

# CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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Winter Issue

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Welcome to the latest issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERs** (**C**ommunicators **A**ND **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](http://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:

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

or to my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

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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.

**America is the only country where a significant proportion of the population believes that professional wrestling is real but the moon landing was faked.**

**David Letterman**

### Cat's Corner

Winter! I hate winter! Come on spring!

In November, when I mowed the yard for the last time this year, I thought about a poem that a good friend of mine wrote about mowing lawns. You longtime **CANDOER** Newsletter readers will remember the stories of this friend, the late **Herb Walden**. I published many of his stories in previous editions. His poem, "Mowing the Lawn," is repeated in this issue!

We have a new author this quarter, **Bryon Hallman**. Thank you **Bryon** for your contribution!

The one-liners, included in this issue were furnished by **Jim Prosser**.

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The following was received from **Tom Lacy**:

Hello **Cat**,

Thanks for keeping this going.

I just want to update you on my situation so you can share it on your site.

My contact information is still current. I retired 09/12; but 11/12 was re-hired as a WAE, for IRM as a COMSEC Auditor. However, I am based in Bangkok where my wife is assigned. Her assignment in Bangkok is for three years, then we will be off to another assignment.

I certainly hope to have the opportunity some day to attend one of the gatherings, out west.

Again--Thank You! **Tom**

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The following was received from **Bob White**:

**Cat**,  
Thanks for the newsletter. It is always a pleasure to read about our fellow OC/IRM/IM folks.

Bye the Bye: Should any of the folks be in the area, they are welcome to stop by. We always enjoy the company.  
Regards to all, **Bob & Kris**

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The following was received from **Jim Prosser**:

Hi **Bob**:

You may wish to include the below publication in the **CANDOER** web site's reading list. It's loaded with fascinating true stories of Foreign Service life. About 25% of the stories contained therein are mine.

Jim P.

### **SERVING AMERICA ABROAD**

Real Life Adventures of American Diplomatic Families Overseas  
Irwin Rubenstein, Editor

To order copies of this book, contact:  
[www.xlibris.com](http://www.xlibris.com) Tel. 1-888-795-4274

The nearly 130 stories in this book (334 pages) were gathered from the members of the FSRA (Foreign Service Retirees Association of Florida) through the repeated requesting, cajoling and near badgering of George Bernard, FSRA's Historian. Without George and Muriel, his wife, who painstakingly assembled everything on a computer disc, there would be no book. A great deal of technical/computer advice and assistance was furnished repeatedly by Peter Shulman, close friend of the editor. Estelle Rubenstein, the editor's wife, proof-read the entire book.

A team of FSRA volunteers was then assembled to put the stories into shape for publishing. They are: Irwin Rubenstein, Barbara Floyd, Stanley Harris, Betty Matthews, Frank Devine, and Arlene Mitchell.

Everyone in FSRA owes a large debt of gratitude to the people mentioned above who spent so much of their time and energy in producing this book, plus the many authors who contributed accounts of actual events of their lives. We all hope the readers think the end product is worth the effort.

The following was received from **Charles Christian:**

We attended the CIRA (Central Intelligence Retiree Association) luncheon at Arlington, VA during our visit to Northern VA last week. I did not retire from there but have enough time in to qualify to be a member. John Brennan, current Director of the CIA, was supposed to be the speaker but could not due to the Government shutdown. Mike Morrell was his deputy and just recently retired. (Google him to see his story and why he retired). He spoke off the record and told us of his great concern and fear about five threats to the U.S. currently.

1. IRAN, North Korea and their soon to have capability to use nuclear bombs. One or both will have ability to hit the U.S. with their missiles. Red China will be an increasing threat to us and others soon.
2. Syria and the five wars within the fighting there now. Terrorists may win and then control the country and it will be the spring board for attacks against us.
3. Cyber war. Going to get worse and it takes 1-1/2 years to come up with defense against a new type of attack.
4. The policies of the U.S. at this time to prevent harm from the above (i.e., Obama and his administration).
5. The Taliban and Al Qaeda will grow and terrorism will spread probably to here.

