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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 04, 2006

Western Union Telegrams: RIP

This [Independent profile of playwright Edward Albee](#) -- timed to the London premiere of the marvelous revival of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* starring Kathleen Turner and Bill Irwin -- casually mentions that Albee once worked as a messenger for Western Union. And that reminded me of a one-line item I saw in the paper this week: Western Union has discontinued telegrams and will focus only on wiring money. [After 150 years, the telegram is no more.](#) What will people make of *The Human Comedy* starring Mickey Rooney (or the book by William Saroyan)? Who will explain to people the shots in films of someone wandering through a hotel lobby saying, "Telegram for Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith? Telegram?" Sad.

BONUS: What was the text of the very first telegram (sent by Samuel Morse)? It was: "What hath God wrought?"

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 10:45 AM



4 COMMENTS:

Anonymous said...

What was the last telegram?

11:30 AM

Michael in New York said...

They didn't say, but it was delivered on Friday, January 27, 2006.

11:31 AM

NYCD Online said...

I still remember the only two telegrams I ever got -- both in the late '70s, both at sleepaway camp in the Catskills. One was from my

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