

# The Communicator

**Newsletter Volume VII  
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## ***Editors Ramble***

***By David Smith***

Happy New Year. While chatting with former colleagues not long ago, we ruminated over how quickly the years are whizzing by. The great CM “Exodus” of 1995 was 12 years ago! This realization underlines why we make the most of our retirement years.

Tripping down that old memory lane brings real pleasure to many of us. This past summer, a return trip to my old Navy training base “HMCS Comwallis” brought back many memories. A sunset ceremony and passing out parade by a group of Sea Cadets transported me back a few decades to when I marched on the same ground.

A visit to Pier 21 in Halifax reminded us of the day my family landed here in 1970 enroute home from a first posting to Rome with a 3 year old son in tow who had never set foot in Canada.

How fortunate we are to have such good memories. As we connect with former colleagues from our “External” days, it’s comforting to realize how easily and quickly we can trip down that familiar lane.

Good times, good memories.

This Newsletter is published by and for members and associate members of the “Association of Former Foreign Service Communicators”. Check us out at: [www.affsc.ca](http://www.affsc.ca)

\*\* For more on the LBP photo above, check out [www.ofarts.ca](http://www.ofarts.ca) (found under articles)

## ***NOCAMS final message***

***By former colleagues***

On the 19th of August 1997, Bob Brill sent the following message to what was left of the CDCS.

“Effective at approximately 1830 GMT August 18, 1997 the dear old servant NOCAMS served us for the final time. The activity was presided over by Tom O’Quinn when he downloaded the final messages to the LOG circuit. For Tom, a difficult task, for many a very sad event. NOCAMS served us well and those who managed her very complex operations provided tremendous service to the department. We shall remember NOCAMS as being “now that was a computer” as she was way ahead of her time. She led in the micro computer era for governmental secure communications and certainly served CN/CP well in their development and exploitation of technology. I hope that someday one of the more knowledgeable will write a history on NOCAMS and all that she did”.

Editor’s note: Bob will be happy to know we did and it is reprinted at the end of the newsletter. The article and photos can be found on the web here:

[http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/canadian\\_comm\\_center.html](http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/canadian_comm_center.html)

## ***Mental Gymnastics***

***By Howard Abbott***

On one of my postings, nearly all members of the High Commission played badminton and those who did not came to the matches as support. Although badminton had become a very important part of our social life, the High Commission had no court of its own so we played wherever we could. Fortunately there was one lighted court on the grounds of one of the apartment buildings where some of our Canada Based Staff played evening games.

The High Commissioner was very much aware of the importance of this activity and he played whenever he could. It was suggested that the mission ask HQ’s for funds from the recreation fund to construct a court of our own but the powers that be in Ottawa took only a few days to refuse our request citing lack of funds.

Approximately 2 weeks after HQ’s refusal, a request was again sent asking for funds to pave a portion of the residence grounds for parking during official functions; this was approved immediately. After the paving was finished a further request was sent asking that lighting be installed on the newly constructed parking lot to provide security for vehicles during functions; this was also approved.

Shortly after the lighting was installed our local property maintenance crew painted the lines and installed the net for our new badminton court!

\* \* \*

## *Pearl River Delta Tour January 14-17, 1999*

*By John Kruithof*

During our posting to Hong Kong (HK) 1996-99, one of the several trips Kawsar and I took in China was a four-day guided Pearl River Delta tour. We selected the standard tour from China Travel Service (CTS). It covered a ferry-ride to Macau, road trip to the inland resort city of Zhaoqing and historic Guangzhou (Canton), then by train back to Hong Kong. I will give you a taste of the trip by breaking it down day by day. Looking back at it now, it is a good thing we had the stamina to endure the hectic pace.

