaw

In memory of past MTC International President, Lavina Shaw, we would like to re-run her story, "My Life", which was published in the Spring 2019 issue of Dots & Dashes

When I was quite young, I would often listen to the clicking of the telegraph, below my bedroom, coming through the heat register of the office of the Sifton, Manitoba railway station, which was my home. Being curious, I asked my dad, when I was about ten years old, to teach me the code. After about three years, my dad said I was good enough to go on the wire. I began to talk with other young men, also learning the code at other stations. I remember Ted Bradford, Ted Ryan, Harvey Shipley and a few others. I also helped my dad in the station, learning enough Ukrainian to sell tickets etc. as most of the village population consisted of Ukrainian immigrants. Dad spoke it fluently. On my 17th birthday, I decided to go into Winnipeg and try out as a commercial telegrapher-I was hired that day!

After spending a couple months in Winnipeg,

getting oriented, I was shipped off to Saskatoon SK to do summer relief. Most of the operators there were my father's age, and they took me "under their wings." I worked a 6-day evening shift, and often in my spare time would don roller skates that were used at times by the clerks, and skate around the hallway on the second floor of the depot. I was nicknamed "Maisie" there, and that stuck all through my telegraph career.

In the fall I was sent to Moose Jaw SK to relieve an operator who was hospitalized. It was a one-person office so I had to be a clerk, bookkeeper and a telegrapher. I was sent to a boarding house where they gave me baloney sandwiches every day for the two months.

Next, I was sent to Fort William (now Thunder Bay) ON to relieve the night operator. The manager told me he didn't want a woman telegrapher, but if I came down in the basement with him, he would reconsider-I knew what he was after. He was my father's age!

At the first opportunity, I took a train into Winnipeg to visit the Union office to lay a complaint, but they just thought it was a big joke. As soon as I could, I bid back for relief in Saskatoon.

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Dots & Dashes

The official publication of

The Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.

Jim Wilson - Editor, *Dots & Dashes*

2742 Southern Hills Court • North Garden, VA 22959
(434) 245-7041 • telegraphjim@gmail.com

www.morsetelegraphclub.com

www.facebook.com/morsetelegraphclub

www.morsekob.org

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MTC Board of Directors

Jim Wades
International President
jameswades@gmail.com
(269) 650-0215

Richard Williams
Int'l Secretary Treasurer
runnerrichard@hotmail.com
(619) 818-9017

John Springer
Director
sasjes@comcast.net
(585) 334-4445

J. Chris Hausler
Int'l Vice President
jchausler@earthlink.net
(585) 334-4445

Jim Wilson
Dots & Dashes Editor
telegraphjim@gmail.com
(434) 245-7041

Derek Cohn
Director
vibroplex@mindspring.com

Lavina Shaw
Past Int'l President
shaw.lavina07@gmail.com
(604) 942-2184

Chuck Beckett
Director (Canada)
acbeckett@rogers.com
(519) 637-2343



If notifying MTC about a deceased member (Silent Key), please notify:

Jim Wilson

Editor, *Dots & Dashes*
2742 Southern Hills Ct.
North Garden, VA. 22959
telegraphjim@gmail.com
(434) 245-7041

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

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

James Wades
International President,
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.
Buchanan, MI. 49107
jameswades@gmail.com
(269) 548-8219

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

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

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

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The next issue of *Dots & Dashes* is scheduled for publication on September 30th, 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



Sidewire

Comments from the
Editor of *Dots & Dashes*

By Jim Wilson



Artificial Intelligence, AI, is a new computer tool which is intended to assist us. Yet, an article in the Washington Post newspaper on May 31st states that “AI poses a risk of extinction on par with nukes.” Yikes! Will AI make humans obsolete? Will AI wipe us out?

For my Sidewire column in this issue, I considered writing an article about the invention and success of the electric telegraph, how the telegraph was the beginning of the electronics revolution which has brought us to where we are today with our advanced electronic technologies.

With curiosity, I considered letting ChatGPT write the article for me. This would be a great test of and my first experience at using Artificial Intelligence.

However, a recent article in our local newspaper described a two-page speech written by Artificial Intelligence. This article discouraged me from letting AI write my article about the telegraph.

The AI generated graduation speech was delivered by the president of a local college to the graduating class of 2023. The college president described the result of her AI generated commencement speech to the class of 2023 as “jaw dropping, brilliant and sophisticated.” While it was plagiarism, the president delivered this machine generated speech to the graduating college class and received raves for her commencement speech.

But the college president noticed something missing from her Artificial Intelligence generated speech. She explained that her speech HAD NO SOUL. So, she added a few personal experiences to enhance her AI generated speech.

Be assured that all articles that you read in *Dots & Dashes* are written by real people who lived real lives with real experiences. The folks who write stories for our *Dots & Dashes* journal have souls.

On another note, former International President, Lavina Shaw became a silent key on March 30, 2023. Lavina, nicknamed Macey, was 94. This issue of *Dots & Dashes* pays tribute to Lavina, a person who did so much for the telegraph community. Read the article about Lavina on the front page.

Jim Wilson

President's Line

Jim Wades, President
Morse Telegraph Club, Inc.



Canada Day and Independence Day

As I write this, both Canada and the United States are celebrating national holidays honoring their independence. This seems an excellent time to consider the foundations on which a nation is built.

While our two countries achieved independence in much different ways and at different times, we share the common heritage of Western Civilization, and there are many parallels in the form of pioneer spirit, westward expansion, industrial progress, and collective sacrifice in wartime.

At such times, we usually honor those leaders who laid the foundation for a nation; the great actors who translated the concepts of individual human rights, popular sovereignty, and the enlightenment philosophies into action and built the framework of a society and a nation. Yet, it is in fact, the common man who collectively builds up a nation.

All nations grow from community, and from that community grows a people and a nation. The success of that nation is predicated on the collective values and actions of its people. Our modern, complex society has countless “moving parts,” in the form of infrastructure, technology, and services, none of which could function without the common man. Our nations were built by those who honored the dignity of honest labor, duty, and loyalty.

St. Benedict wrote that to “labor is to worship.” It is the collective labor of the common man that uplifts society. Those who pound spikes on a maintenance of way gang are as important as the surgeon or engineer. Remove either and a nation is diminished.

As you watch a Canada Day or U.S. Independence Day celebration, take a few moments to honor the pioneers and immigrants whose labor and dignity built your nation. Contemplate the reality that the collective character of a people is the rock upon which a nation is built and maintained. Should a people collectively neglect this fact, they may

continued on page 7 ➡

continued from front page

That spring, a young gentleman, who was an operator at Melville SK, about 180 miles away, came into the office and wanted to see what this female telegrapher looked like. That was Earl and I married him three years later.

Again, in the Fall, when the relief job was over, I was sent to Flin Flon, a mining town in Northern Manitoba, as the evening operator. I was alone in the depot, in the corner of the waiting room, from 7 pm to 11 pm, six days a week. There was a saying, that in this town, the day shift celebrated at night and the night shift in the daytime. I often had to deal with drunks, and one night at 11 pm, I had to drag a drunk who was passed out in the men's washroom, out to the station platform and call the police. I had never seen a men's urinal and thought it was a shower bath. I told a passenger coming off a train that there was a men's shower when he wanted to freshen up.

A couple times, I covered a Flin Flon Bomber hockey game, relaying it, play-by-play, to Winnipeg, from a telegraph set in the Flin Flon arena. A hotel burnt near the station, with two people killed, and I reported that to Winnipeg, as well. One Saturday, after I finished work at 11 pm, two of the boys from my boarding house came to pick me up and asked



if I would like to take a trip down the mine. It was very scary. I found out later that it was illegal and the boys did it on a dare.

