**CANDOER News**

**- - ISSUE 100 - -**

**A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement**

**July 2014 Summer Issue Volume 14 – Number 2**

**Inside this issue**

**CANDOER's Corner 2**

By Bob Catlin

**Clearing the queue** **2**

 By Dick Kalla

**The Dodo with the butterfly net** **3**

 By John Lemandri

**I'm not old - I'm only mature 4** Furnished by Judy Chidester

**Renaming the Titanic 4**

By Bob Catlin

**Oh, what a night 5**

By Richard Hofer

**W**elcome to the latest issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOER**s (**C**ommunicators **AND** **O**thers **E**njoying **R**etirement). The **Newsletter** will be published quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for your reading enjoyment 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: **candoercat@gmail.com**

or to my snail‑mail address:

Robert J. Catlin, Sr.

2670 Dakota Street

Bryans Road, MD 20616‑3062

Tel: (301) 535-9263

 Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

 This newsletter is available on the Web **only**, free, to any and all.

 None of the material in this newsletter has a copyright, ***unless otherwise noted***. If you wish to print the newsletter and make copies to distribute to others, please feel free to do so.

 The **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.

**CANDOER's Corner**

**100th issue of the CANDOER News** **T**hose of you who are newer **CANDOER**s may not know this, but for the first six years of this **Newsletter** it was published every month and was, at a minimum, four two-sided pages long. In December every year the **Newsletter** was 2-3 pages long but that issue included a Directory of Members that was many, many pages long.

 For the first four years the only way of getting the **Newsletter** was by snail-mail. Nancy and I used to mail over 120 copies of the **Newsletter** every month. That was two days of printing, stuffing envelopes, putting on address labels, and adding postage. Of course, that did not include the many hours typing and editing the issues.

 At that time I was asking for a monetary donation to help off set the cost of printing and mailing with an extra donation so when a member passed I could donate $50, in their name, to their favorite charity.

 In the spring of 1999 I decided to start a web site, with no prior knowledge on how to do it. Purchase of a couple of HTML books, on-line lessons, practice on a free web host cites and the **CANDOER** web site was launched.

 When the web site became operational I cut back on the mailing of the **Newsletter**. For those members who had internet access, I posted it to the web site. For those who did not, 45 members, I still mailed it.

 In 2001, due to lack of personal time, because I had gone back to work full time at Pro-­telligent, I quit publishing the **Newsletter**. 70 issues had been published at that time. (By the way, every issue ever published is still available on the **CANDOER.ORG** web site.)

 In April of 2007, after quitting full time work, for the third time, I started the **Newsletter** back up as a quarterly newsletter available on the web site only.

 When I started back up, because my only expense in publishing the **Newsletter** was to register the domain and for hosting, I occasionally asked for donations for those expenses.

 The last time I asked for donations I received over $850; sufficient funds to pay for the web site for six or seven more years. This fund presently has a balance of $662!

 **With your help, I hope to reach 125 issues, but this can only happen with your help**.

***I NEED STORIES!***

**W**ell, summer has finally arrived and if you live on the east coast I am sure you're as glad as I am that this winter is finally over.

 **T**he poem "I'm not old - I'm only mature" was sent to me by Judy Chidester. Thanks Judy!

**Clearing the Queue**

By Dick Kalla

**A**fter I joined the Foreign Service, I discovered that it might be possible to retire when I turned 50. What a lofty goal. Heck, I would still be young enough to do something else, something fun and rewarding. With the skills I was acquiring working overseas in the Communication Center I was well-positioned to jump right in at the drive-thru window at McDonalds, for example. The world was my oyster.

 As time passed some of the luster of the McDonalds idea faded. The cost of daily life kept the savings account closer to the empty mark than full. Kids were born and eventually needed college tuition. For anyone with a lick of fiscal sense, the financial repercussions of always avoiding that Washington assignment and having no mortgage payments through the years would have meant a large nest egg set aside. Not being one of those sensible people, with retirement would come my very first house mortgage. This would put me way behind the average retiree who had, over the years, undoubtedly accrued a great deal of home equity during one or more of their stateside tours.

 So the dream of early retirement faded a little. Reality set in and I was forced to put my dream of departing at a young age aside, at least for a little while. Besides, by then I had found my rhythm and rather enjoyed the work. The travel wasn't bad either. The chance for my family to experience different cultures while working together as a family unit as strangers in a strange land was too intoxicating for me to leave prematurely but, eventually, kids left the nest and the prospect of retiring early once again reared its head.

