

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 published 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 at: www.candoer.org.

The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need story 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, please send it to me at the following e-mail address:

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or to my snail-mail address:

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The **CANDOER** Newsletter will be available in three formats: as a Web Page; as an Adobe PDF file; and 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.

Cat's Corner

Well, here it is summer . . . finally! I thought it would never come what with the weird spring we experienced here in Southern Maryland. We had days in the 80s only to have it drop into the 50s the next day and wind, I do not remember a spring where the wind blew almost constantly. It cut into my fishing that's for sure. I don't take my 14 foot Jon boat out on the water when it is windy. It is hard to control. The wind blows it all over the place like it was a sail.

This issue contains a story that Stu Branch sent to me that I know all of you will enjoy!

In addition, there is a story from a New Jersey newspaper about one of our retirees, Eric Hughes. Eric is an avid three-cushion billiards player.

The one-liners, "Stuff we must learn", found in this issue were sent to me by **CANDOER** Bill Covey!

You cannot tell which direction the train went by looking at the track.

Silent Heroes

By Jean Law Geyer

The below poem was received from Jim Prosser, who received it from Charles Christian.

Charles stated that, "I read this poem after I gave the Benediction at the 2011 CIA Communications retiree reunion in Las Vegas. The author is a commo widow. She wrote it for the first reunion in Florida back in 1981."

Silent Heroes

From farms and factories they came;
From battlefields and city streets.
No monument displays their names,
No medals cast to laud their feats.

They grasped the flag and said, "I'll serve."

Not knowing where or what the task would be.

These men and women, clothed in youthful nerve

Went forth to silent battle eagerly.

And leaving home and family far behind,
They ventured where the wars were newly won.

With naught but freedom for their fellow man in mind;

The task of earning peace would ne'er be done.

They served, and never counted cost,
Nor could they boast of valor to their kin.
In silence served these men, a breed near lost,

But duty's call would have them rise again.
'Tho some would tarnish and defame heroic deeds,

And fantasized the truth they never knew,
'Tis on the brave the slanderous coward feeds,

And eyes, with jealous envy, valor's few.

Hold high your head, and ne'er forget your pride

In duty done and silent bravery shown,
Give thanks, for all those memories deep inside,

And Glory yet to come, from God alone.

Jean Law Geyer
(Widow)

I have seen the truth and it makes no sense.

The Wapama steam schooner going bye-bye for good

By Charles Christian

In the 1920's my father was on various ships in the Pacific and up and down the west coast in the passenger service. He did a year or so on the sister ship of the Wapama, the "Celilo". Both were built in Oregon in 1915.

After my father retired the Wapama was at the Hyde Street pier at the San

Francisco Maritime Museum with some other old time boats. There was a curator at the museum that left Matson Lines the same time my father retired in 1961. They had been long time friends. His name was Harlan Soeten. He was a mate on a Matson Ship in 1942 that was torpedoed by a U-Boat near Trinidad. Harlan spent 24 hours in a life boat before he was rescued. Harlan's wife was from Greece and she visited us when she was visiting Greece about 1962 during my three year tour at the embassy in Athens. I often saw Harlan and Alex at a local Greek Festival put on yearly by the church she went to. Harlan died about seven years ago.

I visited the Wapama when she was moved from the pier to Sausalito and put in dry dock as volunteers spent years trying to save her. She had been taken out of the water as she was hog backed and they were trying to correct that. They gave up and the ship was taken to the ship graveyard in Oakland.

She carried 60 passengers and 1.1 million board feet of lumber.

My father and Harlan were in the lounge of the boat about 1965 and taped, for the museum, an interview with Dad about his experiences and memories during his time aboard the Celilo.

He said things like the benches they were sitting on had seats that opened up to hold all the board games for the passengers to play with while at sea. The Chief Steward he had replaced appeared to have issued tickets in pencil, erased them when they were turned in and then resold them to new passengers on the next trip.

Passengers at the small ports in Puget Sound would come to board the ship (after it had been deck loaded with lumber to go to California) and be concerned at its small size. The crew would tell them that the boat was just the little boat to take them out to the big ship.

It was prohibition time and passengers would want booze when at sea. The room steward would take their money, ask if they wanted gin, scotch or bourbon, go below and fill up a bottle with the right flavoring

powder and then with clear high proof alcohol, shake, lick a label and stick it on, and then wait for it to dry fully before taking it to the buyer.