After Flin Flon, I again bid into the summer relief job in Saskatoon as Earl decided to go to university there, and was working second-trick at Loop Jct., on the outskirts of Saskatoon. When the relief was over, I was sent to Port Arthur (which later amalgamated with Fort William to become Thunder Bay). I boarded with a family from the Scottish Hebrides who loved their Scotch whiskey, but religiously kept the Sabbath, not doing a bit of work on Sunday. My night clerk was Walter Kelm, who came from a poor farming family in Manitoba and was going to high school during the day, completing Grades 9 to 12. I felt sorry for him and often took over his job while he studied. I lost track of him for several years until one day I saw his name in the newspaper. He was the head of the Canada Pension Board! I wrote to him in Ottawa, congratulating him, and received the nicest letter back, thanking me for all the help I gave him while we worked in Port Arthur.

For the fourth time, I bid back into Saskatoon where Earl and I got engaged, married later, in September, 1949, and I moved back to Winnipeg where Earl was stationed as a train dispatcher. A year later he bid on a dispatcher's position in Vancouver. I tried to get back on the Canadian National Telegraphs in Vancouver, but they said they wouldn't hire me as my husband worked for the CN, but I was hired right away by the Canadian Pacific Telegraphs. Their office was in downtown Vancouver, and when I worked the 5 pm to 1 a.m. 🖱





shift, I was often taken for a hooker, while waiting for Earl to pick me up. Once, a man tried to drag me into his car, but I fought him off.

I enjoyed working in the Vancouver office and often copied news for the Vancouver Sun. One day I was put on a direct line to Time magazine, during the 1952 US election.

Both Earl and I resigned from the railroads in 1954-I was expecting our first daughter, and Earl went to work for my dad's company, Mary Maxim Ltd. About forty years passed by, and Dr. Harry Toop, a former telegrapher, asked us to go with him to a meeting of the Morse Telegraph Club in Toronto.

A couple years later, I took over the Secretary/Treasurer's job of the Maple Leaf (Ontario) Chapter. I held the position for nine years and helped build the membership to 175. During this time, in 1998, I was elected to the Club's International Board. In 1999, we decided to

move west to Port Coquitlam, a Vancouver suburb. About a month after we arrived, I was asked if I would take over the Secretary/Treasurer's job for the Vancouver "DI" Chapter. In 2002, I was elected as Intl. President, while Pete Darlington took over my position as S/T of the Vancouver Chapter. During the five years I was President I travelled from coast to coast visiting chapters across Canada and the USA. I can boast that I have been in every state in the USA and every province in Canada. I met a lot of wonderful people along the way,

including former presidents Bill Dunbar and Jim Adkins, former Int'l. Sec./Treasurers Keith LeBaron and Roger Reinke, and all the directors, both present and those who were on the Board when I was President.

A couple events stand out in my mind when I was President. One was talking on the wire, from Spokane, to the last surviving Canadian World 1 veteran, John Babcock, age 107. He still was a good sender! The other was being introduced, by a friend, to Fess Parker, in California, who was the movie star who played Davey

Crockett. Fess told me that Morse Code saved his life. When he was a marine in World War 11, he was told to learn Morse Code. When his platoon was sent to Okinawa, he was held back because he knew the code. The rest of his platoon were killed.

When I finished my five years as International President, I again took over the Secretary/Treasurer's position of the Vancouver Chapter. Last year, because of being legally blind, I resigned. The club then voted to dissolve the chapter as nobody else would take the job.

During the years I have belonged to the Morse Telegraph Club, I have greatly enjoyed associating with its members and participating in a great number of Morse demos, reunions and chapter meetings. When this is published I will be 90, and I can truthfully say, that my association with the MTC has been the highlight of my life!



AFTER ACTION REPORT: SUPERTRAIN 2023



The Calgary Chapter Display

The first Supertrain since the “Pandemic Hiatus” was held on April 15 and 16th and was a great success with over 11500 people attending across the two days!

The Calgary “CG” chapter of the Morse Telegraph club created a four station telegraph network that spanned almost 200’. The line connected our display to telegraph installations for three museums that had displays at the show. This network was the first ever live telegraphy display at Supertrain.

The four stations on the line were, from West to East:

- HP Heritage Park from Calgary AB
- WA Alberta Central Railway Museum from Wetaskiwin AB
- CG Calgary Chapter MTC
- BY Revelstoke Railway Museum from Revelstoke BC



Your editor at the MTC Calgary Booth

Each station on the line consisted of a relay, key, and local sounder with battery. The line was a 16 Ga copper two conductor cable with the stations spliced into one conductor with the other being the ground return. Power for the line was supplied by a mains connected variable power supply connected to the

display in our MTC booth

The total resistance of the circuit was close to 550 Ohms with an additional 500 Ohms added to bring the current down to 46 mA with a voltage from the power supply of 40 V. This worked very well and all the relays were snappy once adjusted on

the actual line. However when Bill Wilson of the Alberta Central Museum added his bug the relays could not keep up and he couldn’t send. Bumping the voltage up just past 50 V and adjusting the relays a bit allowed the bug to send at full speed and be received at all the stations.

We did some manual sending back and forth from the stations, but the show was very noisy and, at our current skill level, it was too difficult

to follow. To keep things moving I had a laptop running MorseKOB, connected to the MTC display with one of Chip Morgan’s interfaces, spooling out the first chapter of The Hobbit from our KOBserver. The laptop was connected to the Internet via tethering through my cellphone. This had the advantage



L to R: Marilyn Maguire, Joanne Johnson, Maureen McVeigh, Heather Davis

of permitting us to demo sending at any of the stations because the KOBserver will back off when the key is opened. One issue was that with the overloaded cell network at the show sometimes the KOBserver would take a bit longer to realize the key was open. Running the KOBserver locally on the laptop alleviated that issue. 🐱



L to R: Larry Isehor, Ken Ashmead, Kevin Jepsen



to describe how landline telegraphy works, its history, and use in Railway Operations. The other museums said the same thing, that the sound of the active displays attracted people to their booths.

It also attracted many “old timers” who regaled us with tales of their days as station operators.

All in all a very successful 2023 Supertrain!

Looking forward to more opportunities to demonstrate our skills and show how Landline Telegraphy works at future events.

I walked around to several other groups with my KOB connected to our KOBserver via another cellphone tether and discussed our proposed Alberta MTC Museum link and had a lot of interest. Once our “proof of concept” is running we will be able to get many more museums and groups connected up in Alberta and Western Canada and potentially as far away as Southern Ontario!

The steady click and clacking of the telegraph sounders attracted a lot of interest from the attendees providing us an excellent opportunity



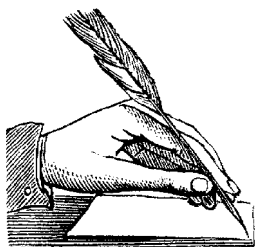
President's Line continued from page 3

nonetheless build a shining palace, but its foundation will rest upon the sand, and it will ultimately fail.

Let's honor the hard work, duty, and loyalty of all those who worked in the U.S. and Canadian railroad industries. Your contributions helped build a nation.

73





Letters to the Editor

March 31st

It is sad news indeed about Lavina's passing. I expected Lavina to live a little longer, but it was not to be.

My dad and Lavina worked together in Saskatoon and possibly elsewhere during the 1940's. Dad told me he knew Lavina as "Maisy" (spelling?) back then.

Lavina told me that my dad was then a bit of a lady's man because "he always seemed to have a girlfriend!" At that time, dad would have been in his late teens and early twenties. And a handsome, well-built young man he was, so there was no doubt dad had no trouble attracting the ladies. Why, oh why, do we have to age?

