

# The “Communicator”



A newsletter by and for AFFSC members

Vol 1, Edition 2

Fall 2001

## Where has the summer gone ?

### Editors Ramble

By David Smith aka 266

How quickly time passes and the sight of last nights harvest moon (Sept 3rd) reminds us that the summer of 2001 is soon going to be nothing but a good memory.

So what is new in our world of former CM's.? First and foremost, you will have noticed the new name for your newsletter. A few submissions by former colleagues gave us a choice and Jon Livingston who submitted the winning suggestion will receive a free one-year membership to our little club as thanks for taking the time and trouble. Thanks to the others who submitted interesting titles.

As your newsletter editor, I am continuing to solicit submissions from those of you who served in the “CM trenches” and indeed would be happy to receive stories from anyone who served with DFAIT not just CM's.

During the summer we received a number of letters from friends and former colleagues and I encourage you to keep them coming.

### Books of Interest Editors Picks

1. **“Body of SECRETS”** - Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency: by James Bamford

Available in bookstores @ \$ 44.95  
ISBN 0-385-49907-8 Published by Doubleday

*A fascinating read for anyone, this book will appeal especially to those former military members who specialized in “Comm Research”. A number of Canadian bases are referred to as well as our own CSE.*

*Bamfords book provides details of the inner workings of NSA and is filled with extraordinary stories. Ever wonder about the true story of the USS Pueblo or the USS Liberty? You will find those answers and more in this book. Highly recommended to those who are interested in such things.*

2. **Jan Wong's China** - reports from a Not-So-Foreign correspondent by Jan Wong

Available in bookstores @ \$ 19.95  
ISBN 0-385-25939-5  
Published by Doubleday

*Those who have lived in or visited the PRC, will find this book especially attractive as the author provides a special insight to the China we thought we knew. As a Canadian-Chinese foreign correspondent, Jan was able to see and write about a world which was not open to the usual “Foreign Devil”.*

*Chapters such as “Farting at Farragamo's” and “Great Leap into the Drivers Seat” more than cover the cost of this book. A great read for all you Foreign Devils !*

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### News from the “Backroom”

During a trip to Winnipeg this summer, I received two bonuses en route. Passing through Thunder Bay, my wife and I were able to spend a pleasant evening with Matti Rikkinen who was “home” visiting his family. Shortly after our visit, Matti packed up his life's kitbag and headed for Finland and Estonia where he intends to spend the next few months. No doubt he will be putting his impressive linguistic skills to work and we wish him well and a happy retirement (Matti retired in July of this year).

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While in Winnipeg, we were also able to spend a few hours over dinner with Marty Byzewski aka B.Y. Marty has chosen a fascinating hobby of tracing his family tree. In so doing, his travels are taking him to many states in the U.S. and across Canada. He has become the proverbial "Travellin' Man" and is always on the go. Anyone that knows BY will realize he gets off on life, especially during his years with DFAIT. He has kindly submitted a number of short stories of his DFAIT experiences (see below). Good luck with your searches BY.

- Your Editor

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**"Smile and the world will smile with you"**

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Peter Nigl sent me a Ghanaian newspaper that carried an article about a gorilla which gave birth to a human baby. Other than Pete, which one of you former CM's has visited Africa lately ! Jeez - have we no shame !!!



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## The Dip Bag

We received a number of letters from friends and colleagues over the summer.

**Nels Rosen** in Richmond BC has joined the group. Nels moved from Langley last year and is settled into his condo and enjoying retirement. He hopes to visit Ottawa this fall.

**Lou Berube** (former EL) has joined the AFFCS and has penned a note of appreciation for this organization (AFFCS) and everyone's efforts.

**Leigh Shankland** sends his regards to all former colleagues from Victoria B.C. (Lucky stiff!)

**Larry Hatt** (former Director) kindly sent a letter which said in part "...I have many fond memories of my time at DFAIT and in particular with my association with communicators, technicians and those who supported them"... Larry not only paid the usual dues but added an additional sum to cover startup expenses. Larry lives in Nepean.

**Jim Fanning** writes that he is "finding retirement busy and challenging, with the chores of house-husband and father to a 7 and 12 year old definitely keeping me from becoming bored". Jim lives in a place called "Head of Jeddore", Nova Scotia.

**Jon Livingston** took the time to compose a letter from his home in Coquitlam, B.C. I especially liked these comments: "An association of ex-CM's is probably the best idea since sliced bread. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than the prospect of getting back in touch with those I knew and worked with in External...and I look forward to hearing more from and about my former colleagues."

