

# K9YA Telegraph

Robert F. Heytow Memorial Radio Club

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## William G. Pierpont, NØHFF

*His Art & Skill*

**Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL**

*Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.* (Francis Bacon, 1561–1626)

Sir Francis must have been speaking of the book the *K9YA Telegraph* staff: Mike,

N9BOR; Dick, W9CBT; and myself are currently working on: it is a book “to be chewed and digested.” We are in the midst of the fifth revised edition of *The Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy, A Manual For Learning, Using, Mastering And Enjoying The International Morse Code As A Means Of Communication* by William G. Pierpont (1915-2002), NØHFF.

Published by the FISTS CW Club (see: *K9YA Telegraph*, September, 2005, pg. 1), this edition, as well as two earlier printed and revised editions, is an all-volunteer, non-profit labor of love. The books are sold at cost, plus shipping.

The *Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy* guides prospective Morse ops, and the curious reader, through all facets, technical and psychological, of learning the International Morse code. Budding Morse operators are then introduced to the best methods of practice and acquiring speed in both sending and receiving. With International Morse code now under their collective belts, one chapter is devoted to jump-start learning the American Morse (land-line) code using what they already know.

But it’s not all about the art of Morse code, it’s the science, too, as Pierpont reviews its history and the

many “schools of thought” and theories it inspired; including those of Koch, Candler and Farnsworth. He continues with an overview of learning devices and courses, including the on-the-air code and theory course of Marshall Ensor, W9BSP. Telegraph keys and their proper use are discussed in detail.

Other chapters deal with Amateur licensing and military training, banana boat and other “swings,” speed contests, abbreviations and the Phillips code, and methods *not* recommended.

“...a book ‘to be chewed and digested.’”

The *Telegraph* staff is privileged to work on what is now acknowledged by many as the standard reference on Morse code for the Ham Radio community. William Pierpont, first licensed in 1930, a veteran of many contacts with Admiral Richard E. Byrd’s 1932 Antarctic expeditions and recipient of a commendation signed

by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was a master at stating the elemental truths of Morse acquisition and practice in a straightforward and elegantly simple manner. His understanding and welcoming language is amply demonstrated in the following examples:

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# The KG4AXH Party Train

*All Aboard!*

**Dennis Buehler, KG4AXH & Philip Cala-Lazar, K9PL**



In the area around Homosassa, Florida you may come upon a bit of vintage railroad rolling stock some distance from any tracks. The red caboose is the brainchild and handiwork of Dennis Buehler, KG4AXH.

With a background in cabinetry, electronics and work as a disc jockey, Dennis had the perfect resume to build, equip and operate the red caboose as a mobile sound studio.

Equipped with a 1,250-watt Bose amplifier and 450-watt booster, the Party Train is sure to be heard when Dennis entertains the public. Outside, complete with cupola, brake wheel, lantern and grab irons it's the archetypal caboose—inside, the sound gear is complemented by high-gloss cabinets and a mirrored and red velvet-upholstered ceiling.

Dennis says:

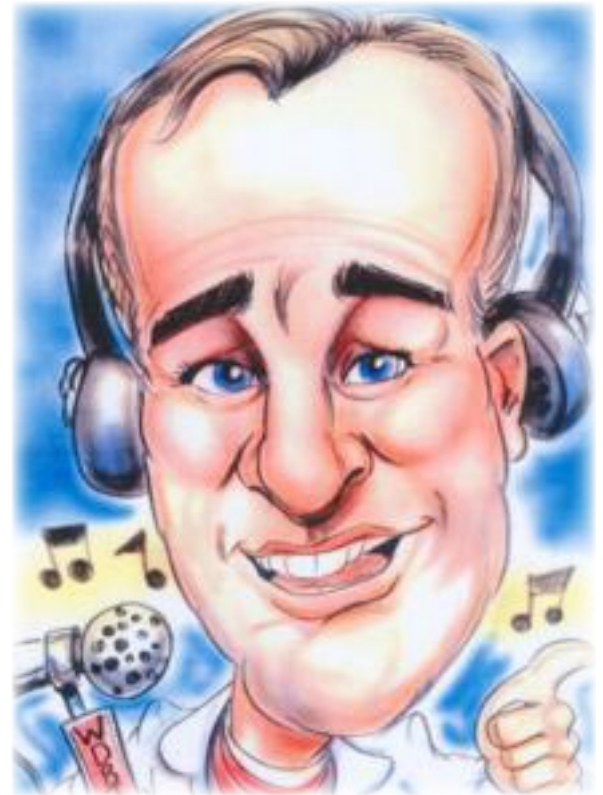
*I built the caboose in 1988, while I still had the facility to do so. I have been in and out of radio broadcasting in my life and when I knew I would be closing my cabinet shop, I wanted to have another avenue in which to work for myself. By having the "Party Train" I was able to entertain at car shows, grand openings, outdoor weddings and other gatherings.*