Thursday, January 14, 1999. We reported to the Shun Tak Centre's HK-Macau Ferry Terminal well before the required 07:45 time and were met by the CTS representative whose duty it was to ensure we got on the ferry. She informed us that instead of there being a group on this trip, we were the only two persons, which meant traveling in China by car, rather than coach. I assured her we could adjust to that. With formalities so limited, Kawsar and I got on the 08:00 Turbo Cat service to Macau, where we arrived one hour later. A CTS representative, Winifred, met us. She guided us around St. Paul's cathedral and Senado Square. Although we had been to Macau a dozen or so times, Winifred's recounting of this area's history made us look at familiar sights through new eyes. I asked her about the rickety old ferry crossing the Inner Harbour to Wanzai on the Chinese mainland. It did not look like a vessel foreigners would willingly board. Winifred took us to A-Ma Temple, a colourful complex well worth visiting. Just as we were crossing the street towards the temple, a tremendous volley of firecrackers from within shattered the calm, and smoke wafted over the red-coloured structure. Winifred explained in detail the ceremonies being performed by worshippers. Then off to a delightful lunch at the Ritz Hotel, within sight of the fabled Bela Vista Hotel, where so much Portuguese history took place. Then to the border, for a land crossing into China. Thanks to the privileges accorded CTS, it was easier than ever. Instead of having to walk the few hundred metres between Macau's exit formalities and the Chinese check post, the CTS vehicle was at our disposal. After introducing us to our mainland guide, Michael, we bid good-bye to Winifred. We were now in Zhuhai, quite familiar to us because of our (Kawsar's) previous shopping trips there. As was the case in Macau, the benefit of having a local guide was instantly obvious. Michael was able to devote his entire attention to us, as the modern, comfortable car came with a driver. Soon, we were on the boardwalk in front of the statue of the Zhuhai Fishing Girl, whose upraised hands held a pearl. Production of cultured pearls is a big industry in Zhuhai. Kilometres of shallow coastal waters have clearly visible stakes among which the process takes place. Not visible are off-shore oil exploration activities which lend prosperity to the area. Tourism is clearly encouraged. Numerous hotels, resorts, golf clubs and amusement parks dot the coastline. Not very long afterwards, we arrived at Cuiheng Village to visit the former residence and museum of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. We peppered Michael with countless questions about this historic Chinese figure. The nearby Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial School was in session. Large classrooms of 50-60 pupils each were being instructed in Mandarin. That is significant, in a Cantonese-speaking province. We drove into Zhongshan City as daylight was fading and checked into the Fu Hua Hotel. In the early evening, Michael took us to a restaurant for dinner. CTS policy is to have the guide not sit at the same table as the guests. Therefore Kawsar and I ate in one part of the restaurant, Michael and the driver in another. After dinner, Michael guided us across a bridge to a newly-completed street from which vehicular traffic was banned. Mediterranean style architecture housed modern shops with brand name goods. Another example of how China is catching up, or even surpassing, the West. Or is it? Just a block off the beaten path brought us into alleys uniquely Chinese. Time to go back to the hotel. Modern though it was, the beds were the hardest we had ever slept on. You don't jump into bed: onto is more like it. But after a full day, it really didn't matter. We slept well.

Friday, January 15, 1999. Breakfast at the Fu Hua Hotel, Zhongshan. Cold winds swirled through the rather austere lobby. It was a good thing we were bundled up. Other dining rooms were also open, seemingly a lot cosier, but perhaps western-style breakfasts were not served there. The cold appeared to have affected service as well. Breakfast did arrive eventually. After we got through, we wondered what the view would be like from the top floor revolving restaurant. Nobody was there, but the door was unlocked, so we helped ourselves to a panoramic view of the city, with rivers, hills, temples and pagodas. Then on the road again. We visited a typical village market, not very different from any market in any Chinese city. The amount and variety of foodstuffs was staggering. No matter how overcrowded China may be, starvation is not a worry for most of its citizens. It's quite a distance from Zhongshan to Zhaoqing, so we spent a good part of the day in the car. For much of the distance, multi-lane super highways were privately developed, thus toll gates were frequent. The Pearl River Delta is heavily populated, with no clear delineation between city and village boundaries. There was housing construction all over, as well as roads. It was rather comical going up one stretch of road, along with all the other vehicles, then being turned back a kilometre or two later due to the lanes being completely blocked by paving equipment. So back to the earlier roundabout, and share two-way traffic on the other side of the road. Further on, there were hundreds of acres of potted orange trees of varying sizes, ready for distribution as traditional decoration for the upcoming Chinese New Year. Halfway to our destination was Foshan City. It's a very attractive city, with wide boulevards and a lot of greenery and an ancestral temple to die for. Kawsar and I have a long-standing interest in ceramics and were very pleased to visit a factory. Lunch was at a posh establishment. Later on, there was a stretch of some kilometres along which hundreds of stalls were selling tangerines neatly piled into pyramids. Had we known what was to happen next, we would have bought a good supply of them. I mentioned to Michael that the scenery I had seen so far made me nostalgic for visiting a Chinese village conforming to a westerner's concept of what a traditional Chinese village should look like. Tradition you want? He instructed the driver to pull off the road. We walked a short distance to a village whose outskirts had been