Greg Edwards

March 31st

Yes, I enjoyed Lavina's presence at the MTC Board meeting too [on March 9, 2023]. The week before, I told Lavina via an email about the WestConn Zoom meetings that I enjoy attending. By golly, my dear friend, Lavina, managed to show up to that Zoom meeting on the very next date.

Lavina and Earl were our dearest friends for many years, starting in the period when they lived in St. Thomas and continuing through to yesterday. Earl, my best buddy, died some years ago of cancer. We traveled together a lot, to Cuba, Europe, and a car trip to Vancouver, BC, and to Los Angeles to an MTC meeting and back. Yes, I have lots of good memories of Lavina and Earl.

Charles Beckett,
MTC Board of Directors Member

April 1st

Attached is the digital copy of the 4-page article concerning Kitt and my running, which was published in the February Coronado 365 Magazine. The publisher has given me permission to use the entire article but I recommend that you include only the last page which relates to my serving as International Secretary-Treasurer of the Morse Telegraph Club and my railroad experience.

73,

Richard Williams,
MTC International Secretary-Treasurer

April 3rd

My first American Morse QSO by wire was with Lavina Shaw on March 4, 2006. Lavina's sine was VR. Lavina's fist had an excellent swing and was easy to copy. I always enjoyed her stories in *Dots & Dashes* about her experiences as a railroad telegrapher. I have about a thousand questions to ask Lavina so I'm especially sorry to hear of her passing. We will all miss Lavina on the key. 73 and 88 to Lavina.

30,

William Egelston
NOWM

April 8th

This letter is addressed to Robert Bohrer, but it includes valuable comments for all of us.

Is the Twin City "MS" chapter of the MTC active anymore? The only member who I ever communicated with was Bob Branchaud, who passed away a year and a half ago, and Bill Reed, whose passing was noted in the same issue of *Dots & Dashes*. The only guy who I know in the area who can operate American Morse is Mike Cizek, and he is a three-hour drive from Satin Charles, MN.

Robert, if you are looking for operators, they would likely be living in that area. I am looking for more information both about what is there and what your plans are. All that said, it has been my experience that visitors to a telegraph display will not themselves have any competence as telegraph operators, so you shouldn't expect any.

What I have found is that the best thing to do is to have someone knowledgeable about the telegraph there to talk to the visitors about history. There are lots of areas to talk about the Civil War use of the telegraph, press use, railroad use, women telegraphers, sports reporting, especially baseball -- not only with the early mechanical scoreboards but in the 1930's and

40's with recreation on the radio from real time telegraphed reports. This is just to name a few.

I find young people are intrigued when I tell them that telegraph operators were the first on-line community and they practiced what today we call email and text messaging between themselves, including all the shorthand's, which cell phone users think they invented. And let's not forget romance over the wires, a telegraph wire was after all, a lot like the internet chat room.

The general public was so fascinated by this that a whole genre of telegraph romance fiction was published in the 1800's. More recently, our immediate past MTC president, Lavina Shaw, who sadly passed away just a couple weeks ago, met her husband, Earl, on wires in the 1940's.

The folks giving this presentation do not need to be competent telegraph operators, rather good presenters. For use of a real telegraph signal while they are talking, I recommend using MorseKOB, which is free to download, but does require a PC computer and some simple specialized hardware to be constructed.

The good thing about this is folks can see what that clicking noise that they're hearing actually means, as it will decode on the PC screen. I am a regular volunteer at the Antique Wireless Association Museum in east Bloomfield, NY. I was there earlier today and not only talked to visitors about the telegraph, but actually communicated with another member in the St. Louis area using MorseKOB and my key and sounder. Here is a video link taken a couple years ago of me in the telegraph office at the AWA, using the operating desk that I set up there: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvwuOUdwvdl>. Anyway, that's my experience doing telegraph displays and presentations.

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

April 12th

Gents: If you like Budd cars, this TVO documentary can be found on YouTube by searching, "Tripping Train 185." The video is three hours long! These Budd's were rebuilt by IRSI in 2013. I don't know who the prime movers were, but you can't see any smoke from the. I also don's now where or what IRSI stands for.

Doug Hately

April 13th

I am sending this to you because you had a personal connection to Lavina. The link below will lead you to a short video that some of the Heritage Park members of the Calgary Chapter, MTC, recently made on behalf of us all.

The setting is Midnapore Station at Heritage Park. This is the station that Lavina Shaw often visited in her role as a telegrapher during the park's annual Railway Days. The photo at the end shows many of our Heritage Park members, with Lavina on her last visit with us. This video has been sent to Lenora, Lavina's daughter, who is also one of our CG chapters MTC members. Lenora was grateful for the video, which will be shown at Lavina's Celebration of Life on Friday, April 14, 2023. The video is: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14otMgLeDAeNmd7AJ1D9aQ5QtsbZMXCUk/view?usp=sharing>

**Marilyn Maguire,
Secretary-Treasurer
Calgary Chapter MTC**

April 14th

I donated a telegraph display to the Bowden Historical Society on April 11th. The Society members were happy to receive my donation. They will have it on display in the Bowden Historical Society Museum, which is located just down the street from my home. This organization meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Meetings include a potluck dinner and a presentation by the night's guest speaker.

**Cathy Stanfill,
KS6CW**

April 14th

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/port-coquitlam-bc/lavina-shaw-11234722>

Opening the link above will take you to Morse Telegraph Club's past president, Lavina Shaw's memorial service, which was held on April 15th. [The link still seems to be active with a recording of that service.]

Richard Williams

April 14th

My speed on code was 31 words per minute. At an International MTC conference, Lavina telegraphed the meal grace at 50 wpm. I copied every word. She sent perfect code

Boyd Ferrell

April 27th

I knew Lavina through the Morse Telegraph Club in Ontario. Many years ago, I attended a meeting in Brantford with my father, who was also a member of MTC. That was the first time I met Lavina and her husband, who informed me that they both worked for my grandfather, who was the agent at Bradwell, Saskatchewan.

Darrell Harnett

May 4th

My interest in the Morse Telegraph Club stems from my dad's work with Western Union for forty years, dating from the 1930's. Dad and my mother were avid stamp collectors and they brought me into the hobby as a child. Over the years, dad accumulated many Western Union stamps and ephemera. Upon his death in 2020, dad's collection passed to me.

I was intrigued by how much I did not know about the company that my dad worked for and its historic mission to transform the speed and efficiency of written communication. So, I embarked on a two-year research effort to learn as much as I could about telegraphy during the 19th and 20th centuries. During that time, I added significantly to my dad's collection, to create a unique collection of my own.

Recently, I have begun to exhibit my collection in philatelic shows and have won awards. While doing my research, I happened upon the MTC Legacy Pages and tried to reach out to the few contacts that I found there, to no avail. Then I discovered the current MTC official website and was excited to find that the club remains active. So, I joined MTC in the hope of learning more, continuing to build my collection and sharing the journey of discovery

about the significant role telegraphy played in the development of our country.

Here is the link to an online flipbook of my exhibit (which consists of 8 display panels of 8 pages each) for NAPEX '23 on June 2-4 in Washington, DC. Let me know if any MTC members are attending. Later this summer, I will be in Cleveland for GASS '23. I look forward to reading *Dots & Dashes* and learning more about the club and its members.

That link is Western Union: Transformation of Communication online.fliphtml5.com.

Please let the MTC members know that I will greatly appreciate any critiques, errors or omissions. I want this exhibit to be as complete as possible.

