

# The Texan

Newsletter of the Texas NTS CW Net (TEX)

**\*\* See "TSN Corner" on Last Page \*\***

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## Hurricane Ike

As you may recall from last month's newsletter, we were giving thanks that a major hurricane (Gustav) had spared the Texas coast. Not so lucky this month as Hurricane Ike spread major devastation through the Galveston / Houston area. Both Charlie, W5GKH, and Ken, K5RG, were impacted, both having had to evacuate prior to the storm. Both lost power for several days. Charlie reported that his power had returned about 3 days later, but it was an entire week before Ken again had commercial power.

The following narrative was received from Ken, describing his battle with Ike. My worst fears for his station did come to pass – the first thing I thought about when I saw that Ike was going to hit Houston was the welfare of his magnificent 40 meter beam (recall a previous newsletter where we showed a picture of a crane mounting it atop his tower). Sadly, it did not survive, as you will see from the pictures Ken sent. Here is his narrative:



Where do we start - well first off we were lucky. On Thursday we had boarded up the house and had done just about everything one could do on the front side - all with the intent of staying put. Our plan has always been based on departing the area for Cat 3 and 4 storms. But with all the events Friday morning showing the Galveston sea wall being topped with Ike still 15 hours away, Camille convinced Ken to leave, so we headed up to the west side of town around 12 Noon to stay with Camille's brother Dick. We were convinced that we were going to be flooded with the storm surge predicted to

be as much as 20 feet. But Ike continued its drift to the east, which spared us the really dirty side of the storm, which as it turned out came right up Galveston Bay. The reported final surge was 12 to 15 feet (9 feet at the entrance to Clear Lake), and since we are 17 feet above sea level, no water was ever reported near our subdivision. They ended up calling Ike a strong Cat 2 storm, but with Cat 4 surge since it was so awfully big.

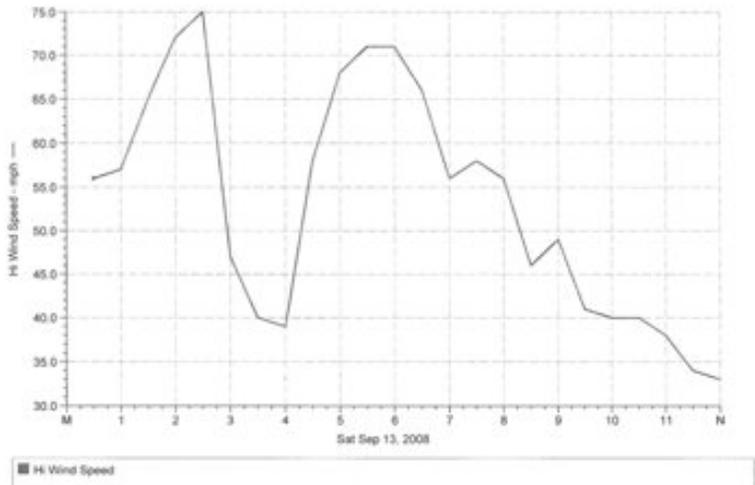
The radio tower and 3 of the 4 antennas (40 Meter Zepp, 80 Meter Delta Loop, VHF/UHF Beam) made it without a problem, but the big 3-element 40 meter beam is no longer, as you can see from the picture. The end elements kinda survived since they have phillystran support wires although they almost became vertically polarized!! The mast slipped in the rotator brackets about 30 degrees. It also looks like the element brackets on the antenna boom have been bent. The driven element came apart and one half of it somehow wrapped itself in the 80 meter delta loop (to the left of the tower in the picture). I had a new parasitic element on 80 meters for a few days. On the 80 M delta loop, the end wires cut deeply into the center insulator and the springs that I use on 40 M have completely sprung.



Also shown is a picture of the generator that made the 7 days without electricity bearable. The last time I went thru one of these hurricanes, I swore I would have air conditioning so two years ago I purchased a 15 KW generator and had the house wired when I built it. The generator worked out OK, but it got a little tense when my 3 day supply of gasoline got low with most of the gas stations without electricity, thus no gasoline. I did just drive past a station that had gotten power, so I didn't have to wait the six hours it was taking at the one station in the area that did have electricity. I had always counted on the cars as a

reserve but found out rather quickly that you can no longer siphon gas from the new ones since the gas tanks have restrictors in the fill line. The 1981 Porsche (a garage queen) had been recently filled so I was able to get 15 gallons out of it!!

