

THE COMMUNICATOR

Newsletter Volume VIII, Edition II

Spring 2008

In this issue:

- ❖ Editors Thoughts

- ❖ Earthquake in Lima

- ❖ Life after retirement

- ❖ Marty's Missives

- ❖ A Customs Incident

- ❖ Where are they now?

- ❖ Final Comps



Editors Thoughts

By David Smith

For those who don't live in the Ottawa area, - ***give thanks!*** This past winter could only be described as "challenging". In 1970/71, Ottawa received a record 444 centimetres of snow. Thirty-seven years later in 2008 we came within a whisker (7.4 cms) of exceeding this amount.



Little wonder so many Canadians head south during winter. To add to our confusion, we recently went from winter to summer in one day. With few outdoor activities (for those of a certain age), it was an opportunity to connect with former colleagues and this winter was a perfect time to do just that. It is always a pleasure to touch base with old friends. CM Lime nights, EL Luncheons, private get-togethers, emails, phone calls – the opportunities are many and what better way to spend a stormy winter's day than reconnecting with those with whom we spent so many years in the Foreign Service.

Winter projects (a document listing all Directors and Deputies during our 50 years of service; the posting of all "stud book" photos on the web) resulted in numerous emails of assistance and suggestions which resulted in many occasions to "chat" with former friends and colleagues. Keeping in touch with our past is good – it doesn't get any better than that. Happy reading. Your editor can be reached at <mailto:drdee@sympatico.ca>

Earthquake! Life in Lima, Peru – October 1967

By Merv McBride

A totally beautiful day was shaping up as the morning moved into its late stages. Relaxing with a smoke and a cup of coffee, feet up on my desk, marvelling at the view from my 8th floor window in the Canadian Embassy, Lima, Peru, I hadn't a care in the world.

Then, my cup started to slide away from me and the curtains on the windows started to sway. Then the building seemed to take on a life of its own and I could even feel the desk under my feet seem to move. Although unaware at the time I was heading into one of the longest 45 seconds of my life. The wall in front of my eyes all of a sudden cracked from ceiling to floor with a nauseating sound. My God, I thought, this is one of those "Trembors" that everyone had told us about and it was scary. I immediately leaped to my feet, raced into my vault, locked up the equipment, then the vault and practically leaped down the stairs to the seventh floor and the main exit. I almost caught up to our illustrious Ambassador, Joseph Francois Xavier Houde as he was quickly abandoning ship. I have to admit that I did not blame him one bit as I know that I was in total panic mode.

Upon reaching the reception area I was slowed down by a crowd of Locally Engaged Staff and a couple of our young Canadian Officers. Dilys Buckley-Jones and Susanne Bisson were there along with our Peruvian receptionist, Maruja. One grabbed my left arm while the other put a vise grip on the other and at the same time Maruja decided it was time to pass out. So, needless to say I was fully occupied and had no time for my own fear. At this point there wasn't much I could do, as the building continued to sway back and forth, was to try and establish some sort of calm reasoning over the situation. That's pretty difficult to do when ones legs are shaking and your mind is just telling you to "Run." So, with shaky knees, that I hoped would not be noticed by my audience, I tried to talk to them, telling them to relax, it would soon be over, don't panic, etc.

So, what seemed like an eternity but was, as we found out later, was only a mere 45 seconds, the shaking began to subside. We were all safe and it was time to take stock of any damage and to vacate the premises.

After each individual had secured their offices we slowly but carefully walked down the stairs and out onto the street. A large crowd had gather in George Washington Park across from the Embassy. It appeared that everyone was accounted for, even Leopoldo, our administrative driver. He was standing there with eyes full of fright. He told me he had been driving up Avenida Arquipa when the quake hit and he could see our building swaying and he was positive that it was in great danger of toppling. While we were all standing around in awe and trying to get our wits together and our hearts to stop pounding our brave Ambassador came to me and handed me a piece of paper. It was a draft telegram that he wanted me to send to Ottawa, immediately, to inform them of what had just happened. The telegram read, in part, "Lima has just been hit by a major earthquake. All embassy Staff have been safely evacuated from the building. Details to follow. Signed. Houde."

If it hadn't been so serious it would have been funny. Sending a staff member back into the building to inform Ottawa that all staff were outside and safe! I simply handed the telegram back to him without a word and headed for my car. My main concern was for my wife and three young children. We didn't have a phone in our residence and couldn't contact them so I headed for my car. I drove my 55 Volvo as fast as the conditions would allow, which wasn't very quick as there was glass all over the road from the apartment buildings and the roads were filled with people. They were just milling around with dazed looks on their faces. The sidewalks and streets were still being hit by falling rubble from the broken buildings.

When I arrived at our small bungalow I was relieved to find that it was completely intact and did not appear to be damaged. Inside I found that all we had lost was a couple of ornaments that had fallen from a shelf. Joyce and the children were shook up but other than that they were fine. The children weren't concerned at all and just thought it was quite an experience.

