

# 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** (Communicators **AND** Others Enjoying Retirement). This **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](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)

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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

We had an extra cold winter here in Southern Maryland. Temperatures as low as 0 and wind chill temperatures as low as -25F. April came and still no spring. May came and so did summer. We went from temperatures 4-6 degrees below normal in

April to temperatures 4-6 degrees above normal in May.

June didn't change much, other than the fact we experienced some weird weather, for us. A lot of rain; days in the 90's to be followed the next day by days in the 70's; and wind 10-15 mph almost every day!

I am sure those of you who live further north may have seen temperatures far colder than ours, but the low temperatures we experienced this winter set many records. Something I would prefer not to see, ever again!

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### **Did I see the head of Joaquin Murietta and the hand of Three Finger Jack, or not?**

By Charles Christian

The two banditos were caught and killed by Deputy Sheriff Love in Tulare County, CA, in 1853. To prove the killings, and collect the large reward, he took the head of Murietta and the hand of Jack to Sacramento to show to the authorities.

Both items were placed in large jars of alcohol and displayed in a museum in San Francisco. They were reportedly destroyed in the 1906 earthquake.

Another source says they were not but were found in the rubble. A man in Santa Rosa, CA, said he ended up with both items and had them displayed in a stone and barred window building that was an office and an adjacent, highly secured museum room.

While calling on him on business in the 70's he opened up the safe door to the museum and showed me his artifacts of the old west that he had collected over the years. I studied for the longest time the contents of the two jars from only three feet away. I can still not believe they were fakes, as some claim, as the details of everything I could see seemed to be beyond the ability for someone back in the 1800's, or after that period, to create. The head had long black hair and mustache with all the fine natural details of a human head. The hand was in the same condition. Both were yellowed.

The county health department soon got wind of the remains and told him he did not have a license, nor did he qualify to have one, to possess human remains and to get rid of them now. The last I heard, he took them to his remote ranch and buried them somewhere. Mr. Johnson died in 2012. Google "Joaquin Murietta".

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### **Message Received, Unfortunately**

By the late Dick Pero,  
Office of Communications, CIA

Countless times Commo has received and delivered a message under adverse circumstances; many times this has been instrumental in the success of an operation. This is one instance where perhaps it might have been best if Commo had failed to receive the message.

I was a young communicator on my first tour at the cover support-base in 1960. Some of my colleagues were on a TDY "Flying Squad". Every few months they would go off to some unknown destination for several weeks to return tight-lipped about where they had been, but with a smug grin indicating they had done something special. I was eager to get in on this action. I wanted to do something spooky. After all, I thought, this was what it was all about.

When one of the "Flying Squad" communicators rotated to another job I was selected to fill the vacancy. I still did not know what I would be doing or where I would go, but I was ready.

Finally I received the initial alert, "You're on standby, be prepared to leave on a moment's notice."

A week or so later at about 10:00 p.m., I received a telephone call at my residence in Frankfurt. It was couched in guarded terms something to the effect: "You're on a standby TDY list. How soon can you be ready to leave, an hour or two?" I did not know the caller, but I said I was prepared to leave. What I asked were my instructions?

First we had to find my traveling partner on the team, a bachelor. He did

not answer the phone at home. Did I know where he might be? Recollecting this query I had to laugh. A bachelor in Frankfurt at 10:00 p.m. could be at any of a hundred or so places offering various forms of enjoyment. I gave my caller some leads and he said he would get back to me. In the wee hours of the morning, with me still wide awake in anticipation, the phone rang once again. "Get to Rhein Main and check in at desk so-and-so at the operations center ASAP."

Off I went, leaving the wife and children, to begin my unknown adventure. I joined my bleary-eyed colleague, ??? and we were put on a USAF airplane with a grumbling crew who had been waiting for us all night. It was now circa 6:00 a.m.

Climbing aboard, we found we were the only passengers in an aircraft the size of a bowling center. ??, an old hand on the team, stated this looked like a fast-moving exercise and there would not be time for a formal briefing for me before we deployed to the advance base. He therefore decided to informally brief me.

