

**Newsletter Volume VI
Edition II
Summer 2006**

The Communicator

In this issue:

- ❖ A story of Romance – Part II
- ❖ 50 years of Gov't Service
- ❖ The mail bag
- ❖ Ghost or Guardian
- ❖ The Good Samaritan
- ❖ Web sites & + Final Comps



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

A Story of Romance in External Affairs - Part II ***By George Levasseur***

I sat down and in a typical Stan Daly style with no preamble; he asked “How would you like to go on a posting to Brussels”? He went on to explain that there were two posts opening up in May and June and he would post me there in May and Madeleine would be cross-posted from Paris to Brussels in June. I frankly didn’t believe it as it was not the policy of External Affairs department to have two married persons working in the same department let alone doing the same work. Well, somehow Stan had arranged something and had secured permission to do it.

Well, I can tell you I returned home that day not being able to go back to sleep very quickly. I could not believe that this was happening. Of course I phoned Madeleine in Paris to tell her the good news and she was excited as well.

I now had to wait six months before leaving for Europe again so we decided Madeleine would take a months vacation and come to Ottawa to get married before returning to our new assignment. The date of the wedding would be on the 4th of May. Arrangements were made with travel section for us to leave for Europe on the Italian line “Carmania” from Montreal two days after the wedding. Another surprise was awaiting me at the travel section. The lady handling my departure saw that I was leaving as a married man. She said “Do you realize that the government will pay for your future wife’s trip back to Paris”? I didn’t expect that at all. Well they did. She cashed in the return portion of her plane ticket and I obtained the tickets for her return trip. Knowing the ropes at the time, I couldn’t frankly believe this was all happening. I can tell you that I only had nice words to say of External Affairs at that particular time.

Well, I thought everything would sort of settle down for a while but little did I know how hectic organizing a wedding would be with a mother in law whom I hardly knew at the time and without my fiancée there. I must say it was quite an ordeal.

Three months went by, and once again it was Christmas. Again I received a phone call from the office and this time it was Archie Mathews, the officer in charge of the courier section. With his usual loud voice, he too asked me to drop in to see him as he wished to discuss something with me. I wondered what he wanted of me. When I went to see him he asked “How would you like to spend New Years with your girlfriend in Paris.”? I couldn’t believe my ears again. He explained that a courier had asked to skip his New Years trip for

Editors Ramble ***By David Smith***

Have you been anxiously waiting to read the final part of George’s love story? It’s a great story George. Our friend Ted Arbuckle continues to be a faithful contributor and more of his memories are included in this issue.

Over the winter, a number of your CM/EL colleagues have managed to document most of the Comms equipment used in “External Affairs”. This issue will point you to the websites. Furthermore, you will be pleased to learn that DFAIT (yes it’s no longer FAC) has realized the importance of creating a display of some old friends of ours and beginning this fall, some of your former colleagues will be assisting the Dept. The plan is to have a permanent display in the lobby of the Pearson building. As with all things, timing is everything. As memories begin to fade, it is critical to document our lives as those days will never come our way again.

We will undoubtedly be calling upon you for assistance when our own memories give out and we require additional info. We look forward to “chatting” with old friends.

Happy reading

personal reasons. Archie told him that there should be no problem as he had the man to do the trip for him. Me! I had done courier work while in Paris and had the necessary passport and various shots. Archie knew that I would jump at the opportunity and of course I agreed to go.

Now, relevant to this story is the fact that while in Paris, a good friend of mine had studied for a year at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Of course, it was beneficial to him, considering the high cost of apartments in Paris to have a place to stay so he stayed with me. He helped out with the food and various expenses which one encounters while living in an apartment. When he was getting ready to return to Canada, he thanked me for the favour and told me that if I ever needed any jewellery I could contact him and he would introduce me to his dad who was a jeweller in the Beauce QC.