Joyce's story was much the same as mine. When she had felt the house shaking it had taken her awhile to figure out what was going on but when she did, she quickly moved the kids outside into the front yard. All was pretty calm at this moment, she told me, but then the maid ran out into the yard and started to physically try to bury her head into the ground whilst screaming at the top of her lungs. If I remember correctly we heard later that the Quake had been measured at around 6.7 on the Richter scale and the center was just off the coastal city of Ica.

The next day was spent getting our Embassy cleaned up which included vacuuming the fallen plaster, straightening pictures and moving furniture back into place. In the comcenter itself my large Taylor safe had moved about 3 to 4 inches from the wall and we were never able to restore it to its rightful place. It was just too heavy for any of us to move.

We were lucky compared to the poor people of Lima in the *barriada* areas of the city where construction was not the best to begin with as they were in total ruin. We were emotionally drained when we took a tour of these areas where it seemed that every third house was just a pile of rubble. You could see just two or three walls standing with smoke still pouring out of the ruins. Families were walking around what once were their only worldly possessions.

Even worse was the damage at the Catholic school in the Port of Callao. When the quake hit, Sister F.X, (a Canadian Nun) was in a second-floor classroom with about 30 children ranging in age from six to ten. When she was herding them together and moving them down a cement staircase, the retaining wall cracked and fell into the middle of the group. Seven children lost their lives that day.

* * *

Yes Virginia, there is “Life after retirement” and here’s proof



*Our very own Mayor Bill Gooch fielding media questions on the state of North Grenville’s (Kemptonville) water.
Check out the council at: <http://www.northgrenville.on.ca/Council/council.htm>*

* * *

The Mexican Wave

By Marty Byzewski

One afternoon, while in Wellington, the admin officer decided to take me and my partner Frank to a local Rugby match. Rhys was an ex-tank officer in the New Zealand army and was quite a character. It was a glorious day with bright warm sunshine and when we arrived at the stadium we stopped and picked up a six-pack of canned beer each which I thought was very convenient for the spectators. We sat in the north stands for about an hour watching the show that was developing between the fans of the local Wellington Hurricanes and the visiting Otago Highlanders. The visitors were fairly drunk and dressed in various highlander outfits including helmets, shields, swords and of course the mandatory six-pack. Most of the Highlander fans sat in the end stands just below us and it was quite a show. Lots of yelling, beer throwing, insults being traded between them and the Wellington fans. The place was hopping with about 35 thousand people. Now to set the scene of what was to follow.

As mentioned we were sitting in the north stands right at the end and when you looked down the stands to the end the sun was right in your face and across the way you had a wide panorama of the opposite stands. Rhys mentioned something about a Mexican wave but it went over my head as usual. There was a brief announcement about beer or something but I missed

that too. The game started and I really don't remember much about it but I know Wellington won. All of a sudden in the opposite stands they started a wave. But this was a unique wave. As the fans threw up their arms along went their cans of beer, some empty, some half full, and some full. In disbelief I watched it go down to the end and then I looked to the right and watched the wave of arms, beer cans and spilt liquid moving towards us. What made it so beautiful was that the millions of beer drops were reflecting the light. I was laughing so hard it was hurting. The wave reached us and we all tossed out beer skyward and then we realized what goes up must come down. We sheltered our heads as zillions of cans of beer of various weights rained down on our heads. I was surprised that no one was hurt. It was the funniest thing that every happened to me on the road. I will always remember the Mexican wave.

N.B. Next day's paper had on its front page a picture of the wave and the headline "Authorities move to ban 'Mexican Wave'". Ha!

* * *

Light Show in Jamaica

By Marty Byzewski

After Hurricane Hugo, my partner John and I flew to Jamaica in a Military C-130 Transport. We flew south over New York State, along the U.S. Coastline, over the Bahamas, Cuba and then onward to Jamaica. It was a beautiful day. The place was a mess. Aircraft, houses blown all over the place. There was no power at the hotel so we climbed the stairs to get to our dark rooms. Fortunately I had brought my emergency pack of beer, sardines, cheese and crackers so the three of us dined in style on my balcony. The next night we had gone to a local restaurant to eat and took a taxi back to the hotel. While on our way back we could see some bright lights ahead of us. As we approached we thought that maybe a war had started. It was like the fourth of July in New York harbour. On one of the telephone poles a transformer full of PCB's was burning. Now if you have never witnessed this it's too bad. It was a beautiful light show with accompanying sounds. We must have sat for about a half hour watching with morbid fascination the wonderful sounds, the fireworks atmosphere, and the colours streaking into the sky. I felt fortunate to have witnessed such havoc. It's hard to believe but a few years later while I was in Bangladesh the same thing happened to me when I was returning to my hotel. Seeing is believing.