The large audience was silent and grim looking after he finished. I probably turned white and sat there after the meeting was over in deep thought. Sorry for the sad news, but so goes our probable future. Hunker down and bolt the doors. Lock and load. Pray!

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**I'm not a paranoid, deranged  
millionaire. God damn it, I'm a  
billionaire.  
Howard Hughes**

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**The Farmer Lost His Ass**  
by John Lemandri

My friend and I were returning to Baghdad from a trip to northern Iraq where we had

visited the ancient caravan city of Hatra. Built during the 3rd century B.C., the city successfully fought off attacks by both the Parthian and Sassanian Persians, and even two attempts by the Romans until it finally fell to treachery. We found a few interesting coins and even some baseball size catapult stones laying on the ramparts, which was pretty impressive considering they had lain there for centuries.

The road dropped off to a steep ravine on both sides as we headed home when all of a sudden a group of donkeys or asses came running up the ravine and on to the road in front of us. I immediately hit the breaks of my vehicle but alas, it was too late. Though the truck suffered some front end damage, the farmer, no doubt, lost his ass.

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**The only reason they say 'Women and  
children first' is to test the strength of  
the lifeboats.**

**Jean Kerr**

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### **Iraq in the News**

By James F. Prosser

The war situation in Iraq is before us in the news every day. The turmoil of that nation goes back centuries in history.

Just over fifty years ago the Foreign Service was quickly expanding in the post World War II era. Then as now, hiring, training and assigning new personnel abroad was being done, sometimes without paying too much attention to suitability of those going to difficult posts.

Baghdad in 1954 certainly was one. The monarchy was about to be tumbled by the Baathists and replaced by what has existed there since. The news from Iraq even then was brutal and gory to say the least. The British and U.S. were trying desperately to maintain the monarchy, but the efforts failed in a very nasty, bloody, coup d'état.

A code clerk (precursor to today's information specialist) was urgently needed to help beef up the Embassy's code room staff. In those days, not even electro-mechanical cryptographic machines were

used in Baghdad. All messages to and from the post were encrypted in either the strip cipher or one-time-pad systems. (Someone should write an article on them!)

Both systems were slow, cumbersome, and labor intensive. Code clerks working on messages in the strip cipher system usually ended up being cross-eyed after working a few days on them. Security of strip encrypted messages was weak, requiring the cipher strips to be changed frequently. On the other hand, the one-time-pad was very secure for messages, for they could not be deciphered by an interceptor.

To fill Baghdad's critical need of another code clerk, a newly hired young lady from a small town in Kansas was sent there as soon as she finished her code clerk training. She was very impressionable and astounded at the dangerous, violent, but exciting life going on all around her. There was a large volume of very important encrypted telegraphic traffic between the post and Washington.

One day while deciphering a high-precedence message in the one-time-pad system, to her great surprise, she saw that it was classified "TOP SECRET". For reasons only she knows, when typing it up on a message form, she kept a copy of it for herself and included it in a personal letter she wrote home to her mother back in Kansas to demonstrate the kind of important work she was doing in Baghdad. Her mother, being suitably impressed took the letter with the "TOP SECRET" telegram and had it published with a story in the local newspaper so all the folks at home would know what one of their citizens was doing abroad in the Foreign Service.

Eventually a news service saw the story and contacted the Department of State for confirmation of the text of the "TOP SECRET" message which appeared verbatim in a small town Kansas newspaper.

Consternation and chagrin in the Department were perhaps mild descriptions as to how this could possibly have happened.

Of course, the miscreant, sadder but wiser, was immediately brought home and dismissed from the Foreign Service.

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**When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.**

**Prince Philip**

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### **Mowing the Lawn**

By the late Herb Walden

Well, spring has sprung,  
And winter is gone,  
And once again  
I'm mowing the lawn.

Grass growing like crazy  
Hither, thither, and yon.  
Looks like a long summer  
Just mowing the lawn.