We were going out in support of a black over flight of the USSR by a super spy plane called the U-2. Gangbusters! I had finally arrived! This was spooky!

### Boyhood Acquaintance

In the evening we landed at Incirlik where we were hustled through some kind of passport/immigration control and shuttled off to a house trailer occupied by a communication technician.

There we feasted on a can of Dinty Moore's beef stew, which was described to me as probably being the best meal I would have in a week or so. The gilt was coming off the lily already.

Shortly thereafter, we boarded a C-130 loaded with two vans and various sundry boxes. I had already been strongly reminded that this was a super-secret operation and to keep my mouth shut and ask no questions. Much to my chagrin, my jump seat co-passenger dressed in Air Force fatigues with sergeant chevrons,

started yelling at me above the roar of the takeoff that he thought he knew me. I indicated that we would talk later as we leveled off and removed our earplugs.

After the noise abated to a dull roar, we re-established an old acquaintance. Sergeant Jim Fahey had preceded me by a year or two in high school and we had played CYO basketball against one another.

He invited me to visit in his van after we landed and got set up.

It seemed like days later we landed at the staging site, an USAF base in Incirlik, Turkey. We began unloading and setting up the communications van. Our team consisted of leader ?? and myself. Before we left we were told that two communicators from ?? and ?? would be arriving in Incirlik to man that end of the circuit.

The commo project chief, ??, who was on "permanent TDY" in Incirlik, said that in the event the operators were delayed, please keep the code speed down as he hadn't operated in a long while and he would be the only game in town. We set up our van, one that had been put together by a previous team, which housed two HF receivers and an HT-4 HF transmitter (fondly called the "widow maker" because of the danger involved when making frequency changes). We then began a watch schedule of eight hours on, eight off, two men to shift, with periodic checks with the base in Incirlik in CW (Morse Code).

When not on duty, we hot-bunked it on two army cots alongside the van, a few hundred yards from the runway. The remainder of the close support team, about ? of all kinds, and some tech reps, were housed in the hangar area, but for us it was open air living; no shelter of any kind. Luckily it didn't rain.

The exciting part of each day was when we opened up a box of IF-9's (in-flight rations) to see what culinary delight we had in store for us. The spaghetti, tuna, and marinated (pickled) beef were big hits. Low on the totem pole were five to eight year old dinner rolls. I decided to visit ? one day and ended up in the "driver's" van. (The

pilots of the U-2 were called drivers.) It was air-conditioned – what a luxury in the 90 degree plus heat of Incirlik.

?? showed me a space suit especially designed for our pilots and when I spotted a pistol I was told each driver carried a personal weapon. The driver selected for this mission was Francis Gary Powers. He carried a Colt Woodsman 22. I'm somewhat of a gun nut and ended up examining this particular pistol.

### "HBJGO" Puzzle

Indications were that D-Day was arriving. The "go" message would come from President Eisenhower and he was playing this mission very close because of the upcoming summit with Khrushchev. A decision was not expected until the eleventh hour. The message was to be relayed from CIA Headquarters to the Project Comcenter in Washington, DC, thence to Incirlik, which would pass it to us via CW. Sometime during the night before the mission was scheduled, the "bird" was to be pulled from the hangar and positioned at the end of the runway. As dawn broke I received my first glimpse of the U-2, long drooping wings, a bullet-like fuselage and all black with no markings – definitely meeting my expectations of what a spy plane should look like.

The takeoff was scheduled for 6:00 a.m. It was light long before then and we were in what is known in communications jargon as the transition period. The ionosphere would not support reliable communications between the two sites; the night frequencies were falling and the day frequencies were not yet stabilized.

? and ? were on duty but all four of us plus the project chief were in the van. It was crowded, hot, and tense. Outside all the close support team members were standing around in anticipation of a takeoff with all eyes focused on our little van. The U-2 sat on the runway midst the increasing heat waves. I am sure Gary Powers was tensing up as well.

