

The Communicator

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Editors Ramble

By David Smith

Well that's it, summer's over. This I know because the cottage is closed for the winter and once again I am reminded of how quickly the years seem to pass in retirement. I doubt I am alone.

Now it's time for the fall edition of your newsletter and I hope you continue to enjoy these stories and snippets from our past. Memories are forever – and we have plenty of them.

Sadly, we continue to say goodbye to some old friends but that also is a fact of life. As we travel down the road of life, we can reflect on the role we played and these tales remind us that they were good times – even when we had to work overtime on Friday evenings to process those \$&%\$ "Deliver-by's".

Now if I could only remember what day of the week it is – oh, the joys of retirement. Life is great isn't it!

I know you will find Bucks article on the Lockhart Era to be enlightening and a real treasure. It's truly a valuable piece of history for us to keep and share with the grand-kids.

Happy Reading



This Newsletter is published by and for members and associate members of the Association of Former Foreign Service Communicators. Check us out at: www.affsc.ca

The Lockhart Era 1956-1966 ***By Buck Arbuckle***

Just after World War II there was but a small comcentre in Ottawa with a handful of communicators and four or five technicians. Only about four posts had machine cypher capability and much encryption was hand-done by book cyphers, a slow and tedious procedure. An interesting note is that Mr. Thomas Stone, a multi-millionaire, worked in the comcentre as a book cypher clerk for one dollar a year while awaiting a posting as ambassador. The machines available were typex, an approximation of the war time German enigma machine, and a few Mark II Rockex. A large percentage of traffic was sent by CN/CP telecommunications at considerable cost with many transmission errors to the encrypted texts. This small comcentre provided an almost personal service as borne out by the fact that Prime Minister Mackenzie King sometimes left his East Block office, less than a hundred feet down the hall, to enquire if there was any reply to one of his telegrams. Under the circumstances, communicators could legitimately say NO to the Prime Minister. This small Ottawa communications effort, a mere section of the Supplies and Services Division of External Affairs was under the tutelage of Mr. Stanley Daly.

Transmission to Washington and New York was by land line protected by a crypto system known as telecrypton. Overseas traffic went to the army signal corps in Ottawa where, at their leisure after military traffic was cleared, it was sent on an inconsistent radio circuit to the British Diplomatic Wireless Service in London who then forwarded it on to Canada House. Many departmental dispatches were bagged and entrusted to the British diplomatic courier service which took days to deliver. This was all very unsatisfactory and the department was demanding a more efficient and faster service.

Col. W. Lockhart, a retired army signals officer, was hired, designated Director, and given the job of forming a communications division with the primary goal of improving the service. Lockhart scanned his available staff and selected a core of competent people from the comcentre. His Deputy Director was Archie Matthews, with banking experience came Catherine O'Keefe to look after the accounts, and Lucille Pothier served as his secretary. With this nucleus of experience he went to work.

Although leased circuits to London and Paris may have preceded Lockhart, credit for eliminating delays inherent in the army's radio circuit seemed to accrue to him. Certainly he opened up telex circuits to many embassies thus vastly improving on the accuracy and speed of CN/CP services. Paris and London became telex relay centres to area embassies but he often forsook this route through London and Paris and deliberately directed traffic onto telex direct from Ottawa. When these costs exceeded that of a leased circuit, he installed a dedicated circuit to "save money". All these improvements were immediately apparent to the geographic/political divisions who began getting same day responses to telegrams, even over several time zones. They enjoyed and used the new service to the fullest. Dispatches which previously would be sent by diplomatic bag were now appearing as 10 and 15 page telegrams. As traffic increased, Lockhart needed

more machines. Having curried favour with the political arm of the department he decided to ask Finance Division for more money. They balked. Lockhart tendered his resignation. The department paid. After all, an administrative division such as finance was not willing to tell the political divisions to cool it.