All of Houston ended up without power and 7 days later, of the people who lost power, 50% of those have now got it back. The family member that probably took the biggest hit, Aunt Dee, who lives 125 miles north of Houston had a pine tree fall on her car. So Houston took a hit, it smelled like a lumber yard when we returned - but all of this is insignificant compared to Galveston. It breaks our heart to see what they are experiencing. So it has been another great story but one that could, for us, have been a lot worse, especially if the storm had come in further to the west.



Also shown here is a wind plot from the weather station whose anemometer is at the 60 foot level on the tower. The storm came right up Galveston Bay; we live about 1000 yards from Clear Lake that connects to the Bay. The plot starts at 12 Midnight and shows a peak measured wind of 75 MPH on the front side, which blew from the North. As the eye passed over at 4 AM, the winds died down to 40 MPH and the winds shifted to the west and eventually settled to the southwest. It was the back side of the storm that did the most

damage according to the neighbors that remained. Even though the peak wind was slightly less at 70 MPH, it was above 55 MPH for 150 minutes (from 4:30 AM to 7 AM). Other plots show a peak rain rate of 14 inches per hour that coincided exactly with the front side of the storm. Total rainfall at K5RG was just under 8 inches, not much for a hurricane.

So that is the entire report complete with pictures. 73, Ken K5RG

Charlie, W5GKH, also reported on the 16<sup>th</sup>: We had power restored about 3:30 this afternoon, but about two-thirds of the town is still in the dark. I was able to save the stuff in my freezer and refrigerator with the generator. The cool front helped, too. 73, Charlie

Bert, AC5Z, was also impacted. Only some relatively minor wind damage to trees. Antennas survived OK. He sent in a report from his area indicating his generator worked fine when power was lost over night.

It could have been a lot worse. We're all thankful that Ken, Charlie, and Bert made it through OK. Note that we did not have a great deal of health and welfare traffic in the aftermath of the hurricane. Most of that appeared to be handled on SSB and digital links.

### **Mexican SSB QRM and PAN Frequency Change**

You may have noticed that the SSB QRM from the Mexican fixed stations (not hams) has started up again. This is particularly bothersome for late TEX. They seem to be operating on 3551.12 using Upper Sideband, so their signal goes all the way up to 3554 or so. They are apparently using high power, since they are also bothering the Colorado and even the Pacific Coast stations on PAN if they are still on at 10:30.

I previously sent out an E-Mail asking NCS stations to move to 3550 if the QRM was there at late TEX time. I have since tried 3550.5 with some success. Please let me know what you observe at your QTH regarding the SSB signals and whether moving to 3550.5 is adequate to avoid their overriding TEX. My receiver may be narrower (I routinely use the 150 Hz filter setting on TEX), so if your receiver is wider, just moving down a little may not be enough.

Note that the PAN manager, Rob, K6YR, has officially moved PAN back to 3552 now. However, their alternate frequency is 3557 if the SSB QRM is on. Late TEX NCS stations please be sure to close the net, or move down to 3549, by 10:30 so we do not bother the PAN stations.

### **Long Skip on Late TEX**

A couple nights this past month saw long skip conditions on late TEX. One night in particular I could not copy either Sam, W5CU, or Charlie, W5GKH, from the Dallas area. Both were skipping right over me, although they could hear each other just fine. Late TEX NCS stations are reminded to always ask for another station, ideally located the furthest from you, to call for QNI just in case the band is long. Of course, that would not have helped me on that particular night. Fortunately, the band appears to be back to "normal" once again, but it could recur any time now that we are into the fall / winter seasons.

## **W1NJM Saga**

Thanks to Sis, WD8DIN, the editor of the "Traffic Call" newsletter of the Hit and Bounce Net (HBN – 0730 CT, 7042 KHz), for passing along George Hart's saga of the "early days". Here's Part 18 of George Hart's recollections. Geo suffers the trials of a station op at W8YA.

### **RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OLD HAM**

A journalistic history of the life and times in Amateur Radio of George Hart, W1NJM, by George Hart, W1NJM. Chapter 18.