devastated by the laying of the new road. Instant brush with rurality. Narrow concrete paths winding among red-bricked homes and barns. Piglets and chickens outside doorways. Water buffalo tethered to trees. Pigs in pens. Villagers constructing a new, small, red-bricked home. A group of children, fascinated by the appearance of strangers, afraid of coming too closely, scattered in all directions when I produced a camera. Then a breaking of the ice that can not be scripted. Kawsar spotted a table of four women playing mahjong. A game had just finished. Michael informed the assembled that Kawsar would be honoured if she could join the next game. One woman gladly volunteered her place. Under the scrutiny of a growing number of observers, Kawsar played a knowledgeable hand. She didn't win, but played well enough to impress. Applause when the game ended. Eeeehja! A foreign she-devil, playing mahjong. Nobody minded me taking two unobtrusive pictures during the game, which led to a three-generational family posing for another shot. It was a moment forever etched in our minds. Had we had half a ton of tangerines, we would have left them for the children. We started the remaining distance to Zhaoqing. Hills began crowding in on us. In less than an hour, we were there. After driving on a causeway reminiscent of the West Lake in Hangzhou, we turned into the city and arrived at the Star Lake Hotel. At 31-storey, it is reputedly the tallest building in Western Guangdong. The 23<sup>rd</sup>-floor room we were assigned had a magnificent view of the lakes and Seven Stars Crags. After an early evening dinner, we watched a colourful display of the Xinghu Coloured Music Fountain. Kawsar couldn't resist visiting some shops. After all that, we were ready to sleep, even though the beds proved every bit as hard as the night before.

Saturday, January 16, 1999. Breakfast at the Star Lake Hotel, Zhaoqing. It was excellent, served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor restaurant. As in Zhongshan a day ago, we were drawn to the idea of getting a bird's-eye view from the revolving restaurant high above. But we were unsuccessful. The door was locked. Although someone was inside, our pantomime through the glass door of only wanting a quick looksee was answered with an equally emphatic tap on the wristwatch and negative wagging of the index finger. Oh well, you can't win them all. It would have been nice to get a glimpse of Xijiang (West River) and possibly the Harbour Passenger Terminal from which we understood Turbo Cat service existed directly to Hong Kong. That was in the opposite direction of Seven Star Crags, where we headed next. It's a natural resort area, no doubt crowded on holidays. It was peaceful on our visit. Limestone crags rose for considerable height from the waters of the lake. Crags, islands, pathways, pavilions, foliage blended in perfect harmony. Tightrope artists traversing between two crags were brightly contrasted against the clear blue sky. At one of the pavilions we bought a rice paper painting of blossoms and crags. We were impressed by the painter, who had met Deng Xiaoping during the latter's swing through the south. He showed us the advanced sketch of a large painting he had been commissioned to do in commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution. Seven Star Crags was truly an inspiring sight, which no doubt motivated this verse composed by Marshal Ye Jianying in 1966:

*With water borrowed from the West Lake,  
Seven hills transferred from Yangshuo,  
Green willows lining the banks  
This picturesque scenery will remain forever!*

We spent hours walking that glorious day, but it was time to move on to Guangzhou. By late afternoon we checked into the White Swan Hotel. Room 1911. Nice touch, corresponding with the year Dr. Sun Yat-sen overthrew China's last emperor. In the fading light, we walked around Shamian Island. Across the canal, the front of Qingping Market was enveloped in a kilometre-long shroud of bamboo poles and plastic covering. Workmen were systematically demolishing a whole traditional neighbourhood. Progress, you know. For dinner, Kawsar had requested Michael to arrange for a hotpot meal. It was more elaborate than expected, and we found ourselves not quite able to manage. No problem. Two delightful hostesses helped us throughout the meal, mixing the meats, vegetables, dumplings, noodles, herbs and spices, lobbed into and retrieved from boiling broth. It took us some time to get back to the hotel, its lobby filled with interesting shopping opportunities, to which Kawsar availed herself. In no time at all, the fourth day of our trip arrived.