Somewhere around 6:00 a.m. we heard

some CW on one of the guard frequencies we were frantically searching. While it sounded like Incirlik's signal and our operator's fist, the characters being sent made no sense and we continued our search and call procedure. Like a magnet, that familiar signal sending repetitive characters kept drawing our attention. We passed the 6:00 a.m. takeoff time and by now ? was in the first state of a nervous breakdown, with the rest of us not far behind. We were by now convinced that the signal was coming from our base. We focused on the characters being sent, although they made no sense. "JGOHB". But wait – there was a slight discernible break after three and then two characters. It became 'HBJ-GO-HBJ-GO, etc. The operator kept sending in the blind. We stared at these repeating five characters as if they comprised a puzzle.

Someone started saying them - "HBJ-GO-HBJ-GO." I cannot recall which of us in the van finally broke the code but someone shouted: "HBJAYWALK GO!" That was it! (HBJAYWALK was the project cryptonym.) ? almost broke a leg exiting the van and went racing across the field toward the bird. He waved for takeoff. By now it was about 6:15 a.m.

Then out of the eerie early morning stillness came the roar of the engine. Gary Powers was on his way. As the U-2 contrail faded in the sky we felt drained but elated: Commo had done its job one more time.

Incirlik's operator had known that with the circuit out he could not send the formal enciphered message, so he sent all he dared to send in the clear and in the blind in the hope we would hear the signal and figure out what it meant. We had.

### Feasting and Fingerprints

We were directed to stay in place until we were assured that the aircraft had passed the point of no return in the flight plan. By this time we were just about out of IF-9's and were rummaging around in the discarded cans of food that had not previously appealed to our palates. In true

fashion we were not forgotten. Another U-2 landed at Peshawar with cameras and recorders removed and their cavities filled with frozen T-bones and several bags of charcoal. We feasted, rested, packed up, and started back.

Our C-130 landed at RAF Habbiniyah, Iraq (a logical guess on my part) for a rest stop about 1:00 a.m. After a fine breakfast at the British Officer's Club and the passing around of some liquid fortification by the two standby drivers who had been pre-positioned there, it was off to bed in the BOQ. At around 5:00 a.m. we were rudely awakened by a loud knocking on our doors. "Get up, get dressed, and be ready to move out." Something was wrong and the rumors began to fly – we had to go back, the bird was down, the bird was lost.

We sat around until mid-afternoon not knowing what was happening. ?? was closeted and all we could do was speculate. Everyone was grim faced and not enthused by the prospect of returning to Peshawar. There was universal concern for the driver and the success of the mission. Finally, in mid-afternoon, we boarded the C-130, took off, lost an engine, landed, reloaded the vans and equipment on a standby C-130, and headed back to Peshawar.

Still no word on what had happened. The next morning we were debriefed and given the cover story on the loss of the plane, lost on a weather mission along the border and presumed to have inadvertently strayed over the border. Everyone was sworn to absolute secrecy.

We received our per diem (about \$15 since quarters and rations were provided) and packed off back to Frankfurt.

Several days after my return I was reading the Stars and Stripes at breakfast and there it was - Khrushchev had blown the lid off. To top it off, there was a picture of the "agent's weapon" a Colt Woodsman 22 with my fingerprints on it. My wife took one look at me and asked no questions - she knew where I had been for the last two weeks. The lid was also off back at work and our colleagues finally figured out where the "Flying Squad" had been flying to all

along.

Did fate play one of its tricks on us this time? Who knows? Whatever the end result, commo did its job. But maybe this would have been one time when we should have failed.

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### **Can't Take Any More of This Crap**

By John Lemandri

One morning my associate and I entered our communication office in Bissau, West Africa, turned on the lights and discovered our office and its high voltage equipment sitting in an inch of feces laden water. Overnight, the contents of an underground sewer had broken through the floor. Needless to say the situation was extremely dangerous due to the possibility of electrocution. My first and only message to Washington that day was "Sewage broken through floor, shutting down operations, can't take any more of this crap." I signed the Ambassador's name and sent it.

