

OMNIGRAPH DISK CODES

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In the course of acquiring the occasional Omnigraph clockwork code-practice machine, I have accumulated 34 different aluminum code disks. While I have no maker-printed copy of the code text, the disks are easily transcribed, by either playing them on an Omnigraph or "reading" the points and blunt ridges on the disks' edges as code dits and dahs.

Each disk has a designation consisting of a letter and a number ("A3," "J6," etc.) stamped into one side near the edge. A disk may be "read" with the designation side up, beginning at the edge just clockwise from the designation.

The numbers, which appear to run from 1 through 9, indicate a particular lesson. The letters indicate the order of disks within a lesson. Thus, lesson 3 consists of A3 followed by B3, C3, etc.

The highest letter in my collection is "O" (in lesson 9). As an instruction manual states that the ten-disk model Omnigraph came with five sets of 15 disks and "O" is the fifteenth letter of the alphabet, it seems likely that the most lessons contained disks from "A" through "O."

I have no disks from lesson 1. Lessons 2 and 3 consist of short, repeated words in Continental code with wide spacing between letters. Examples of text from these lessons include:

A2: CAN CAN CAN EAT

B2: EAT EAT FAT FAT

and

K3: RAIN RAIN RAIN

N3: ARMS ARMS ARMS

The speed of the code

depends on the setting of the Omnigraph motor, but in any event it is quite slow. While the spacing between letters and words decreases in the more advanced lessons (allowing more and faster code to be sent), the length of dits and dahs and the spacing between them remains constant throughout the lessons.

I have no disks from lessons 4 or 5. Lesson 6 appears to consist of random words and groups in American Morse. Lessons 7 through 9 consist of formal radio messages in Continental code, with a tendency toward the dramatic. For example:

K7: RECD FM HATTERAS WED 5 AM SEVEN-TEEN HUNDRED

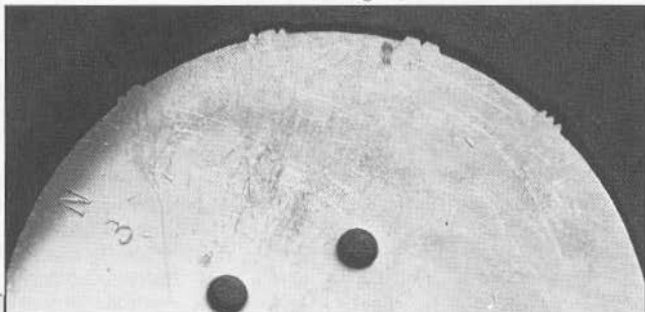
L7: TURKISH HUSSARS ARRESTED WHILE AT SCUTARI

and

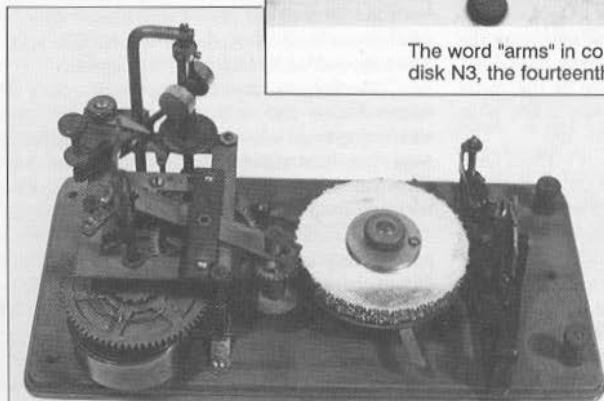
C9: SRF SRF SRF DE K RNL RNL K - HAVE ONE

D9: HUNDRED RESCUED FROM SS RUNDALE LOST ON

These messages include numbers, procedural signs, and a liberal sprinkling of names of people. In lessons 6 through 9, code is sent at about three



The word "arms" in code on the edge of disk N3, the fourteenth disk of lesson 3.



A five-disk Omnigraph. This instrument is also pictured on page 52 of *Vintage Radio* and the Feb. 1981 cover of *CQ*.

times the speed of lessons 2 and 3 (assuming a constant motor speed).

Surely additional code lessons were issued during the approximately 20 years that Omnigraphs were marketed (about 1907 to 1927). After all, early Department of Commerce radio regulations specified that operator-license code tests be given by Omnigraph "whenever possible." I would welcome correspondence related to other lessons.