### **PENN STATE AND SOME OF THE HI-JINKS THAT OCCURRED AT W8YA**

I have many stories to tell about my experiences at W8YA from late 1932 through most of the summer of 1938, interrupted briefly by a semester at University of Michigan in 1936-7. One, on the lighter side, was the "electric chair" designed and put into operation by Walter Hawk. In the operating room of the station building were two identical very heavy, very sturdy straight-backed wooden chairs used by whoever was operating the station. The members of the staff had become accustomed to leaning back on the two back legs of these chairs while operating or conversing.

Gil several times expressed concern that "one of these days" someone was going to lean back too far, the back legs would slip and the occupant would land on the hard wooden floor, with possible injuries. So Hawk decided to take action to discourage the habit.

He drove two spikes through the seat of the chair, hammering the heads flush with the wood of the seat. The chairs had a flange around the seat extending a few inches downward, so that the mechanism under the seat would not be visible. This mechanism consisted of a dry cell battery, a small spark coil of the type used in the ignition system of Model T Fords, and a pendulum mechanism by means of which the spark coil would be energized if anyone tilted the chair backward. Only one of the two identical chairs was so equipped. After catching a few of the staff members leaning back and getting a sharp jolt through the seat of their pants, the practice became to inspect the chair before sitting down to operate. Then Walt and one or two of his colleagues, including Gil Crossley himself, started conspiring to catch others off guard, usually by calling the intended victim into the workshop while the chairs were switched. Upon returning, the victim would sit on the wired chair, at which time the perpetrators would try to entice him to lean backward on the chair's hind legs thus setting off the spark coil.

I got caught twice. The first time was before I knew the chair was wired, after which I was careful to look before I sat. The second time was after Gil Crossley had given us a lecture about after-dark urinating off the boardwalk between the station building and the studio. There were no sanitary facilities in either building, the nearest restroom being in the power plant up the embankment and across the railroad tracks. Gil said the area between the station and the studio was beginning to smell like a barnyard and ordered the practice (indulged in only at night) stopped.

It was not only a nuisance but a little hazardous, especially after dark, to have to go all the way over to the power plant for relief, and when Gil was not present, we frequently violated the order, only going further off the boardwalk into the weeds. But this particular night Gil and

several staffers were in the workshop while I was operating and nature's call overtook me, so I had to make the trip.

While I was absent the chairs were switched. When I came back and resumed operating I found some of the staffers standing around me. When I asked what the hell.

Walter Hawk said some of the newer guys wanted to watch a real expert operating the key, and maybe I could give them a few pointers. So I tilted the chair back, knowing confidently that I had inspected it when I first came in, and got the jolt. Gil participated fully in the merriment that followed. After that I never again sat at the operating position without first inspecting the chair. But almost always when a new staff member or visitor arrived, the entire staff present tried to trick him into sitting in the electrified chair.

W8YA was involved in a lot of traffic handling in those days. In fact, traffic handling was a major part of amateur operating then, as attested by Clinton B. DeSoto in his "Two Hundred Meters and Down." As the crack CW op on the staff, I undertook much of this work. One night I came in to try to clear some traffic headed west.

Walter Hawk and Jim Faries were in the workshop grinding crystals at the time. I sat down, "fired up the rig" and, after tuning around a bit, called "CQ WEST." After repeating this several times, I finally received a call from W9YB, which I recognized as the call of the amateur radio station at Purdue University, which we had contacted many times. I explained that I had ten messages going west, and the operator at the other end said, simply, "GA" (go ahead). So I sent the ten messages, pausing after each one for his QSL (Acknowledgement of receipt). After the last message, I thanked him profusely, to which he replied, "You're quite welcome, and say George, if you want to see our station, step into the next room."

It took a moment for the import of this to sink in, then I put down the headphones and went into the workshop, where I found Walt and Jim hunched over their little crystal oscillator, convulsed with laughter.

"You bastards!" I yelled. "Didn't you even copy the messages? This caused the laughter to intensify.

COMING IN CHAPTER 19, Geo tangles with AARS.

