



# How Telegraphers Are Made

By T. R. McELROY, World's Fastest Telegrapher

## PART II.

**B**LURP! Blurp! Blurpity-blop! Did'ja ever notice the melodious thirst-provoking musicale provided by an oil bottle as it blops out, bit by bit, the oil feed to a kitchen range burner? Y'wanna, sometime. It's great! Now what's that got to do with radio, a fellow might wonder. Well, gents, I'll tell you.

I was sitting in my own radio shack last night, tipping over a few milkshakes (?) with some pals of mine and flipping the dials to hear WSE and WAG and WIM turning out nice stuff. The shack is adjacent to the kitchen. And I was trying to synchronize my own gurgling of Jamieson's Old Scotch (a grade A milk) with the delightful music of the oil bottle.

One of the dames in the shack who probably would make Webster go green with envy at her vocabulary, says to me: "Mac, that blurble is for all the world typical of the musical prelude to one of your gymnastical regurgitational performances." Well, sir, I wiped superfluous suds with the back of my hand and beamed pleasantly upon the little gal and thanked her for the compliment. I thought she was trying to tell me what a great acrobat I might be! We won't discuss that particular episode any further. Suffice to say she explained in my own language what she meant. But here is where it fits into the radio picture.

'Sfunny thing how a fellow will duck a job day after day and week after week, just putting it off through lack of ambition to get started. Here I had a job that I'd promised to do, in trying to tell the gang who read "RADIO" something of my ideas as to making code work easier.

I can't remember exactly where I left off last month, so I can't hope to make this what the telegraph editor might call a "running story". I had a copy of "RADIO", but I left it with a friend of mine, Jimmy, who runs a beer garden. Sometime I'd like to tell you about beer gardens. You see, I wanted to show Jimmy what a big shot I was, writing for magazines and all that, y'know. It'd positively put me on the approved cuff list.

So anyhow, I'll bust right into the subject of technique. Don't look for smooth, errorless writing. I'm no rhetorician. I'm a telegrapher and I don't pretend to be anything else. I'm telling you what experience has taught me, and not what I've studied or read somewhere. And now for the business:

There isn't a great deal that anybody can tell you about receiving. I find that the large majority of men can receive a whole lot faster than they can put the stuff down. Although there isn't an excuse in the world for that. You can pick up a good second-hand typewriter at any pawn shop for five or ten bucks, and many a guy spends that on inconsequentials such as rent, light, heat, or food. How much more important to get a mill "the better to enjoy your hobby, my dears", sez Gramma Wolf! It'd oughtta take the average operator about two or three weeks to type 40 or 50 words per minute, and that's about as fast as most radio signals fly.

Don't expect to develop any real speed listening to hash. Y'gotta develop speed list-

ening to press. Never mind what any other fellow tries to tell you. Trying to copy hash will develop accuracy; but it's a lot more fun to copy plain press or plain English at 40 wpm and have a few mistakes, than to copy headache provoking junk at 25 or 30 and have it perfect. In a championship contest the fellows really have fun copying the stuff, because you get to following the continuity of the story. So that's that. Speaking of that reminds me of one contest I was in. A man named Joe Chaplin beat me. Swell fellow and a real American. I flopped on oranges and lemons in the contest. And would'ia believe it, to this day I positively gag on whiskey sour because it's main ingrievances (I'd like to tell you about that one sometime) are oranges and lemons. But anyhow, you see what I mean about following the story. You can't get anywhere practicing if practice is drudgery. Y'gotta enjoy it. So slip your dials some night to whatever frequency they use on Press Wireless or some other press station. Most of them work around 40 to 45 wpm. You'd be surprised how much of it you'll get and how much fun it'll be.

One vitally important point on receiving to bear in mind is to keep cool. I've seen fellows working for Consolidated Press in New York drop a whole sentence because of talking while copying, and then continue right on and a minute or two later, still copying, remember what they'd dropped and flop back the typewriter and fill in. You can all do the same. Honest, it's a cinch after you get wise to it. I remember another contest I was in and the word "hospitalization" shot through around 55 or 58 wpm. Now how the Hades is a fellow gonna grasp that at that speed? But a half minute or so later it came to me and I flopped back and filled in. You wanna try it some time just for practice.

I'll come back to that receiving business some other time. I want to tell you something about sending, before I get weary and quit writing. Now in the name of whatever gods are guardian angels of communications, will you read this carefully? I'm not a fellow who wants to boast. At least not on such abilities as may be alluded to in a nice family magazine. But I make the positive statement with every ounce of energy my big fat fingers can throw into this typewriter, that I can make any man a better sender. I don't care how good you are, or how lousy. Read this and pay attention to it and you'll immediately be better.