 As I slowly rose up the ladder to more of a leadership position, I was required to step away from the day-to-day operations that had previously taken up so much of my day-to-day work life. At two one-man posts and some with a larger crew, it had been necessary for me to come to work every morning and "clear the queue." This meant that I and any fellow communicators pulled up the messages that had been stored or accumulated during the night and prepared them so that the various Embassy entities could both catch up on what was happening around the world and receive their marching orders.

 The method that we used to pass these messages changed over the years. In the beginning it meant a mimeograph machine and blue clothing (those that used the mimeograph will understand this reference). That was followed by snap-out forms that, at least at small posts, more easily provided copies for designated offices and sections. The State Department was usually slow at integrating new technology at least at the field level but, eventually, the all-mighty Xerox machine made an appearance and queue clearing was easier and faster. Throughout it all, no matter what the method, manual manipulation was needed to "clear the queue."

 Before I retired, technology struck one more time and messages were now sent directly to the desks of those who had the need to know. While these messages still transited the Communications Center, they usually did so unseen and went directly to individual addressees. Secretaries and others now were responsible for clearing their own queue.

 Seven years after I had hoped to retire, I finally pulled the plug. McDonalds no longer seemed the plum assignment that it once had. When I found that I needed a little extra cash to send my youngest to college, I drew upon the vast storehouse of skills I learned in the Foreign Service and was able to find a temporary job as a medical courier. Take that, McDonalds.

 Now that I have been retired for a number of years, many more than seems possible I might add, I find that I have resorted to reliving old work habits that were ingrained in me in the early days of my career at posts small and large. Each morning now I get up and hurry into my computer room excited to "clear the queue." Instead of deciding which office or offices, how many copies, etc., I now look at the overnight queue on both of the email accounts my wife and I use and decide upon which ones to delete, which ones to retain for further scrutiny and, almost never, which ones to print.

 As I was promoted upward in the Foreign Service I was eventually assigned to positions where I no longer was expected to do the actual queue clearing. Now that I have retired, I’ve been relegated back to those great years when my primary responsibility was to make decisions about missives that had gathered during the night. That’s why I still hurry out of bed each morning; you never know what the overnight queue will bring.

**Humor**: There's an annual contest at Bond University, Australia, calling for the most appropriate definition of a contemporary term.
 This year's chosen term was "political correctness".
 The winning student wrote:

 "Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and promoted by mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a piece of shit by the clean end."

**The Dodo with the butterfly net**
by John Lemandri

**T**he American Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar was an antiquated three story building in the middle of a fairly downtrodden town. Once the French provincial capitol, years of neglect had taken its toll, although the island itself was picturesque. It was said that the Dodo, a three-foot bird that no longer possessed the ability to fly, went extinct on the nearby island of Mauritius in the 17th century, although I occasionally found one on Madagascar.

My first task upon arrival after establishing communications was to destroy the piles of classified documents that lay about the office. One morning as I sat in the lieu with the window open and the incinerator going full blast, a piece of paper with the word SECRET floated onto my lap. I peered out the window at the Soviet Agricultural Office next door and was surprised to see a strange looking man with a butterfly net emulating what could have been the courtship dance of the long extinct Dodo. As he scooped one 'butterfly' after another, it dawned on me that those butterflies were in reality pieces of telegrams floating in the breeze.

No one at our embassy knew how long this love fest between the Russian and our sensitive communications had been going on, but it came to an abrupt end when I replaced the metal grill atop our chimney.

**I'm not old - I'm only mature**

Today at the drugstore, the clerk was a gent.
From my purchase this chap took off ten percent.
I asked for the cause of a lesser amount;
and he answered, "Because of the Seniors Discount."

I went to McDonald's for a burger and fries;
and there, once again, got quite a surprise.
The clerk poured some coffee which he handed to me.
He said, "For you, seniors, the coffee is free."

Understand---I'm not old---I'm merely mature;
but some things are changing, temporarily, I'm sure.
The newspaper print gets smaller each day,
and people speak softer---can't hear what they say.

My teeth are my own (I have the receipt.),
and my glasses identify people I meet.
Oh, I've slowed down a bit...not a lot, I am sure.
You see, I'm not old...I'm only mature.
The gold in my hair has been bleached by the sun.
You should see all the damage that chlorine has done.
Washing my hair has turned it all white,
But don't call it gray...saying "blond" is just right.

My car is all paid for...not a nickel is owed.
Yet a kid yells, "Old duffer...get off of the road!"
My car has no scratches...not even a dent.
Still I get all that guff from a punk who's "Hell bent."

My friends all get older...much faster than me.
They seem much more wrinkled, from what I can see.
I've got "character lines," not wrinkles...for sure,
but don't call me old...just call me mature.

The steps in the houses they're building today
are so high that they take your breath all away;
and the streets are much steeper than ten years ago.
That should explain why my walking is slow.

