**CANDOER News**

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

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By Bob Catlin

**W**elcome to the latest issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOER**s (**C**ommunicators **AND** **O**thers **E**njoying **R**etirement). 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.**

***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**

**W**e 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.

**Providing TDY Support to Dakar**

By Rudy Garcia

**I** was on duty that Sunday when I received a call-in signal from Ouagadougou, our relay. It was early morning in Nouakchott and the sand had not started blowing. I rode my bike (POV) in and received the NIACT telegram. It was from Dakar requesting communications support. The Gambia was undergoing a coup d-etat and embassy personnel in Banjul were trapped at the residence, which was by the beach. I called our JAO director to reply to the request. It was decided that I would go. The JAO director got some funds and arranged for a driver and a Chevrolet Carry All from the joint motor pool. Unfortunately, it was a USAID owned vehicle.

We headed south along the main highway toward Senegal. This was a two-lane road sometimes covered by encroaching sand dunes as they blew eastward from the sea. It was especially hairy when the sand covered your lane atop a hill. You could not see if there was an oncoming vehicle while you were on the oncoming lane trying to avoid the dune. That, however, wasn't the problem. Halfway to the Senegal border the vehicle jerked to a stop. The driver said it was the transmission as if he knew the car was defective. The only tools in the car were a small spanner and a screwdriver. Now you see why I said it was unfortunate it was a USAID vehicle. We crawled under the vehicle but there wasn't much you could do with the vast array of tools the vehicle carried. After cooling down we were able to get underway but could shift only to second gear. It broke down twice more and we had to sit for almost an hour each time before it would move again. Finally we were able to get to Rosso, Mauritania, the border town. I gave the driver a sum of money to get the vehicle repaired and to return to Nouakchott. There was no way I was going to continue in this car all the way to Dakar.

I found out on my return the driver used the money for something else and said he'd pay me back in installments. I told him he had to produce the funds immediately so I could voucher it or I'd take him to the JAO director on charges of misuse of government funds.

I boarded the pirogue that ferried people across the Senegal River. On the Senegal side I bought a seat in the next bush taxi (taxi brousse). These were usually Peugeot 404 station wagons with three bench seats. The vehicle was full; nine people including the driver, as well as all the baggage -- no air conditioning. I was lucky this time, no livestock. The car drove southward stopping only to let people relieve themselves and for the noon and afternoon prayers. We passed through St. Louis, the biggest city along the route, and smaller towns with no one about, due to the heat. In the late afternoon we arrived at the bus terminal in Dakar. It is also the termination point for these taxis. I took a city taxi to the embassy and arrived sweaty, smelly, still sporting my oil-stained shirt. The control officer, I believe it was Len Shurtleff, met me and gave me hotel information and filled me in on the situation.

Apparently there was a coup d'etat in The Gambia. Senegal had sent in their military to help the Gambian military quell the uprising. In accordance with our E&E plans, all U.S. Embassy personnel gathered at the residence (in Fajara, if I'm not mistaken -- it's been 35 years) to proceed with the planned evacuation.

Unfortunately the rebels had surrounded the residence although the U.S. was not a target. All the other nationals (French, Brits, etc.) had jumped in their cars and driven across the nearest border into Senegal. Even our Peace Corps volunteers fled The Gambia by any means, including moped. I was to help out in the Dakar IPC so the incumbents could assist in the efforts to communicate with the residence. The Ambassador's secretary manned the HF unit to get almost minute-by-minute status reports. She used code names for the government troops and rebels: cowboys and Indians, black hats and white hats, and other code names that popped into her head. There were two other OC TDYers, CEO/C Erick Morin and AF/EX Rover Gipsy Breckman (sp?). After a few days it was decided that two TDYers would make their way to the Chancery, which was in the city of Banjul itself (a couple of years later as a Rover, I was to figure out that TDYers are expendable). I thought I would be one of the two but they sent Gipsy to go with Erick. Yeah, she was tough: travelled with two Halliburton suitcases as her HHE. They were to go to the river and take a pirogue to the Chancery and secure it as much as possible. Things were winding down by then, the Senegalese military had rounded up the rebels and the embassy personnel were no longer surrounded. I was told I could leave on the afternoon of the third day. Since I had no airline ticket I decided to return the way I came.