### **TEX Mailbox:**

**Charlie, W5GKH**, sent in a copy of a couple pages from the January, 1991, "TEXan" newsletter, containing the TEX roster and net assignments. Thank you, Charlie. Interesting to note there are 55 stations listed on the roster, compared to our 40 listed in this newsletter. Calls that are still familiar today include W5GKH (was WD5GKH then), K5GM, K5KV, K5RG, W5TFB, KS5V (now W5KNN), AC5Z, and KB5W. There may be others of you who changed calls in the interim. Thanks to you "old old timers" for your continued support of TEX !

Rodney received a report from **Jay, N5PWG**, regarding activity during the aftermath of the hurricane. We are very happy to learn that Jay is back on the air. Hopefully we will again hear his great bug keying in the near future.

**Pat, KD5TXD**, has been busy again, this time compiling a history of all the hurricanes and storms that hit the Texas Coast (and her county in particular) since 1851. Pat writes:

I have attached a file with all of the hurricanes that have affected the Texas Gulf Coast since 1851. <<Note: Readers please let me know if you want a copy of this very interesting document. It is in Microsoft Word format and is about 4 MB in size – I will forward a copy to you upon request – Steve>>

As far as CW and radio go I found some interesting things from my study. The telegraph came into South Texas with the railroads. Corpus Christi didn't have a telegraph link until 1871. Storms as early as 1886 were noted to be destroying railroad tracks and uprooting telegraph poles.

The great and disastrous Galveston hurricane of 1900 was reported to the Weather Bureau in Galveston by telegraph. Those reports had come in describing the power of the storm and the damage done in Trinidad.

In Kingsville, the railroad had opened up in 1904 but the community did not get any warning about the 1916 hurricane which almost blew Kingsville away. The telegraph was here, but we didn't get the word.

It isn't until the 1906 storms that went through Velasco and Port Isabel that I found note of wireless warnings being transmitted from ships at sea to New Orleans. There are some reports of wireless warnings as early as 1905.

Radar is another interesting event. The first mention I found of radar images being made public in warnings about hurricanes was in 1957 for Audrey, a cat 4 that went in at the Texas/Louisiana border. I believe, but could not find exact dates or storms, that the military was using radar to track hurricanes as early as WWII. In 1942 a cat 1 hurricane made landfall in Galveston without any warnings. The notations I found indicated that interest was focused on WWII and this storm just happened with reports coming after it hit.

1943 had a storm, also going into Galveston, which is called the "surprise hurricane". Wartime censorship is blamed for the lack of warning on this storm. Also, this was the first storm that had reconnaissance aircraft flying into it to gather data. The data was not shared with the public. I put together a power point file with all of the Atlantic hurricane plots from 1851 to 2007. I have that timed to switch images automatically every 5 seconds. I am going to have that running at the Corpus hamfest in November.

So, I have been trying to have some fun along with being too busy. I will try to be better about being on the radio for the nets this coming month. Thanks and 73!! Pat KD5TXD

*Thank you very much Pat. It was indeed very interesting. Makes me glad that I live further north, although a few of the storms came all the way up here, from what I saw.*

## TEX Net Topics

We continue to miss some RN5 liaisons due to the Wednesday through Saturday slots being open. Please consider filling one or more of these slots as a regular or even backup station. We still have **17** open slots! Thanks to Sam, W5CU, and Rodney, W5DY, who have been filling the majority of the empty slots. Also thanks to Chuck, AA5J, who has also gone to early RN5 a few times.

### TEX CW Net Weekly Schedule

Local	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>NCS #1</b>	W5GKH	AA5J	K6JT	AC5Z	KD5TXD	AC5Z	W5GKH
Backup	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	KD5TXD	W5DY	W5DY	W5DY	W5CU
<b>NCS #2</b>	W5GKH	AA5J	KD5TXD	K6JT	<i>Open</i>	W5DY	W5GKH
Backup	K6JT	<i>Open</i>	K6JT	<i>Open</i>	K6JT	<i>Open</i>	K6JT
<b>RN5 #1</b>	W5GKH	W5CU	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	W5CU
Backup	W5DY	AA5J	W5DY	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	W5CU	W5GKH
<b>RN5 #2</b>	W5GKH	W5CU	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Open</i>	W5CU
Backup	W5DY	<i>Open</i>	W5DY	K6JT	W5DY	W5DY	W5GKH