Sunday, January 17, 1999. Buffet breakfast at the White Swan Hotel, Guangzhou. Spectacular setting. Scattered among the considerable number of guests were at least a half-dozen white couples with adopted Chinese babies. The hotel is an almost obligatory stop in finalizing adoption procedures. It was very touching to observe the bonding process the now enlarged families were going through. Although we had been to Guangzhou before on business and pleasure, we did the touristy things. The Six Banyan Pagoda, the Five Rams Statue... and on down the line. The Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, with its 3000-plus capacity unobstructed by pillars, is a strikingly impressive structure. After lunch, we went to a downtown market. Kawsar bought some authentic, soiled, worn, embroidered little shoes and dodats. I latched onto a first-edition, well-thumbed, mildewed English-language copy of Quotations from Chairman Mao. Then time to head out for the East Railway Station, Given Guangzhou's chaotic traffic, it's difficult to know in advance how long it will take. As luck would have it, we arrived at the station well ahead of time. Why not kill some time at the nearby stadium, where a flea-market was going on? Kawsar bought two small vases that the hawker insisted had very reluctantly been given up by his poor relatives in Chongqing because of severest economic pressure. A likely story, but the vases were nice. Then it was time to say good-bye to Michael and the driver, and board the 17:25 Kowloon through Train for the comfortable two-hour journey home. On the train, an event happened that showed you need luck to survive. During the few minutes I vacated my seat to freshen up, our now quite heavy handbag decided to drop down from the overhead rack, directly onto where I had been seated. Kawsar's scream scared the living daylight out of everyone in the coach,

except me, blissfully unaware of what had happened until I returned to my seat. The rest of the trip, through Shenzhen, much used by Hong Kong residents for rest, recreation and relief from high HK prices, was uneventful. Then to our abode, in Wisdom Court, Mid-Levels, and a comfortable bed.

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**Hockey night in Moscow**

*Submitted by Terry Hayes*



Here are the Moscow Maple Leafs. Military members of the team are: front row, first from left, Lt-Col. Jim Hutchison; second from left, retired RCASC Sergeant and coach of the team Jake Brunning; second row, third from left, Sgt Ray Sturgeon, and sixth from left, Sgt Joe McLaughlin. Standing at right is ex-National Hockey Leaguer Aggi Kukulowicz. Lt-Col Jack Watson was absent for photo.

*It's hockey night in Moscow*

by Sergeant Raymond N. Sturgeon

During the winter months, Saturday is traditionally known as "Hockey Night in Canada". For the six members of the Canadian Armed Forces who are serving on the staff of the Canadian Forces Attaché in Moscow, Saturday is "Hockey Night in Russia".

Although life in Russia is very trying for a foreigner, especially during the long hard Russian winter, the Canadians on staff of the Canadian Embassy in Moscow have formed a hockey team to while away the winter. The calibre of players on the team varies from non-skater to retired professional to old pro. The ages of the players average from 28 years to 55 years.

All six of the Canadian Armed Forces Personnel at the Moscow Embassy have participated in one form or another. The Canadian Forces Attaché, Naval Captain John W. McDowall, was one of the team's most

avid supporters and withstood many a cold Russian winter to cheer the boys on. The Captain's Secretary, Sergeant (former Petty Officer) Joe Péladeau, took on the chore of trainer, while the remaining four members — Lieutenant-Colonel Jack Watson, Lieutenant-Colonel Jim Hutchison, Sergeant Ray Sturgeon and Sergeant Joe McLaughlin — all took active part as players.