With more machines he needed more staff. Operating 7 days a week and catering to 24 time zones he had to provide service 24 hours a day 365 days a year. It took 7 communicators to put one communicator on each shift so he always asked for communicator positions in multiples of seven, something the department wasn't used to. Personnel Division balked. Lockhart offered his resignation. Again the department capitulated and found the man-years. He repeatedly asked for more staff and more resources and usually won his arguments against a tight-fisted department. Occasionally he would make a Treasury Board submission and when approved, he told the department he already had authority to proceed.

With fewer dispatches consigned to the diplomatic bag, reliance on the British services declined. But with more and more embassies on machine cyphers, it was now necessary to ship a steady stream of boxes of secret keying material to each post. Instead of limiting our dependence on couriers, our requirement increased so Lockhart started up a global Canadian Diplomatic courier service. Many embassies had very limited ability to meet couriers so in a few cases Communications bought them cars to ensure that couriers were always met at the airport. Our dependence on the British services, which we paid for, was on a steep decline and Lockhart was determined not to lose a valuable liaison and co-operative relationship with the British. Therefore he seconded four technicians to the British technical service to learn techniques and participate with them in the sweeping of embassies in the search for clandestine bugs. These technicians and their successors became a Canada based divisional unit who carried on sweeping operations according to our own timetable.

New equipment meant more technicians and extensive training. A technical school was opened. The induction of new communicators required the opening of an operator's school. The explosive expansion of communications traffic necessitated the establishment of a duplicating section. Though communications did prepare advance copies of all telegrams for delivery, the mountains of paper pressured the registry to hire more bodies to sort and file.

The department loved its improved service and kept calling for better communications in the hinterland. As fast as equipment and staff were available, they got it. In the end Lockhart had command of over three hundred personnel and a secure network that reached around the world. However, compulsory retirement came at age 65. He retired having set an expansion program in motion, built an empire and established a world class communications system second to none.

* * *

Mini-profile: Merv McBride

By himself (Excerpts from a personal email with David Smith)

I had to tax the old brain about the Courier runs in Brussels but it now all floods back and I do remember you coming through a couple or three times. We had the couriers over to our house several times for meals and a game of pool in my basement garage. My stint with External went like this - including some TD's.

1960 - Joined External and went to New York for the UNGA

1961-1965 - Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations - NYK

1965-1968 - Canadian Embassy, Lima, Peru

1968-1969 - Ottawa

1969-1971 - Accra, Ghana

1971-1972 - Ottawa

1972-1975 - Nato Bru - with TD in Helsinki for 5 weeks

1975-1976 - Ottawa

1976-1978 - Mexico City, Mexico - with a 5 week TD in San Jose, Costa Rica

1978-1979 - Ottawa

1979-1983 - Bonn, West Germany - with multiple TD's in Vienna, Austria, Bern

1983-1984 - Ottawa

1984-1988 - Paris, France

1988-1989 - Ottawa

1989-1990 - Return to New York and retired at the end of November 1990

I take great pride in saying that in 1961 I went to New York as a top CM -1 (got my promotion to CM-2 around the same time) and then ended my career as a CM-7 back in New York. I take that "not easy to forget" remark as a compliment. The only time I did courier duty was when I loaded up a few hundred pounds of Noreen equipment and, with a family of wife and 3 small kids, and headed off to set up the Comcentre in Lima. Cheers, Merv



Mystery Photo- who? - send your answer to me at drdee@sympatico.ca

Play It Again Sam
By James Fanning

Hello David Life is sweet, as seems to be the case more frequently than not. The attachment you sent me was correct: the clever thing about this poem about reincarnation, is that you read it down the left side, then up the right side, repeating as often as necessary for you to achieve your dharma. It is also a visual pun based loosely on the circle of fire that is in the Hindu depiction of Siva as Nataraj, the Lord of the Dance...the constant cycle of birth, death, reincarnation. Perhaps a note at the beginning of the CoffeeHouse would warn readers that it was to be read in a circular fashion.
All the very best, old friend – Cheers, Jim Fanning

The Folksinger has lost her voice after singing her heart out all evening. She was now sipping a café au lait and listening to the Poet-with-the-Beret who had a Che Guevara look in his eyes. Her guitar stands forgotten. The Older-Bald-Guy sitting in the corner is contemplating universal truths. He is considering poetry as a Performance Art form. He visualises the title “Poetry as a Plastic Art” wrought in pink neon tubing using a wonderfully retro Art Deco style. He is waiting for a new pot of his favourite blend to finish dripping. The words that he has written in his steno pad are arranged in a roughly circular pattern. They are reproduced below.

