



# PICKERING KEYBOARD KEYER

I had the Pickering Keyboard Keyer on my operating desk when an RTTY friend came in. "Don't you have to push FIGS to get numbers and punctuation and then LTRS to unshift?" he asked, forgetting that I didn't even own a printing unit. "No," I said, "this is for CW." "Then how do you send the dits and dahs?"

The Pickering Keyer is a fascinating unit that eliminates the mental gymnastics of translating letters into Morse code sounds. Lightly touching any of the glare-free buttons, even for an instant, will produce the Morse representation of the character. All letters, numbers, punctuation, and ham procedure signs ( $\overline{AR}$ ,  $\overline{BT}$ ,  $\overline{SK}$  . . . ) are self-completing once they have begun. For example, to send CQ, just touch C and then Q. Unfortunately, there is no memory for letters as there is for a dit or dah in conventional keyers. While the C is playing, the Q should be held down. This Keyer will complete the C, insert the correct between-letters space, and then it will send the Q. Longer words can be sent by touching the first letter and while it is being sent, hold the second. Once the second has begun, move your finger to the third and hold until it begins, and so on. Letter spacing is automatic; word spacing is up to the sender.

Obviously it is necessary to be familiar

with a typewriter keyboard and a knowledge of touch typing is an asset. Knowledge of CW is still necessary to know when to move fingers from letter to letter. Since some letters are shorter than others, at higher speeds you have to be quick. The speed is adjustable by a front panel control from about twelve to seventy words per minute. Slower speeds are possible by increasing letter and word spacing. The dit length can be varied by the weight control. Some keyers are pre-adjusted for weight, but being able to adjust it is an advantage because copying ability can change with dit length, depending upon the rate at which CW is being sent. The letters will be sent in perfect form.

How easy is it to use? Very. First, plug the unit in and hook up a loudspeaker or headphones to the appropriate jacks on the rear panel. Turn the KB-1 on and press a few buttons to get the feel. Very little pressure is required to activate the IC logic systems to send letters. The keys have a barely perceptible movement and this makes rapid finger placement possible. The monitor produces a low pitch tone that is easy to hear above background noises without blotting them out. The volume level is an adjustment on the front panel. After practicing for several hours it becomes second nature to push a

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button and to hear the correct letter emerge from the monitor. Finger placement, even for a hunt-and-peck typist, becomes easy and rhythmic. Adjustment of the keyer speed to a comfortable rate coupled with a relaxed typing speed still allows the hunt-and-pecker to send perfect CW at speeds up to twenty words per minute. The Pickering is heavily weighted and it will not slide across the operating desk. You could even use it sitting upon your lap if you wished to use CW while mobile.

After becoming accustomed to hearing a complete letter in Morse when moving one finger a fraction of an inch, I tried the unit on the air. I told my contacts what kind of keyer I was using and comments included, "That's cheating" . . . "Sounds clean" . . . "Pretty good." Sending became effortless. The hand rhythm developed quickly and smoothly and the letters flowed out as I thought of them. It was a BPLer's dream.

The unit is ideal for code practice sessions, as we use it here at 73. It is easy to pick the unit up and carry it to classes, and even a beginner can send perfect code without even knowing it. This new dimension to learning also allows the sender to learn characters and spacing. The speed can be adjusted to a moderately high rate and long spaces can be inserted to give the impression of slower speed. This, incidentally, is the newly approved method of teaching CW: fast letters with long space. It allows the listener to adjust to the concept of shorter letter timing, just like he will get in actual copy off the air.

To hook it up to your rig requires looking at the transmitter's schematic. You must determine the voltage across the key, positive or negative, in order to connect the cable to the correct keyed output. This protection is necessary to protect the integrated circuits that make up the circuitry. If you make a mistake, no damage occurs.

For the ham who takes Morse code seriously or for the professional code practice instructor, the Pickering KB-1 Keyboard Keyer is an indispensable tool for perfect CW. True perfection costs only \$265 from the Pickering Radio Company, P.O. Box 29, Portsmouth RI 02871.

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