The first team was formed in 1966 and that season played just three games, since it was difficult to find opponents. As enthusiasm grew, the 1966/67 edition of the team grew in stature and in size, and acquired a name for itself — "The Moscow Maple Leafs". In that year they played seven games. Through the courtesy of

Punch Imlach and the Toronto Maple Leafs, Maple Leaf sweaters were donated to the Moscow edition of the Leafs. At the start of the 1967/68 season the Moscow Maple Leafs were ready to take on any team in the Soviet Union. They had acquired several new players to bolster their team of the previous season, including ex-NHLer and a member of the 1964 Canadian National Team — Aggi Kukulowicz, the Station Supervisor for Air Canada in Moscow, and the prospects for the season seemed bright. However, the first game of the season was disheartening for the Leafs, as they suffered a 5 to 4 defeat at the hands of a Moscow Junior team called the "Sokolnikies". The coach of the team, a retired RCASC Sergeant — Jake Brunning, put his team through a quick conditioning program and two weeks later the Leafs won their first game.

JANUARY 1969

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Leger Roy and John Scott are in the rear row, fifth from the left

### ***Diplomatic couriers by Merv McBride***

From 1965 to 68 I served at our Embassy in Lima, Peru. As a matter of fact I was the first communicator assigned there and set up the comcentre – that is another story.

As is the case for most of us in those days, it was our responsibility to provide assistance to our Diplomatic Couriers. Somewhere in the good old black book it stated that a “Male” member of the Embassy staff must escort the Diplomatic Courier. Before the Couriers schedule was changed to arriving on Friday night and leaving on Mondays, they used to come in around midnight on Monday nights and leave at 8 a.m. on Tuesday. This left very little time for socializing, drinking or anything. Usually the courier would retire straight to his hotel right after dropping the bags off at the Embassy and hitting the sack.

One memorable time was when Dick Normandeau came to Lima. Dick was an old buddy from my New York days so we had a lot of gossip to get caught up on. After doing the bag exchange routine and locking them up in the vault we retired to the restaurant on the ground floor in the building. Here we had a few double Pisco sours and chatted for an hour or two. That got Dick back to his hotel around 2:30 a.m. to await his early morning wake-up.

I showed up at the hotel at the pre-arranged time which would have been around 6 a.m. to find that Dick was still fast asleep. It took me quite awhile to get him up and moving and of course, this left us with quite a wild ride to the airport. The airport is located outside of the city near the port of Callao with only one route there from Lima. I believe it would normally have been about a 30-40 minute ride to the airport, barring any mishaps. To make the trip a little easier and faster I used my own car – a lovely 1955 Volvo Fast-back in lieu of the Embassy’s land rover. And, as is normal when one is late, delays are thrown into your path.

We were moving along rather quickly when we ran into a road block of gigantic proportions – a huge mutli-vehicle accident. Dick started to panic as he knew full well that if he missed this flight he would be stuck in Lima for several days and would have to abort the rest of the run. No problemsays I and proceeded to drive into the dry ditch and into the field that ran parallel to the road. (Anyone who has been in the area will know that fences were pretty well non existent – thank Heavens). I then proceeded to drive through a couple of fields, over a couple of small cross roads until I was past the road block and pointed my little Volvo back onto the ‘highway’. And thus, Dick arrived at the airport in time for him to resume his run.

For some reason or other I believe Dick resigned from the Courier service shortly after getting back to Ottawa!

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### ***The Canadian Caper by Buck Arbuckle***

There was little that happened in the Department of External Affairs that was not known to Telecommunications. Whether interested or not, we were privy to the most secret initiatives of the Department, and our tentacles reached not only throughout the Department but far beyond. The Prime Minister's office, Privy Council, Trade & Commerce, RCMP, DND, National Film Board, various provincial offices, and many others used our telecommunications facilities with confidence of security and delivery.

But on November 4, 1979, a major event took place that tested the security and mettle of the whole Department, with special significance for Telecommunications. Remember the Canadian Caper? In Teheran a number of Iranian revolutionaries invaded the U.S. Embassy and took 66 Americans hostage, but another six managed to elude the group and found their way to the safety of the Canadian Embassy. Our communicators processed a most sensitive stream of telegrams from Teheran describing the delicate situation which was critical for both the Americans and the Canadians. The then Minister of External Affairs, Flora MacDonald, grasped the gravity of the situation and felt obliged to confide in the Prime Minister who in turn quietly informed the Leader of the Opposition. Of course the area division was in on the secret, and of necessity, the Securities Division was informed on a need to know basis. Eventually Passport Division was brought in, registry had to open special files and the Telecommunications Division, who handled all the traffic, knew everything. As plans were developed, more and more people became aware of the situation which compounded the risk to security.

