



A CW ‘Shaggy Dog Story’ to Keep On Hand

The following account is adapted from a yarn spun by K9STP (SK) — One of those gifted CW individuals and a fine elmer. – Ed.

Adapted by Randall Noon, KCØCCR

I had been looking forward to Saturday afternoon all week, and now here it was. Outside the weather was overcast, chilly and uninviting. Inside there was a pot of good coffee and the shack was cozy.

To go with the java steaming in a 2007 Dayton Hamvention® mug, there was a well-stacked ham sandwich, neatly cut into triangular halves, perched on a paper plate imprinted with clown faces.

The computer was a few feet away. The callsign look-up site QRZ.COM was on the screen. The power supply indicators were all lit. The antenna tuner was set. Static hissed from the headphones.

As Joliet Jake might have said to his brother Elwood: *The band is open, we got 5 watts of power, half a pot of joe, it’s overcast . . . and we’re wearing sunglasses. Hit it.* < <http://bit.ly/IABoTB> >.

The mission this afternoon, however, was not to save the *Saint Helen of the Blessed Shroud Orphanage* in Calumet City < <http://bit.ly/iN1KO4> >. It was to work slow-speed CW operators in the 7.100 to 7.125 MHz portion of 40 meters, the old Novice CW subband.

While Technician Class operators and the small remnant of Novice Class operators are now permitted to use CW from 7.025 to 7.125 MHz on 40 meters, some operators just learning CW prefer to work the 7.100 to 7.125 MHz portion of the band.

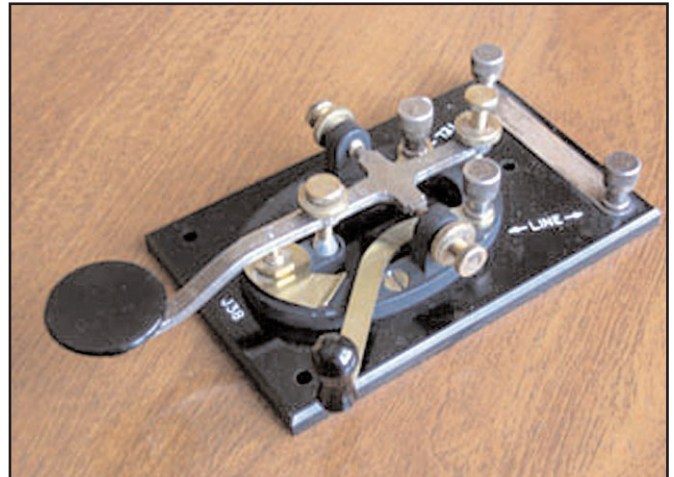
There are a several reasons why this is so. Not many high-speed CW operators frequent this area of the band. They tend to stalk DX at the low end of the band and lay siege in frenzied pileups until their QSL ransom demands are met. Consequently, the intimidation factor in the higher part of the band is low.

Forty-meters is open during the day and often stays open late into the evening. This is a plus for operators with less expensive CW mono-band transceivers who can’t change bands.

Along with that, a 40-meter, half-wave wire dipole is easy to construct, is not overly long, perhaps 66 feet or less in total length, and doubles for use on 15-meters on the third harmonic. In short, all amateur license holders can work this part of 40 meters with simple, inexpensive equipment.

However, the primary reason slow-speed CW operators frequent this part of the 40-meter band is that it still retains its traditional Novice subband character. A lot of straight key operators and easy-going, rag-chewers enjoy the relaxed CW speeds usually found here, which is just above the RTTY trills and just below the phone subband where some operators endlessly discuss who had the frequency first.

This old Novice subband reminds me of the last lines spoken at the end of each *Beverly Hillbillies* television show: “Set



“Because the response was admirably concise, it did not take long even at 5 to 7 wpm. As I looked at my stenographer’s pad, I noted what the other operator did not say. . . .” (Courtesy of KCØCCR)

a spell; take your shoes off; y’all come back now, y’hear?” < <http://bit.ly/kEEWb6> >.

So, not only is this a no-pressure, relaxed place in the 40-meter band to do CW, but I also gratefully recall how nice it was when operators were patient with me when I was first learning my way around a key.

