

# CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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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](http://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:

[candoercat@gmail.com](mailto:candoercat@gmail.com)

or to my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

This newsletter is available on the Web **only**, free, to any and all who worked with or for DC, OC, IM, or IRM.

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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](http://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.

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### Cat's Corner

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>

Just as I was putting this issue to bed John Lemandri sent me several short stories for publication in the **CANDOER** News. This issue starts John's stories with one of his longer stories. The next issue will begin his series of short.

I wish to take the time now to thank John for his many short, humorous stories and also to make a plea to the many loyal readers to send me their stories. Please, help me keep the **CANDOER** Newsletter going!

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### Letters to the Editor

Dear **CANDOER** Colleagues,

Regarding the recent Winter Issue of the **CANDOER** News and my article submission on Beirut (October 1983), I would be remiss if I failed to highlight the other IRM staff members at post on that tragic day. Embassy Beirut's Communications Programs Unit (CPU) (we worked from inside the British Embassy at the time) operated under the very solid leadership and management of CPO Dewey Holmes. The CPU was further staffed by two permanently assigned Foreign Service IRM officers, Ernie Olivarez and Barbara Gregory. Moreover, Mel Bladen, assigned to ATSE Technical Control at the time, proved to be instrumental in resolving some extremely complex connectivity issues that, because of the situation, demanded the most rapid resolution possible.

Though as junior TDY officer I would find myself, initially, on duty alone the first few hours that day, support from all the above individuals would quickly materialize as the enormity of the USMC tragedy became known and as the tempo of our

operations escalated accordingly. To my memory each officer I've highlighted here played a critical role in helping maintain rapid, reliable and secure Mission/Washington communications throughout the crisis. Clearly, it was my great fortune to have such experienced and seasoned IRM officers by my side that day. It was with that consideration that I felt obligated to provide this addendum to the readership of the **CANDOER** News thereby helping ensure that the hard work, dedication and commitment of my IRM colleagues would not be overlooked.

Best Regards,  
Tim Lawson

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The following was received from Fran Masterman:

I enjoy reading all the memories from my time in OC.

One of the most memorable is a TDY I spent during my ten years as a WAE - this was a two month TDY in Tbilisi, Georgia in 1994. The hotel I stayed in was the Metechi Palace. It was really a 4-star hotel in a 1-star country. Beautiful lobby and rooms, but it was the only hotel I have ever stayed in that had a sign on the entrance that read, "No guns." It also had a sign with the circle and the gun with a diagonal line ... but it did no good. One day, after returning from a long hard day at the Embassy, I received a phone call saying, "STAY IN YOUR ROOM - GUNMAN IN LOBBY SHOOTING". I stayed and no one was shot that time.

Also the trip home was something. At the airport, when the flight was ready to load, they just opened the door and everyone ran to the plane (an old Russian Airflow). You ran in order to get a seat. Some of the three seat sets held four or more people. There was a carpet that ran down the aisle, similar to all airliners, but on take-off this rug would slide to the rear of the plane and on landing slide back to the front. I had a window seat and never had the airport in Frankfurt looked so good!!!!  
Fran Masterman

The following was received from Vic Maffei:

Thanks for the reminder (Winter Issue of the **CANDOER** News and Tim Lawson's article submission on Beirut (October 1983)). I myself got there two days after the blast. Very confusing atmosphere! I had the task, besides working commo shifts, to inventory and clear all materials from the embassy CPU, i.e., comsec, radios, commo equipment, plus the extra "overkill" can-do kits that rained in on us from Bonn, Athens, and elsewhere. I was also there for the move to the British Embassy. When we reestablished our circuit (albeit slo-mo) it was like Columbus going ashore in the new world. I remember poking strips of tape for channel numbers and channel checks; what a pain. I had a big argument with my old friend Tom Paolozzi over going off Minimize as soon as we reestablished our own circuit. He thought it was my wish to stay on minimize, when it was really a complaint by Charge` "?Hugh?" (don't remember!). He came to me from his office, where I was pouching the excess materials, saying, "I don't need all this s..t!!!" Anyway, it all got ironed out, eventually. Kudos to all involved. Yet another testimony that we were can-do types.

All the best to the best,  
Vic Maffei

The following letters were received from Stu Branch, James Prosser, and Eric Hughes in memory of **C. Grant Shaw**, who died on February 18, 2011.

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of **C. Grant Shaw**. Many of our **CANDOERs** will remember him. He served in a number of senior positions within the State Department Communications organization and perhaps knew more about it than anyone else.

He was an advisor to the "Orrick Committee" (William Orrick, deputy undersecretary of state from 1962 to 1963) whose recommendations resulted in the formation of the Office of Communications to be headed by a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS). Some of his

many assignments within OC included: Senior staffer to our first DAS, Jack Coffee; he was instrumental in the Bonn BAX program; served as Chief of Foreign Operations; Chief of Engineering; Chief of OC/T, etc. I'm sure many of the **CANDOERs** served with him in these and/or other of his important assignments.