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### **Good Luck With Postage Stamps**

By James F. Prosser

Postage stamps are small, yet significant and essential things in our lives. For some, particularly collectors, they hold great importance, interest and value.

Personally, I am not a collector, although I do appreciate the plethora of stamp varieties, colors, patterns, motifs and reasons for which they are printed. I even have a friend whose wife divorced him for the sole reason of his predilection of collecting stamps and traveling great distances to attend stamp collector fairs and markets the world over. She vehemently objected to frequently finding the bathtub filled with stamps soaking to have them removed from the paper! Not to mention the space for scores of huge binders filled with stamps and the thousands of hours spent maintaining and cataloging them.

With more than 150 countries issuing their own postage, one can easily see how this attracts millions of collectors world-



wide. Stamps purchased for collections and resale is considerable revenue for the issuing country for which no postal service need be provided.

The International Postal Union (IPU) governs the number of special or commemorative postage stamp issues a country can print in a given year. For some Pacific and Indian Ocean island nations or small third world countries, the income from the sale of their beautiful postage stamps to collectors on the world market is a major factor in the country's revenue income, again while not having to provide any service. The IPU has a means of controlling this, but I am not exactly sure how it works. Otherwise, postage stamp sales for places like Tahiti and the Seychelles would become one of their major industries, along with tourism.

While living abroad and traveling to many countries, I usually used the local international mail for my letters and postcards. Friends and relatives loved the stamps they received and often requested me to save whatever stamps I could and forward to them. This I did gladly. One friend even gave me a small annual stipend to send him a letter or post card from every country I would travel. He didn't care if anything was written on it other than his address.

In consideration of others' love of unusual foreign stamps, rather than putting a single stamp with exact postage, I always had a large supply of small denomination stamps available to put on a letter to make up the required amount. It often resulted in a lot of licking, but in the end was worth it.

In the early 1960's when I was stationed in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo, the post office there had a magnificent array of gorgeous postage stamps. They were of a wide variety of colorful flora and fauna. The Congolese Postal Administration was close to running afoul of the IPU for production of too many commemorative stamp issues in 1964.

Leopoldville was the first post to which my wife Mary and I went after our marriage a few years earlier in Munich,

Germany. We both had an awful assortment of single person's household effects, none of which went well together. When it came time to leave Leopoldville, we decided to sell or give away the majority of our things as they were either inappropriate or just plain worn out from the heat and humidity of the Congo.

Mary left three months before I did in order to attend a family wedding in Green Bay. I departed in December 1964. Basically, both of us left with just the clothes on our backs and about 100 lbs. of memorabilia. Our next posting was Brussels. It was our intention on home leave to purchase all new clothing, furniture and household goods, for Brussels did not have government housing. Fortunately, both of us had worked extraordinary amounts of overtime in the Congo during that very turbulent period and had accumulated a respectable bank account.

We had already agreed that our new home in Brussels would be furnished with the best Danish teak furniture. Rather than purchasing it from a catalog, I arranged my home leave travel to have a four day stopover in Copenhagen, Denmark to place the furniture order and make shipping arrangements to Brussels so it would arrive there three months later when we did.

I wrote a letter to the Royal Hotel (then the newest and best in Copenhagen) requesting a single with bath for a four-day period in the week before Christmas. In my usual fashion, I plastered the envelope with quite a number of those lovely, small denomination Congolese stamps. A couple weeks later I received confirmation from the Royal Hotel indicating everything was in order, and the rate was the Danish equivalent of U.S. \$37.00 as I recall.

Flying from Leopoldville in December (hot & humid) with only light tropical clothing and one suitcase, I made a stopover in Munich to go to the Army PX and purchase clothes for the winter weather of Munich, Copenhagen and Green Bay.