I have that taped interview and it brings tears to my wife and me. You can hear Dad clear his throat and cough often. He died of lung cancer in 1972. The Doctor says it may be his life long smoking, but maybe it was all those years in old ships full of asbestos.

It was another time.

**There is always one more imbecile
than you counted on.**

My Wife Will Kill Me

By John Lemandri

In 1980 after coming out of Iraq, I remember nearly passing out in the hallways of the State Department, and praying in bed at night I would make it to the next morning. I had absolutely no idea what was wrong with me, except I felt weak and at times ready to pass out. Concerned, the State Department sent me for a physical examination, whereupon I was diagnosed as having an irregular heart beat. A cardiologist and a heart surgeon from Georgetown University Medical Center, upon consulting with each other, informed me my situation was serious enough to warrant an operation to replace my left ventricle (heart valve), or else I could die.

Shocked, I hesitated for a second, looked them both in the eye and remarked, "Doc, I'm in great shape. I run six miles non stop, swim a mile non stop and have sex twice a year!"

"What, you have sex twice a year?" exclaimed the cardiologist.

"Yes," I said rather proudly.

"Then cut that down to once per year," he jokingly demanded.

"Then for sure I will die," I cried out.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because," I said, "My wife will kill me."

Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious

Tribute to Les Oly

By Dick Kalla

As reported on the [CANDOER web site \(WWW.CANDOER.ORG\)](http://WWW.CANDOER.ORG), my friend Les Oly died on May 6, in his home in Falls Church, VA. Les, who was only 58, was on assignment in the Department. He went far too soon.

Les and I served together in Jakarta. Some of you may have run into him over the years at one of his other assignments such as Pakistan, Brazil, Ontario, Central African Republic, Israel, Austria or maybe when he was an African Rover. Les was a great guy. One of the best I worked with in my 33 year F.S. career. He was smart and he was funny. Willing to argue politics at the drop of a hat, Les was a formidable opponent who had all his facts straight. I will miss him greatly.

Prior to joining the Foreign Service, Les served in the Coast Guard. After the Coast Guard, he returned to his Montana roots and graduated from the University of Montana. With degree in hand, he returned to Seattle, where most of his Coast Guard service had taken place, and worked for a time as a jailer in the suburban city of Issaquah. That stint, his work in communications in the Coast Guard and his degree in education would prove to be a perfect match for the work of F.S. communicator. So with his wife and family, Les set sail for the life we all know so well where he excelled at the opportunities he was given and rose quickly through the ranks.

Those of you who knew Les will probably remember that he loved a good joke and that he was quite fond of and very capable of pulling a harmless prank or two. As I contemplated the sad news of Les's passing, I couldn't help but reflect on an incident from our time in Indonesia where his reputation got the best of him.

The incident in question started off

innocently enough. Those of us in the IPU were sitting around reading the weekly Embassy Newsletter when we spotted, in the personal announcements section, a plea from one of the Embassy secretaries who was departing post. This kind person had been feeding, spaying and caring for the many cats that roamed the Embassy compound and was looking for someone to take her place.

So far, so good. Certainly there was a "good Samaritan" out there in the Embassy family who would take on this important duty. This was truly fodder for those of us who worked in a secure area without windows, and I must admit here that, like Les, I have also been the architect of more than my share of sophomoric humor attempts over the years.

In this case, it just happened that another one of the Embassy's stable of secretaries had made it quite well known, at least to us up in the IPU, that she hated, nay, despised cats. The feral creatures roaming the Embassy grounds were the bane of her existence. She would expound this hatred with great venom to any of us who made the mistake of asking her how things were going.

This was just too good to pass up, so I ginned up a notice, pretending that it was from her, for publication in the next Newsletter stating that she would be pleased to take over the duties as unofficial cat lover/protector and praising her predecessor for her fine work. The exact wording of this missive escapes me, but the reader will get the idea. I laid it on thick. By now you might be wondering what this had to do with Les. Suffice it to say that at this point in the story, he was all for what I had done and, in fact, encouraged me, though I needed little encouragement, I must admit.

I hadn't anticipated the sense of outrage this notice might provoke. She had been wronged and somebody was going to pay. It was truly shocking. Instead of laughing it off, she made it a federal case. It didn't take long for her to decide that this offending work had come from the IPU.