D'yuh remember back in the days when you went to school? Most of you are probably my own age, about 35 or 36. And in my school about 25 years ago they were teaching a new fangled writing method consisting of scrawling of queer hieroglyphics on paper by what they called a "free arm movement." Turn back the pages of your memory to those days. And see how the same thing applies to correct sending.

I can't think of anything that'll as correctly describe the two methods of sending . . . correct and incorrect! We were taught, y'remember how tiresome it was to write with fingers, and how it developed "writers' cramp". If you don't remember, ask your old gent, he'll know. And while we're on that subject just recall the prevalence of that ailment years ago as compared with the scarcity of similar complaints today. Now writers cramp—I think specialists like my old pal Candler in Chicago, call it occupa-

tional paralysis. I dunno. But anyhow "glass arm" is the same thing. Not much of it nowadays. Some young fellers might think they've got it. But like other ailments we operators hear about, you don't suspect you have it, or fear you have it. You know you've got it—when you have glass arm. And the especially sad part of it is that it is positively avoidable. The same as writer's cramp.

Take a pencil or pen and try to write with your fingers, old time style, for ten or fifteen minutes. I'll bet a cigar you'll quit with aching fingers. Now write the same stuff with the whole arm movement and if you're anything like me it'll be almost impossible to read it, but your arm and hand will be fresh as a daisy. Now try it with a key. Send ten or fifteen minutes with any ordinary key. Put the peek on your mitt and notice how with a key you've a high hump in your wrist and your fingers are down near the table on the button. Try it. Don't take my word for it. Just geev a look at your wrist. If you could look at an X-ray photograph of those tendons and muscles you'd have a mild case of the horrors to think you'd been abusing your mitt that way.

Now take that key off the table and shove a book under it, to bring the button up where it belongs, about two inches above the table. And then put it in the center of your desk about where you'd have a letter if you were going to sign it. With your elbow just off the edge of the desk. Now flop out dots and see how easy and rhythmically they flow outta your whole arm. Try it! Do it now! Take those code-mutilating keys off your desks and bring them up high where they belong and put them on the desk in front of you where they belong. And see the difference. This thing is a positive phobia with me. I go nuts when I hear lousy sending, because I know that it isn't the op's fault. They just don't sell straight keys that are made right.

Now if you've read that paragraph and if you've done what I've told you to do, you'll find that within two or three nights you can send better stuff than you ever dreamed you could send. I mean it! On the level! Try it, and be a good enough sport to write me and let me know.

And now for the semi-automatics. Oooh! Those double distilled, horrifying code-desecrators. And yet, correctly designed and adjusted, they can be the greatest little plaything in your radio shack. I'm talking about inanimate objects now, don't get off the theme.

The same essentials for straight key sending apply to automatics. The fibre handles must be up where they belong. Take your present automatic if you have one. Slide a book under it. Get those paddles about 2½ to 3 inches above the table where they belong. Take a look at your wrist. You'll see it runs smoothly straight. Now take the book from under the automatic and put your fingers on paddles as you ordinarily do. Look at the hump formed by your wrist. Just try to imagine slapping some bummy rummy across the schnozzle with your wrist cramped. You can't do it!

There is only one correct method of sending, on an automatic. You've got to slap the paddle with your thumb, actuated by your whole arm, to make dots. And you've got to slap it over to the dash side with your whole arm, the index finger and large

(Continued on page 35)



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**How Telegraphers Are Made**

(Continued from page 24)

finger hitting the paddle. Now there isn't any use talking about that or arguing. There is only one correct way and anybody who thinks differently is nertz. You've got to slap those dashes over just exactly as though you were slapping your mother-in-law . . . with the wrist straight up and down and the index finger and large finger hitting the paddles, with a full arm movement.

Try it! Put that automatic on the desk in front of you where it belongs, about where a letter would be if you were gonna sign it. It'll be somewhere around 12 inches in on the desk directly in front of you. Your arm diagonally across the desk with the fingers resting on the paddle and the elbow just off the desk. And the hand up and down. Keep your wrist off the table. You send with your whole arm.

Do what I'm telling you. Just try it. It won't cost anything. If you could only realize how easy it is to be really good at this code racket, you'd go wild over it.

And now I find that my "inspiration" is exhausted. Oh these phoney false bottom bottles! I'll breathe a little prayer (oh, and is it strong) onto the sheet and yank it outta this mill where I sill have some semblance of control over my fingers. I often wonder how many other fellows thank their lucky stars for a knowledge of touch typing which is so vitally necessary in writing when your eyes become bleared!

More next month.

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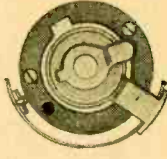
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