My SAS flight from Munich to

Copenhagen arrived early in the evening. By the time the taxi dropped me at the Royal Hotel it was about 9:30 p.m. It was rather strange, for the lobby was practically deserted, likewise the streets. Mentioning this to the desk clerk, he responded, "Well, this is the Christmas season, and no one stays in Copenhagen, not even the Danes. They all go home to their places in the countryside." He gave my key to the bellhop and said my room was 2101 and wished me a pleasant stay.

Arriving at room 2101, the bellhop opened the door, took my suitcase inside, and turned on the lights. I was stunned by what I saw. I said to him there must be some mistake, because this room was much more than the single with bath which was what I ordered. The bellhop smilingly replied he was only following the front desk clerk's instructions and departed.

I decided that I would shortly have to go back to the front desk to correct what obviously was a big mistake on their part. But, before doing so, I was very curious to see exactly what kind of accommodation room 2101 really was. First of all, looking back outside the door toward the elevator, I realized that on the 21st floor there was no corridor, only two rooms, 2101 and 2102. Walking all around room 2101, I soon realized it occupied one-half of the 21st floor of the hotel. It had three very large bedroom suites, a dining room, one exceptionally large living room, complete kitchen, plus a small private office or conference room. All the outside rooms had large windows. The living room exterior wall was floor-to-ceiling glass with double doors opening to a patio outside. Turning off the lights in all the rooms and opening all the drapes, the night view on three sides of the Christmas lights of Copenhagen below was breath-taking.

Suitcase in hand, I returned down to the front desk and explained to the clerk there had been an error, for I requested a single with bath, but room 2101 obviously was far more than that. The clerk checked the reservation and noted that the hotel manager himself made the room

assignment, and that yes, the room rate was for a single with bath, Danish equivalent of U.S. \$37.00. He assured me the rate was correct, adding "Don't be concerned. The hotel is almost empty. If you wish to see the manager about this, he will be here in the morning after 10 a.m. Enjoy your stay!"

Back up in room 2101, I settled down somewhat apprehensively, not believing what I had apparently fallen upon. I also was rather hungry. I love pickled herring, cheese, Danish beer, and those famous open-faced Danish sandwiches. Calling room service, I ordered an ample supply of all four to last at least until noon the next day.

After breakfast the next morning, I just had to pay a call on the manager. Returning to the front desk, a new clerk escorted me to the manager's office. Entering, I introduced myself and was about to explain what had happened since my arrival. He jumped out of his chair and rather effusively exclaimed, "Mr. Prosser! How happy I am to meet you! The day your letter was received requesting a reservation, I just happened to be in the mail room and all those wonderful Congolese stamps on your letter caught my eye. I'm an avid stamp collector and can't tell you how thankful I am for getting such an unusual assortment."

I replied that I too, was very pleased to receive such an unusual and wonderful room assignment, but that I could afford to pay only the single with bath rate I requested.

The manager reassured me, "Please don't worry! It's a single with bath. The hotel is almost empty, but we still must remain open. It's a nice room. As a matter of fact, last year your Vice President Lyndon Johnson stayed there. It's our presidential or royal suite. Enjoy your stay."

And I did. Especially all the great food and beverage items room service could provide; particularly the pickled herring and Carlsberg beer.

After all the furniture shopping and

shipping preparations were completed, it was time to check out and head for the airport. At the front desk, the bill presented to me showed exactly what I had requested, i.e. four days, single room with bath. I said to the clerk, "I ordered considerably from room service, but there aren't any food or beverage charges on the bill." She said, "The manager put a note in the file that they're all complimentary."

Talk about good luck with postage stamps!

On the PanAm flight to New York, still in disbelief at my good fortune of the previous four days and nights in Denmark after the events of the Congo, I sat back and reflected "What a Christmas present!"