The Americans in Washington were kept fully informed through our communications links with our Embassy in Washington. Subsequently the Americans opened a special "decoy" office in Hollywood to establish false identities for the six American refugees which portrayed them as a Canadian film crew working for a Hollywood company.

Very important to the whole caper was the role played by the Canadian Diplomatic couriers who made frequent trips into Teheran carrying pertinent documents, replacement passports, all the while noting all airport procedures for passengers. These procedures were carefully detailed and memorized for later use. Finally all personnel were carefully briefed as the time

approached to hatch the escape plan. All seemed set. Would the local staff at the Canadian Embassy raise the alarm? In spite of all the activity and tension, somehow the secret held. Though many people were aware of fragments of the story, few knew the full extent of the plan, and it must have given Flora MacDonald a few sleepless nights as she considered the consequences of a security leak.

At last the day arrived. The six Americans escaped, as did all the Canadian staff of our embassy. Our Diplomatic mission in Teheran was abruptly closed without notice and our assets abandoned.

When the bubble burst the Iranians were none too pleased with the events, but the rest of the world experienced euphoria with the Canadian Caper. Many a glass of champagne was raised in a toast to the Canadian effort and our telecommunications circuits were overloaded with congratulatory messages from the entire world. Perhaps the most prolific and sincere outpouring came from the U.S.A. The news media there couldn't get enough of the details. American office towers were suddenly decorated with huge Canadian flags hanging down many stories, though where they got them from on such short notice remains a mystery. Hollywood made a movie which has seen repeated exposure in theatres and television. But for me the most touching tributes were the letters from American school children expressing unbounded gratitude for the department's role in saving six Americans. Many of those letters were funnelled through to me for reply, and it was my bit of euphoria to find the right words to respond.

This episode in the life of the Department was perhaps the most notable of many, one where individuals counted, and one for which the Department can be justly proud.

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***“All things come to those who wait”***

*An update on Buck Arbuckle’s letter to Deputy Minister Peter Harder, which was printed in Volume VI, Edition I Spring 2006. A copy can be found on the AFFSC website – click on “Members” and enter the newsletter section.  
By David Smith*

Patience is a virtue and our virtuous friend Buck has been rewarded! Buck recently received good news that the commemorative plaque referred to in the above letter, has been relocated from the grounds of the old Ottawa City Hall. Following a cleaning and buffing, it was recently (January 2006) installed in a prominent position on the wall in the lobby of the Pearson Building just as requested. Never let it be said Buck doesn’t enjoy influence! While the initiative was solely Buck’s, I think he would agree that thanks should also go to Janice Attree-Smith (IAM) (yes, the lady I sleep with) who gently reminded (prodded) the office of the USS on the need for action and for periodic updates. The photo below shows the refurbished plaque now proudly displayed in its new home. As former CM’s, we especially take pride in the name of one of our own, Mary O’Flaherty, the on-site communicator in Teheran at the time. Hats off to you Buck for this initiative – and thanks to the Deputy Minister, Peter Harder for making it happen.



Although this plaque was the initiative of the City of Ottawa, it stands as a testament to all those who played a role in the “Teheran Caper”



The “Teheran” plaque is on the far left. This is the open lobby area on the right as one exits Tower “A”

## ***Hong Kong on the Seat of your Pants***

***By Marty Byzewski (the polish prince)***

The first time I flew into Hong Kong I did not realize the surprise that was waiting for me. We had flown from Vancouver via Alaska and once we approached the Chinese mainland all we could see was thousands of ships surrounding the harbour area. There were large fluffy clouds which give you the impression on how fast we were approaching. The old airport in Hong Kong was built right out of the city into the harbour and had a very inventive approach. We had to land via the city heading in the seaward direction. So our approach started low in the west out to sea and approached the airport on the right. I could see the buildings approaching and then at the last moment the 747 would dip the right wing (I was sitting on the right side) and swing 180 degrees back to the airport and down and land. Now let me tell you when you are sitting in a 747 landing you do not expect to see people on their balconies hanging out their laundry. We were that close!