***Sincerely,
Phillip Leber***

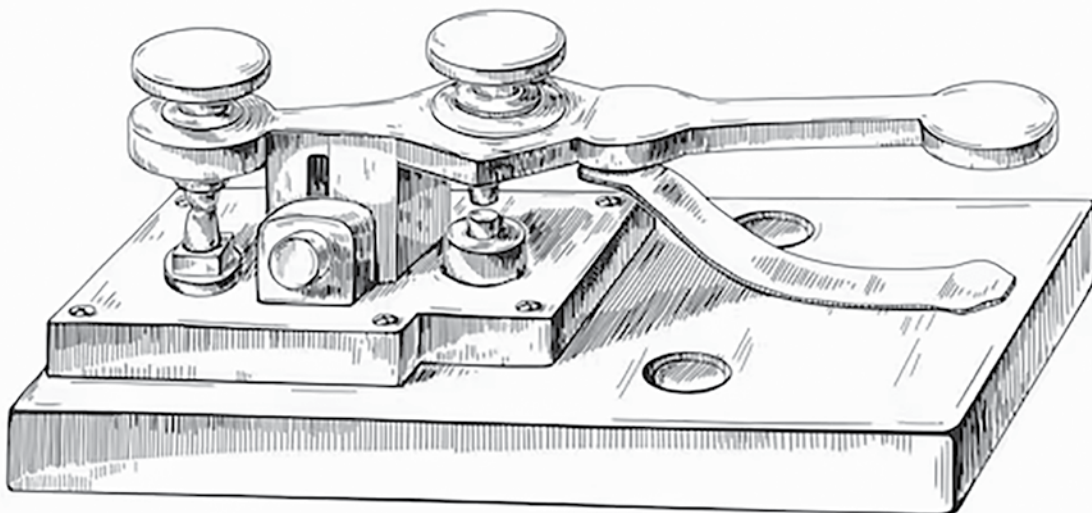
May 27th

A Canadian National Railroad friend of mine loaned me his book, *A Century of Our Stories -- 100 Years of Building a Legacy Together*. My friend began working for the NYC CASO through St. Thomas Ontario and ended when the CN/CP bought the Canadian CASO as a CN engineer.

This book was first published in Canada in 2019 by Sid Lee. The ISBN is 978-2-9817028-4-5.

This is a first-person account by the locomotive engineer, testing track geometry, meals on wheels, moving pictures, maps, ditch lights, a station blueprint, dispatchers, Morse code, and a description of every department. In other words, this is a living accounts of what it was actually like working on a railway!

***73,
Robert Weare***



Welcome Aboard!

NEW MEMBERS OF MTC

Robert Bohrer of Cosmos, MN

*Marian Gibbard of Condor, AB
(Calgary Chapter)*

*Emily Watson Isaacson of Tacoma, WA
(Sea-Tac Evergreen Chapter)*

Phil Leber of Bradenton, FL

Vincent LeVeque of Los Angeles, CA

*Maureen McVeigh of Calgary, AB
(Calgary Chapter)*

Stu Mitchell of Stafford, VA

Peter Morrison of Beverly, MA

William Phillips of Pinehurst, TX

Robert Roth of Saint Paul, MN

Perry Van Patten of Kuna, ID

MEMBERS SAMPLE BIOGRAPHIES

Here is a sample of one of our new MTC members and of loyal continuing members. You will appreciate this new column about our Morse Telegraph Club members.

ROBERT MOSES

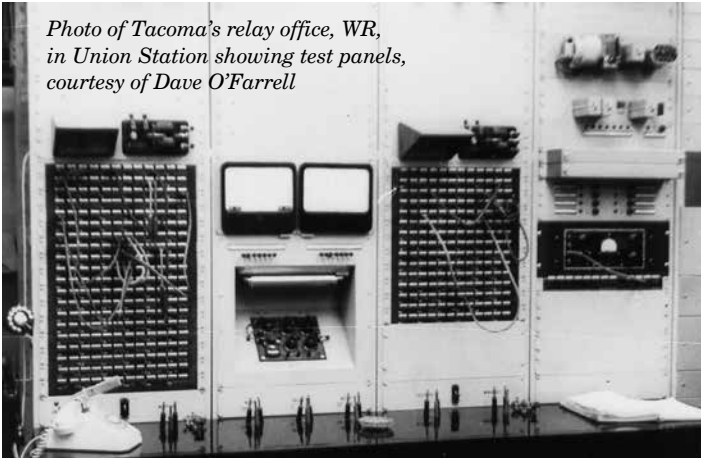
MTC member, Robert Moses, is standing beside a telegraph key and sounder displayed in the historic Hotel Del Coronado Museum. When the hotel opened in 1888, it was equipped with a Western Union telegraph office. MTC member Robert Moses, docent at the Del Museum, explains the history of the Hotel to thousands of visitors a year. Bob served in the US Navy submarine service from 1973 to 1986, as well as the Coronado Police Department 1982 to 1997. Bob is a ham operator (KM6KLLW) in his leisure time.



CHAPTER NEWS

Seattle-Tacoma Evergreen "SX" Chapter

*Photo of Tacoma's relay office, WR,
in Union Station showing test panels,
courtesy of Dave O'Farrell*



The spring meeting of the chapter on April 15th was via Zoom only. The original plan was to hold the meeting in person at the Foss Waterway Seaport Museum, but the museum was not available that night. During this meeting we had a lively discussion of how test panels played an important role in telegraphic operations.

We have experienced losses close to the chapter during the past three months. Chapter Vice President Doug Oakman's wife, Debbie, passed on February 15th. Debbie and Doug contributed much time to the telegraph and railroad exhibit at the Washington State History Museum last December. Debbie was an obstetrics R.N. who helped deliver many babies through the years.

I received the latest *Dots & Dashes* a few days ago and was shocked to see that Walt Mathers of Glen Bernie, Maryland, passed in mid-March. Walt encouraged my participation in an extensive telegraph operation at the 135th Gettysburg reenactment in Pennsylvania in 1998. For that event, I was ordained by Walt to be the superintendent of telegraph operations for the Army of Northern Virginia. And Walt was the conduit by which I met Les Kerr in about 2010 in Snoqualmie. I learned about Les's development of MorseKOB.

Yesterday I received an email noting that Lavina Shaw passed. Lavina lived in Vancouver, B.C. She was the Queen of the Morse Telegraph Club for many years. Lavina served as the International

MTC President for five years. She attended our chapter meetings several times over the years at the Poodle Dog restaurant in Fife.

Please keep the memory of these individuals alive as we send condolences to their family members.

**73,
Kevin Saville,
President,
SX Chapter**

Calgary "CG" Chapter

Attached is an article written by Kevin Jepson about "Supertrain 2023" with two photographs. [Read Ken's Supertrain 2023 article on page 6]

**73,
Ken Ashmead,
President,
MTC Calgary "CG" Chapter**

Washington-Baltimore "WA" Chapter

Gung-ho to tell the world about the valuable contribution of the telegraph, "Plan A" went up in smoke when the Director of Fort Ward Park in Alexandria, Virginia announced that "Civil War Camp Day" on June 10th was cancelled because of very hazardous air quality caused by raging forest fires in Canada. Ah well, better safe than sorry. We look forward to next year.

And the sudden loss of our newly installed WA Chapter President, Walt Mathers, still hasn't fully sunk in. Walt was a great motivator and an idea man who was very good at planning telegraph and signal events.

Walt's wife, Valerie, who has a want ad in our recent issues, is still struggling with the loss of Walt. Please keep Valerie in your prayers.

**73,
Jim Wilson,
Secretary-Treasurer,
"WA" Chapter**

This certifies that James Swain Esq.
has my permission to take and use the
Telegraphic apparatus, (which I de-
posited with the American Consul
in Paris in the year 1845,) for the
purpose of private exhibition, and
may own the same for that purpose
on the condition that he fits the
instruments up at his own expense,
and deposits a receipt for the same
with the Consul to be filed in the
Archives of the Consulate. -

Sam. F. B. Morse.

Po'keepsie, New York,
United States, May 11, 1858.