### Competition

By Dick Kalla

*I recently answered a call seeking writers to submit a poem, fiction or non-fiction story for a contest held yearly in my county up here in Washington State. The theme of this year's story was to be "COMPETITION." All entries had to have that as their theme. To make it more difficult, the piece was limited to 800 words or less. Those were the two hard and fast rules. Anything else was fair game. A panel would then judge each submission and 30 writers would be picked to read their work at a local bookstore. The stories would then be printed as a book. I was one of the 30 chosen. I had, I believe, a bit of an advantage over some others who might have entered. My Foreign Service career had provided me with a story of competition that was probably unique, particularly up here in this part of the country. This is the story I submitted and the one I read:*

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 On September 1, 1969, then Captain Muammar Gaddafi and a small band of Libyan military officers overthrew the government of King Idris while he was undergoing medical treatment in nearby Egypt. The coup took place in Benghazi

where I had been assigned two years earlier. Shortly before I arrived in 1967, an angry mob had breached the Embassy Office and the staff had barely escaped. But, it had been an uneventful two years until that lazy Labor Day morning when my wife and I were startled awake by the sound of gunfire. Several hours later, I was picked up by Principal Officer George Lane and a Libyan military convoy. George had convinced the new Libyan authorities to provide him and other essential Embassy staff with a military escort.

I spent the next month working and sleeping in my office, unable to leave because the city was locked down by a 23-hour per day curfew. It was a stressful time, but mostly it felt exciting, at least once my wife and newborn daughter were moved away from our downtown apartment to the suburbs where the families and unessential members of the staff waited out the coup in relative safety.

I was 28-years old that September of 1969, the same age as Captain Gaddafi. He was attempting to run an entire country. I thought that I was doing well when I had been assigned as the head of the Communications Unit. That I was the only member of the office seemed irrelevant, I was in charge. I had reached a new level in my career. The notion of running a country at age 28 was mind boggling to me.

The Communications Unit in Benghazi was responsible for receiving and transmitting all Embassy correspondence, classified and unclassified. If I had been playing a part in a movie, my job title would have been Code Clerk. Our staff in 1969 consisted of seven Americans and approximately 15 Libyans and other foreign country nationals.

After the first few days of the coup, things in Libya started to settle down a little and with the local opposition swept aside, the new Libyan government began its drive toward normalcy and international recognition. They had, after all, successfully deposed the previous leader. It was now time for them to join



the world community. Sure, they had taken power militarily, but there were plenty of rogue nations with a worse record. At least the “Libyan Revolution” had resulted in relatively little loss of life.

With this proclamation of normalcy, nations were now invited to accept the new Government. It became a contest to see who would be the first to extend recognition. More than that, it became a race between the two super-powers, a competition in which I would play a small part.

On September 6, Captain Gaddafi came to the Embassy Office to meet with George Lane. He came because he wanted U.S. recognition of the new Libyan Arab Republic. When he arrived, he informed George that he would soon be heading to the airport to greet a group from the Soviet Union who were coming to extend official recognition. It was later believed that because Gaddafi considered the Soviets “godless” he was offering the U.S. the opportunity to recognize first.

Without the benefit of foresight of what Gaddafi and his new government would later become, it was an opportunity not to be missed. We had been waiting on a formal response from Washington, but it was slow in coming. Time was running out. George Lane excused himself and called me outside his office. “Tell the Embassy in Tripoli that we don’t need an official document. Just a simple YES or NO will do. And impress upon them the urgency.” I rushed to comply.

With the help of a colleague, a direct line to Tripoli was established and kept open exclusive of anything else. Finally, slowly, the teletype began to chatter and I saw the word “YES” print out. Without waiting for more, I ripped off the copy and ran to George Lane’s office. Knocking on the door, I walked in and handed the paper to George. He was standing alongside Gaddafi who had run out of time and was saying goodbye. The approval had arrived just in the nick of time.

In those Cold-War days, this was a minor victory, one that in retrospect did not

stand the test of time as Colonel Gaddafi and his government went on to commit numerous atrocities. Nevertheless, at the time it seemed very important to win that race. Personally, I can still feel the adrenaline rush, the taste of victory and the sense that I had just been part of a moment in history.

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**See you next quarter!**

**KEEP THE STORIES COMING!**

**Enjoy life, but be safe!**