

CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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Inside this issue

| | |
|---|---|
| Cat's Corner | 2 |
| CPU Late-Shift Blues By Kelley Dupuis | 2 |
| 'I read you five by five By Ray Collins | 3 |
| Crucial Communications By Paul Nugnes | 3 |
| Pride, Shattered Dreams and Uncertain Reality By Tim Lawson | 4 |

Welcome to the latest issue of the newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERS** (**C**ommunicators **AND** **O**thers **E**njoying **R**etirement). This newsletter will be distributed quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for viewing on or about, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15.

The **CANDOER** Web site and newsletter may be viewed by going to the following URI: www.candoer.org

The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need contributors.

Do you have an interesting article, a

nostalgia item, or a real life story you would like to share with others? If you do, send it to me at the following e-mail address:

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or to my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

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The **CANDOER** News will be available in three formats: the first format is as a web page; the second format is as a PDF file; the third format is as a Microsoft Word document.

The PDF file and Microsoft Word document will allow you to download and print the newsletter exactly as if I had printed it and mailed it to you.

If you are unable to read the PDF formatted newsletter, you can go to www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2

[.html](#) and download the FREE reader. When installed on your computer, it will allow the automatic opening of any PDF file.

Cat's Corner

The picture used at the top of page 1 is of the Department of State building in 1865.

The three stories, *CPU Late-shift blues*, *I read you five by five*, and *Crucial Communications* were all forwarded to me by Charles Christian.

In answer to my plea for stories, Tim Lawson sent me a vignette about the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut in 1983. I include below his explanation of that story:

Cat

Per your earlier request for input and stories for your next edition, please find below (attached) a short vignette I've written regarding my time in Beirut. Since today (October 23) marks the 27th anniversary of the tragic bombing of our Marines, I thought this story might be appropriate. It is of course completely personal in nature and by no means an official account of that day. I did not mention any others on the staff at that time, with the exception of the Ambassador. This is because I did not wish this to be a story about individual actions or heroics (although there were many that day) but instead a simple description of my personal feelings and observations at the time.

Hope you find it suitable for publication.

Best regards, Tim

Erick Morin has added the [CANDOERS](#) to Facebook. If you would like to join the group the URL is:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Candoe r/175231445841913>

CPU Late-shift blues

By Kelley Dupuis, CPU, Brasilia, 1989 (not listed as dead or a member, quit due to nerves?)

Things were pretty quiet 'til a quarter to 4, then USIS dumped 25 cables in the door.

An avalanche of off lines just fell on my head:

O Lord how I wish I were home in bed.
Clock's strikin' 4, can't take any more,
And I got them
Nerves-junglin',
Telex-tape tanglin',
Phones keep ringin'.
Line ain't synchin'
CPU late-shift blues.

Front office screamin' about a distribution
That's thrown the pol section into mass
confusion.

Early shift's gone and I'm all alone;
Secretaries keep comin; at me on the phone.
Clock's strikin' 5. I'm just barely alive.
And I got them
Nerves-janglin';
Telex-tape tanglin';
Line ain't synchin'
CPU late-shift blues,

Just tried to make that unattended vux,
But the lights are goin' crazy on my mux.
Called up the relay and began to shout,
They said: "Sorry, son, all South America's
out"

6:15, I'm working for the machine,
And I got them
Nerves-Janglin',
Telex-tape tanglin',
Phones keep ringin',
Line ain't synchin'
CPU late-shift blues.

Finally I think I can see some light:
The clock says it's time to get away from all
this.

Front office says, "The DCM needs the
CHIS!"

Goin' on 7, but I'm a long way from heaven.
With them
Nerves' janglin',
Telex-tape tanglin',
Phones keep ringin',
Line ain't synchin',
CPU late-shift blues.

'I read you five by five' and other communications lore

By Ray Collins USAF C4 Agency, Scott AFB, Ill, early 1990's

Words and phrases are often used and passed on without realizing the origin or purpose behind their use. The meanings behind some often-used terms are deeply rooted in military communications history.

For example: How many times have you heard or used the terms "five by five" "five square" or "fiver"?

Most people know it has something to do with a level of understanding, but know nothing about its origins.

In the vernacular of radio operators, signal strength and readability were measured very subjectively, using the voice definitions of operating signals, QSA (signal strength) 1 to 5 and QRK (readability 1 to 5).

"I hear you five by five means a station's signal strength are both very good or excellent. "Loud and clear" gained unofficial acceptance because it was easier to say.

Any combination of these factors could be heard over the airwaves ranging from the number "1 by 1", meaning scarcely perceptible and unreadable to the perfect rating of "5 by 5".

Over the years the term migrated to everyday usage and evolved into slang terms such as "fiver", "five by" and "5 square".

On another note, does this sentence look familiar to you? "The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog's back 1234567890 times."

Some senior communicators, particularly those associated with teletype operations of old, may readily identify with this sentence and its use. But why was this particular phrase so popular when testing the circuits.

In days long past, communications centers used this sentence between teletype terminals to test the keyboards. Look at the sentence closely; it served a very distant purpose. Do you see what it was?

This sentence contains every character of the alphabet. The numerals 1 through 0 were usually added at the end of the sentence.

Teletype operators could make sure all the keys on the keyboard were functional by using this sentence to test their equipment.

Here is one more piece of trivia. Did you know that almost a full minute is unaccounted for on the military 24 hour clock? How is this possible?

The 24 hour clock starts each day at 0001 hours and ends at 2400 hours. There is no provision to extend the clock to account for the 59 seconds between 2400 and 0001.

