

CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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Inside this issue

CANDOER's Corner By Bob Catlin	1
History I bet you didn't know	2
The Jerk By John Lemandri	2
African travel in the '80s By Erick Morin	4

I need Stories!!

Welcome to the latest issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERS** (Communicators **AND** Others Enjoying Retirement). 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:

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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

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

I NEED STORIES!

Well, summer arrived here in southern Maryland like no other summer I can remember. We have had 7-15 mph winds almost every day and more rain than usual and nights that dropped into the low 60s and days in the low 70s. The weather made me feel like I had moved back to Waterford, PA.

The winds have really cut into my boat fishing time. It is hard to control a 14 foot Jon boat in 7 mph winds or higher, so I have done a lot of unproductive bank fishing.

History I bet you Didn't Know

If you were in the market for a watch in 1880, would you know where to get one? You would go to a store, right? Well, of course you could do that, but if you wanted one that was cheaper and a bit better than most of the store watches, you went to the train station! Sound a bit funny? Well, for about 500 towns across the northern United States, that's where the best watches were found.

Why were the best watches found at the train station?

The railroad company wasn't selling the watches, not at all. The telegraph operator was. Most of the time the telegraph operator was located in the railroad station because the telegraph lines followed the railroad tracks from town to town. It was usually the shortest distance and the right-of-ways had already been secured for the rail line.

Most of the station agents were also skilled telegraph operators and that was the primary way that they communicated with the railroad. They would know when trains left the previous station and when they were due at their next station. And it was the telegraph operator who had the watches.

As a matter of fact, they sold more of them than almost all the stores combined for a period of about nine years.

This was all arranged by "Richard", who was a telegraph operator himself. He was on duty in the North Redwood, Minnesota

train station one day when a load of watches arrived from the East. It was a huge crate of pocket watches. No one ever came to claim them.

So Richard sent a telegram to the manufacturer and asked them what they wanted to do with the watches. The manufacturer didn't want to pay the freight back, so they wired Richard to see if he could sell them. So Richard did. He sent a wire to every agent in the system asking them if they wanted a cheap, but good, pocket watch. He sold the entire case in less than two days and at a handsome profit.

That started it all. He ordered more watches from the watch company and encouraged the telegraph operators to set up a display case in the station offering high quality watches for a cheap price to all the travelers. It worked! It didn't take long for the word to spread and, before long, people, other than travelers, came to the train station to buy watches.

Richard became so busy that he had to hire a professional watch maker to help him with the orders. That was Alvah. And the rest is history as they say.

The business took off and soon expanded to many other lines of dry goods.

Richard and Alvah left the train station and moved their company to Chicago -- and it's still there.

YES, IT'S A LITTLE KNOWN FACT that for a while in the 1880's, the biggest watch retailer in the country was at the train station. It all started with a telegraph operator: Richard Sears and his partner Alvah Roebuck!

Immigration Road Trip

By Rudy Garcia

Sometimes, edited narratives lose their intended meaning. When I arrived here in Colorado Springs a reporter asked me to submit "My Story," which I did. There was one particular edit that completely changed the point. I told of a time at Kruger Park when an old cow-elephant charged me. I had no time to turn my Suzuki "Jeep"

SJ413 around. I shifted to reverse and gunned it backward, outrunning her after 50-60 yards. The story was to show my Suzuki could outrun in reverse an old elephant although it needed a hill to get to the advertised 60 kph capability. The reporter simply stated that I was "charged by an elephant."

Recently I attended a Denver-area AFSA lunch and we were asked to submit a bio. I wrote the family immigrated to Switzerland from the Philippines. Six months before we were eligible for Swiss citizenship my father was offered a job in the Baluchistan area of Iran. We lived in Iran for eleven years; six of which I spent at boarding schools in England. My submission was changed to "I immigrated from the Philippines to the U.S. via Switzerland and Iran." Not the same thing.

The condensed story of our trip to the U.S. from Iran follows:

When our immigration visa was approved in 1967 we were in Tehran. We planned for half the family to go by car to Europe and the other half would meet there. Together we'd go overland/sea to NYC, except for my older brother who was over 21.

We had an old Opel Olympia station wagon (1960) that we bought in Belgium in '64 and drove to Tehran. My mother had also made a round trip from Tehran to Rabat, Morocco to interview King Hassan II for the USIA magazine "Iran Today"; my older brother drove. So we were not particularly worried about the trip but for the load we planned to take in the car. We had a local blacksmith hammer out a spare leaf spring to carry with us. We left late November 1967 and promptly had our first flat tire on the highway to Tabriz, as it was not a paved highway back then.

At the border it took us six hours to process our documents and cross into Turkey. Our route was west through Agri and then northward to the Black Sea. The weather changed as we neared the mountains and we installed the rear chains as we reached the snow. The snow on the mountain roads reached two feet in areas,

with drifts on the shoulder higher than our heads. At one town, Bayburt, the engine wouldn't turn over as it had frozen due to the extreme cold overnight. A local, who was smoking while watching us, took his chair and smashed it against the wall, poured some kerosene on it and lit it on top of the engine block. But that didn't loosen the pistons. Finally the army garrison commander ordered his men to tow the car up and down the avenue until the engine cranked. The route was supposedly dangerous due to highway bandits. Army officials recommended vehicles go in convoys from town to town. We left by ourselves. When we approached steep inclines we would get out and walk, as the car couldn't handle the load.