**Grant** was a valued advisor to DAS Dick Scott, DAS Bill Goodman, DAS Will Naeher, and me. He was immersed in the organization. He was a mentor to many younger communicators. His knowledge of the history of the organization and his management skills were without equal.

We have lost an extremely talented public servant who made a very significant contribution to our National Security Telecommunications capability. I will miss him!  
Stu

To the comments of others, I would like to add one more.

In 1967, President Charles DeGaulle of France expelled NATO from France. A move of all USNATO communications facilities had to be made in a very brief period of time, which included constructing a completely modernized communications center in Brussels. It required all the resources of **C. Grant Shaw's** Regional Communications Office in Bonn, Germany for several months to bring about the successful completion of the project on time for the official opening October 13, 1967. Much of the credit for this is attributed to **C. Grant Shaw**.

James F. Prosser

USNATO CRO 1967-69 & 1978-80

To **C. Grant Shaw's** family and ALL COMMUNICATORS:

I was saddened when I heard of **Grant's** death. He was a true professional and compassionate man.

Back in 1977, I had just acquired a master's degree in public administration. I had hoped to change career fields at State but personnel wouldn't place me in a professional position outside of OC/T. After a frustrating two years of visiting the State

personnel office and getting the run-around, my morale sank to its lowest ebb.

**Grant** was the Chief of OC/T at that time. He saw the frustration in me and wanted to do something to help out.

He pulled me aside one day and asked if I wanted to work on a special project for him. Naturally, I said yes. The project was to develop a comprehensive personnel training manual for communicators returning from overseas so they could successfully function in OC/T.

I completed the project in one year, in 1979. Many of you may remember the document. **Grant** gave me a Certificate of Excellent Performance, Quality Step Increase, and an outstanding performance rating. He also sent personnel a special letter for my file, praising my work on the project. I was able to use the project and citations to pad my resume, which enabled me to find employment at another agency in my new field.

He was the only person in the entire State Department who gave me a chance to demonstrate my administrative skills.

That's the kind of person **Grant** was. I'll never forget him!

Eric Hughes

OC/T Communicator - 1960-1980

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### Assignment Iraq

By John Lemandri



One evening in Iraq my wife Suzanne and I were returning from a trip to northern Kurdistan near the city of Mosul. We were tired. I hadn't slept much the past three days since the Kurds had surrounded our

vehicle on horseback, guns strapped across their back, like Indians chasing a stage coach in the wild, wild, west.

The weather was cold, really cold, and I had driven a thousand kilometers through some pretty rough terrain. Sue didn't drive.

1:00 a.m. Our British Leyland Land Rover broke down about five miles from Iran, in the middle of nowhere. In the dark, rainy night Suzanne stood above the engine, a flashlight shining downward while I lie below, a wrench in one hand and hammer in the other, attempting to repair a broken alternator. At that stage in my life I fixed everything with a hammer. Either fixed it or so badly beat it up that I threw it out. Ten feet away a dozen Iraqi tanks rolled into the night, followed by another dozen truckloads of soldiers, armored personnel carriers, helicopter gun ships and what looked like the whole Iraqi Army.

Caked with mud and looking more like bums than diplomats, we got the vehicle fixed. As we drove into the darkness through the desolate mountain pass, two cars approached, their lights turned out. One cut in front, the other behind. In an instant our vehicle was surrounded, automatic weapons pointed at our heads. Get out yelled a voice. We didn't move, too tired to comprehend. "Get out! Get out," yelled the voice. I got out. "Come on Sue," I said. "No, not she," said the voice in broken English. Suzanne stayed in the car. I was blindfolded, pushed into another car and driven away. I sat in the seat awaiting my fate. I was mad, mad at myself. How stupid could I be for traveling into a terrorist laden countryside in the middle of the night? I contemplated the fate that awaited me. More important, I worried about the fate that awaited Suzanne. We had been married five short months. Would she survive if I didn't?

We bounced along a rutted dirt road until the car jerked to a stop. Someone shoved me out. I stumbled, was dragged across the ground and thrown into a house. The blindfold slipped and I found myself staring at a dimly lit bulb hung at the end of a wire in the form of a hangman's noose. Not exactly Saddam Hussein's palace. A voice

said, "Get up." I hesitated and was shoved into a chair. The shadow of an ominous figure lurked over me. He was close, so close I could smell the stench of his breath and the feel of his boot against my chair. A second shadowy figure held a gun, the muzzle pointed at my head, while a third silhouetted himself in a dark corner of the room muttering Arabic into what must have been a radio.