After all there were "jokers" like Les Oly working there. Eventually, we were all called down to the Admin Officer's office and interrogated. We were told that we had to come clean and apologize or she would be taking her case straight to the Department of State. Eventually, the DCM even got involved, so relentless had her calls for justice become.

Finally, as the perpetrator of this offensive posting, I admitted my culpability and apologized to the offended and by now litigious secretary who had been severely wounded by this terrible action. That, one would suppose, would be the end of the story. It was not. Les, who hadn't been completely innocent in this great caper, was still thought to be the perpetrator of the evil deed. No matter whom I apologized to or tried to convince that it had been me, and only me who wrote the notice, it was believed by most that it was Les who had really done it. I was only taking the heat because I was the section head. But, without further proof, the incident slowly died out. The secretary and others in the Embassy will go to their graves convinced that Les was the one who pulled the prank.

Rest in peace, friend Les. I've just admitted to the world that you were innocent (mostly) and I'm sorry you were blamed.

Doolittle's Raiders

Received from Stu Branch



It's the cup of brandy that no one wants to drink.

On Tuesday, in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, the surviving Doolittle Raiders gathered publicly for the last time.

They once were among the most universally admired and revered men in the United States. There were 80 of the Raiders in April 1942, when they carried out one of the most courageous and heart-stirring military operations in this nation's history. The mere mention of their unit's name, in those years, would bring tears to the eyes of grateful Americans.

Now only four survive.

After Japan's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, with the United States reeling and wounded something dramatic was needed to turn the war effort around.

Even though there were no friendly airfields close enough to Japan for the United States to launch retaliation, a daring plan was devised. Sixteen B-25s were modified so that they could take off from the deck of an aircraft carrier. This had never before been tried -- sending such big, heavy bombers from a carrier.

The 16 five-man crews, under the command of Lt. Col. James Doolittle, who himself flew the lead plane off the USS Hornet, knew that they would not be able to return to the carrier. They would have to hit Japan and then hope to make it to China for a safe landing.

But on the day of the raid, the Japanese military caught wind of the plan. The Raiders were told that they would have to take off from much farther out in the Pacific Ocean than they had counted on. They were told that because of this they would not have enough fuel to make it to safety.

And those men went anyway.

They bombed Tokyo, and then flew as far as they could. Four planes crash-landed; 11 more crews bailed out, and three of the Raiders died. Eight more were captured; three were executed. Another died of starvation in a Japanese prison camp. One crew made it to Russia.

The Doolittle Raid sent a message from

the United States to its enemies, and to the rest of the world: We will fight.

And, no matter what it takes, we will win.

Of the 80 Raiders, 62 survived the war. They were celebrated as national heroes, models of bravery. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced a motion picture based on the raid; "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo," starring Spencer Tracy and Van Johnson, was a patriotic and emotional box-office hit, and the phrase became part of the national lexicon. In the movie-theater previews for the film, MGM proclaimed that it was presenting the story "with supreme pride."

Beginning in 1946, the surviving Raiders have held a reunion each April, to commemorate the mission. The reunion is in a different city each year. In 1959, the city of Tucson, Arizona, as a gesture of respect and gratitude, presented the Doolittle Raiders with a set of 80 silver goblets. Each goblet was engraved with the name of a Raider.

Every year, a wooden display case bearing all 80 goblets is transported to the reunion city. Each time a Raider passes away; his goblet is turned upside down in the case at the next reunion, as his old friends bear solemn witness.

Also in the wooden case is a bottle of 1896 Hennessy Very Special cognac. The year is not happenstance: 1896 was when Jimmy Doolittle was born.

There has always been a plan: When there are only two surviving Raiders, they would open the bottle, at last drink from it, and toast their comrades who preceded them in death.

As 2013 began, there were five living Raiders; then, in February, Tom Griffin passed away at age 96.

What a man he was. After bailing out of his plane over a mountainous Chinese forest after the Tokyo raid, he became ill with malaria, and almost died. When he recovered, he was sent to Europe to fly more combat missions. He was shot down, captured, and spent 22 months in a German prisoner of war camp.

The selflessness of these men, the

sheer guts ... there was a passage in the Cincinnati Enquirer obituary for Mr. Griffin that, on the surface, had nothing to do with the war, but that emblemizes the depth of his sense of duty and devotion:

"When his wife became ill and needed to go into a nursing home, he visited her every day. He walked from his house to the nursing home, fed his wife and at the end of the day brought home her clothes. At night, he washed and ironed her clothes. Then he walked them up to her room the next morning. He did that for three years until her death in 2005."