At one point we met a German family going the other way so we brewed some tea in the middle of the road and exchanged information; it was that desolate. We didn't meet up with any bandits but did hear the howling of wolves throughout the trip along the mountainside.

The Black Sea was a welcome sight as there was no snow there. We went along the seaside from Trabzon to Samsun and down to Ankara, west to Istanbul where we had minor repairs done to the car. We crossed into Greece and took a ferry from Patras into Brindisi, Italy. Had my first Cappuccino on board the ferry; delicious!

One of the rear springs finally broke just outside Naples, where we had the spare installed.

We continued up north to Milan and into Switzerland, passing through the St. Bernard Pass and, finally, Fribourg. It was as cold there as it was in Bayburt, negative 27F. We rented an apartment there until the rest of the family arrived.

When we were reunited we went through the last medical requirements and shots for immigration. We set off for Cherbourg, France, where we boarded the QE I just after New Year. On the sixth day we entered NYC harbor, plowing through the ice while standing on deck, our baggage in hand. A typical movie scene of immigrants arriving by boat in the winter,

passing the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island.

We stayed a couple of days in the Times Square Motor Hotel (what a dump) while processing more documentation. Finally we drove down to Falls Church, VA, site of the head office of the company my father worked for, Melpar.

We had the car two more years; I took my driver's test with it. We finally sold it for \$25.00, after the third cycle of its odometer.

This, and other travels, may help explain why I joined the Foreign Service.

The Jerk

By John Lemandri

While stationed in Turkey, my wife and I went to the Aegean Coast for a week's vacation where we met a young Turkish gentleman in his early twenties. Ozcan ran a bed and breakfast near the city of Bodrum, noted for being the home of the famous 5th Century B.C. Greek Historian Herodotus, who was often called the father of history.

One morning while I was enjoying a cup of tea, Ozcan asked what I did at the American Embassy. I jokingly remarked that I was a Jerk, but not just any Jerk. I was, in fact, the Chief Jerk, hoping of course that Oscan, with his limited knowledge of English, would not know the meaning of Jerk. However, anyone who knew anything about Turkish culture instinctively knew that being a Chief had significant meaning. You could be anything in Turkey, but to be chief of something demanded a high degree of responsibility and respect.

Impressed that he finally met someone of importance, Oscan proudly told everyone he knew that his new found American friend was a Jerk, not just any Jerk, but a Chief Jerk. It was hard to keep a straight face as I was accorded special reverence by the local community, and especially Oscan's family who I met over tea.

All good things must come to an end,

and as my wife and I were preparing to depart, Oscan asked how he could find me should he visit the American Embassy. "That would be easy," I replied. "Just ask anyone who is the biggest Jerk. They all know who I am."

African Travel in the 1980's

Erick G. Morin - Retired FE-OC

Traveling in Africa was always an adventure. One never knew what to expect when they arrived at the airport or even once they boarded the plane.

For instance on one trip from Niamey to Abidjan, as I walk onto the plane, there were a group of people standing in the aisle and I feared that all the seats were taken and I would have to wait for the next flight which could mean another two to three days in Niamey. I looked up the aisle and saw two empty seats in one of the rows. I walked up through the other travelers and looked in the seat and to my astonishment there was a Praying Mantis, sitting in one of the seats. I slid in picked up the Praying Mantis and held on to it. A British Gentleman had followed me down the aisle. He sat down next to me and asked me why the locals had not taken the seats. I showed him my new good luck charm. We both had a good flight and when I walked off the plane I released the Praying Mantis into the air and off he flew.

On another trip I spent a few days in Praia, Cape Verde islands. Unfortunately, the International airport was on a different island so I had to travel to the island of Sal to make my connection to Guinea Bissau. This meant I had to travel and spend the night on Sal, traveling the next morning on to Guinea Bissau. My Portuguese being very limited I had a feeling this would be an adventure. I could order a beer or a meal, but to make travel arrangements, I did not have the vocabulary. I had the Embassy travel office make me reservations at the only hotel on the island, so that limited the trouble there. I made it to the island and even got a taxi to take me to the hotel. I thought I had made reservations with the

taxi driver to pick me up in the morning, it was a 7 AM flight departure, so I had to get up early and I asked the taxi driver to pick me up at 5 AM. The desk clerk even confirmed with the driver a pick-up for the morning. Well 5 AM the next morning came and went and not only was the taxi not there but there were no other taxis to be had. It was about a three-mile hike from the hotel to the airport so I set out on foot. I was carrying my duffle bag and my toolbox. About ten minutes down the road an army truck with a load of troops in the back stopped and asked me I assumed where I was going. I said "Aeroporto". He motioned for me to climb in the back. I jumped in and off we went. Sure enough the driver stopped right in front of the airport and I jumped out. In Portuguese I gave them a big "Obrigado". I even shook hands with the soldiers in the truck.

Travelling with the State Department in the early 1980s in Africa was quite the adventure. A lot more fun than the Army promised me when I joined in 1971 with their promise of "fun, Travel and Adventure", (FTA).