So, true to the FISTS credos, *Accuracy transcends speed*, and *When you’ve worked a FISTS, you’ve worked a friend*, I had plans to spend the whole afternoon listening for slow CQs and spending whatever time it took to complete some relaxed QSOs.

In less than one sip of coffee I heard a slow, tentative CQ on 7.145 MHz

CQ CQ CQ DE KF8### KF8### KF8### K

The CQ call was being sent at perhaps 5 to 7 wpm and the callsign was a group D, 2 x 3, which is most likely a Technician Class operator in this part of 40 meters. I matched my speed to the speed of the CQ as best as I could and promptly responded.

KF8### DE KCØCCR KCØCCR KN

There was a short pause. Then the following response came over.

KCØCCR DE KF8### TXS OM. RST 569 569. OP JOE JOE. QTH ROSS ROSS, OH OH. HW? -- KCØCCR DE KF8### K

Because the response was admirably concise, it did not take long even at 5 to 7 wpm. As I looked at my stenographer's pad, I noted what KF8### did *not* say.

He *didn't* say, "Your RST is 569 569," "My name is Joe Joe," "My QTH is Ross Ross, Ohio Ohio," or "How is my signal?" If he had, the length of his transmission time would have easily doubled or tripled.

KF8###'s fist was clean and well-spaced. The important contact information

was politely repeated twice. Everything needed for a confirmed QSO was there in his first reply in case the band mysteriously dropped, as it sometimes does.

While the total words-per-minute sending rate was perhaps five to seven, I noticed that the individual character speed was closer to 18 wpm. This is the usual technique when a person learns code by the Farnsworth Method, where a person learns CW characters at about 18 wpm, but spaces the characters apart such

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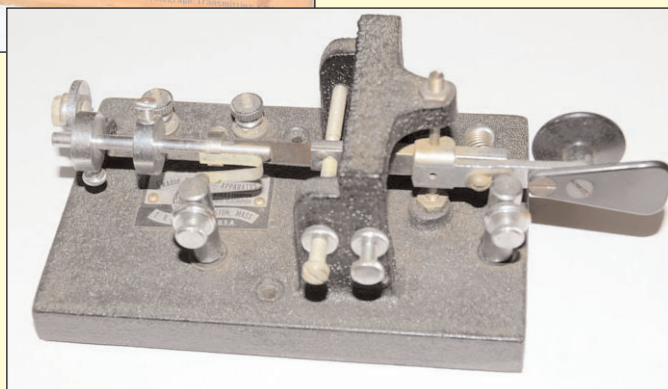
"I did a *double take* when I turned to page 42 of the April 2011 *WorldRadio Online*," writes **Alfred Watson, WG1D**, of Sturbridge, Massachusetts.

"What struck me at first glance was the similarity of the W6CLF J-36 Bug and the old bug I have. However, mine is an old Mac Key made by the T. R. McElroy Co.

"In addition to the bug, I even have the original box it came in, showing the original price of \$5.95 and the labeling on the end of the box."

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On CW, WG1D says he prefers a double-paddle electronic keyer. If you'd like to contact him, write: < ahwatson@charter.net >. (Photographs courtesy of WG1D)



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that the overall sending rate is perhaps 5 wpm in the beginning.

As aural recognition of the characters improves with practice, the spaces between characters naturally close and the overall sending speed increases without having to change the sound of the characters as they were first learned.

It is common that CW beginners often send faster than they can receive. When transmitting, characters are mentally matched to CW sounds, which are then executed by the hand almost as soon as the mental match has been made. When receiving, however, a person has to hear the CW, recognize the CW pattern and then mentally match that pattern to the correct character. This is why when CW tests were required, a person usually only had to receive CW. It was presumed that if a person could receive CW at 5, 13 or 20 wpm, he or she could also send at those speeds.

On the other hand, it is also common that a practiced CW operator using a straight key often can receive faster than he or she can send. With practice, a CW operator stops performing the intermediate mental translation steps from sound to character. The sound *is* the character. No translation thought process is needed. Consequently, the operator can receive faster than he or she can send.