The interrogation began. "You are an Israeli spy," yelled the one with his boot between my legs. The toe of his boot began to press hard against my groin. No longer tired, the adrenalin was pumping through my body. "No, Ani Amerikia (I am an American)," I replied. The interrogator shouted, "You are an American spy". "No, I am a diplomat," I responded. "What are you doing out of Baghdad," the voice demanded in broken English? "Visiting your country," I replied, trying to act calm but fearing the worst was about to happen.

The interrogator was by now very agitated, his foot pressing harder as he twisted it against my groin. He screamed, "You hate our country and Iraqi people." "I hate no one," I responded. Although at that moment, I hated him an awful lot. "Where is my wife," I asked? "Shut up," came the response. I was worried. I had some control over my fate in the way I responded, but not knowing Suzanne's was terrifying. "Where is she," I asked? The interrogator snapped back, "In the car, don't worry about her. What were you doing near the Iranian border, he demanded to know?" "Traveling to Baghdad," I replied. He snapped back, "That's not the road to Baghdad. Why were you spying on our military?" I responded, "I wasn't spying on your military. I wasn't spying on anyone's military. I must have gotten lost. My car broke down and your military passed us as we were trying to fix it."

The interrogation was not going well. My host was becoming more hostile and muttering something to the second goon with the gun who had a sadistic smile on his face as he pressed the muzzle of his weapon against my head. My heart began to

palpitate as reality gripped me. I began to fear the worst. I would never see my lovely wife again. The cold, the tiredness no longer mattered, although his foot in my groin was causing me pain, Somehow, before this thing got out of hand, I had to keep my cool and convince them that I was harmless. "Look," I said, "my wife and I received travel permission from your government. We just want to get home and go to sleep. I am a clerk, not a spy. If you don't believe me contact your Foreign Ministry, they'll tell you." I prayed someone in the ministry would be awake at 3 a.m.

The interrogator seemed perplexed. The Iraqi on the radio began talking faster into the mike. The questioning continued, "You hate Iraq and you hate Iraqi people." "No," I responded, "I don't hate Iraq and I like Iraqi people. Look, just because our governments don't get along doesn't mean we can't be friends." He looked astonished. Why would an American want to be anyone's friend? Iraqis were told Americans hated everyone, even other Americans. The regime pushed that propaganda to its people to the point where they showed American gangster movies on television each night just to convince themselves that Americans really are bad.

Across the room the dark figure with the radio began yelling in Arabic, I could make out some words. Someone in their ministry was awake and able to verify I was not a spy. The goon with the gun put it down. The interrogator looked bewildered. I almost felt pity for him. He hadn't caught a spy. If he had, it would have meant a promotion. Even more important, a new house or car. No five year waiting list. Instead he caught a clerk, a simple clerk who sends telegrams, nothing more, nothing less.

"Can we go now," I asked? 45 minutes had elapsed and I was worried about Suzanne. "No, not yet," the interrogator responded, "we first have tea." As if tea was going to erase the horrors of the last hour and turn the evening into a pleasant experience. I didn't argue. He held the cards, and the gun. We had our tea, to bit sweet

for my liking, but that's the way Iraqis like their tea. We had a second, and a third. He was trying to placate me, apparently realizing that he could get into trouble for roughing up a diplomat, even a low-level American clerk.

The niceties finished, we departed company. "Masalaama," he said. It meant good bye in Arabic. I kept quiet. Blindfolded again, I was driven back to my car. The blindfold taken off, Suzanne was nowhere to be seen. I approached my car, hesitated and feared the worst. I could take interrogation and even a bit of torture, but no, please God, don't let me lose my wife.

Suzanne was nowhere to be seen. I peered through the darkness into the front window of the car. Nothing. A wave of emotion swept over me. My eyes teared. A thousand pounds had been placed upon my shoulders. I couldn't breathe or think. I didn't want to contemplate the outcome. Again, I looked into the back seat. And again, there was nothing. Suddenly, the mass of blankets began to move. First there was a hand. Then the outline of a face emerged. It was Suzanne's. She was alive! My sorrow turned to joy as a wave of emotion engulfed me. We had been through a harrowing ordeal. Yet, at that moment, I was the happiest man in the world.

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### **Libyan Flies**

By Dick Kalla

The bright yellow early morning Libyan sun was already oppressively hot as I made my way through the pungent alleyway that ran behind the Hotel Grand in downtown Benghazi, Libya. Maybe the hotel had once been grand but those days were long past. It was now grand in name only. The surface of the alley was coated with a shimmering layer of black. On closer observation, it was black because of the thousands of flies that had made it their temporary stopover. Why they were in that alley, I don't know. Probably the hotel's garbage was stored back here. But, whatever the reason, the flies found it to their liking. Not just any flies mind you. These were authentic Libyan flies

- arrogant, opinionated and fearless. As I strode along they would, reluctantly, move just far enough to avoid death. Then, as soon as I had passed, they would settle back down in their original spot and go back to doing whatever flies do. It was always quite a sight to see me invade their territory and watch them evacuate their space just before my foot descended and then fill the gap back in as soon as my foot moved on.