**Dennis Buehler, KG4AXH**

I have always been interested in Ham Radio. When I was 10-years-old, my grandfather went to Lafayette Radio in downtown Detroit to get me a set of code records. Leaving the store and crossing Grand River Street, he was struck by a motorcycle cop leading a funeral procession. Despite his broken hip, my grandfather was happy to tell me the records remained intact!

As time passed my interest in Ham Radio persisted, but girls and motorcycles always seemed to get in the

way. In 1963, I went into the Navy and was sent to Pensacola, Florida for communication tech radioman school. I needed 24-wpm to graduate, but at 18-wpm I developed "code inaptitude" and was dropped from school and sent aboard the aircraft carrier America, CVA-66, as a radar striker.



**Dennis Buehler, KG4AXH**

Disk Jockey and Ham

In early 1998 I decided that if I was going to get licensed I had better get going—by November I had my General Class license.

Shortly after my dad was diagnosed with cancer and my mother needed my help caring for him, I had to quit my job in order to help her. Ham Radio was my social life, I couldn't venture far from home because of my dad's health problem.

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**"So Come on, Come on  
and Do the Locomotion  
with Me."**



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# Nothing First-Personal, Good Buddies

*Intelligent Design—NOT*

**Rod Newkirk, VA3ZBB/W9BRD**

The 27-MHz Citizens Band's golden anniversary is at hand. Celebrations are expected to be muted. Veteran Hams display an inbred antipathy toward Cbers, an attitude interpreted by the latter as excessive arrogance. True, Hams are licensed to delve more seriously into the wireless art. But why would we necessarily disparage the activities of other less dedicated communications? After all, FCC dictates class distinction within Amateur Radio itself. The negative mindset goes much deeper than mere haughtiness, and with cause.

When diathermy was discarded as medical therapy in the late 1940s, its 11-meter spectrum allocation (for inadvertent radiation) was inherited by Hams. Relaxed standards made the band special fun. For one thing, MCW was permitted. A fully modulated Morse kilowatt could produce the most power output legally possible in the Amateur service. Those mammoth signals were glorious. However, with the adjacent 10-meter band jumping with easy DX, 11 never really attracted much of a following.

In the mid-'50s Washington decided to make available a simple short-range QRP service to the public for general use. The lightly used 27-MHz Ham band was reallocated for same; no great loss to our hobby and barely noticed. Basic CB regulations stipulated channelized AM, five watts maximum, no homemade haywire, antenna size restricted. Licenses were issued with cumbersome callsigns until the FCC's administrative load rapidly grew too big to handle. The concept looked like a winner. Except that the ivory tower engineers neglected to factor in the ionosphere.

DX: Limited only by multilayers of skip QRM, propagation often enabled coast-to-coast contacts via handhelds. At the same time, Ham flea markets were a growing source of powerful AM transmitters rendered useless by TVI. Oscillator crystal replacement was the only conversion required. One such leaky monster showed up in a Chicago suburb near W9BRD. Until the clown was run out of the

neighborhood, Hams were blamed for his interference. FCC was totally swamped by complaints from an angry populace who comprehended no difference between Amateur Radio and CB.

Unlike our comparatively disciplined Amateur Bands, there was no 27-MHz self-policing tradition. Also, no cyberspace to help siphon off crazies. Ham publications occasionally ran Pollyanna editorials on how the CB service would be a steppingstone toward Amateur licenses. Yet it was obvious that the misused Citizen's Band was permanently derailing potential Hams. The raucous bubble ballooned to the point that vehicles were coming out of Detroit CB-equipped. Channel 19 was supposed to be an emergency assistance frequency. Lots of luck, good buddy.

This abused institution did have its humorous side. Remember the big hit song, Convoy? Ham Radio jargon is strange enough, but CB developed doggerel quite wondrous to behold. W9BRD had an erudite neighbor whose speech and grammar were normally impeccable. When he climbed into his CB-installed Cadillac he switched to a southern drawl filled with colorful expletives and his self-assigned ID—Nature Boy. It was like quiet Clark Kent donning his Superman suit.