So now, out of the original 80, only four Raiders remain: Dick Cole (Doolittle's copilot on the Tokyo raid), Robert Hite, Edward Saylor and David Thatcher. All are in their 90s. They have decided that there are too few of them for the public reunions to continue.

The events in Fort Walton Beach this week will mark the end. It has come full circle; Florida's nearby Eglin Field was where the Raiders trained in secrecy for the Tokyo mission.

The town is planning to do all it can to honor the men: a six-day celebration of their valor, including luncheons, a dinner and a parade.

Do the men ever wonder if those of us for whom they helped save the country have tended to it in a way that is worthy of their sacrifice? They don't talk about that, at least not around other people. But if you find yourself near Fort Walton Beach this week, and if you should encounter any of the Raiders, you might want to offer them a word of thanks. I can tell you from firsthand observation that they appreciate hearing that they are remembered.

The men have decided that after this final public reunion they will wait until a later date -- some time this year -- to get together once more, informally and in absolute privacy. That is when they will open the bottle of brandy. The years are flowing by too swiftly now; they are not going to wait until there are only two of them.

They will fill the four remaining

upturned goblets.

And raise them in a toast to those who are gone.

No amount of advance planning will ever replace dumb luck.

Perth Amboy native competes in national billiards tourney

By Suzanne Russell

Growing up in Perth Amboy Erie Hughes learned to play three-cushion billiards from Steve Mizerak Sr., father of former world champion pool player Steve Mizerak Jr., in the family's Madison Avenue pool hall.

"The father told me one day 'you shoot pretty good pool, but I think you'd be interested in three-cushion billiards.'"

Eric tried it.

"I didn't know what I was doing, but I knew I liked it," said Eric, who played the game in his high school years and then stopped for about 35 years before resuming play in 2006.

"It's filling in my retirement years. I love the game," said Eric, who in 2005 was inducted into the Perth Amboy High School Hall of Fame.

Eric had a billiards room built onto the back of his Washington, D.C., home and dedicated it to Steve Mizerak Sr. and his son, Steve Jr. who became one of pools more recognizable figures by appearing in training videos, beer commercials and the 1986 Paul Newman film, "The Color of Money," before he died in 2006. Eric has framed photos of the Mizeraks in his billiards room.

Eric competed in the 2013 U.S. Billiards Association National Three-Cushion Championship at the New Jersey Convention and Expo Center.

"It's real poignant for me to play the game in the national tournament in Edison," said Eric, adding the tournament was previously held in Las Vegas. "It's an opportunity not to be missed."

Eric said this is the first time the tournament, which brings together the best three-cushion billiard players in the

country, was held in New Jersey. About 50 players competed.

Pedro Piedrabuena of San Diego is the reigning national champion.

Eric said three-cushion billiards is an unusual game to play.

"It's difficult. There are no pockets. It's not a pool table where you put the ball in the hole," said Eric, explaining the billiards table measures 10-feet long by 4-feet wide. "Everything is played on the top of the table."

Eric said shots are played off one ball that has to hit three cushions before hitting another ball to score a point.

"There are so many ways you can do it. There is a certain system you use. The top layers know the system backward and forward," said Eric about the sport that is played all over the world. "It keeps your mind sharp. There is a lot of math involved."

"It keeps you humble because when you think you know a lot about the game, you miss a shot. If you're not on your best game you can miss a shot," Eric said. "It's a game you can miss by millimeters. You can't appreciate a trick shot until you understand the game."

Three-cushion billiards is a gentleman's game. The strict dress code requires competitors to wear bow ties, vest, long-sleeve dress shirts, black slacks, black socks and black shoes.

"It's a great game. Pool halls do not have tables like this. Nobody understands what the game is," Eric said.

Eric is trying to spread the popularity of the sport to Anguilla, the Caribbean island where his family is from. He has organized an Anguilla Pocket Billiards Association to inspire the local youth to get involved in the game and off the streets. He's still trying to get support to coordinate a billiards tournament between players in Anguilla and the island of St. Maarten, located a 10 to 12 minutes board ride away. He plans to visit the island this summer.

See you next quarter!