*As you can see Jon, you will - ED*

**Janice Sutton** and her husband Frank Weibe have joined the AFFSC and "think the AFFCS is a great idea". Janice, you may recall from the spring newsletter book review section is the author of "So Many Goodbyes" - Episodes in a Foreign Service Career. For those wishing to get in touch with Janice (a book order perhaps?) her e-mail address is: franjan@king.igs.net.

**Editors Note:** Great to hear from all of you and we encourage anyone who can still use a pencil, pen, typewriter or computer to send along news of your life in retirement (or second career).



## The speakers column -

articles and stories submitted by your colleagues.

### Flying with a pilot Trainee

- by Marty Byzewski

One day I left Budapest, bound for Bucharest, with my partner Vince on Hungarian Airlines flying in an old TU-134A. This is the Soviet copy of the DC-9. These aircraft suck, with all kinds of loose things, mist emitting from the air vents etc. We circled Bucharest once and then did our final approach. Now I have flown in a lot of different types of aircraft and this approach was very different. We were fire-balling in at a tremendous speed. My life flashed before me as I knew that we were goners. I'm sure we hit the deck at about 150 knots. Fortunately, I am here to write this story. I'm sure he used all the runway to stop the pile of junk that we were flying in. I'll always remember that hot landing. God Damn commie bastard behind the stick !!



### A Walk Through Chandni Chowk

- by Jim Fanning

A cornucopia of scents assail:  
puris frying in hot oil,  
rotting garbage,

incense and flowers,  
exhaust fumes and hot metal,  
beedi smoke,  
and the unmistakable presence  
of a public convenience.

From the Jama Masjid, the mullah  
reiterates, for the third time,  
his summons to the faithful.  
A legless beggar wheels by:  
did the treasure he stole from angry  
gods  
warrant this Promethean reward?  
Temple bells ring,  
and the crowds surge unceasing.

Psychedelic visions appear:  
Toby jugs that live;  
saffron headware crowns,  
shading eyes that view  
far different horizons.  
Ancient gods walk the land,  
indifferent to the caste  
of their weary avatars.

Pondering, in the shadow  
of the Red Fort,  
the hubris of those who sought  
to civilize the land  
where the Bo-shaded Gautama  
attained Nirvana long ago:  
where a lover's tribute became  
a wonder of the world.



### **“CM” profiles**

*by David Smith*

As your newsletter editor, I thought it would be appropriate and have plenty of human-interest value to profile one of our own from time to time. For this our 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, I have selected an individual who is well-known not only by all former CM's but by many “External” employees past and present.

Not long ago Janice and I were privileged to be asked to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of a former CM whom I have always held in high regard for so many reasons.

I refer of course, to **Rod Villeneuve**.



I first met Rod many years ago (dare I say decades ). At the time a younger Rod was in charge of a shift and at the same time was building a house for himself and his family. I know of few people who would even attempt what Rod did - from digging the “hole” himself to hauling 8,000 fieldstones - selected and hauled home from the fields in the trunk of his car - to be used as the outside walls and the fireplace of his home. Who couldn't help but be impressed with someone blessed with so much tenacity. Of course many of us will remember that all this effort extracted a price but happily Rod bounced back in spades from a setback.

As the years went by, our paths crossed from time to time as we went abroad but finally Rod settled down and became the Head of the Training section aka “The School” or “Rod U”. It was here that I came to know him best. CM's whose time goes back to those days will recall that we always seemed to be upgrading to new and more modern equipment. From Model 17 teletypewriters to 19's to 28's to 32's and finally to model 40's.

At the same time new crypto gear was constantly being introduced. During his years in the school, Rod had to learn all of this equipment to the point where he could teach the rest of us how it all worked. Rod was not just content to learn how it

worked, he had an inquisitive nature that demanded he discover all manner of quirks and which later became Rod's “Tips and Tricks” bible. Back in the days of punched tape, Rod would shop in farm supply shops for a “chicken punch” which just happened to make the same size hole as our punched tape had. On completion of training, graduates would receive a chicken punch which just has to be a collector's item today. (Alas, mine is gone).

Of equipment with names like Noreen, Bid 770 and Aroflex, Rod had an impressive knowledge of these sometimes aggravating machines but I have yet to see him ever lose his cool. Even when it became necessary for him to finally take matters into his own hands and “carve a door” for access to an adjoining office, he was a picture of “Cool”. I remember returning to his office after he had “enlarged” his office and there he sat with this very satisfied look on his face saying nothing. It was only after some pressing that he calmly announced “I've got my door” !