Play It Again, Sam-A Metaphysical Fugue-

Reincarnation.	Rebirth
Tantalizing words	NOW?”
to fill our hearts with hope	“what happens
for that mystic second chance.	The final thought must be,
“What goes round comes round,”	of what must come.
we say as a catechism...	to quiet acceptance
a talisman against eternal night.	that leads
“Believe and have faith,”	permits a self-dialogue
teach most religions,	Waiting at the dark portal
“and Heaven will be yours.”	of knowledge.
Yet we can’t look into Heaven	accumulated wealth
to authenticate the veracity of this premise.	from your
Instead we view the cycle of the seasons,	to benefit
and the circle of life:	that no one has time
we rage against the truth	is in accepting
that, as you age, you attain	and part of that role
-not Nirvana-	cannot be refused,
-not enlightenment-	The role of senior citizen
wisdom.	enough.
And with wisdom	have listened,
comes the sure knowledge	have supported,
of mortality.	if we have loved,
We struggle through	are never quite certain
Childhood’s learning curve.	and their direction known,
We are driven blindly	are bent,
through hormone-fevered puberty.	And when the twigs
Then we jockey savagely	of parenthood.
for jobs we might not like;	in the vital role
work for people	to offer exemplary service
whom we cannot	we are expected
admire.	in the office,
Concurrently,	Machiavellian manoeuvres
while exhausted from	



Oslo's Mayor Ole Soltvedt and Uncle Sam, (Marty Byzewski), are kidnapped from a passenger train by bandits during the Oslo Centennial celebration Saturday.

Editors notes:

1. Marty is still as active as when we all knew him in DFAIT. He plays hockey as though he's still in his 30's and seems to have forgotten he's closing in on the OAS soon. Our hats, Yankee or otherwise are off to him – and I'm jealous!
2. A postscript to George Levasseur's love-story "Romance in External Affairs". Some time ago Ed Smith suggested to me that Ron Kaiser and his wife might in fact have been the official 1st employee couple in External Affairs. After some checking, I learned that Ron and his wife were in fact married in India in 1963 and were both employed at that time which appears to give them the title, making George and his wife the 2nd employee couple in the Department. First or second, they are great memories and trust CM's to be the first (and second) yet again in our trailblazing years in External Affairs.
3. Eleanor Ryan received this written note from Nels Rosen dated May 12, 2006: Greetings. Sorry for the delay in paying my dues but I just got out of the hospital two days ago and I'm trying to catch up with the paper which accumulated while I was in. The cancer I had 10 years ago has flared up again and I'm starting treatment next week. Wish me luck. Best Wishes Nels (Nels can be reached at his home address: 7251 Minoru Blvd. Suite 313, Richmond BC V6Y 3P5 Tel 604-214-4470 email: rnshort@shaw.ca)

* * *



Lou Berube presenting a "Rockex Clock" retirement gift to Jim Rogers on June 8, 2004

La Marseillaise – Farewell to Paris (Sung to the tune of the Marseillaise)

By George Levasseur

Adieu adieu O belle-e Fran-ance	Adieu adieu Oh beautiful France
Nous retournons au Canada	We are returning to Canada
Nous aimons bien ton ambiance	We very much like your ambiance
Tes expressions, dictons et ho la la !	Your expressions, dialects and Oh la la
Nos parents nous attendent là-bas	Our parents await us back there
Ils ont bien hâte de nous revoir	They are very anxious to see us again
Espérons qu'un jour nous reviendrons	Hoping that one day we will return
Céder encore à toutes passions	Yield again to all your passions
Tes bon vins et surtout tes bons froma-ages	Your good wine and especially your good cheese
Les hommes qui ne sont pas sages	Men who aren't behaved
Les femmes en ont la rage	and women who love them
Adieu adieu bars, cabarets	Adieu adieu bars, cabarets
Adieu Adieu Adieu.	Adieu, Adieu, Adieu

* * *

Match making

By Buck Arbuckle

Gordon Happy was scheduled to take a courier run through Africa and return. A couple of days before he was to leave, he stopped in to his favourite bar for a beer. While there, he mentioned his forthcoming trip to the bar maid who showed immediate interest. She had never been to Africa and doubted that she would ever get there; would Mr. Happy be kind enough to bring her back a souvenir. Happy received the request and tucked it away in his mind with the myriad other things he was supposed to remember on the trip.