But I'm keeping up on what's hip and what's new,
and I think I can still dance a mean boogaloo.
I'm still in the running...in this I'm secure,
I'm not really old...I'm only mature.

**The Titanic Renamed**

**By Bob Catlin**

**T**hose of you who regularly read this **Newsletter**, or attend the monthly luncheons, know I love to fish. It is a hobby that started long before I retired.

 My love for fishing started in the early 80's. After I had a heart attack my cardiologist suggested I find a hobby to help me relax from the pressures of my job.

 At that time the late DASC, Will Naeher, was going to Canada fishing every year and asked me if I wanted to join him and his group.

 I had not been fishing since I was a child so I thought, why not! Off I went to K-Mart and bought $35 worth of fishing gear. That first trip hooked me on fishing!

 My fishing season got off to a slow start this spring. Bad weather and then a problem with the boat were to blame. During last years fishing season I had to change the name of the boat from "The Girl Next Door" to the "Titanic" because of a leaky boat.

 The boat is a 14 foot riveted, aluminum Jon boat. The rivets, after 20 years of a lot of use, were all coming loose. To say this caused the boat to leak would be an understatement. It was more like, it became a sieve! I probably had the only Jon boat on the local waterways that had to have a bilge pump in it to keep it afloat.

 This spring I took two weeks to remove all the paint from the bottom of the boat. Seal all 184 rivets with J&B Weld and then paint it forest green with two heavy coats of marine paint.

 The bilge pump is no longer needed. It stays as dry now as it did when it was new.

 The boat name has been changed back to "The Girl Next Door."

**Oh, what a night!**

By Richard Hoffer

**T**his night was not the type of experience that "The Four Seasons" referred to in their 1976 hit record.

 Fifty years ago last December, I was an 18 year old Seaman Apprentice onboard the USS ESSEX, returning from my initial cruise. We had participated in ASW (anti-submarine warfare) exercises with our NATO Allies in the Mediterranean Sea (Med), and with CENTO Allies in the Arabian Sea.  It's interesting to note that our CENTO partners included Iran, Iraq and Pakistan - - as well as the United Kingdom.

 Our east to west Atlantic Ocean transit was uneventful. Twelve days later, we made our first "liberty" port - - Barcelona, Spain.  Ten cent San Miguel beers, served by a white jacketed waiter at a sidewalk café, beautiful city, good people. I liked Europe already!

 Transiting the Suez Canal was a fascinating experience. We didn't have a lot of room to spare either port or starboard. Egyptian Migs closely buzzed our ship on several occasions during the north-south transit. Nasser was the Egyptian president and U.S./Egyptian relations at the time were strained. Working shifts of 12 hours on and 12 hours off, it was easy to forget the day of the week at sea.

 After a refueling stop in Aden, Yemen (past and present a God forsaken place), we headed for Karachi, Pakistan to begin ASW exercises with our CENTO allies.  It was to be a typical cruise until we reached Pakistan -- then things changed.

 On November 14, one of our Sikorsky SH-3A "Sea King" helicopters crashed into the Arabian Sea during nighttime operations. Our task force searched all night and the following day for the four-man crew. It was an eerie feeling, peering out into the quiet darkness of the sea from the flight deck. Our searchlights attracted a lot of sea life - particularly sea snakes. Despite our efforts, we never recovered the crew -- just some chopper debris.

 Religious services were held in the hangar bay for the helicopter crew; LCDR. Richard Taipale, Lt. George Fenters, SOA2 Kenneth Murphy, and ATR3 George Blythe. The service was followed by a gun salute.  Then it was back to business.

 We were anchored in Karachi Harbor on November 23rd when word reached the ship late at night that President Kennedy had been assassinated in Dallas.  I remember the ship's boatswain blowing a long and unfamiliar (I knew it wasn't "mail call") whistle before reading a statement over the 1MC (main circuit intercom).  Stunned, bewildered and a feeling of helplessness would best describe the atmosphere onboard. The boatswain also announced that the Carrier Division Commander -- a Rear Admiral -- would be consulting with the Consul General at the American Consulate in Karachi. I recall shipmates wondering what is a "Counsel General", civilian or military.   Little did I know that 17 years later I would return to Pakistan in a much different capacity and spend a few weeks at our Consulate in Karachi.

 Our trip home began uneventfully with another refueling stop in Aden.  That gave some onboard the opportunity to try to get their money back, after being swindled by local merchants selling counterfeit watches (wanna buy a Rolex, cheap?), cameras, etc., during our first visit.  Most purchases didn't work for more than a few days. A common trick was to switch the product during the transaction. Crewmen would return to the ship, unwrap their "purchase" only to find an empty box, or a piece of junk.  Needless to say, no one got anything back - the offending stores were all closed on the return visit.  Lesson learned, the hard way.

