



## THE HISTORIC KEY of "NBD"

①

The clock showed "five bells" and an hour had gone,  
When they learned that at seven, Carnarvan came on.  
They gave a quick glance at the clock on the wall,  
And asked if I thought we could hear them at all.

We hastened up stairs where the outfit was laid,  
And I saw the receiver that Pickard had made.  
That one single audion looked very strange,  
But I found the receiver was in the right range.

Just before seven bells, and surprising to me,  
I suddenly heard the loud test of a "V".  
I sat there in silence, and I didn't speak;  
Carnarvan at Belmar, was always so weak.

I tilted the Baldwins just back of each ear,  
And I noticed that Fabbri and Cole could both hear.  
A space and a break signal followed I guess,  
When, clear as a bell, he sent "Carnarvan Press".

A "lid" could have copied a signal so strong,  
And I wrote it all down as he went along.  
This station at Belmar, I seem to recall,  
They seldom if ever could copy at all.

Both Fabbri and Cole showed an interest when,  
I told them five thirty we covered "YN".  
I told them the schedules they wanted to know;  
"POZ" and "UA", and the ~~Wop~~ <sup>Wop</sup> "IDO".  
~~WOP~~ <sup>WOP FROM</sup>

I found that the signals were better by far,  
Than anything possible down at Belmar.  
But Taylor forbid us to touch any set,  
If the note drifted out, there was nothing to get.

Mr. Fabbri became quite excited I guess,  
And sent a report to our own DCS.  
But it wasn't so easy as all that my friend,  
We had other problems with which to contend.

We never suspected what Taylor would do,  
But we found out precisely before we were through.  
Between Daniels and Taylor, they both made a vow,  
By fair means or foul, to defeat us somehow.

We sent in the most of the copy by far,  
But Taylor insisted it came from Belmar.  
I'll never forget all the pains that they took,  
And resorted to every damn trick in the book.

And then Taylor played the best card that he could-  
Recommended the place be abandoned for good!  
I'll never forget how the boss looked at me!  
He stood there transfixed, just as mad as could be.

(2)

He stood there in silence and clinched his fists tighter,  
It was then that I learned that this man was a fighter.  
He told me to copy as much as I could.  
I told him he knew that I certainly would.

He started for Washington that very night,  
Determined to put up a regular fight.  
He telephoned me, when a few days had gone,  
That they had agreed that the test should go on.

This was the crucial battle he won,  
And that was when Otter Cliffs really begun.  
If Taylor had won, you can take it from me,  
There never would be any call "NED"!

Things happened fast. We were never aware,  
They promptly closed Chatham, kicked Taylor "up stair".  
Someone got wise what a mess it had been.  
From Chatham and Belmar we got some good men.

From all of this mess it was quite a relief.  
We could now go ahead, and I was made Chief.  
They built rooms for traffic, enlarged the mess hall,  
And remoted the spark over ~~there~~ at Sea Wall.

They built two large barracks, and got some Marines.  
The shacks in the field had the Hoxie machines.  
Bill Woods and his crew kept the sets working right,  
And the "Spark" and "Arc" crews kept it up day and night.

How pleasant it is for us all to recall,  
Such men as Ralph Elliott, Dutton and Ball,  
And Sautter and Newmark, Frank Seiler and Bates,  
And the fights that we had with Marines at the gates.

And Chief McElaney, who dished out the chow,  
And Jimmy legs Grimes, whom we all recall now.  
O'Connor and Swanson, who led the Marines;  
The ship's cook, Mike Early, who cooked such good beans.

Al. Stevens and Maddocks, the Davis boys too,  
And Chisholm and Hovenden of the first crew.  
Jim East and Fred Meinholtz; yes, we knew them all,  
And the "Morse" men we had ~~who~~ were right on the ball.

John Steele and Harper, and Bruce, so they say,  
~~He~~ Invented the Rhombic Antenna one day;  
And Proctor and Curtis, Pfeiffer and Cole.  
The Warrants we had - and - Oh, Oh my soul!

Dear old Captain Tracy, in memory figures,  
Who first went to sea in the days of square riggers.  
Mr. Berry and Marshall, who ran the ship's store,  
And Kumpel the Yeoman, and so many more.

Jack Miller indeed was a musical cuss,  
Who got up the band just to entertain us.  
At all the church services he took his place,  
And played all the hymns with a sneak rolling bass.

And Old Doctor Morrison, the two-stripe MD,  
The messcooks who permanently worked the KP,  
The old Denby trucks that went so damn slow;  
You were stuck in as little as one inch of snow.

You all must recall the old mascot airdale.  
We all called him "Moooa", he had a short tail.  
He certainly was a most seagoing dog,  
I can still see him trying to rescue a log!

There was Macintosh, Kenderick, Carroll and Morse,  
All there in the office to wait on the boss.  
With all this activity, anyone might,  
Imagine the letters that he had to write.

The thousands of messages handled on spark;  
The millions of words that we copied on ark. <sup>ARC</sup>  
The total amount there is no way of knowing,  
But it took a big crew just to keep it all going.

Each watch had its chief for the eight-hour trick.  
The Morse men we had were the best you could pick.  
With work of this kind it also requires,  
To be ~~all sent~~ <sup>relayed</sup> again over all the leased wires.

With ~~all of~~ this work and the hundreds of men,  
There never will be such a set-up again.  
Electronic progress reveals that it means,  
Instead of the men, it is done with machines.

By the end of the war we had grown to <sup>became</sup> such size,  
The "big brass" in Washington all had <sup>get</sup> wise.  
They learned what a marvelous job had been done,  
And a whole lot was said to commend everyone.

We all were delighted when we heard the boss,  
Was honored by wearing the great Navy Cross.  
The President sent him a citation too,  
In full recognition of what we'd been through.

And so, on this day, just us few who remain,  
Have gathered, recalling those old days again.  
It's forty five years since he passed on, and yet-  
As long as we live, we will never forget. ↘

We all are aware many others of these,  
Are now in the ranks that we call "Silent Keys".  
How long we may live, there is no one can tell,  
But today, we must all say a final farewell.

By <sup>poet LAUREATE (2nd line)</sup> Harold Castner, CPO/Chief Radioman, NBD.

\* Note: <sup>(undated)</sup> Castner wrote this poem in 1967 on the 50th anniversary of the commissioning of NBD (in 1917) Castner became a silent key in the 70s B.M.R.

*Typed  
11-85  
BWB*

SW Harbor,  
November 15, 1985

Bill Breniman:

Fred Grindle, SOWP 3295 SGP, gave me this poem Xerox yesterday for QSP to you in case you'd like to publish it with other Radio NBD documentation. It is NOT copyrighted. Hi!

73,

*Brandy*  
Brandy Wentworth