



CW Part 2 by Mardy Eedson, VE3QEE

In the CW Part 1 , I outlined how my interest in CW began. I hope you were able to read about SKCC at <<https://www.skccgroup.com>>.

Strangely, a lot of hams who don't use CW, do own a key, or a collection of keys. Why is that?

The key symbolizes our connection to the early days of amateur radio when much of the communication was accomplished using dots and dashes. You can still use Morse code. Just check out the lower frequencies on any band by spinning the dial with the radio set in CW mode. Chances are you will hear a conversation going on. It is a well known fact that CW signals get through when conditions are not ideal. This is true because the signal is narrow, say 50 to 100 Hz wide, which means all the transmitting power is concentrated. The interrupted sine wave being transmitted arrives at the receiver relatively undistorted, compared to AM and SSB modes. This means it is easier to copy. Morse code removes accents inherent in voice transmissions. In fact, CW can strip the accent from a Scotsman! An "A" sounds like "A" dit dah.

The key can be a status symbol with bragging rights and often a story to tell. Keys come in a variety of shapes and sizes. You can own a very old one or an unusual one or an expensive one. They tend to hold their value because there is not much that can go wrong with a key short of dropping it. If they get grimy with age, Keys can be cleaned and be restored with TLC. And because keys are passive components they can be used almost indefinitely without "using them up".

Keys are plentiful. At almost every amateur radio fleamarket, and on the internet, keys are offered for sale. If you need to come home with a "treasure" the key is a good item to pick up because it won't lose its value and you can fix it up, use it, put it on display, or sell it to another ham who needs a key. Can you just imagine the total amount cash a single J38 in good condition might have earned over the years since 1945 by being bought and sold over and over within the ham community? There is probably one selling right now for many times the original price new.

At the time of writing this article photos of a couple of my keys are posted on my QRZ page.

Since becoming active with the SKCC group I am up to around 700 different SKCC contacts. This is still many contacts away from earning the ultimate "Senator" designation, which has been one of my goals. However, along the way I have picked up the Triple Key



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Award for making 100 contacts with each type of manual key -- 100 with a straight key, 100 with a bug, and 100 with a cootie or sideswiper.

Becoming "Senator" will probably not be the end, because my adventures within the amateur hobby are constantly evolving. In a future part, CW Part 3, I plan to tell about my experience with the CW Ops group and about taking a course with the CW Ops Academy. In the mean time, I just saw a Zoom presentation about POTA (Parks On The Air) given at the May HARC meeting on Zoom. It was a very informative and inspirational presentation by Larry VE3LBI and Dave VA3CP. Who knows where this hobby will be leading hunters and activators next?

Hi hi (di-di-di-di di-dit, di-di-di-di di-dit). Note: in Morse code "hi hi" actually sounds like laughing.