On the appointed day he collected all necessary documents and tickets from the office, signed for his mail, and left for the airport. He was on his way to Africa. After an uneventful trip of about two weeks, he arrived back at Mirabel airport in Montreal. Now Mirabel airport was never an attractive airport for short haul connections and it often imposed long waits and considerable inconvenience on those waiting to continue to Ottawa, particularly our diplomatic couriers. In spite of such delays, couriers still had to protect the mail irrespective of loo queues or other exigencies. To overcome these difficulties the courier service had a company under contract to meet incoming couriers in Montreal and drive them and their mail to Ottawa. The money saved in airfare paid for the Montreal meet. So on this occasion, there to meet Happy was a coloured gentleman of generous proportions, coal black, a native of Jamaica; he spoke with a polished British accent and had the manners of a gentleman. Happy had met him on several other occasions and knew him to be gentle, pleasant and courteous. During the drive to Ottawa he asked the driver if he would be willing to participate in a little stratagem. Being a man with a good sense of humour, the driver readily agreed.

On arrival in Ottawa the mail was deposited in the Department as usual and the trip was officially at an end. Time for a drink. Happy invited the driver to his bar. The bar maid was on duty and she inquired whether Happy had already been to Africa and back and, if so, had he remembered to bring her a souvenir. Certainly he had remembered and he had it with him now. At this point he waved his driver over. He told the bar maid that the coloured gentleman was hers and that he brought him all the way from Africa just for her to take home. Thereupon the driver reached for her with outstretched arms and eyes full of gleeful anticipation. "Oogo Bugo Bongo" he said, or something that was supposed to represent some lost native language. The bar maid screamed, dodged his advancing embrace and quickly fled into the rear extremities of the building, not to return until Happy and his driver drank their beer. It is uncertain whether she ever served drinks in that bar again.

* * *



Any Guesses on the airman? – send your answer to drdee@sympatico.ca

The Cocktail Party

By Buck Arbuckle

Most cocktail parties gradually fade into the background of long lost memories. Few are ever brought forward as a significant event worth recalling, but of course, there are exceptions. The one I recall was held shortly after WWII, and was a pleasant enough party among friends eager to pursue a friendly evening with lively discussion over a generous supply of potent liquid refreshments.

The party was held just a short drive from Bonn, in the suburbs of Cologne, Germany, a city flattened by bombers during the war. It was little more than rubble pushed off the main roads to allow what little traffic there was to move about. Some stores, even jewellery stores, were operating in marked stalls set up on the side of the roads while construction crews rebuilt the buildings behind them. My host was a retired bomber pilot who had flown many missions over Germany and had actually contributed to the devastation of Cologne. For me this was a great chance to meet other veterans like myself and exchange reminiscences on wartime activities.

The party was really rolling along when the doorbell rang and my host answered the summons. There on his doorstep were two nuns, immaculate and beautiful in their traditional habits. They spoke English and were seeking donations to be used to repair war damage to the Cologne cathedral which was about the only building left standing in the city. It was only fortuitous that the cathedral escaped serious damage from all the carpet bombing raids. My host explained that he could not possibly make such a donation. “After all,” he said, “I am suffering a wartime disability and am still carrying a heavy tax load levied to have the thing knocked down”.

Such is the aftermath of a long and bitter war.

* * *

Final Comps “In memoriam” - 2006

Members and friends of the CM/EL community to whom we have said goodbye

David McLeod (June 5, 2006)
Charlie Hall (October 1st, 2006)