Autograph of Professor Morse, inventor
of the telegraph, found in the archives
of the Consulate-General, Register H,
page 53.

Translation of the handwritten note by Professor Morse:

This certifies that James Swain Esq has my permission to take and use the Telegraph apparatus (which I deposited with the American Consul in Paris in the year 1845) for the purpose of private exhibition, and may own the same for that purpose on the condition that he fits the instruments up at his own expense, and deposits a receipt for the same with the Consul to be filed in the Archives of the Consulate.

Samuel F. B. Morse
Po'keepsie, New York
United States, May 11, 1858

This framed document was presented to the Morse Telegraph Club (Washington Chapter) by Mr. Robert E. Stufflebeam, Chief of the Division of Communications and Records, Department of State. This autograph of Professor Morse, inventor of the telegraph, was found in the archives of the Consulate-General, Register H, page 53. [This appears to be an original autograph.]

“30” SILENT KEYS

News of our brothers and sisters who have closed the key



Calgary “CG” Chapter

LAVINA GRACE SHAW, of Port Coquitlam BC passed away on March 30, 2023 a day after her 94th birthday.

For five years, Lavina served as International President of the Morse Telegraph Club. Thus, many MTC members got to know and appreciate her. Lavina was born on March 29, 1929 in Ethelbert, Manitoba.

On September 24, 1949, Lavina McPhedrain and Earl Shaw were married. They met and romantically courted by telegraph. Their two daughters Lenora and Brenda later married and had families of their own.

In her era, it was unusual for a telegraph operator to be female. Lavina’s interesting story is herein reprinted from the Spring 2019 issue of *Dots & Dashes*. Read Lavina’s life story beginning on the front page.

Lavina worked for the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railroads as a telegraph operator. Later, she spent 25 years as a medical secretary at St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital. Lavina was an active member of the St. Mark’s United church in St. Thomas, ON and Trinity United in Port Coquitlam, BC.

Lenora, Lavina’s daughter, explains that her mom was constantly doing works to help others, locally in the food bank, nationally through world organizations. Lenora stated that her mom had a lifelong love for learning and that she read extensively.

Her passion was always railway and telegraphy. Lavina was the first Canadian and woman to be elected President of the Morse Telegraph Club. She was active in the MTC, traveling to world meetings and promoting the history of telegraphy through displays and demonstrations across Canada and the USA.

Several of the Letters to the Editor in this issue describe personal relationships by MTC members with Lavina. You may want to read these tributes to Lavina.

Thanks to Lavina’s daughter, Lenora Crane, for this summary of her mom’s life.

BRUCE HENRY EDWARDS, age 97, passed away on March 3, 2023. When asked, Dad liked to declare “I was born in the middle of wheat field.” His Saskatchewan certificate proved it: BIRTHPLACE: Sec.4,TP24,Rge17,W2nd,” the grid description of midwife Bray’s wheat farm, a horse & buggy ride from “Part Sec. 6,TP23,Rge.20,W2, Charles & Edith

Edwards’ homestead: April 24, 1926, near Markinch SK.

But Dad knew early that he wasn’t a farmer: he was two months old when he packed up his diapers & moved to Regina—mom, dad, sis Joyce & bro Chuck in tow.

Fond memories of boyhood adventures with chum Jimmy Crook: his gopher sending their teacher into hysteria when it stuck its head up through Dad’s inkwell, playing submarine in derelict boilers, climbing trees, getting swept up in the Regina Riot, & climbing the underside of bridges hand over hand. He cherished memories of his grandparents in Gibbs SK where a neighbor taught him how to operate the grain elevator.

Prairie drought & the Great Depression left him with nightmares of going hungry. He earned the odd dollar helping a baker deliver bread to the Regina jail, unloading BC fruit from box cars, & shoveling coal. Their father died, so he quit school to deliver telegrams by bike at three cents a piece for Canadian National Telegraphs (CNT). He delivered the telegram that told the parents of his CNT mentor Josh that he’d been killed in action at Dieppe, 1942. “They accepted it with grace,” he said, “& we chatted.” Teaching himself Morse code & typing got him a formal job as a telegrapher. And then it was his turn to volunteer for active service.

Camp Borden, 1944: on draft for Europe, but Personnel held Dad back. Why? He could type fast & accurately. How embarrassing. Typing nominal rolls was the order for weeks. What now? The parachute regiment? OK; but no: Why? He’d had a hernia repaired. The Signals Corps where his Morse code & radio training would be useful? No: no reason given. But the Canadian Armoured Corps wanted him: Sherman tanks, WS 19 radios, & a back injury with delayed effects; trooper Edwards, loader-operator, on draft for England & advanced tank training. But Victory in Europe put an end to that draft. VE Day celebrations at the Casa Loma in Toronto & the longest bar in Detroit. Then, the atom bombs dropped on Japan ended the War in the Pacific. Brother Chuck and in-law Andy McAfee returned from Overseas.

CN Telegraphs welcomed him back: Regina, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, the Lakehead: Port Arthur & Fort William, now Thunder Bay, Ontario, where Saskatchewan wheat was stored in huge elevators for loading on ships. He met Leonora Fero, his bride, June

9 1952: twins Greg & Grant, July '53; & Geoff, July '54; Winnipeg MB, 77 Rampart Bay; Testing & Repair training, promoted to wire chief; moved to Wabowden; daughter Leonora born, '58; a National Defence security clearance to be CNT wire chief Churchill MB; installed CNT console, NORAD refueling base, Fort Churchill. NORAD's demands & the Northern Lights' effects had him on call 24/7 for three years. Churchill's rocket scientists supported his disputed overtime tickets with a beer box of read-outs from their upper atmospheric research. His overtime tickets were never questioned again. Memberships at the officers' & NCOs' clubs at Fort Churchill made the long winters bearable. Meeting Gov.-Gen. & Madame Vanier was a highlight.

His lineman married his clerk. They set up life in a travel trailer on railway property. Buddies would give their trailer a shake on the way to the beer parlor. Enough's enough, said lineman declared one evening as he charged out; but, his buddies weren't guilty (this time): a huge polar bear scratching his back on the corner of their trailer sent him fleeing back inside.

Kitimat, BC: the same latitude as Churchill but subject to Hawaii's warm winds instead of the Arctic's icy blasts. Hunting, salmon fishing & blueberries. Mom developed puzzling symptoms. Might a dryer climate help? Moved to semi-arid Kamloops, BC: building their dream home & tragic news: Mom had acute Multiple Sclerosis. Her illnesses were soul-searing.

Vancouver, BC: Dad found a treed lot in Tsawwassen, built a home around Mom's needs, but she died Feb. '73. He soldiered on: activities, hobbies, sports, & dating; Grant graduated, UBC pharmacy '77; Geoff graduated, UBC medicine '81, & married Vicki Fitz-Clarke; lost daughter Leonora in '83, but he carried on; video cameras, editing; Geoff & Vicki began giving him grandsons Michael, Robert, David & Stephen; Expo '86 everyday 'til it ended; travel & work, work & travel; BC Tel hired him away from CN Telecommunications; his grandsons have given him five great grandchildren: Henry, Emma, Margot, Eliza, Cliff...

He remained in his home in Tsawwassen under son Greg's care 'til his death at Vancouver General March 3, 2023.

When his little bro Brian died, he shared "The Portal", a poem he wrote decades ago:

*Softly with reverence, I close the portal door
Remembering so dearly the one gone before
Someday I too, while looking back,
will through this portal stroll
Then forward to re-union I'll bring my heart & soul*

*Until this day, I shall embrace the beauty I do find
Embrace it all with gracious heart & peace of mind.*

by Bruce Henry Edwards, 1926-2023.

-30

Thanks to Bruce's son Greg for this information about his dad.