Rod's talents not only lay with an impressive and wide-ranging knowledge of so much equipment but he was as good as it got when it came to combination locks. What Rod didn't know about locks wasn't worth knowing and his “lock-smith” course was just magic. I have such good memories of the time we spent together and the laughs and stories we shared.

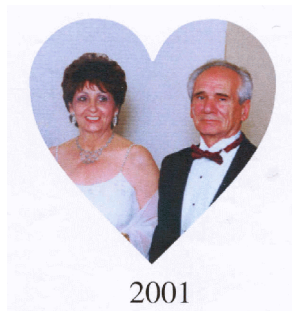
Everyone will recall his love of jokes and stories and if he gets you aside and you stand still for a moment, he will conjure up a few from his joke bag for you.

Rod is my friend and my hero.

Readers might be curious to learn what he is up today. As I recently found out, Rod is still doing the things he loves the most. Summers will see him out in the fresh air picking wild berries and only Rod can find the best spots to find all manner of such. He has an affinity for rocks (we all have our quirks!) and a short while ago he hauled home a 300 lb beauty in his car. I probably don't have to tell you what his wife Lucile thought of that little caper!

I think Rod's greatest enjoyment derives from helping out others. This is the Rod I knew years ago when, at the drop of a hat, he would stop whatever he was doing and off he would go to assist family or friends with all manner of tasks.

I hope he forgives me for revealing this but at age 72, Rod is still the same man he was decades ago. He has been blessed with a lovely family. His wife Lucile, who has so many talents of her own, (singing being at the forefront), 3 great sons and a lovely daughter. During his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations his son Pierre asked a couple of questions which gave us all a great laugh. If you look at their photos, Pierre wanted to know why, in 1951, he was taller than Lucile, and why, in 2001, he is shorter and isn't smiling anymore. Rod, in his usual manner just smiled. Any CM who has remained married (to the same lady) for 50 years deserves our admiration.



And that dear reader is a brief profile of a man and his family that I have admired for many years. And they called CM's beer-swilling, tattooed, pot-bellied, no mind Communicators. I beg to differ!



**From your President -**  
George McKeever

The first thing I would like to do is give a big welcome to each member of the AFFSC, and thank you for joining. We have passed the hundred mark for memberships, which is a bigger number than anyone first expected, and there is still potential for growth. I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the other Executive members who have done so much to get the Association up and running.

The questions that now face me, and the Executive, are what direction do we go now that we have joined together, and what are we going to do with our resources. For those who have not seen or read the by-laws of our Association, we have six goals.

The first is to maintain communications among former Communicators and friends, and secondly to provide information of the activities of former Communicators and friends. I feel that this newsletter is spearheading our efforts to achieve those goals, thanks to the tremendous work that Dave Smith is doing. While the ability of using resources such as the Internet and electronic mail will be pursued, the Association wants to include everyone so written communications are still going to be the number one priority.

The next goal is to encourage efforts to build a historical record. We have several members interested in working on either books or novels based on our experiences as Foreign Service Communicators, which is something the Association

can encourage. For some time my personal project has been a virtual museum on the Internet, which has been quite successful. Some kind of physical museum has been suggested because of items or mementoes that individual members have kept and would like to offer to someone to display. That is something the Association could explore.

I will just mention the other goals, which I would like to discuss further but this first column isn't intended to be exhaustive or exhausting! The other goals are organizing social activities; co-operating with other organizations/associations; and to be supportive and helpful where possible to the welfare of former Communicators and friends.

All of these goals are open for discussion and suggestion, and I encourage everyone to contact me to give me your views and opinions.

The last thing I wanted to do before ending my contribution to this issue is to give you some numbers. Many individuals have asked about how many former Communicators are still working for the department. Based on our unofficial records, I have found 44 former CM group members have moved into the CS group, about 2/3 of them rotational employees. Throughout the department there are 20 others who have moved into other groups (AS, EL, Courier, etc.), most of them leaving the CM group some time ago. There is still going to be a trickle of CM 'blood' in the Department for some time to come. There are also a number of others working in the public service in other departments, I know of at least four myself. Because of gaps in our information, these numbers may not be complete, but I know many of you will be surprised how many of us are still working (and looking forward to retirement!).