Oh, I get some rest  
From dusk until dawn,  
But the rest of the time  
I'll be mowing the lawn.

Sometimes I break  
To go to the john,  
But in a few minutes,  
I'm back mowing the lawn.

My summer fishing  
Is more off than on,  
Since, I'm way too busy  
Just mowing the lawn.

I'm getting real tired  
And starting to yawn,  
But I can't take a nap  
Cause I'm mowing the lawn.

Lots of jobs  
Seem to go on and on,  
But they're nothing compared  
To mowing the lawn.

By the end of the summer  
I'll look old and drawn  
Cause I've spent so much time  
Mowing the lawn.

In the years that pass  
 Long after I'm gone,  
 I'll be remembered  
 For mowing the lawn.

"Here lies Herb Walden"  
 (My tombstone---engraved upon)  
 "He didn't do much  
 But he sure could mow lawn!"

**Herb Walden - 1998**

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**Kill one man and you're a murderer,  
 kill a million and you're a conqueror.  
 Jean Rostand**

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**Travel by Car - Cyprus to West Berlin**  
 (A believe it or not chain of events)  
 By Bryon Hallman

I served as CPO at the embassy in Nicosia, Cyprus from 1979 to 1981. Having spent the previous 15 years of my FS career overseas, I asked for a Washington assignment. When told that OC did not know where to place me, I gave it some thought, and decided to apply for an excursion assignment with SY based on my locksmith certificates(s) (the only training I got using my GI Bill). I was informed that my application had been accepted. What I did not know, and was later informed, was that if OC cut orders for my next OC assignment before SY did, then I would be ineligible to take the excursion. That's just what happened; and my OC orders were cut ten months prior to the end of my Nicosia assignment reassigning me to West Berlin.

During my Nicosia assignment my off time was pretty much occupied working on cars I had purchased there. The first was a 1959 Mercedes which I purchased soon after the beginning of my assignment; and the second a 1960 Jaguar. Both were great running cars with right hand drive. Upon transfer, I did not want to part with either, so I decided to send the Mercedes under the authority of my transfer orders, and figure an alternative way to get the Jaguar

to West Berlin. I came up with a brilliant scheme to leave the car with the RSO, go on my home leave, and while my family would go to West Berlin direct, I would return to Cyprus and pick up the car and drive it to my new post. As it worked out, by prorating my travel to West Berlin via Cyprus, I would not be out of pocket. I'm sure many **CANDOERS** have had similar schemes.

So my family and I enjoyed our home leave visiting my parents in Pennsylvania, and then driving to San Antonio, TX, my home leave address, to visit my wife's relatives.

My family would remain in San Antonio while I drove to Pennsylvania, put my car (a 1957 Cadillac Fleetwood) in local storage, and prepare for my journey to Cyprus. My family would begin their travel once I was in West Berlin.

A few days later I would find myself in Cyprus at the home of the RSO making my onward plans for what would become an almost unbelievable journey. It took only a day to make plans to take a ferry from Cyprus to Greece, and a second ferry from a port in the Western part of Greece to Ancona, Italy.

The trunk of my Jaguar was full, and suitcases were in the back seat. Having all the tickets needed I drove to the port to depart with the ferry to Greece. The first problem was that during my home leave my registration had expired on the Jaguar, and I was not permitted to leave Cyprus with the car until I had paid for another year's registration. I was accompanied to an office where the proper registration papers could be purchased. But it was Sunday, and that meant going to the house of the person who would fulfill my request for my car's registration. That was done, but not without paying a good tip to have the papers done immediately so I could get back to the port in time to process the papers and get my car on the ferry.

Returning in time to catch the ferry, I was a happy camper in my assigned room with my two suitcases, on my way to Piraeus, Greece.