Members at Large Chapter

GEORGE AVERILL, age 82, of Cataula, Georgia passed away on March 1, 2023. He had been suffering from ALS disease. George was born in Macon, Georgia on February 18, 1941.

At age 14, George earned his amateur radio license, which at that time required passing a test for copying Morse code. George's call sign was K4EOR; he enjoyed the hobby for his lifetime and for awhile taught Morse code via the Internet.

George earned three college degrees and spent his career as a high school teacher, specializing in earth sciences, geology, physics, and astronomy. George and his wife, Ellen, were both high school science teachers. In 1991, Ellen was voted Georgia's Biology Teacher of the Year.

George and Ellen were also accomplished Master Gardeners and George also served as a scoutmaster. "He was doing a lot of things to help people," commented Ellen.

George served in the U.S. Army reserve for 28 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. And using his valuable skills in engineering, during retirement, George managed his own business repairing chandeliers.

George and Ellen raised one son, who currently serves as Vice President of an airplane insurance company in Birmingham, Alabama.

Thanks to Ellen Averill, wife of George for 52 years, for this touching and interesting information. Ellen states that her beloved husband, George is now in heaven, no longer suffering from ALS. Ellen notes that about 200 people attended his funeral.

Ollie Blackburn "AT" Chapter

LARRY CARD, passed away on April 14, 2023 after a long illness.

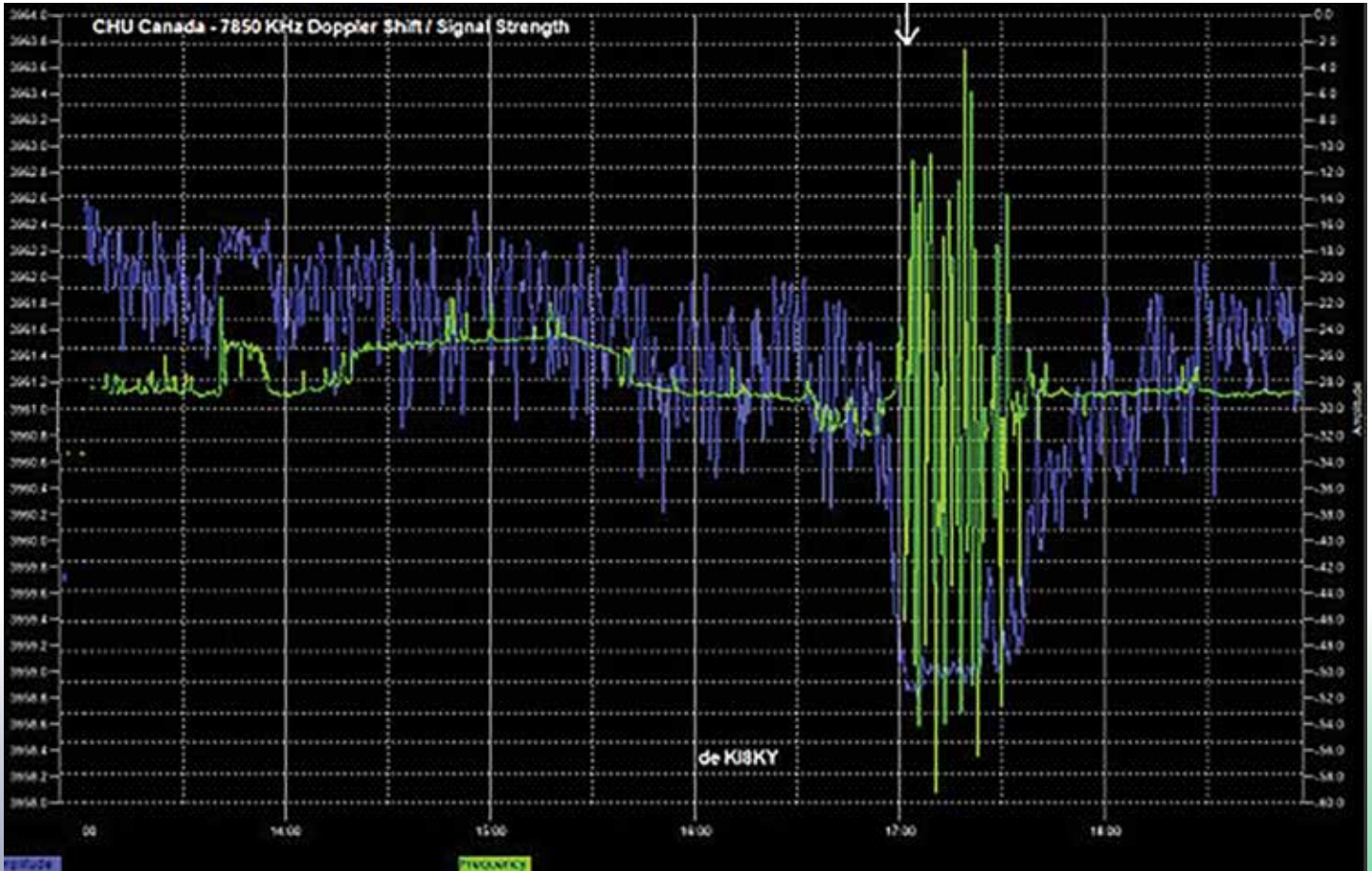
Thanks to Derek Cohn for this brief notice. Derek notes that Larry was active on the dial-up telegraph circuit and on MorseKOB. More information about Larry will be published in the next issue.

A NEW WAY TO DETECT SOLAR FLARES

Submitted by Larry Wilson, Friend of MTC

Ham radio operators are experimenting with a new way to detect solar flares. Some flares are so powerful, they shift the frequency of government radio stations that broadcast atomic

time. This happened just two days ago during an unexpected X-flare. Find out how to set up your own Personal Space Weather Station on today's edition of Spaceweather.com.



An X-flare on June 20th changed the frequency of Canada's CHU radio station. Credit: Brian Curtis of Sault Ste Marie, Michigan

Have you ever wondered...

...where your Dots & Dashes editor got his prior experience?



The plaque explains this mystery. Presented during the War in Vietnam, this Army plaque reads:

"James L. Wilson, Editor, 128th Signal Reporter, 13 October 67 - 3 October 68, In appreciation officers and men 128th Signal Company, Cam Ranh Bay RVN"

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I had the honor of serving for a year as editor of a weekly newspaper in Vietnam.

Ah, what memories! ~Jim





A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

Recall that the new column, "A Penny for Your Thoughts," began its debut in the Spring 2022 issue of Dots & Dashes. This new column is intended to be a safe place for you to air your thoughts.

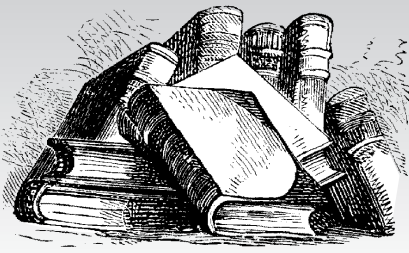
Previous items that were on your minds included:

- The Unprovoked War by Russia Against Ukraine
- Current Inflation in the Price of Everything
- Our Global Climate Disaster
- Issues of Growing Older
- The Perceived Decline in Democracy Worldwide
- The Worldwide Rise in Crime
- Issues of Declining Sex in Long Time Marriages
- The Fear and Likelihood of Global Nuclear War
- The Millions of Illegal Immigrants Pouring into the U.S., Canada and Europe
- The Uncertainties of Death

For this issue we will add the question of what to do with your cherished telegraph equipment after we are gone. This question was raised in the previous issue by members of the MTC Maple Leaf "ON" chapter.

So, our best advice is to tell your family what you wish to have done with your telegraph equipment, including the option of donating it to the Morse Telegraph Club for display in their future museum. For this option, contact MTC International President, James Wades.

