

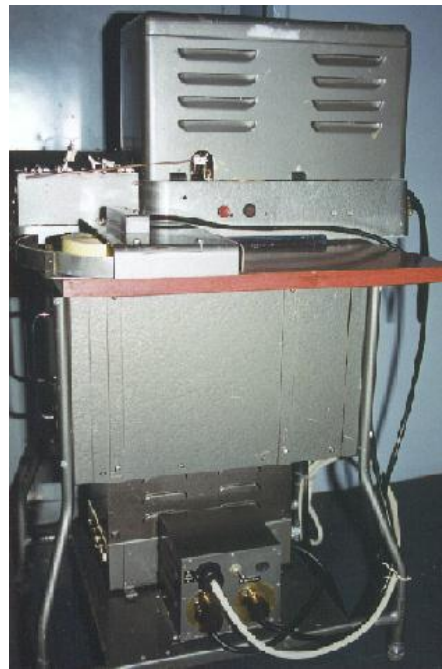
# THE COMMUNICATOR

**Newsletter Volume VIII, Edition III**

**Fall 2008**

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## *Down memory lane*

### *Editors Thoughts*

*By David Smith*

I'm puzzled. Why do the winters seem so long and the summers so short! The summer of 2008 is now over but left behind are memories of those scarce sunny days (in this region) when we could actually get out and play. Now it's time to get the snow blower out of storage and prepare for a return to winter life in Canada (for most of us). Given the challenges of last winter and this summer, one might be tempted to think that Canada has six months of winter and six months of bad weather but this would not be accurate. Many of us found time to complete those summer projects we dreamt about during that remarkable winter of 07/08. Once again, it's time to begin planning next year's projects.

This edition of "The Communicator" has a "Dip Courier" flavour. A recent phone conversation with Michel Dargis who retired last month gave me some interesting facts. It is still my intention to nail down Ken Ljungar for more information on his years as a Courier – once he stays home long enough for me to corner him. At present, there are 6 courier positions but only two are filled by couriers – those being Ken Ljungar and Gerry Springett (a former CR). Ken is constantly "on the road" managing about 5 days a month in Canada. He will be 65 in January of 2009 and my guess is that he must be close to serving as a courier for at least 31 years. That just has to be a record of some sort. Michel advises he personally has filled 60 passports and Ken exceeds that by a considerable number. One can only imagine the travel points amassed! Places to which we use to travel without a need for visas now require them for Couriers. My hat is off to both Ken and Michel. How they stand/stood the challenges of such constant flying is a mystery but they alone know the secret and I for one am impressed. Well done guys – you are an inspiration to us all.

Happy reading .

All are welcome to touch base with me anytime at [drdee@sympatico.ca](mailto:drdee@sympatico.ca)

## *Courier stories*

*By David Smith*

### **Istanbul to Vienna – or not!**

For any Canadian Courier in the early 70's on the "Middle East" run, it was not unusual to encounter a glitch while flying through Turkey. My experiences probably mirror many of my colleagues.

A portion of the routing, in this case the flight from Beirut to Ankara, would often stop in Adana on the way in and Istanbul on the way out. These two stories deal with flights beginning in Istanbul and supposedly ending in Vienna, Austria.

One of the challenges with flying out of Istanbul is that Canadian Couriers were left to their own devices. With no consulate or other office in Istanbul, this meant we had no Canadian escort to assist us with the dip bags which was the rule of the day back in the 70's. Arriving from Ankara, couriers had to off-load the diplomatic bags by themselves and drag them to a check-in counter. On this particular day, I had a considerable number of bags and on this route, the bags were always stowed in the aircraft hold but for some reason, the particular ticket agent I was dealing with was insistent that I couldn't fly because I had too many bags. As she put it, "I know you U.S. couriers bring your dip bags on board". In spite of my attempts to convince the agent that Canadian dip bags go in the aircraft hold, I was unable to move the agent away from this misconception. What to do? Here I was in a city far removed from any Canadian assistance, with people in Austria getting ready to meet me at the airport and receive their material and I was faced with being stuck in Istanbul because of an agent who "knows" we stow our bags on board the aircraft. After mulling over my situation for a few minutes, I hatched a plan to thwart this individual. After purposely waiting for 20 minutes, I "hid" the majority of my dip bags behind a large pillar just out of sight of the agent. Returning to the counter I promptly informed her that I solved my problem by calling the Canadian consulate (which didn't exist) and they came and took most of my load. Looking at my one remaining dip pouch I was quickly given a boarding pass. Carefully, I arranged with a baggage handler to spirit my bags out of the ticket zone and with a few of those very useful "Yankee greenbacks" in his hand, away we went to the plane and shortly afterwards I was winging my way to Austria.