My heart was in my sleeve.

## ***The Dip bag***

***From the editor***

In 2006, Eleanor Ryan received notes from the following persons.

### ***From Mary Rosen dated November 29, 2006.***

"Dear Eleanor

This is to tell you that Nels passed away on Sunday evening November 26. He spent the previous two weeks in hospital but could not longer take in food. All of us were with him, also took turns the previous days so he was not alone. He lost his voice too but I know he understood us to the end. He looked forward to your notes and I thank you and the others for the contact,'  
Yours very truly, Mary Rosen"

### ***From Monique Barsalou in July, 2006***

"Dear Eleanor, David, Barrie, Roger, George & John,

What a nice surprise it was to get your card today. Thanks for your good wishes. It means a lot to me to know I am in your thoughts. Monique"

**Editor's note** : Monique underwent a bone marrow transplant for leukemia in November of 2005. I spoke with Monique today (Jan 31/06) and she is happy to report she is "on the mend"

### ***From Joan Jeakins, a portion of a note received in June, 2006***

..."If this is far too late for any AFFSC membership, then please use it for the gift basket fund or something suitable." ...

"Thank you so much for all your efforts – truly, truly appreciated! Yours, Joan J."

## **Important Information about Membership Dues**

*By George McKeever*

The AFFSC Board of Directors has reviewed the amount of yearly membership dues and decided to set the annual amount to zero (\$0) for both sustaining and associate members commencing with the membership year beginning March 2007.

This decision was reached for two reasons. The Association has realized completion of its primary objectives: the success of Reunion 2005, ongoing Lime Nights, the Newsletter, this web site, ongoing contact with members and former telecommunications staff, and responding to matters of health and well-being of former CMs. The Board would also like to remove the administrative burden of running the Association and discontinue the overhead of membership dues, regular meetings other than Annual General Meetings, and other time consuming tasks for which are simply not supported or too difficult with our dwindling volunteer base. There will continue to be an annual accounting of Association funds and spending to the membership until the surplus of funds is exhausted.

This decision will have the following impact on current and future Association memberships:

- Members who have paid for membership year 2007 or beyond will be contacted by the Treasurer for the refunding of the dues.
- Current memberships, Sustaining and Associate, are extended indefinitely. There will be no requirement to submit renewal forms, just keep us apprised of changes to contact details should you move or change e-mail addresses.
- While some restricted areas of the web site will become open to the public, some content, such as addresses, will remain password protected. The validity of members' user identities and passwords will be continue indefinitely so they can continue to access restricted pages.
- New members will be welcome. Sustaining Membership will be automatically granted on application. Persons wishing to apply for Associate membership and meet the conditions of membership will continue to be approved by the AFFSC Board.
- All by-laws of the Association continue to apply.

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## ***The story of the century***

*By the Editor*

***Stop the presses! Every editor dreams of a Headline story and dreams can come true. After years of hoping for what I'm sure you will agree is a profound story from our historical past, I am excited to tell you that it is now in the production mill. I look forward to publishing it in the next issue of "The Communicator" and if this teaser doesn't get your heart beating, you may wish to check for a pulse! Stay tuned.***

### ***Final Comps "In memoriam" – 2006***

***Members and friends of the CM/EL community to whom we have said goodbye***

***Daniel Barnes (November 16, 2006)***

***Nels Rosen (November 26, 2006)***



## THE MESSAGE SWITCHING ERA ARRIVES

By the early 1970's, Canada had established some 120 embassies and missions in more than 100 countries around the world and in widely dispersed locations. There became a growing need to communicate quickly and easily with the "home office" and with each other. As a result, in 1974, Canada's Department of External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs Canada), developed a message switching system called OCAMS (Ottawa Communications Automated Message Switch). It had a capacity to initially service 64 circuits but some circuits required two channels which imposed limitations on scalability.