 Thanksgiving was celebrated while in the Red Sea, complete with canned turkey and instant mashed spuds. Not one of my better Thanksgiving meals.

 Naples, Italy was our next (and final) stop on the cruise.  Naples was a delight, considering where we had spent the previous five weeks. I had my first taste of authentic "Neapolitan" Pizza!  It was nice to see friendly (albeit sometimes conniving) faces again.

 We exited the Med about a week later via Gibraltar and happily headed home for Christmas.

 About a day into our crossing, we changed our course to search for a small plane that had disappeared north of the Azores Islands. Seas were beginning to build before we reached the search area. The next day we were greeted by gale force winds and huge (40-50 feet) swells. Visibility was extremely poor and the ocean was white with foam. Our work space was one deck below the flight deck and near an external hatch. The "catwalk" was at least 40 feet above the water. While the ship was in "condition Zulu" (all external hatches secure), I took a peek once or twice outside. It was amazing to actually look up at swells that were approaching the ship in the distance.  Surely, no one could survive very long under these circumstances.

 It took two or three days for the seas to calm down after the storm. I remember the Captain announcing over the 1MC that we had finally reached cruising speed -- 22/23 knots. He was still hopeful that we would reach our home port on schedule.   Unfortunately, about three days later, all hell broke loose. Before satellite weather technology, ships had to depend on land based stations and other ships for forecasts. We clearly didn't have any idea what we were heading into -- several hundred miles off the New England coast. This storm was much worse than the first one. We were being cuffed with tremendous waves, heavy rain and gale force winds. Our elevator pit #1 was flooded.  All of the "Telefunken" Stereo's and other goodies purchased by ship's officers and stored in #1 were destroyed. The privileged class got their comeuppance!  The steel elevator curtains on elevator #2 were partially shredded by the waves. Damage control personnel worked feverishly trying to "shore-up" the doors with 12 inch timbers.

 Each wave was throwing more water into the hangar bay.  Inside the hangar bay you could clearly see the ship's expansion joints flexing -- up, down and sideways. Obviously, this was not a good situation.

 At some point in the early evening, the Captain addressed the crew over the 1MC. He was brief and told us that "the last couple of waves really hurt us".  He was going to sound "GQ" - General Quarters. He wanted everyone to proceed to their assigned damage control stations to assess possible damage. Most of us didn't know yet that two giant waves had struck the ship, knocking down our 60 foot, 23 ton mast onto the flight deck. As I ran to my station, I smelled something strange. The mast had fallen onto a Marine A4D jet, rupturing the fuel tank. Thankfully a fire didn't break out. My damage control station was located in "secondary control" or SECCON -- which is located between the flight deck and the ship's "forecastle", on the ship's bow. If an attack takes out the bridge, the ship can be controlled from SECCON. To reach SECCON you have to traverse the forecastle - where the anchor chains are stored in a large open area. The ship was pitching violently, and the waves hitting the hull sounded like huge sledgehammers. Water was sloshing around the deck, coming in through the anchor holes.  This was quite a scene and a little scary. My job was to man an internal radio network. I did so sitting on the deck. It was impossible to stand.

 We stayed at General Quarters for 24 hours, until the worst of the storm had passed. The Captain subsequently informed the crew that the waves which floored our mast were 85 feet high. The Navigator reported that the storm, at its worst, had actually "pushed back" the ship nearly one nautical mile.  At one point we had taken a "roll" of 37 degrees.  Our destroyer escort ships ("tin cans") reported rolls of 50 degrees. The "rolls" were a little unnerving.  The ship would heave slowly to port or starboard, pause, and then slowly recover. On occasion, it would seem like a long time had elapsed before you could feel the ship begin to right itself. I think most of us held our breath a few times.

 On December 23rd, we finally arrived at our home port - Quonset Point, Rhode Island. I had chosen Christmas duty, so that I could celebrate New Year's with Pat and friends. Yes, we were "going steady" in 1963!  However, my plans changed a few days later when a "sea cock valve" was accidentally opened by damage control personnel. Divers finally secured the hatch. Water extensively damaged our electrical system. We had only emergency lights - no heat or hot water.  The Captain reduced ship's company to a skeleton crew. I got to go home a few days earlier than planned!

 The ship arrived at the Brooklyn Naval Yard in early January, after unloading fuel and ammunition in New Jersey. We spent almost four months in Brooklyn undergoing repairs. Being a New Yorker, this was a nice arrangement for me. A short walk and a fifteen cent subway "token" was all I needed to get home.

**See you next quarter!**