Couriers had to use whatever novel solutions they could to ensure "the mail got delivered".

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## **Istanbul number two:**

Flights from Istanbul to Vienna were always full of surprises. This particular flight was no exception. After boarding in Istanbul and taking off for Vienna, the steward made an in-flight announcement that “Our flight to Munich will be X hours”. At first, I was sure he had made a mistake and advised him he had said Munich instead of Vienna. To my horror, he replied that no, in fact this plane was going to Munich. My next question was to query the flight number of this plane and his reply matched my ticket and boarding pass. While trying to ignore my silly questions, he half-listened to my confusion over the fact that this was the correct flight, the correct plane and why were we going to Munich? The answer was, believe it or not, that “the majority of people on this plane wish to fly to Munich”. Naturally, I asked how long we would be in Munich before proceeding on to Vienna. To my astonishment he said “this plane is not going to Vienna, just Munich”. And it didn’t! Thankfully, upon landing the German ground staff in Munich whisked me to a flight going to Vienna and I arrived just a little later than my normally scheduled time, no thanks to “Turk Hava Yollari”. Only on a Turkish airline!

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The “Best of Buck”  
*By Buck Arbuckle*

## **Those Inimitable Couriers**

In those days when the Diplomatic Courier Service was a major part of our organization, consuming a huge chunk of our Telecommunications budget, there were unexpected spin-offs. It happened like this.

I was nominated to join an administrative conference in Washington, D.C. to exchange views that may be useful to both the State Department and External Affairs. Our delegation comprised senior officials from our administrative offices such as ADM administration, director general of finance, personnel, etc.; in general, bigger wheels than I was. Appropriate airline and hotel reservations were made.

It was the day of departure and we were all set to go. Enter the Courier Service. At the airport Air Canada extended “noblesse oblige”. I was standing in line with my seniors when the ticket clerk rescued me; I was directed to leave my colleagues and go to the first class check-in. Not

wishing to challenge Air Canada's wisdom, I accepted their direction. After checking in I entered the VIP lounge just a little bewildered. When my flight was called I was escorted to a waiting car and driven 60 feet to the aircraft. I was ushered on board ahead of other passengers, including the rest of my delegation who stood watching me. Taking my seat in first-class I watched sheepishly as my colleagues filed past to the tourist cabin. There I was, low man of the totem pole, travelling first class on government business while they travelled tourist. I could feel the tension, the animosity, the suspicion as they filed by my seat. Knowing my schedule, those inimitable couriers had asked a favour in my case, and Air Canada really laid it on. Shortly after take-off the stewardess came by and noted that I had been bumped from tourist class to first. She smiled and asked "What the hell did Air Canada do to you?"

The rest of the trip was as might be expected. We met with the Americans, talked, wined and dined, and generally had a good visit. Then it was time to return to Ottawa where Air Canada was at it again. I was led off the aircraft first and ushered through Immigration and Customs ahead of the rest. I must say I enjoyed the treatment but that wasn't the end of it.

Back in the department those colleagues that I travelled with, or should I say travelled in the same aircraft with, instigated an investigation. They were certain I had raided the public purse for all those extra privileges and needed assurances that no unnecessary or additional expenses were charged. The airline tickets were upgraded at no cost and, of course, my expense account was clear, very much on the conservative side so there was nothing untoward found by the "investigation". No first class favours were paid for and the investigation petered out. Meanwhile the courier section had a good laugh at the special attention extended by the airline and the temporary discomfort the department inflicted upon me but no harm done.

\* \* \*

## **The Tourist**

Tom Ito, a Canadian born communicator of Japanese parents, had a deep rooted desire to visit Japan and meet some of his Japanese relatives. Determined as he was to visit Japan he somehow couldn't scare up the fare. Working for External Affairs, he perceived that there must be some way the government could be coerced into picking up the tab for such a trip.

Tom badgered the Personnel Division to arrange a posting to Tokyo but whenever a posting opportunity opened up he was for some reason not available or not suitable. Unperturbed, he

approached our courier section to see about a transfer to that service. Again there were no available positions but the division had a reputation for trying to accommodate special personal requests, especially if they could be satisfied in house at no additional cost to the government. Now Tom seemed to have the acumen that the head of courier needed. Perhaps if Tom had some annual leave he might be slotted in to take a courier run, use his leave and then take a courier run home again. This might be possible if one of the regular couriers was ill or otherwise unavailable to make the trip. Thus the department pays his fare, he visits his relatives and everybody is happy. Soon an opportunity presented itself. He was briefed, given a diplomatic passport, tickets, visa, timetable and off he went to Japan with two weeks leave ahead of him.