Canadian National/Canadian Pacific (CN/CP) Telecommunications was awarded the contract to build the OCAMS system and later, NOCAMS (New Ottawa Communications Automated Message Switch). NOCAMS was just an expanded version of OCAMS with better, faster and bigger hardware which could handle up to 512 full duplex circuits. CN/CP chose the Data General Corporation as an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) for the computing hardware after carefully evaluating the majority of small computer manufacturers in that era. The equipment selected for the task had to be efficient, reliable, economical and scalable.

Faced with developing a software application far more complex than routine message switching, CN/CP successfully incorporated provisions for handling classified and unclassified traffic. The application would queue messages according to established priorities, then switch them over a world-wide network. In that era, the Department of External Affairs averaged 20,000 messages daily from 24 time zones. With a speed of 5,000 messages per hour the system was more than capable of meeting immediate requirements.

NOCAMS was designed in a redundant configuration with two Data General Eclipse S-230 mini computers for message switching and four Data General Nova 3's as the front end. Only one Eclipse and 2 Novas were on-line at any given time while the other computers remained in standby mode. Both the Nova and Eclipse machines had a 16 bit Input/Output bus. Eclipse was based on many of the same concepts as the Nova, but included support for virtual memory and multitasking. Nova was a popular 16-bit minicomputer built by the Data General starting in 1968 while the Eclipse line was released in early 1974.

To ensure the integrity of Tempest requirements, OCAMS and NOCAMS systems were installed inside a shielded enclosure which was fabricated in the UK and shipped to wherever it was needed. External Affairs referred to it as "The Box".

Data General peripherals included two 192 megabyte moving head disks and two 24 megabyte fixed head disks. Later, the 192 mb disks were replaced with units having 600 mb capacity. A Dasher display was used for displaying system alarms, dumping memory contents, loading and restarting the computers as well as deleting or adding peripherals or circuits.

Data General Asynchronous Line Multiplexors (ALM's). Multiprocessor Communications Adapter (MCA's) and Automatic Call Units controlled system communications. In OCAMS, messages were transmitted over full-duplex, leased and dial up asynchronous lines of varying speeds. Up to 30 days traffic was stored in an active file for recall or a repeat transmission. With NOCAMS, the front ends could be scaled up to 512 full-duplex circuits; OCAMS was limited to 128 circuits.

Circuit speeds on OCAMS ranged from 1/4 of 66 baud (quarter speed circuits) to 9600 baud. When NOCAMS came on line, the quarter speed circuits were retired thus allowing the 9600 baud interfaces in the

front end to pass more data . Initially this faster throughput was much to fast for the new IBM PC's which were just coming on stream in the early 1980's. Flow control had to be employed until the IBM improved the PC to accept a 9600 baud data input without interruption. OCAMS operated 24 hours per day, 7 days per week with a recorded uptime of 99.9%.

NOCAMS finished its life cycle under the Larose software. For Personal Computers located at the missions, he wrote a version of NOCAMS which made the PC behave (more or less) like a mini NOCAMS switch thus making the operator's life much easier. This application prepared the NOCAMS message with all of the prerequisite formatting thus relieving the operator of this tedious task.

COSICSs, although short lived (1986-1996), was intended to provide world-wide desktop secure communications. As COSICS was being developed however, new and better technologies quickly came on the market and the decision to replace COSICS with a more flexible PC based system called SIGNET was adopted. Costing some \$56 million to develop, COSICS was only installed in Ottawa and consulates in the United States along with the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC and the mission in New York. COSICS consisted of three different sections - CAMS, CATS and CAIPS. CAMS did the message switching. CATS did the archiving while CAIPS provided Immigration specific software. For additional information see [Canadian Online Secure Information and Communications System](#)

After the end of COSICS, SIGNET provided a secure messaging system. During the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's, Canadian National Railways divested itself of several non-rail transportation activities such as trucking subsidiaries, a hotel chain, real estate, and telecommunications companies. The biggest telecommunications property was a company which was co-owned by CN and CP called CN/CP Telecommunications. Upon its sale in the 1980s, CN/CP was renamed Unitel (United Telecommunications) and upon corporate affiliation with Rogers Communications, was renamed AT&T Canada.