I took a taxi to the bus terminal to catch a bush taxi back to the border. I was in luck as one was almost full, so I bought the remaining seats so we could leave right away. We arrived at the Senegal border too late for the pirogue, which usually stops operations at 21:00 hrs. The border guard said the pirogue broke down in the middle of the river but if it was now operational he'd let them take me across. We walked to the riverbank and he yelled into the darkness and got a reply saying they were still down. I asked where the nearest hotel was, as it was 22:00 by then. He said there were none in that village but the nearest was in Richard Toll, a sugar refining town some 40 kms away (I found out later it was only about 10 miles away). I asked if I could just sit in his office, a small shack with a small porch in front. He obliged, even pulled out a dirty worn mattress from inside and set it on the porch. I thanked him and put my bag under my head thinking I'd just lie a while. I guess I fell asleep as I woke to a donkey sniffing and starting to lick my feet through my sandals and a dog smelling for food in my bag. It was still dark but it was morning.

The pirogue was fixed and took me across the river. I thanked the border guard and gave him approximately $20 for his efforts to accommodate me. On the Mauritanian side of the river I joined a bush taxi, buying the last two seats to have more space and so we could get going immediately. It was one of the longest car rides I ever had. I was in the middle bench with another guy who, seeing there was no third passenger, sprawled out with his knees intruding into my space. I had to keep whacking his knees and telling him I own the empty space. The guy at the front passenger side window kept spitting out of his window and his phlegm would fly into my window and onto my sleeve. I slapped him on the back of his head a couple of times and he finally stopped. There were three Mauritanian women crammed into the small rear bench seat (Mauritanian women are force-fed as stretch marks are signs of beauty). They chanted a mantra, non-stop, all the way back to Nouakchott!

The Chancery in Banjul had since moved to a new location from the old building in the city. It relocated to a white building named "The White House" in a more open area around Fajara. I provided TDY support there about three years later.

**The Uninvited Guest**

By Charles Christian

**I**n late 1863 the Chattanooga campaign had Gen. Bragg besieging the city and the Union forces held Knoxville to the east which put Yankees in the front and in the rear of Gen. Bragg. A division led by Gen. Longstreet was sent to Knoxville to deal with the Union forces there while Bragg continued the containment of the Union army in Chattanooga.

Gen. Longstreet and Gen. McLaws made their headquarters in a fine home just west of Knoxville on the Kingstown Pike. The madam of the house was not pleased to have her house commandeered by Gen. Longstreet, but there was nothing she could do but obey the rule that she and her people stay on the second floor and were not allowed to leave that floor. One day she was determined to go out and headed down the stairs and the guard at the bottom told her to go back up or he would fire. She continued and he fired into the step just below her and she went back upstairs.

On top of the house was a small square cupola with glass all around the sides from half way up to the roof. Snipers were positioned in it to fire upon the enemy only a couple blocks away in town.

Eventually the CSA could not seize the city as the Union forces had built a wall of dirt 6 feet high and a ditch in front 6 feet deep. In front of it was a cleared field of tree stumps and piano wire strung between the stumps to trip attacking soldiers. The two obstacles made it almost impossible to storm the fortifications and when they tried it cause massive casualties. Eventually the CSA pulled out and left the town in Union hands.

32 years passed and in 1890 the United Confederate Veterans held their first reunion in Knoxville and the Union veterans were also invited towards healing the old wounds between the sides.

Gen. Longstreet was invited by the same woman this time to be an invited guest at Bleak House. At the farewell dinner the last night of the reunion she threw a dinner party where she stood up and proposed a toast to Gen. Longstreet and said words to the effect: “General Longstreet, 30 some years ago you were an uninvited guest in this house and now that you are my guest again I am sad to see you leave.” (Google Bleak House and the Knoxville battle for more information.)

**Postscript:**  During one of my many travels through the south over the years I visited Bleak House. I was wearing my blue forage cap with the Sons of Union Veterans emblem on it. The house is now the local headquarters for the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The older woman in charge would not give me a tour and directed a younger and pretty woman to do so. The young woman was most kind to me and showed me all the artifacts of the war that the house held. The bullet hole in the staircase was still there. The cupola was still there and, instead of a ladder, there was a staircase up to it. On one of the wooden walls was the likeness in colored chalk of the three CSA soldiers that were killed while on duty in it. The woman also told me that there was a big blood stain on the wooden floor when the UDC took over the house. The President of the local UDC then had it removed as she thought it was not fitting to be viewed by any one. I had the thought that even the Sons of Confederate Veterans would have had her taken out and shot.