On the ferry I roomed with and befriended an English fellow traveling from Saudi Arabia to England with his car. The ferry was full and very loud most of the night and we got little sleep. Morning came soon enough, and my new friend and I were approaching Rhodes where we were able to spend a few hours relaxing while drinking a beer or two watching the tourists. As we were talking I looked up and saw a ferry in the distance. I said, "What would we do if we did not return to our ferry in time?" He had no idea. So we returned to the dock only to discover that the ferry we saw was our ferry. My friend said that the ferry surely left the dock earlier than scheduled. Come to find out that his watch was set for Saudi time, and he did not reset his time for Greece. So we had gotten ourselves in a real jam with our cars and valuables on the ferry while we were stranded.

We immediately went to the travel office at the dock, but there was nothing that could be done. Now I really felt stranded, and evening was approaching. I had Cypriot pounds in my pocket, but did not want to spend them on a hotel; so we suffered in the cool weather of night. I had shower clogs, wore shorts, and a t-shirt.

In the morning we went to an airline office, and I told them our sad story. I was informed that the flight to Athens was fully booked. After begging and pleading with the lady working the travel desk, she bumped two people off the plane to accommodate us. I had enough money to pay for the tickets after taking a loss on the exchange to hasten the exchange to pay for the tickets before they were no longer available to us.

So now we were on the plane looking like two bums; but on the plane nevertheless thinking about the two passengers whose seats we had taken. I took half the Greek Drachma and gave it to my friend just in case we got split up he'd have money enough to get to the port. We arrived at the domestic terminal just by the water. After checking through customs my friend could not find the money I gave him.

It was lost or stolen. Now my remaining funds were only enough to get us to the port of Piraeus. After a bus ride and then a short run with a taxi we were at the port just two hours before the ferry was to arrive. Can you imagine two fellows trying to force their way up of the stairs of the ferry as two hundred or more people are trying to disembark? I said a silent prayer when I discovered my baggage and valuables were not touched and another when I was sitting in my car just ten minutes before being motioned to drive off the ferry. I said good-bye to my friend and wished him luck.

I had been assigned to Athens earlier in my career and knew my way around. First on my list in Athens was to go to the embassy and cash a check. There were many FSNs who remembered me, and I had no trouble getting a map of Greece, and ESSO coupons for the gas I'd need in the event that my money ran out. The next day I began driving west to the port which would take me by ferry to Ancona, Italy.

Three things happened that would make me unhappy. First, I saw no ESSO gas stations all the way to the port. Second, the brake servo on the car ruptured and I had to pump four to five times to slow me down. So I down shifted and used the hand brake to accomplish coming to a halt. And third, my arranged passage on the ferry did not include my car, and it consumed much more of my remaining funds. Because of the three recent disappointments, I was concerned about ever getting to West Berlin, and would I have enough money.

Proceeding on the high speed highways through Italy, Austria, Germany, I had my heart in my mouth driving at up to 100 mph having only my hand brake and down shifting to insure that I could come to a complete halt.

I was on my second day driving since leaving Ancona, and picked up a fellow named Kent who was hitch hiking to England. I was looking at every gas station thinking I'd see ESSO. Not one to be

found. Now my funds became lower and I began to worry. I gassed up once, and now needed to fill the tank again. I had a credit card and told the passenger to go inside and see if they would accept the card for payment. He came out and said "Yes", so I happily filled up. When I went inside to pay; they changed their mind. Now I was worried that I would not have enough money to pay the bill, but I did have enough; but wondered if I'd have enough gas in the tank to get to Frankfurt. At that point, I had about five or six dollars in Greek, Italian, and Austrian currency. Kent gave me a five pound note. That might come in handy. A few hours later Kent went on his way while I continued to Frankfurt alone.

Frankfurt was within range now and I had a quarter of a tank of gas remaining. Dumb luck would be on my side because the exit I took was very close to the Consulate. I knew many couriers during those days, and was told that I would be welcome to stay if I'm ever in the area. I got directions to one of my friends and knocked on his door. I said, "Well, here I am. Is the invitation still open?" I had a very good night's sleep after a good meal.

In the morning I gassed up. It would turn out to be my last visit to a gas station. I also cashed a two hundred dollar check, half in Marks and half in US dollars. About a mile up from the consulate I saw my first ESSO station. I laughed to myself.