TEX/1: 3552 at 19:00 local; TEX/2 3552 at 22:00 local

RN5/1: 3567/7045 at 19:30; RN5/2: 3567 at 21:30 local

TSN: 3552 - 19:45 local; CAN: 3552/7052 - 20:30 local; PAN: 3552/3557/7052 - 22:30 local

RN5 Backup: W5CU, W5DY, W5ESE, W5GKH, K5GM, AA5J, K6JT, K5RG

NCS Backup: W5DY, N5EL, AA5J, K6JT, KD5TXD, AC5Z

### Statistics:

Traffic count was even lower than August – only 79! We have not been getting much from W1GMF, N1IQI, or even WB5NKD. I understand that many of Pat's messages are now coming to Texas via digital links, so that may partly explain their scarcity. Not much traffic at all coming through CAN or RN5, at least for the sessions that I have observed. I note that activity in the Pacific area is considerably higher, at least for the area and region nets. We need to start generating more traffic ourselves. There does not seem to be any other way to keep things running and add a little fun in the process.

Rodney, W5DY, with 41 (68%) took top QNI for the month. Pat, KD5TXD, was second with 25 (42%) closely followed by Floyd, N5EL, with 23. Thanks to all for your support.

We had a few new visitors this past month – AC5AA, Trav, checked in from Austin; Craig, K0CMH, checked in from Missouri; Bob, W5OV, joined us one night from Sachse, not far from my QTH; and Carl, K7ZYV, checked in one night from Mississippi.

The complete list of stations and traffic / liaison totals are shown in the following table. Traffic averaged 1.3 per net session (down from 1.6 last month and barely above the 1.0 for net reports). Net time averaged 10.9 minutes per session (compared to 11.6 last month). Check-ins averaged 4.6 per session, up slightly compared to 4.5 last month.

### TEX Net Statistics (September 2008)

Call		QNI	Total	NCS	RN5	TTN	DFW	CTTN	TSN
AC5AA	Trav	1	1						
	Austin	0							
W5CDX	Wads	0	1						
*		1							
K0CMH	Craig	1	1						
	MO	0							
W5CU	Sam	13	21		10				
*		8			7				
W5DY	Rodney	18	41	4	8				
		23		2	11				
N5EL	Floyd	23	23						
*		0							
W5ESE	Scott	22	22					21	20
*		0							
W5GKH	Charlie	9	17	8	5				
*		8		8	4				
K5GM	Pete	2	2						
*		0							
W9GVW	Eric	5	6						
*		1							
KA9IKK	Bill	1	4						
		3							
W7IZ	Scott	0	1						
		1							
AA5J	Chuck	12	20	3	3		4		
*		8		3	1				
K6JT	Steve	14	44	1	2		13		
*		30		14	7		30		
KA5KLU	Doug	2	2						
*		0							
K5KV	Benny	0	1						
		1							
N5NVP	Jim	5	10						
		5							
W5OV	Bob	1	1						
*	Sachse	0							
K5RG	Ken	4	18						
*		14							
KD5TXD	Pat	16	25	5		13			
*		9		3		9			
AC5Z	Bert	9	9	9		1			
*		0							
K7ZYV	Carl	1	1						
*	MS	0							
Totals		276		60	58	23	47	21	20
				100%	97%	38%	78%	35%	33%
QTC 1		36	79						
QTC 2		43		Sessions:		60			
Time 1		385	656						
Time 2		271							

The roster, which follows, has been updated with a new station who has started checking into TEX this month (October). Please welcome Martin, WA5MS, who is located in Highland Village, near Lewisville, about 20 miles from my QTH. Note the names and QTH's for the one-time visitors are shown in the statistics table.