The Citizen's Band is still loaded with hardcore devotees, especially truckers and others who make their living on the road. Used properly, it's an extremely valuable resource. Now most of its former irresponsible lunatic fringe has upgraded, or downgraded, to digital online anonymity. Nature Boy probably is doing spammed porn. ■



*"Cause we got a mighty convoy, Rockin' through the night..."*

*"Lots of luck, good buddy."*



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# Shave and a Haircut...

**Mike Dinelli, N9BOR**



Larry spotted the old J-38 straight key sitting on a shelf in his basement. It was behind a large box of vintage parts he had accumulated in the 25 years he had been licensed. The sight of the key took Larry by surprise and gave pause to remember his good friend, Rick, an SK. Larry and Rick met at Sullivan High School in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood. They joined the school's Ham Radio club and it didn't take

long before the two became inseparable.

The old key was dusty, and hesitantly, Larry reached for it. While he might have forgotten about the old key, he had not forgotten his good friend. He missed Rick and thought of him often, even though it had been over ten years since he passed.

Larry took a soft cloth and gently wiped away the dust. June, Rick's XYL, asked Larry if he would like to have any of Rick's Ham gear—before it was sold or discarded. Larry felt it was an honor to have Rick's key and gladly accepted the kind gift.

He took Rick's death hard—they talked to each other almost every day. Often, they would run into each other on the Ham bands. Both were ardent CW operators, who ended their conversations with the standard, "shave and a haircut—dit dit." Sometimes, when they spoke on the telephone, they would end their conversation with a "dit dit" and a chuckle.

Even though ten years had passed, the sight of Rick's key brought on an unexpected melancholy. It was getting late, so Larry took the key to his shack and placed it on his operating desk. He turned out the lights and went upstairs to bed.

The next day, Larry thought about his friend and the dusty old key. It was difficult for him to concentrate at work. He decided he was going to clean it and use it on the air that night.

After dinner, Larry rushed down into the shack and studied his old friend's key. The brass had developed a greenish patina from sitting unused in the damp basement. He decided to clean the key with a little soap and water, but not polish it. There was something more to this than Larry was willing to admit. An old key should never look brand new, he thought; the years add character and tell a story.

After the cleaning and a thorough drying, it was time to plug the J-38 into Larry's vintage station. Larry has a modern, high-tech station for DXing and contesting. However, this key deserved to be connected to a seasoned station—one that understood the history and significance of this special instrument.

The rig fired up with the unmistakable thud associated with big, old iron. The tubes glowed and there was a faint smell of vintage electronics. He breathed it all in. The receiver came to life with a cacophony of signals—must be some-

thing rare, he thought. However, tonight was not a night for hunting DX.

Larry's mind raced with thoughts of his departed friend. It had been months since he used his vintage station and years since he saw Rick's J-38. He reached for the VFO knob and slowly tuned to the bottom of the band listening to every station. The old rubber tuning belt skipped a bit—not to worry. The band was alive with signals—not at all like he was used to hearing at the bottom of the solar cycle. Larry remembered the first time he heard signals coming from the speaker of his then new rig. I guess this old Heathkit still has some life in it, he thought.

*"...this old  
Heathkit still  
has some life  
in it..."*

Illustration by:  
Dick Sylvan, W9CBT



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# Homebrew QSL Cards

**Chris Walter, KI4CBF**

Several Hams told me they liked my QSL cards and asked where I had them printed. Actually, I make the cards myself and here is how I do it.

To create the cards I use a word-processing program, in my case, WordPerfect II. After checking what size card fits in a 3 5/8" X 6 1/2" envelope, I bought a ream of 110# cardstock from Office Max and had them cut it to those dimensions. You get a ton of blank cards from a ream.

For the page format, I selected A6 (4.1" X 5.8") for the paper size in landscape mode. This size is different from my cards due to WordPerfect's limitations, so I used margin controls to set up the card. My margins are: left, 0.12"; right, 0.4"; top, 0.75"; and bottom, 0.06". It took some experimenting to get these correct for the card.

I made a table of one row and three columns for the top of the card where my callsign and a U.S. flag are in the first cell; "confirming two-way QSO with" is in the second cell; and my contact's call in the third cell. I usually insert, fill and put a border around the last cell with the contact's callsign.