Now I was on my way to Helmstedt to obtain flag orders to enter the corridor which would take me to West Berlin.

At Helmstedt the US military made me gut the contents of my car completely. I was disturbed. The subject of flag orders was not mentioned, and shortly I was in eyesight of the entrance to the corridor.

Once there I saw a free spot and soon drove to it. I was asked for some papers, which I did not have. After checking my diplomatic passport in a small building, it was returned to me and I was told to proceed. Gates were opened and I soon realized that there was no other place to get my flag orders. I just kept driving. I

knew that the license plates of the military and diplomatic corps personnel were green. So that's what I looked for, and followed as close as I could because I knew they were on their way to West Berlin. In time I was very close to West Berlin, and saw signs directing military in one direction, and civilians to another. I should have gone in the military side, but knew that in the absence of the flag orders would not be allowed to use the corridor for six months to a year. My other option was the civilian side. I came up to the entrance and saw the German guards. They wanted my passport, and then asked why I was trying to get into West Berlin that way. I lied and said I made a mistake. I was not permitted to get out of my car. That guard chewed and chewed until he was almost out of breath. I apologized more than once. This was no time to be my jovial self, but did ask if I was going to be taken to a jail. He said "no". Then I ask if he knew the location of the US Mission and could he give me directions and could I enter. He said I could enter. What a relief. I soon was at the US Mission on Blvd ClayAlle, and was soon greeted by the Administrative Officer. Thirty minutes later I was in my assigned housing. He said he was baffled. He asked, "How in the world did you through the gates of the corridor at Helmstedt, and then into West Berlin without flag orders?" I just said it was a long story.

P.S. I never did use my ESSO coupons; I still have that five pound note that Kent gave me; and, I still have a deteriorating Jaguar, but with good brakes.

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### Winter of My Life

Received from Leo and Ann Cyr

**You** know time has a way of moving quickly and catching you unaware of the passing years.

It seems just yesterday that I was young, just married and embarking on my new life with my mate.

And yet in a way, it seems like eons ago, and I wonder where all the years went.

I know that I lived them all...And I have glimpses of how it was back then and of all my hopes and dreams... But, here it is...The winter of my life and it catches me by surprise.

How did I get here so fast? Where did the years go and where did my youth go?

I remember well...Seeing older people through the years and thinking that those older people were years away from me and that winter was so far off

That I could not fathom it or imagine fully what it would be like...But, here it is... My friends are retired and getting grey... They move slower and I see an older person now.

Some are in better and some worse shape than me...But, I see the great change...Not like the ones that I remember who were young and vibrant...But, like me, their age is beginning to show and we are now those older folks that we used to see and never thought we'd be.

Each day now, I find that just getting a shower is a real target for the day! And taking a nap is not a treat anymore... it's mandatory! 'Cause if I don't on my own free will...I just fall asleep where I sit!

And so, now I enter into this new season of my life unprepared for all the aches and pains and the loss of strength and ability to go and do things that I wish I had done but never did!!

Yes, I have regrets.

There are things I wish I hadn't done... Things I should have done, but indeed, there are many things I'm happy to have done.

It's all in a lifetime...

So, if you're not in your winter yet... Let me remind you, that it will be here faster than you think. Whatever you would like to accomplish in your life, please do it quickly! Don't put things off too long!!

Life goes by quickly. So, do what you can today, as you can never be sure whether this is your winter or not!

You have no promise that you will see all the seasons of your life...

So, live for today and say all the things

you want your loved ones to remember... And hope they appreciate and love you for all the things you have done for them in all the years past!!

Life is a gift to you.

The way you live your life is your gift to those who come after. Make it a fantastic one.

~ And, Remember ~

**"It is health that is real wealth  
And not pieces of gold or silver."**

**Having more money doesn't make you  
happier. I have 50 million dollars but  
I'm just as happy as when I had 48  
million.**

**Arnold Schwarzenegger**

**See you next quarter!**