### TEX Roster

Call	Name	Location / Notes	Call	Name	Location / Notes
N5BA	Brian	Houston	W6LFB	Jim	Denton
W5BYQ	Earl	Houston	WA5MS	Martin	Highland Village
W5CDX	Wads	Crowley LA	# N7NET	Scott	Allen
W5CU	Sam	Edmond OK	AAØNI	Daniel	Oklahoma City OK
NV5D	Martin	Allen	KB5NJD	John	Duncanville
* W5DY	Rodney	Goliad	# N5NVP	Jim	Scott LA
N5EL	Floyd	Temple	* N5PWG	Jay	Pasadena
* W5ESE	Scott	Dripping Springs	K5RDW	RD	Vilonia AR
AA7FY	Mark	Fort Worth	K5RG	Ken	Houston
W5GKH	Charlie	West Columbia	W5ROK	Steve	Richardson (K6JT)
K5GM	Pete	Austin	KC5T	Bob	Houston
W9GVW	Eric	San Antonio	W5TFB	Jack	College Station
KA9IKK	Bill	Houston	W5TV	Tom	Nacogdoches
AA5J	Chuck	Plano	* KD5TXD	Pat	Kingsville
KJ9J	Newt	Pharr TX (winter)	AI6U	Chris	Sacramento (CA)
* K5JRN	Si	Denton	# W5UFK	Ken	College Station
K6JT	Steve	Plano	* K5UN	Lee	Leonard
KA5KLU	Doug	San Antonio	K5WQG	Eddy	Tomball
W5KNN	Ed	Bulverde (was KS5V)	# KM5YQ	David	Irving
K5KV	Benny	Star	* AC5Z	Bert	Nacogdoches (Lufkin)

# Not Capable of operating in 3600-3700 band; \* Capable of 160 meter operation

### Operating:

Richard, NF5B, has put out another issue of the "Brass Pounder's Quarterly" newsletter. You can access a copy of all issues of Richard's fine newsletter via the following link:  
<http://home.earthlink.net/~bscottmd/bpq.htm>

The newest issue, Volume II, Issue 3, has the following topics, which will be of interest to many of you:

- Editor's comments: About digital messaging – radiogram or "E-mail"
- Hurricane Gustav Operations
- Improving the listenability of your phone station: acoustic shaping
- Op Notes on Radiograms: When, where and how
- The message fair – new tricks for old dogs

Richard does a fine job and has some very good information in his newsletters. Be sure to look at the previous issues as well.

Until next month, 73, Steve

(TSN Corner appears on the next page)



## TSN Corner

Texas Slow Net (Daily) 1945 CT 3552.0 KHz

[http://www.geocities.com/scottamcmullen/Texas\\_Slow\\_Net.html](http://www.geocities.com/scottamcmullen/Texas_Slow_Net.html)

Scott McMullen W5ESE

TSN Net Manager

Net QNI was up again this month: 119 versus 111, with 13 different stations again participating. Welcome to first time participants Ross, K5RST, and Adam, N0SSS. Come back and join us as often as you can.

Here is a roster of stations that have participated in the Slow Net in recent months.

### Net Stations (QNS)

Call	Name	City	State	Call	Name	City	State
K0CMH	Craig	St. Louis	MO	K5KV	Benny	Prarieville	LA
W5DY	Rodney	Goliad	TX	WA5LOU	Lou	Kennard	TX
N5EL	Floyd	Temple	TX	WB5NKC	Arley	Oklahoma City	OK
W5ESE	Scott	Dripping Springs	TX	WB5NKD	Pat	Oklahoma City	OK
WD0ESF	Mike	Medicine Lodge	KS	N5NVP	Jim	Scott	LA
W5KCM	Randy	Watauga	TX	K5RST	Ross	Zapata	TX
AE5GT	Clint	Wimberley	TX	N0SSS	Adam	Oklauinion	TX
AA5J	Chuck	Plano	TX	KB5TCH	Carroll	Douglassville	TX
AA5JW	Carl	Stafford	TX	KD5TXD	Pat	Kingsville	TX
KD5MMM	Phil	Fentress	TX	KJ5XF	Tony	Austin	TX
				N5XGG	Joe	Colmesneil	TX



### The Straight Key Century Club

The Straight Key Century Club was established in January 2006 in the spirit of maintaining the fun of Straight Key Night all year round. The club sponsors a variety of contests and awards centered around the use of straight keys and bugs, has an email reflector, and also

publishes a downloadable monthly newsletter. Membership in the SKCC is free, and more information is available on their web site at <http://www.skccgroup.com>.

### September Activity Report

TOTAL SESSIONS 30

TOTAL CHECKINS 119

TOTAL TRAFFIC 28

BY 13 DIFFERENT STATIONS

*The telegraph key image is courtesy of FCIT*