* * *

A Customs Incident – Early 1950s

By Buck Arbuckle

It was May 6, and having just finished my work in Bonn, Germany, I was packing up for the drive to The Hague. As I was about to take my leave, I was informed that The Hague had just phoned to say they were out of Canadian cigarettes and if Bonn had any to spare, perhaps I could bring them with me. My little car was already packed with luggage and official baggage but Bonn released 25 cartons into my safe hands. I packed them around my luggage, covered the floor of the back seat and pushed them under the two front seats. Cigarettes were everywhere.

Off I started on an uneventful trip to the Dutch border where I had a memorable surprise. At the Dutch customs shed was a huge sign, in five languages, facing into Germany. It read, “THIS IS OUR LIBERATION DAY, GERMANS ARE NOT WELCOME IN OUR COUNTRY ON THIS DAY”. I’ve never seen anything like it before or since, but it certainly conveyed the deep animosity the Dutch had for the Germans after the war.

Custom formalities were no more than a wave-through for me, a Canadian with official passport; however the Customs official paused and asked me to pull over. Had he spotted some of those cigarettes? Somewhat concerned, I got out of the way of other traffic and the official again approached my car. “Where are you going?” he enquired. I replied that I was going to our embassy in The Hague. “Ah,” he said, “would I mind taking one of his off-duty colleagues to The Hague where he lives”. Of course I agreed and he called his comrade to the car.

Now the Germans had paved most of their highways during the war to enable rapid movement of troops and military supplies to occupied countries or other trouble spots, but the Dutch had no desire to facilitate the German stronghold on their country. Therefore major strips of many of their highways were still cobblestones. As I drove, the car shook and cigarettes kept popping out all over the place. My Customs companion kept kicking the loose cartons back under the seat. I was experiencing some consternation for this whole consignment which, of course, could be considered contraband. My companion nevertheless engaged me in friendly conversation as he directed me to his address. As he left the car and looked at me, his eyebrows seemed to have taken up residence on his forehead; he clicked his heels together, saluted and said “Monsieur has beaucoup cigarettes, non?” He smiled, saluted again and walked off.

My, my. Should this ever happen again I would certainly insist on official documentation for official cargo to forestall any possible border difficulties.

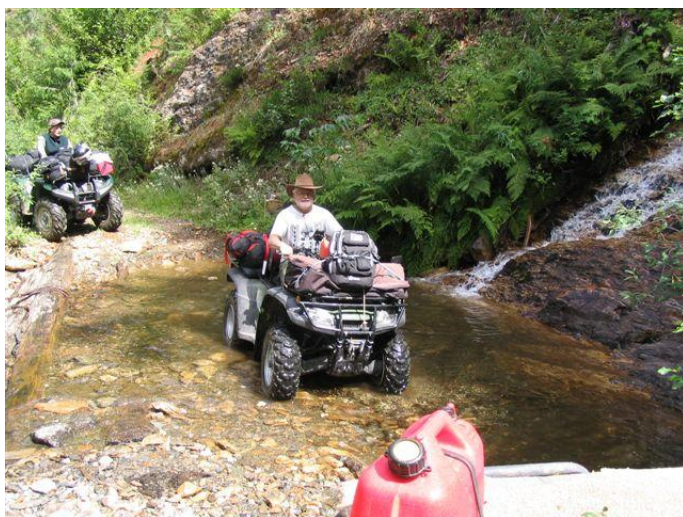


Can you name these folks?

Where are they now?

By Ron Waugh, Creston BC

Some photos to show you what a 68-year old does in his spare time. I do backpacking too with 50-lbs on my back for 5-days at a time. These photos are of my last 4-day quad trip last year. We usually try to do 2 or 3 of these each summer and fall without the girls--(male bonding time). The guy in the photo with me was in an avalanche three winters ago while sledding. He survived with a smashed knee and is on the mend, but his sledding partner didn't survive. It was a tragic event.



Where are they now? (cont'd)



From Bob Phillips March 1, 2008 Bob can be reached via email at: mwood49302@embarqmail.com

Hi Dave

I really appreciate the newsletter and your kind thoughts. I forgot to tell you that I retired in 1993 after they disbanded my unit. They wanted to send me to an economics branch but I could not see starting all over again, so I took a slight penalty and retired. I have never looked back. Life has been very good to me. I have not been in contact with any CM's in years. My wife passed away 5 years ago and I married an American lady and am now living in Fort Myers Florida. I receive the emails about the CM's and I really appreciate hearing about them.

My wife, Marge, and I travel a lot in the US. She comes from a large family in South Carolina's and we visit with them regularly. I am really enjoying life here with my new wife Marge. I was very fortunate to meet a wonderful lady like her. Five weeks ago I underwent a quadruple bypass and am recovering very well.

I can't tell you how nice it is to hear from you.

Bob

* * *

Final Comps "In memoriam" – 2008

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



Dorothy Louise McCabe, Spouse of Bob McCabe (CM/AS), Tuesday, April 1, 2008



Gérard Sirois (EL) Tuesday, April 1, 2008



Valerie Thomas, Spouse of Barry Thomas (CM/CS), Wednesday, April 16, 2008