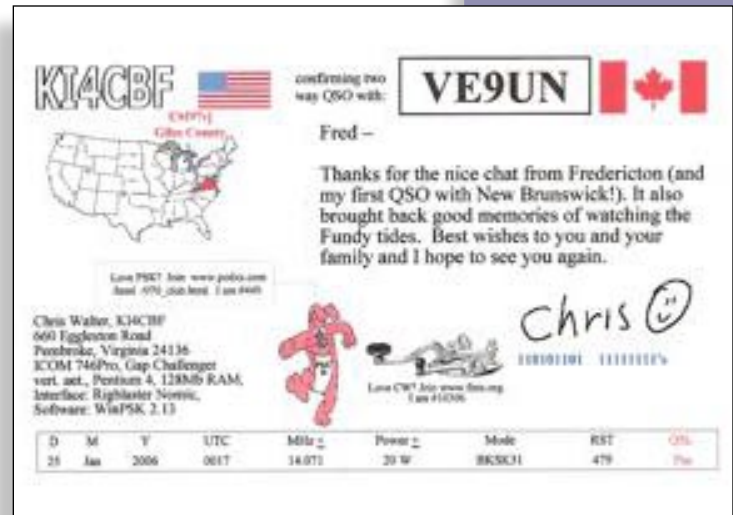
For DX QSOs, I put their nation's flag from the CIA World Factbook (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/docs/flagsoftheworld.html>) in the cell with their call. In the sample card, I added cell lines so you can see them. Normally, I have faint lines for the QSO's call cell.

For the U.S. and Virginia maps, I Googled and downloaded them and then edited using WordPerfect's graphics toolbar.

For my remarks, I made a table with one row and one column, sized the font and reduced line spacing to fit it all in. I then removed the table's lines. See the sample QSO.

Personal information was put into text boxes. Here is one with lines around it to better illustrate: The last part is just a table of two rows and nine columns for date, time, frequency, RST, etc. The upper and lower borders inside the table were changed so they do not appear. There is a separate column for each entry.

When I make a new card to send, I just type over the information in the previous QSO's card. For me, it is easier to type out the information than write it by hand, and the other Ham can read it! The only things that change are the other Ham's call, remarks, date (maybe), UTC, frequency, RST and mode. ■



**KI4CBF's Handiwork**

## WB8RCR's QSL Maker

John McDonough, WB8RCR, offers a stand-alone program to create your own QSL cards. It's appropriately called, QSL Maker and is available free for Windows PC users.

While not as flexible as a page layout program, QSL Maker is a great way to get some cards out in a hurry.

You can download QSL Maker at:  
<http://www.hfradio.org/wb8rcr/>

John says, "Please don't send money. Every now and then someone sends some money and I have no idea what to do with it."

Nice guy!



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He was anxious to make a contact—a real connection, using his friend's key. He tuned slowly looking for a CQ and stopped at 7.040 to take a swig of coffee. It was the only clear spot he heard on the band. The thought of Rick, the old key and the memories of times past, choked him up. He took another sip from his MFJ coffee mug and sat back in his chair.

Deep in the background he heard a weak station tuning up. The signal's strength increased a little, but its note fluttered like DX making its way over the pole. The station called CQ, 3 x 3, so Larry jumped up and carefully adjusted the old green rig. The fist sounded familiar, but he couldn't make out the callsign.

Larry grabbed the J-38 and carefully sent, "QRZ DE W9XXX?" It had been awhile since he used a straight key and he knew his sending was rusty. After a pause, the station answered, "VY NICE TO CU AGN LARRY - UR 449 ES NAME HR IS RICK - HW? BK"

It hit Larry like a jolt from a HV plate cap. His heart pounded, even though he knew his mind or someone was playing tricks on him. He recognized the fist as that of his old pal Rick, gone SK ten years earlier. Could it be? Hands shaking, he sent, "TNX RICK UR ALSO 449 WID QSB - QTH CHICAGO CHICAGO - OP IS LARRY LARRY - QSB MISSED YOUR CALL? DE W9XXX K."

The station answered back, "NICE TO HR MY OLD J38 AGN - SRI LARRY MUST QRT - HPE CU AGN SN - U DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I MISSED U - 73 ES GB SK W9XXX DE W9YYY DIT DIT."

Larry couldn't believe what he was copying. Was someone playing a trick on him? Did he say it was nice to hear HIS J-38 again? Larry grabbed the key and sent, "RICK DON'T QRT - IS THAT U? PSE AGN? DE W9XXX K." But, there was no answer. Larry tuned up and down the band a little, but heard nothing. In fact, the entire band now appeared to be dead—all those strong signals had vanished and there were only a few weak ones remaining.