A few years later I went back to the Bleak House with my wife, the same older woman was there but did not recognize me as I was not wearing that horrible Yankee cap. I told her that I had recently been honored by the UDC in California with the presentation of the highest award they can issued to a nonmember, The Jefferson Davis Historical Gold Medal. This was as a result of all my work on researching and seeing to it that all CSA veterans in the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery had their stories typed up by me and that their gravestones showed their service record with small stainless steel plates that I installed over the years. I also gave talks on notable CSA vets in the SRRC to the UDC and participated as a Union Chaplain at various CSA events in Northern California for some years. A senior SCV officer had also told them of my work with him in other matters of CSA vets in Northern California.

The older UDC woman told me that her husband had been presented the UDC Stonewall Jackson Silver Medal for his good works on behalf of the CSA vets and was the gardener at the Bleak House for years. The house backs up to the Tennessee River and the large garden area was a masterpiece of beauty to see and walk through. The lady now took me by the hand and joyfully gave the two of the grand tour of the house.

In the later years of my travels in the South, I was very discreet about my SUV connection and Yankee roots. All my people during the war lived so far north that they were almost Canadians and none of them probably even knew a Southerner. But I did learn to be sympathetic to the Lost Cause in the past 35 years my study and travel in the south, but will continue to be true to the Yankees.

“The Union forever!”

**Now That's a Memory**

By Bob Catlin

**W**hen it comes to remembering names of people I have met, but have not seen on as regular basis, I have a problem. I remember the face, but rarely the name.

On November 01, 1990, after suffering a heart attack, I was detailed to the Office of the Manager of the National Communications System (OMNCS). An assignment I loved.

While assigned to the OMNCS I was able to attend several AFCEA luncheons. One particular luncheon, in 1992, I had the pleasure of sitting at a table with General Colin Powell. At that time he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Though out the luncheon we talked at length about what we did to relax during our off duty time. Of course, my conversation was about fishing. The General talked about buying old Volvo or Saab cars and doing "frame off" restoration. He said when he finished the restoration he would drive the car "around the block" and then put it up for sale and start on the next one.

Now let's flash ahead to 2002.

I had retired form State and was working as the Vice President of Human Resources for a company founded by the Late Ken Loff, PRO-telligent.

Colin Powell was now Secretary of State.

On this particular day I was trying to enter the Department through the Diplomatic entrance, only to find it blocked off and several microphones set up under the overhead canopy. So, I stood there to see what was going on instead of going around to one of the other entrances.

Before long, Secretary Powell and a foreign dignitary (I do not remember which one) came through the doors and made several remarks about their meeting.

As the dignitary got into his limo and left, Secretary Powell looked over at all of us standing around waiting to get into the building and he noticed me. He walked over to me with his hand extended and said, "Mr. Catlin, how are you doing." "Are your still working here at State." I replied, "I am no longer a government employee, but am a contractor working here in the building." He responded, "Well we need you guys too." He then asked if I was still getting in some fishing time.

That was 10 years after our initial meeting at the AFCEA luncheon and not only did he remember my name, but the fact I worked at State and loved to fish.

Now that's a memory!

**Gee, Look at All Those Poor People**

**By John Lemandri**

**T**he year was 1977 and I was midway through my assignment at the American Embassy in The Hague, Holland. The city hadn't changed much since the war. As my friend and I turned a corner and began walking across the cobblestone square all of a sudden two 1940s style busses pulled in front of us and out strolled 60 or so elderly people dressed in clothing I had only seen in past issues of Life Magazine. I remarked to my friend, "Gee, look at all those poor people," when all of a sudden the elderly stopped moving as I heard what could only be described as a thousand cuss words in Dutch. We had inadvertently walked into a movie set being filmed about World War II, and the director wasn't pleased.

**See you next quarter!**

**KEEP THE STORIES COMING!**

**Enjoy life, but be safe!**