There have been attempts to create a 0000 time that is the same as 2400. These attempts at clock tampering were rejected by officialdom.

The bottom line is to make sure if you are on the 24 hour clock nothing happens during the 59 seconds between 2400 and 0001. An occurrence has to happen in order to be accurately recorded. If it occurred in those 59 seconds it did not happen.

Crucial Communications

By Paul Nugnes, Communications Officer
From Foreign Service Journal, 1989

I am writing in regard to Ambassador Joseph Reeds' article "Diplomats Abroad: Time to Restore Moral," which appeared in the Wall Street Journal March 26 (ASSOCIATION VIEWS. April). I am sure most members of the Foreign Service are appreciative of his remarks. I generally agree, but must take exception to the ambassador's reference to "code clerks". The term better lends itself to late 1940's Bogart movies with naked light bulbs and green eye shades. Today the Department of State's professional Communicators are a group of dedicated, highly skilled individuals who take great pride in a chosen field of endeavor. Communications officers must be competent in the use of the latest technology. We work with high-speed circuitry, sophisticated electronic encryption-decryption devices, computer-driven telecommunications processors, a wide range of complicated

radio equipment, and manage the post's telephone system. We have a reputation for bravery above and beyond the call of duty in times of stress, terrorism, or natural disaster.

We are frequently required to be as adept as, if not more than, our diplomatic counterparts in negotiation with the host country communications authorities to ensure the reliability of leased circuits and that short-term telephone and telegraphic circuitry is in place to support VIP visits. This is not always an easy task in an unfriendly country.

Communicators play a vital role in the formulation and execution of U.S. Foreign policy by providing rapid, reliable and secure telecommunications at our embassies overseas. I hope when Ambassador Reed returns to private business he will remember us fondly for the service we provided him and his embassy and that he will have stricken "code clerks" from his vocabulary.

Charles Christian note: Paul is the man who gave my class all a letter of appreciation for the day we spent working down in the pouch room in Wash., D.C. to clear up a large back log of pouches to be moved in and out. Seems the regular crew down there just did not like working fast. Regarding Paul's timeline of green eye shades and naked light bulbs being from the 1940's, I wore one under a naked light bulb in Africa pushing groups with a pencil as late as 1958.

Pride, Shattered Dreams, and Uncertain Reality

A vignette

In memory of Beirut, Lebanon, October 23, 1983

By Timothy C. Lawson

The Pride. About two months into a prolonged TDY assignment to Beirut, just turning twenty-five years old, on my second tour in the Foreign Service, I found myself right in the middle of a very adventurous time in Lebanon—a time in 1983 when America's sense of renewal and pride had been put center-stage by the Reagan

administration for all the world to see.

With a large number of Marines and a smaller but symbolically significant number of Army and Air Force members on the ground, it was a fascinating time for a young code clerk. While I had previously served in the U.S. military, my TDY assignment to Beirut was the first time I had been in the midst of what had become an active combat environment and squarely in "harm's way."

Some claimed that President Reagan's dispatch of U.S. Marines to Beirut as "peacekeepers" was a dangerous and foolhardy gambit designed to recapture the spirit of patriotism evoking an earlier Lebanese mission in 1958. Who knows for certain? All I know is that for me, watching an M60 tank roll down the Corniche (Beirut's famous seaside promenade) with a U.S. Marine standing on top holding our flag in one hand and his weapon in the other, it was indeed a heady feeling of national pride as an American and as a member of the Foreign Service. I shall never forget it.

A Shattered Dream. Beirut in those days, despite its intense civil war (one lasting well over 15 years), always remained an amazing city that mixed wonder and delight with an ever-present feeling of the macabre; constant bombings, kidnappings, and often gruesome deaths. It was a scary but intriguing place for all of us, Marines and Foreign Service personnel alike. For me personally I recall a sense of wonderment and trepidation simultaneously—but there I was helping support something much larger than myself—and no matter that I didn't know exactly what that "something larger" really was, I knew all the same that it had to be important. That helped assuage some of my fear, but not those very vivid dreams. I especially recall one which took place on October 21st, 1983. It was very disturbing because it was not so much a dream, but rather a kind of vision perhaps. I saw something which appeared as a mosaic of a hundred or more broken pieces of glass or was it a broken mirror? There was a face too all broken up in the fragments. It was a face I did not recognize, but it was stained with blood. My "shattered dream" as I

named it, was so shocking that I sat straight up in bed, trembling, with my eyes wide open in a cold sweat. I shall never forget it.

Uncertain Reality. A day later, Sunday morning October 23rd, as I stood outside waiting for the Embassy driver to take me to the Mission, I heard a tremendous explosion which echoed all around. It would later be called the largest “non-nuclear” explosion in history—one that would murder 241 of our U.S. Marines. Yet at that point what had actually happened was still not clear. Reporting to the office as the lone communications officer that morning, I was quickly swept up into the flurry of flash cables, each calculating a new “body-count” in almost rhythmic precision. On his very first day at post as President Reagan’s personal representative, Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew looked at me and asked: *“Tim, where did this happen?”* To which I responded *“I’m not certain Mr. Ambassador, but I think it happened here ... yes, right here to our Marines in Beirut.”* I can remember the look on the Ambassador’s face. Yes, it was still about determination, but it was suddenly colored by a new reality—an uncertain one that our national leadership, despite pride and even dreams, continues to grapple with 27 years later. To all those who served and died in Beirut that day, in your honor, I have never forgotten.

See you next quarter!