With a shaking hand Larry wiped a tear from his cheek. He always thought of himself as a man of science—not someone who believed in the paranormal or ghosts. He tried to process what had just occurred. He entered the contact in his paper logbook and after about twenty minutes, turned off the old rig and silently mouthed "dit dit." He stood up, wobbled a bit, and went upstairs.

Helen, Larry's XYL, was putting away the dinner dishes and noticed something was wrong. "You all right?" she asked. "Yes, but please sit down. I have something to tell you." ■

#### CONTINUED - PARTY TRAIN FROM PAGE 2

I am very active in Ham Radio—12,560 contacts and growing. I enjoy DX and have confirmed contacts with China, Russia, Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, all of South America and most of Africa with the exception of Chad, Sudan, Zaire and Tunisia.

I spend a lot of time helping fellow Hams with antenna installations and with the quality of their audio. I have made many great friends and should have gotten my license years earlier than I did.

My rig is an Icom IC-718 with dipoles for 17-, 20- and 40-meters and an A-99 vertical on 10-meters. It makes me feel good when ops ask me what type of beam I'm running—they can't believe it's only a dipole at 45 feet. ■

## Ham Quips

AMERICAN GOTHIC VERTICAL



NO MORE ANTENNAS ON THE ROOF, DICK!  
IT'S STILL LEAKING FROM THE LAST ONE.



Inside the KG4AXH  
Party Train



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K9YA Telegraph

The code is not a new language. It is the language you already know, "written" in sound patterns instead of patterns of ink on paper—it is your own language. You will learn to "read" by ear the language you already read so well by eye.

This is lesson one, it is most important always to think of it this way: EVERY CODE LETTER, NUMBER AND SYMBOL IS A UNIQUE PATTERN OF SOUND.

Psychology teaches us that when we start to learn something new, if we think of it as being EASY, it will be easy. The best teachers never hint or suggest that there is anything hard about it, and their students learn it quickly, usually within a week or two. They also make learning it FUN. We learn much faster that way; so think of learning it as fun, enjoyable. If you want to learn it, you can.

Our FOUNDATION is the alphabet, numbers and punctuation marks. Learn these SOUND PATTERNS so well that when, for example, you hear "dahdahdit" you immediately recognize it is "G." This is basic, but don't stop there. Code is to communicate: and we don't talk in letters, but in words. Words are our smallest thinking units. Even while we are still learning to master the alphabet we can begin to recognize small common words, such as "the" and "of" as words when we hear them.

And:

1. Your ATTITUDE toward learning is crucially important: It is essential PREPARATION for success.

- Have a "CAN-DO-IT" attitude, because it is easy to learn. If you don't tell people that learning the code is hard, it won't be. If you really want to learn it, you can. Approach it as if it were impossible to fail. Motivate yourself.
- Keep a RELAXED ATMOSPHERE, free of tension, pressure, and any sense of hurry and anxiety.
- ENJOY the learning process itself.
- PICTURE YOURSELF BEING SUCCESSFUL.  
Comments: Whenever we think of anything as

"hard," it creates a stumbling block, and that tends to discourage us. Most people find that competition during the initial stages hinders learning. In actual reading and copying code, any anxiety or undue concern about "getting it all," or too intense interest in what is being received, or trying to out-guess what is coming next, can cause us to miss out some of what follows. People who do things well do not struggle with them. "Relaxed receptiveness" works.

Reviewing some of its 33 chapters, plus appendices, reveals the truly comprehensive nature of *The Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy*.

Chapter 1 How to Go About it Efficiently

Chapter 2 Principles of Skill Building and Attitudes for Success

Chapter 3 Part I: Laying the Foundation  
Part II: Laying the Foundation  
Part III: Laying the Foundation

Chapter 4 Building the First Floor on a Solid Foundation

Chapter 5 Practice To Gain Proficiency

Chapter 6 How Fast? The Wrong Question—How Well!

Chapter 7 Listening or "Reading"

Chapter 8 Copying—Getting it Written Down

Chapter 9 Sending and the "Straight" Key - Part I  
Sending and the "Straight" Key - Part II

Chapter 10 Other Keying Devices and Their Use

Chapter 11 Further Development of Skills

Chapter 12 How Long Will It Take To Learn?

Chapter 13 The Role of Memory in Telegraphy

Chapter 14 The "Ear"

Chapter 15 Timing

Chapter 16 Other Methods

Chapter 17 Common Errors and What to Do about Them

The fifth revised edition of *The Art and Skill of Radio-Telegraphy* is planned for a 2006 release. Watch the FISTS Web site (<http://www.fists.org>) and the *K9YA Telegraph* for availability and additional information. ■

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