When he returned to Ottawa he looked very distraught and discouraged. He had successfully looked after the business of carrying the mail so there was no official complaint against him. What could be wrong? Eventually we found out. Tom was Japanese, he looked Japanese and for all intents and purposes, in Japan he was a home grown native. But he spoke Canadian and could not speak Japanese. Outside of tourist circles he was lost. Not matter where he went or what he did, he got no co-operation because he could not make himself understood. His countrymen expected this Japanese brother to speak Japanese, not English, so they just laughed at him and offered no help whatsoever. At every turn, at every corner, at every inquiry he was met with derision. Thus his trip that he so looked forward to was a big disappointment through a simple oversight. He didn't fit the homeland Japanese mould.

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## Memories

*By Marty Byzewski*

### *Red Square on a Snowy Morning*

In 1990 I was sent to Moscow for four months to replace the head of the communications centre. I had always been fascinated by the 'Evil Empire' and all the tales of Russian History I had taken while attending university. The first Sunday morning I was in Moscow I went to Red Square. It was a scene out of Dr Zhivago. The cannons, bells, church steeples and softly falling snow. I don't believe I ever felt more alive then in the brief moment when I realized I was in the middle of history, the Tsars, Napoleon, WW2. Sometimes I miss those lost moments in time.

## *A Night at the AAA bar*

One night during the curfew in Beijing right after the riots in Tiananmen Square three of us decided that we would go out to see The Great Hall of the People on the edge of the square. The place is reported to hold at least 10,000 people during cocktail parties or 5,000 sit-down. Why we decided to take a chance with those People's Liberation Army being on each corner is still unknown to us. It probably was the beer we had drank during the afternoon B-B-Que. We had our diplomatic passports and I guess we figured that they would stop bullets and give us almighty immunity from the bad guys. Well we never made it to Tiananmen because of the barricades and ended up at a bar named the AAA Bar. Now we thought this very unusual being in the middle of Beijing and having an AAA bar. Man it was dark and we were the only westerners in the place. I was very nervous and thought that we were goners. But we had our beer and about two hours later returned to the embassy after one scary experience at a roadblock where our military guard with us was cursing at the military guys. They had their guns pointing at us but he managed to talk to them in his halting Chinese and I guess the passports helped. It was quite an evening.

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## Where are they now? Len Dupuis



Len Dupuis and his family in Alberta

Go to Youtube and type **Len Dupuis** in the search line for a nifty video of Len and his daughter

*The following is an excerpt from an email received from Len last February, 2008.*

“I retired in the summer of 1994 and then worked in Moncton NB as a Commissionaire for NAVCAN for five years. My wife Ruby is originally from Saskatchewan so after a few years in Moncton where I grew up, we moved to Leduc, Alberta in 2004. I have not worked since we came here and lead a pretty quiet life.  
Len”

***Where are they now – “continued”***

As a further update to the list of those colleagues who continue to work for DFAIT, (printed in Vol VII, Edition III of the Fall 2007 newsletter), my numbers now indicate there are just 25 souls remaining. It’s comforting to know that we still have former CM’s keeping things under control at Headquarters and around the world!

Recent retirees are Yves Bachand, Gary Black (52 years), Cliff Swelin, Michel Dargis (retired in Sept 2008 with 45 years of service). Ron Messett retired in September 2007 and John Hagemeyer has also retired.

**Then and Now!**

With Zimbabwe now close to becoming a “failed state”, these photos, best viewed on-line ( they are not from Zimbabwe) drive home the point that perhaps kicking out the farmers was not the smartest move the government made.



Then



and

Now



*Final Comps "In memoriam" – 2008*  
*Members and friends of the CM/EL community to whom we have said goodbye*

Monique Barsalou – April 29<sup>th</sup>



John Ferguson (EL) – August 6<sup>th</sup>



Ted Ogilvie – May 17<sup>th</sup>



Perry Lesk – August 22<sup>nd</sup>



Don Butt (EL) – July 7<sup>th</sup>



Joan Ogilvie (wife of Ted)  
October 12<sup>th</sup>



Frank Henderson – July 11<sup>th</sup>