I had discovered this shortcut behind the Grand not long after I arrived in Benghazi. It cut several minutes off the walking time between my apartment and the Embassy Office. I hadn't reckoned on the flies, but I was willing to put up with them to save time and footsteps. But, try as I might, I could never learn to treat them like the local populace did, with indifference. I think we, as Americans, are taught from birth that flies are dirty and something to avoid or even kill. Libyans did not seem to feel the same way. I suppose the high temperatures had something to do with that attitude. It was just too damn hot most of the time to bother with shooing flies away. Consequently, the locals let them have their way. It was maddening to me to watch a Benghazi resident allow a fly or flies to crawl slowly over his face, eyes and mouth and not chase it away. To be honest, though, not all Libyans allowed this to happen. I soon noticed that only males permitted the flies' free reign. Libyan females were smarter. Ladies, when in public, were required to be covered from head to foot. The only part that they could leave uncovered was one eye. Supposedly, this was for safety reasons. Someone had presumably deduced that covering both eyes was probably not a good idea and might lead to disastrous results. It was always explained to foreigners that this covering was for religious reasons. But I sometimes wondered if this custom wasn't started by the women themselves. Being the smarter sex, they probably got tired of flies crawling on them and decided to cover up. I've never actually seen this hypothesis printed elsewhere but I think I'm on to something.

But the flies weren't just bad in the

alley behind the Grand. Like any true flies worldwide, they liked to congregate with their buddies wherever there was the chance of a meal. One such place was the local butcher shop. There, meat from various animals was hung from hooks for shoppers to view. After a customer explained his or her cut of choice the butcher would remove the meat from the hook and cut away the chosen piece or pieces before returning what was left back to its hook. When I first visited the butcher I wondered why all the meat hanging up was a shade of black. Was it something the animals ate or drank that was causing the meat to be that color? On closer observation, it was soon apparent that the color was due to a covering of flies, happily feasting away. When the butcher removed the meat from the hook, the flies would buzz around angrily, filling the air with their protests. When the meat was returned to its hook, the flies would quickly settle back down and resume their meal. It was a tried and true system. The butchered meat provided food for the hungry flies and the flies provided a handy protective covering for the meat. Everyone was happy.

It was a Foreign Service custom at many small posts in those days to go to the airport to meet new arrivals and to wave goodbye to employees departing for new horizons. I suppose this is a practice still being carried out today. In any event, it was a typically hot day when my wife Pat and I along with the remaining staff of Embassy Office Benghazi traveled to the sweltering, fly-infested metal Quonset hut that served as the Benghazi International Airport terminal. We were there to welcome a newcomer to post. As we waited, I happened to glance over at Pat who was smiling and listening to an animated conversation with the others in our party of greeters. As I watched, I noticed that she had a dark speck on one of her teeth. I knew that husband-etiquette required me to tell her if I ever noticed anything stuck in her teeth. It was, I was told, very embarrassing to be caught with food debris in ones mouth and I should let her know, discreetly of course, if I it ever happened. This was

clearly such a moment and I sidled close to make her aware. As I got closer, it was soon obvious that the object on her tooth was no stray strand of spinach, this was ever so much worse. A fly had landed on Pat's tooth. I suppose it was just taking shelter from the oppressive Libyan sun and had discovered a cooler wetter place to perch. What was the best way to let her know what was happening? I could, of course, wait until there was a break in the discussion and whisper that she had a fly on her tooth. This, however, seemed like it required a more direct approach. So I did what any good husband would do under the same circumstances. I took the prompt direct approach. Screwing up my courage, I announced: "Pat, you've got a fly on your tooth." It would not be unfair to say that I now had her undivided attention. She took immediate steps to divest herself of the nasty creature that had invaded her person. I do not mean to imply that Pat made a big scene about it. She is too polite in a group setting to let that happen. But, she was clearly distressed by the incident and her demeanor for the rest of the stay at the airport was unsettled, at best. Then, when we arrived back home, the spitting and tooth brushing and mouthwash gargling began. I'm certain that she, in her heart, thanked me for letting her know, in front of our friends that she had a fly on her tooth. On the other hand, because of me everyone else now knew. Somehow, we lived through that terrible period in our lives. We even learned to keep our mouths shut to avoid having Libyan flies use our mouths as convenient stopovers. Pat agrees with me that the flies in Libya were a problem.

As my Foreign Service career and travels took me to other parts of the globe, I never again encountered flies quite as pesky, plentiful, and troublesome as the ones in Libya. That's not to say that some places didn't come close, but Libyan flies still stand supreme in my mind.

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**See you next quarter!**