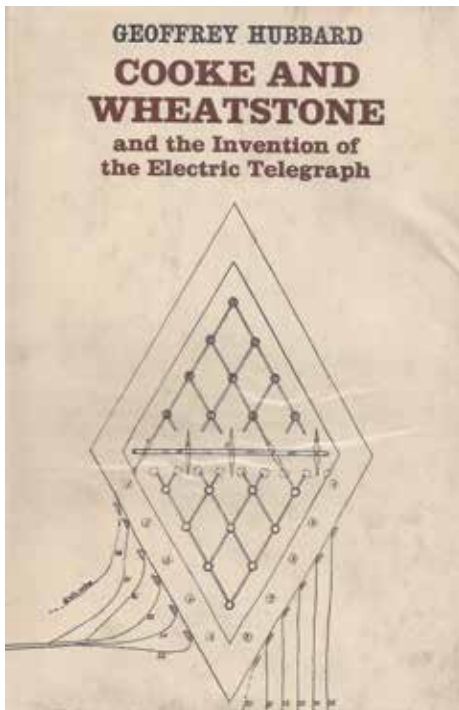




J. Chris Hausler's BOOK & MOVIE REVIEWS



Although our club is all about Morse telegraphy as practiced in North America including the use of American Morse Code, there were other budding electric telegraph systems being developed at the same time as Morse and his associates were doing their work. When Morse was developing his system in the 1830's, inventors had already been experimenting with the idea of an electric telegraph for close to 80 years. The thought that rapid communications could be achieved by the use of electricity was not a new one, but for various reasons the first near practical systems were only just then, in the 1830's, being demonstrated.



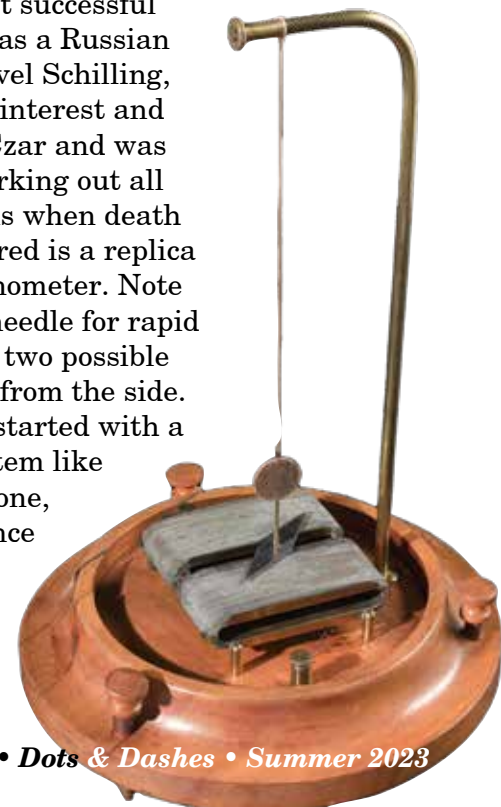
With that in mind, in this column I am going to occasionally examine books about such alternative early electric telegraph systems. For this column that alternate system, probably the most well known, is the Cooke and Wheatstone "needle" system.

Unlike any of the other early systems except, of course, the Morse system, it too survived well into the middle of the 20th Century. The book is "Cooke and Wheatstone and the Invention of the Electric Telegraph" by Geoffrey Hubbard. Originally published in London in 1965, it has been republished and is available in paperback for less than ten dollars from Amazon. Its ISBN is 978-0415846783.

Morse was lucky in that when he decided

to pursue such a system using electricity the necessary technologies and understandings had just been or were then being developed by others. Joseph Henry had just demonstrated that by using an electromagnet with many turns of wire around the magnet core and a high voltage, what Henry called an "intensity magnet", a signal could be sent quite some distance. Further, John Fredric Daniell and William Robert Grove were just then developing the first reliable long lasting chemical batteries. Had Morse been any earlier, without these technologies it is likely he would have failed like many of the other earlier experimenters. This book points out that Cooke and Wheatstone's system, just like Morse's, was also developed based on the knowledge of others. By the 1830's, the scientific ideas required for a commercially successful implementation of an electric telegraph were finally "in the air" and if one person would not invent it, it would get itself invented by someone else, even such a curious choice as a fine arts painter named Morse.

The book mentions that the person who might have fielded the first successful electric telegraph was a Russian diplomat, Baron Pavel Schilling, who had gotten the interest and full support of the Czar and was in the process of working out all the necessary details when death overtook him. Pictured is a replica of a Schilling galvanometer. Note the disk above the needle for rapid identification of the two possible positions as viewed from the side. Although Schilling started with a multiple needle system like Cooke and Wheatstone, there is some evidence that by the time of his death he may have simplified it to a single galvanometer



and a two state code. He was certainly doing demonstrations with just a single galvanometer.

William Fothergill Cooke saw one of Schilling's demonstrations and brought the technology back to England. Cooke, although possessed of a fair amount of business sense lacked the technical skills to successfully develop his ideas and this is where Charles Wheatstone came into the picture. The book also points out that two more ill-matched partners than Cooke and Wheatstone would be hard to imagine. Throughout the process they argued and fought constantly. The book implies that just like with Morse, the electric telegraph in its effort to get invented had a wry sense of humor.

The book provides details about Cooke and Wheatstone's lives, their joint efforts and arguments as well as examines their development process. The evidence is that most of Cooke's technical ideas were thrown out by Wheatstone even though Cooke insisted for years that Wheatstone had only been of minor assistance. It is not clear to me which of the pair first got the idea for the five needle system, but the evidence is strong that Wheatstone actually did the technical

development of it. Although it was quickly proved economically impractical, to me the five needle system was a stroke of genius in that it demonstrated to anyone who could read that a telegraph using electricity would work. No code was required to understand the messages. Even after Morse had demonstrated his system of short and long marks on a strip of paper, some folks thought that it was

all a trick.

Pictured is one of the recently uncovered large five needle panels from that original installation in September 1837 on the London & Birmingham Railway. It is four feet tall and two and a half feet wide. It had been "lost in the files". As it was large it was hung on the wall such that the public could



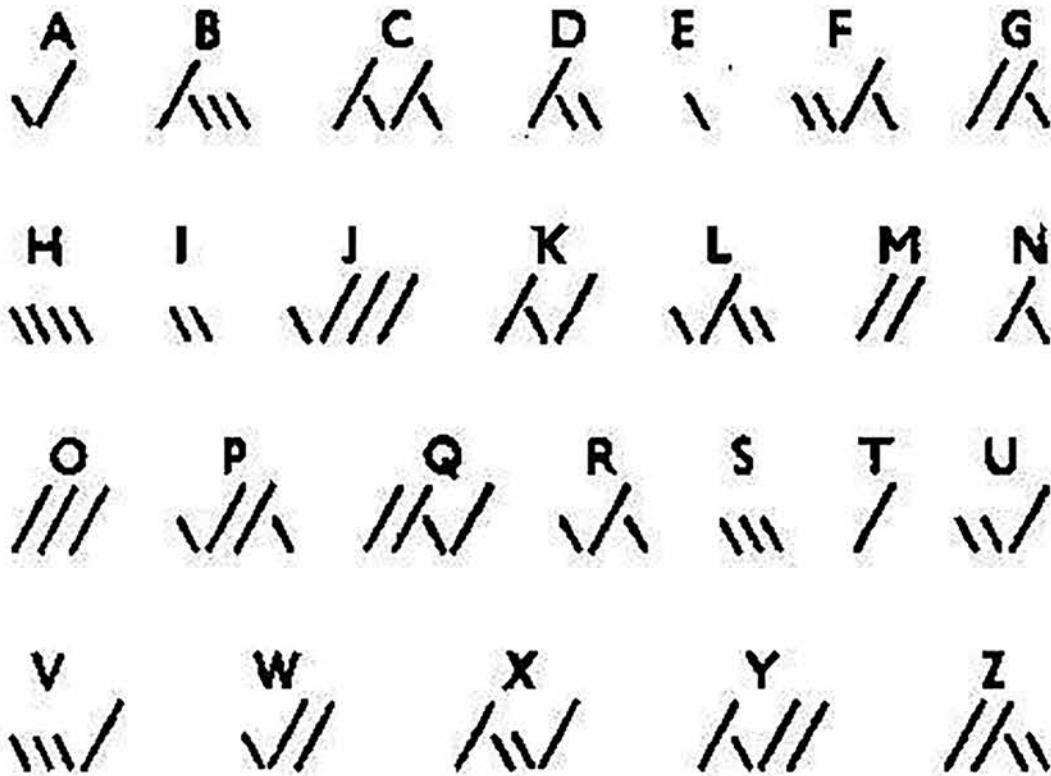
witness it. It directly represented 20 of the 26 letters such that anyone watching who could read could decode the messages. The letters missing are C, J, Q, V, X and Z. The missing letters could be represented either pictorially or phonetically by combinations of the others. There's a famous case of a criminal being caught by a telegraphed message which said he was dressed like a Quaker, but of course spelled KWAKER due to the lack of a Q. Thus there was no question in the public's mind that it worked.