With all that in mind and suspecting that the ink on KF8###'s license had been dry for a while, I took a chance, slightly pushed up the speed to 9 or 10 wpm, and sent the following:

KF8### DE KCØCCR -- R SOLID JOE. RST 589 589 SUM QRN. QTH HIAWATHA HIAWATHA, KS KS. OP RANDY RANDY. FISTS 6588 6588. UR SIG FB. RIG? -- KF8### DE KCØCCR K

There was a slightly-longer pause at the other end this time. Then the following came over at about 13 wpm:

KCØCCR DE KF8### -- R SOLID RANDY. SRI NO FISTS. FT-897D, 100 W, MFJ 941E, FULL G5RV UP 30 FT ALIGNED N ES S, HIMOUND HK 705 STR KEY. LTRAIN, WNDY, 42 F. U? -- KCØCCR DE KF8### K

Again, I was impressed with the conciseness of the reply despite the fact that I had to significantly quicken the speed of my note taking. KF8###'s speed had more than doubled, yet he hadn't said PSE QRS (please send slower), or asked for anything to be repeated. This emboldened me to send the following at 15 wpm.

KF8### DE KCØCCR -- R JOE.
MFJ 9040, 5 W, MFJ 971, 40 M
HORZ ZEPP UP 25 FT, AMECO K1
STR KEY. SKIES GRAY ES 38 F.
GUD DAY TO WRK CW. --KF8###
DE KCØCCR K

With the usual preliminaries out of the way, KF8### didn't hesitate. His chatty reply at 18 wpm came over as soon as I had finished.

KCØCCR DE KF8### -- R
RANDY. FUN QRP SETUP U HV.
USE FT-817 ES BUDDIPOLE WHEN
PORT. WISH WX NICER TODAY
FOR PORT OPS. WL GET FIST NM
AT DAYTON THIS YR. GOING TO
DAYTON? NICE ST PARK FOR
CAMPNG NOT FAR FRM DAYTON
ES NOT FULL THEN, HUESTON
WOODS. --
KCØCCR DE KF8### K

I was scribbling as fast as I could. What once had been well formed cursive letters now looked like Gregg's short-hand squiggles across the page. While there have been a few gifted individuals who can pound out 35 wpm with a hand key, most brass pounders top out at about 22 to 25 wpm. I am in the latter category. I looked over my note pad and began my CW riposte at maybe 20 wpm.

KF8### DE KCØCCR -- STILL
SOLID JOE. WL CHECK OUT PARK.
C, DAYTON THIS YR. WL CAMP
AND WK PORT. MEET FOR LUNCH
IN HALL WHERE CHOC CHEESE-
CAKE ON A STICK SOLD? --
KF8### DE KCØCCR K

As I finished my message, my hand quickly shifted from the key to the pencil like a quick draw artist. With no break between my last character and KF8###'s first, the following came over at about 22 wpm.

KCØCCR DE KF8### -- SOLID
RANDY. AS

"Ok," I thought, "perhaps KF8### has max'ed out and the "AS" signifies that he needs a breather." However, no sooner had that thought crossed from one ear to the other, when KF8### came back over the air at a brisk 24 wpm.

KCØCCR DE KF8### -- SRI FER
AS. CHNGED TO RT HAND.

Spice Up Your CW Social Life – Attend a QSO Party

QSO parties are fun and great way to work CW. Here is a list of some of the upcoming QSO parties — some of which are CW only. Check out the requirements on the Web sites if you plan to submit an entry.

Even if you don't enter, work a few of the contesters to help out their scores. (To determine contest periods in these listings applicable to your local time or to UTC, visit the TimeZone Converter at: < <http://bit.ly/m0gxu6> >. – Ed.)

U.S. Counties QSO Party

July 30, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Central time), and July 31, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Central time). Operate on 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters: < <http://bit.ly/j08JEp> >.

NCCC Sprint Ladder

August 5, 9:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. (Central time). That's right, just 30 minutes of fun. Operate on 160, 80, 40 and 20 meters: < <http://bit.ly/kXTDy1> >.

North American QSO CW Party


August 6, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. (Central time). Operate 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 meters: < <http://bit.ly/jv0ox6> >.

Maryland-DC QSO Party

August 13, noon to midnight (Eastern time); and August 14, noon to 8 p.m. (Eastern time). There is a premium for CW QSOs. < <http://bit.ly/ig2dru> >.

Kansas QSO Party

August 27, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (Central time) and August 28, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Central time). Kansas is celebrating 150 years of clear skies, roaming buffalo, Dorothy and Toto: < <http://bit.ly/mktWqZ> >.



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