

Why 73 is the best number to use to say Best Regards  
ex: K8UNZ

I did some research on line trying to find the history of the use of the number 73 and the phrase 'Best Regards.' What I found was differing 'facts' on how this association came about. This led me to believe that many history writers should be called 'writers of historical fiction.'

So, I'll try to generalize what I found. Which means that I'll be putting on my writer of historical fiction hat.

Way back in 1855 (and, yes that was before I was born) some telegraphers were lamenting about all the work they had sending and receiving telegrams. They all agreed that a lot of telegrams had phrases in them that were used in everyday speech.

Before going any further I have to explain that I have been accused of having a one track mind. The problem with my one track mind is that it has a lot of siding associated with it. And, right now I have been switched onto one of those sidings.

I can visualize a group of telegraphers<sup>1</sup> siting around a table in the salon across the street from the telegraph office. Back in 1855 if you bought a nickle beer you could get a free sandwich at lunch time. The meat used was from a roast taken from whatever animal was found on the cow catcher of one of the trains passing through the town. After a number of nickle beers and a lot of discussion they decided that they should make a list of all of the phrases that were being used in telegrams. And, they should assign a number to each phrase. And we all know the phrase 'Best Regards' was assigned the number, 73.

This way while sending a telegram and coming upon a phrase that they had assigned a number to they could send that number and not the phrase. This would shorten the amount of time spent each day sending phrases. And while receiving a telegram and seeing a number that they had assigned a phrase to, they would then write out the phrase.

To me that is a lot like cutting two inches off the top of a blanket and sewing it on the bottom of that same blanket and thinking that you have a longer blanket.

In 1856 an upstart telegraph company created their own numbered phrase list. The new list was very close to the one created in 1855. And the new list was called the 92 code. And yes, it had 92 phrases. Oh, you may have heard of this new telegraph company. Western Union. And the new list became known as the Western Union 92 code. And it was used by most telegraph companies.

We can now jump ahead to a little after 1900. This is the start of wireless telegraph. Many of the land line telegraphers became wireless telegraphers. They also brought their operating practices with them. And also brought the 92 code. So, wireless telegrams were shortened by sending numbers instead of phrases. And then lengthened after receiving them. Just like in land line telegrams.

Soon after wireless telegraph came on the scene private citizens started receiving wireless stations. And soon after that they wanted to also transmit using wireless. And so started Amateur radio. Many of the wireless telegraphers also became radio Amateurs and brought their operating practices with them and the 92 code. And we Amateurs still use parts of that code today.

This is all history. And it is all true. Well, almost all.

We now jump to the present, get off of the siding and back on the main track.

But before I tell you why 73 is the best number to use to say Best Regards. I should define some words and one phrase. At least as they are used here.

The first is: Prime Number. A prime number is a number that can be divided evenly by the number one and the number itself. For example: 5 is a prime number. And we can prove it as follows:

$5 / 2 = 2$  with 1 left over.      $5 / 3 = 1$  with 2 left over.      $5 / 4 = 1$  with 1 left over.

You can not divide 5 evenly by either 2 or 3 or 4.

But you can divide 5 evenly by 1 or the number itself, 5. That makes 5 a Prime Number. What are prime numbers used for. I did not know, so I went to GOGGLE to find out. What I found was they are used for the creation and creaking of ciphers.

Oh, one more thing about prime numbers. Can you guess how many prime numbers there are between 0 and 100. I'll give you the answer at the end of this dissertation.<sup>2</sup>

Next is Octal. Octal is a numbering system. As its name implies, it uses eight numbers. The numbers, 0,1,2,3,4,5,6 and 7. We do not have to know how octal works, just that it uses those eight numbers. What is octal used for? Not as much as it once was. Back when personal computers were eight bit machines, octal was used by many software writers. But has fallen out of use with today's 32 and 64 bit machines.

The next is binary. Binary is a numbering system. As its name implies, it uses two numbers. The numbers, 0 and 1. We do not have to know how binary works, just that it uses those two numbers, 0 and 1. What is binary used for? Just about everything. This is something to think about. Everything that is digital uses binary. For example, your cell phone uses binary. A lot of 0's and 1's. Your voice is changed to 0's and 1's. Everything that you type is changed to 0's and 1's. Everything stored in your phone is in 0's and 1's. We could go on and on. Everything digital uses binary.

Next is palindrome. A palindrome is a group of numbers or letters or symbols that if you look at that group starting at the beginning and going forward to the end, the order is the same if you started at the end and look backwards to the beginning,. A couple of examples: 61,516 is a palindrome. Forward it is 6 – 1 – 5 – 1 – 6. And backwards it is 6 – 1 – 5 – 1 – 6. Another example is LEVEL. Forward it is L – E – V – E – L. And backwards it is L – E – V – E – L. We all hope to be level headed and level handed.

So, lets get started on why 73 is the best number to use to say Best Regards.

73 is the 21st prime number. I know, there are a lot of prime numbers.

If we reverse the two numbers that make 73 we get 37.

37 is the 12th prime number. And 12 is the reverse of 21. And 73 is the 21st prime number.

If we separate the two number that make up 73 we get 7 and 3.

And if we multiply them together we get:  $7 * 3 = 21$ . And 73 is the 21<sup>st</sup> prime number..

If we convert 73 to octal we get 111. A palindrome.

If we convert 73 to binary we get 1001001. A palindrome.

If we convert 7 to binary we get 111. A palindrome.

If we convert 3 to binary we get 11. A palindrome.

If we convert 73 to Morse Code we get Dah Dah Di Di Dit Di Di Di Dah Dah. A palindrome.

I have been talking about a lot of numbers. Mostly the number 73, but the word number has a lot of meaning also. Remember back in grade school when you and your BFF came up with a super secret cipher that you knew no one would ever solve. You use to pass notes back and forth in class when the teach had their back to you. And some how the teacher, with eyes in the back of their head saw the note being passed. Took it, looked at it and then passed out a spot math test to the whole class. And while the teacher sat at their desk and quickly solved your super secret cipher, and wrote the message on the black board. (Yes, back then the boards were black.) That is when you found out your super secret cipher was a well known code.<sup>3</sup>

And that code was the simple swapping of letters for numbers based on their position in the alphabet. So, for the word: N U M B E R

we get: 14 21 13 2 5 18 and if we add these together we get, 73.

All of these facts about the number 73 makes me believe it is the best number to use to say, Best Regards.

Oh yes, there is one other numbered, phrase that we Amateurs use. That is 88. For Love and Kisses. To me that proves that love does conker all. Including time.

One more thing before closing. We all have heard some Amateurs say, "I'll say my 73's," I know what 73 stands for, 'Best Regards' but I have no idea what 73's stands for. Is it Best Regards, Best Regards, Best Regards.? Or, Best Regards-es? The 'Old Man' would brandish his Wouff Hong.

1. A telegrapher is someone who is proficient in the use of Morse code. Or, a telegraph operator.
2. There are 25 prime numbers between 0 and 100, or 25%.
3. If you do not know the difference between cipher and code, shame on you.

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december 6 at 8:42

Take a look at the date on Santa's list.  
You will have to enlarge the picture.

100 years of radio.