The impracticability of the five needle system resulted in the rapid reduction in the number of needles used and the implementation of some kind of code. Both two and single needle systems came to predominate. Although a number of codes were developed for these needle systems eventually International Morse prevailed for the single needle systems. Pictured is a description of the use of International Morse for a single needle system. Also pictured is a palm sized portable single needle instrument we have in the collection at the AWA museum. You can see the single needle code for International Morse on its face plate. You are probably all aware of such "pocket" sets for use with the North American Morse system such as the Caton instrument used in the U. S. Civil War and other such small easily portable instruments which became popular for use by linemen. This is the only such instrument I've seen for the needle system.

Just like with the Morse system, telegraphy for railway traffic control and safety in Britain remained in use for a great many years and continued to be based on the common single-needle



instrument. They were still in service in the 1970's on the Great Northern Line out of Kings Cross. This was mostly for what we would call "block wires". Further, the receiver was designed such that the indicating needle would travel between



EXPLANATION OF ALPHABET

THE LONG STROKES REPRESENT POINTING THE NEEDLE TO THE RIGHT, THE SHORT STROKES TO THE LEFT; THUS A \swarrow IS MADE BY POINTING THE NEEDLE ONCE LEFT AND ONCE RIGHT; C $\swarrow \searrow$ IS MADE RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT; F $\swarrow \swarrow \searrow$ LEFT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT; Y $\swarrow \searrow \searrow$ RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, RIGHT

Single Needle Telegraph Alphabet.

two stops which were designed to each emit a different sound when the needle struck them. So the messages could be interpreted aurally just like with Morse on a sounder. I recall watching an old British movie made in a "signal box", the British term for interlocking tower. This "tink-tonk" code could be clearly heard.

As it was for Morse and his associates, the development and eventual acceptance of the Cooke & Wheatstone needle system was an uphill struggle as they refined the technologies and implemented early trial systems. And for both groups, it was only with continuing effort that they were they able to finally succeed. I think you will find the book an interesting read.

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.rfandp.org. The price is only \$25.15 postage paid.

Hubert Jewell is now a Silent Key, but his interesting book is still available.

AVAILABLE: Vintage Canadian Morse code club patch
www.ebay.com/itm/1949326228100.

AVAILABLE: I have a few switches for sale. These were pulled from telephone test sets model 35-F. The 35-F test set can be viewed on line. The switches have the look of a telegraph key, complete with gap adjustment, shorting lever and adjustable return spring. This is just the ticket for someone putting together a Phrase radio. I have used these guys on the air. The knobs are numbered 1 thru 4, your choice while they last. Make that only one per customer, please.

The price is \$10 plus shipping, which usually runs about \$5. Call for availability 574 607-5441.

**73,
Pete Ostapchuk, N9SFX**

PS: In the past, these have been sold by folks who claimed that they were used by allied spies in WWII.

This rumor is not true!

Please, only one to a customer

DID YOU KNOW?

All your life, you probably have been asking this question:

Why Do Peanut Butter and Honey Not Require Refrigeration?

Peanut butter generally has a long shelf life because of its high fat and low moisture content, which are unfavorable conditions for bacterial growth. Some brands of peanut butter even have longer shelf life, thanks to the addition of stabilizers like palm oil and hydrogenated oils.

The rule for honey is: Do not refrigerate. Cool temperatures will cause your honey to form a semi-solid mass. Because of the sugar content and low pH of honey, organisms that can spoil food won't survive in honey. Archeologists have found honey in thousands of years old Egyptian tombs. The ancient honey was still edible! Scientists claim that, stored in sealed containers, honey can remain stable for centuries.

As newsman Paul Harvey used to say, "and now you know the rest of the story."

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

2742 Southern Hills Court
North Garden, Virginia 22959
(434) 245-7041

E-mail: telegraphjim@gmail.com

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.arnewsline.org
www.usrepeaters.com
www.qth.com
www.qrz.com

NOTICES & INVITATIONS

MORSE TELEGRAPH CLUB, INC.

www.morsetelegraphclub.com

MORSE KOB PROGRAM

www.morsekob.org

DUES

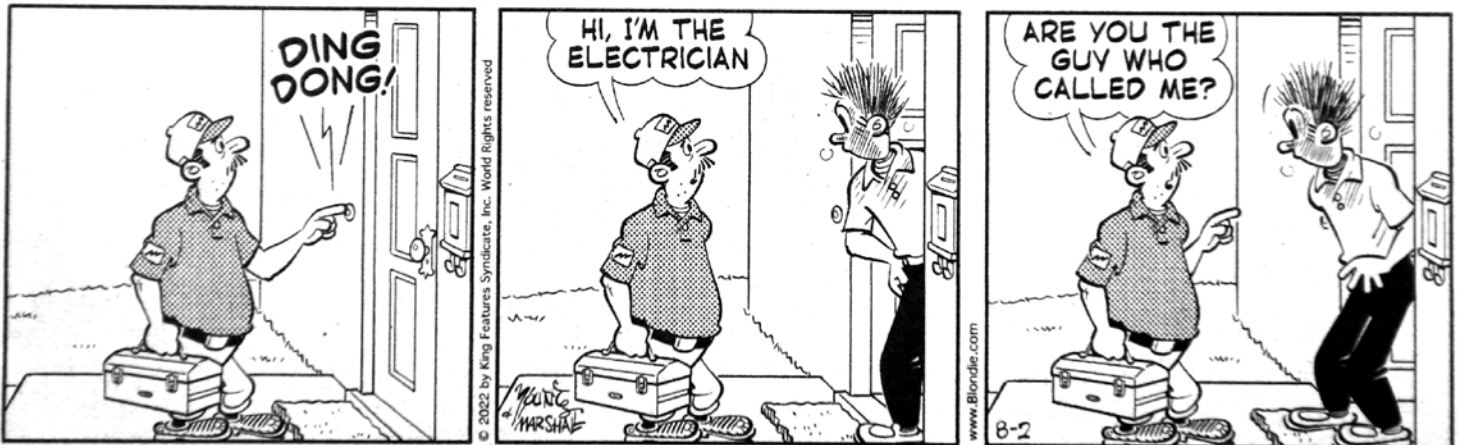
U.S. First Class postage \$25.00

E-mail delivery \$20.00

Canadian is by chapter

BLONDIE

By Dean Young and John Marshall





Dots & Dashes

What

Hath

God

Wrought