I never thought that I would pick up on the offer. But, as everyone knows, being single is not easy especially when you live in a place like Paris. I WAS BROKE. What an opportunity to get officially engaged on that trip. I just couldn't miss that chance. I decided to call on my friend who happened to be home in Ste Marie de Beauce PQ. We of course reminisced and talked about the good times in Paris before I mentioned to him what I had in mind. I explained my situation to him as he knew my girlfriend Madeleine. He asked what I needed and then introduced me to his dad on the phone. His dad began my thanking me for what I had done for his son; that I had basically treated his son like a brother and in return he would treat me as a son. What is it you need? I explained that I needed wedding rings but knew nothing about these

things. He said he would gather a few sets and send them to me in Ottawa for me to choose from. Now, this man didn't know me at all and again I just could not believe my ears. He ended up sending me five sets of rings by registered mail. I chose one set, returned the other four and he wouldn't take payment for the one I took. You can imagine how proud I was being able to make our engagement official on New Years Eve in Paris, an event paid by the government. Only a millionaire could do this!

Because I was arriving Paris at 5 Pm (southern run) on New Years Eve and because of the special situation, Archie told me I could return to Canada the day after New Years. By the way, Stan met me in the hallway one day before leaving and told him about the wedding rings. In his serious Stan Daly style, he said "you're not taking diamonds on your trip"? I asked why not and he said "I won't allow it because that's smuggling". For a moment I thought he was really serious. Of course he did not allow me to panic too long before finally telling me he was pulling my leg. I arrived in Paris as planned, the Embassy car picked me up, dropped my courier bags at the Embassy and then my girlfriend Madeleine picked me up. After freshening up, we attended the Embassy New Years ball where we became engaged with all our friends present.

I left Paris as planned and returned to Ottawa where I worked for another three months prior to our wedding. We got married on May 4, 1964 and the next morning, we traveled by train to Montreal and jumped on the boat for Europe. I proceeded to Brussels to begin my posting and Madeleine joined me a month later. We have been together now for forty years and still counting.

I hope some of you will remember all of this as it was really something else. This had never been done in External Affairs, where both husband and wife worked together in the same office doing the same work. As a result, we happen to be the first employee couple. It turned out to be a very nice experience for External Affairs and ourselves. Unfortunately, employee couples were not the norm although we heard of some other couples working together.

The above turned out to be the most wonderful years of our lives. Thank you Stan, Archie and External Affairs and thanks to the wolves at the time for giving me a break.

* * *

50 Years of Government Service – Gary Black Submitted by Raymond Fortin

"Your readers may not be aware that Gary Black now has 50 years of government service. He is presently in Riyadh and coming home this summer to retire. Gary told me that he has a villa in Merida Mexico (near Cancun) and will likely go there in retirement. "

Gary's CM website logbook entry: "Sure nice to keep track of all the old CMs, ELs. Our ranks may be thinning but our memories are growing. Still slogging it out with FAC. April 20, 2006 marks my 50th anniversary with H.M. Government. Must start thinking about joining all you lucky dogs out there in retirement. Take care, be happy. Cheers Gary

Editors note: You can reach Gary at gary.black@international.gc.ca

The Mail bag – we have mail

A Letter to the editor

By Ray White

I read with pleasure the latest edition of the Newsletter and thought I would provide a little more grist for the mill. (Ed's note: Ray is referring to the letter sent to the USS by Ted Arbuckle re the Commemorative Plaque on the grounds of the former City Hall)

The question of nominating Mary for the Order of Canada originated with our Local 70125, of which I was Chief Steward at the time. In the name of the Local, I wrote a letter to Government House making the proposal. (I gave a copy of this letter to George McKeever several years ago, along with a number of newspaper clippings which are on the AFFSC website.) Govt House replied that I needed to have the nomination countersigned by at least two prominent people. Ken Taylor was back in Ottawa and I spoke with him and he agreed to lend his name. I phoned Mary's MP in St. John's, one John Crosby (yes him, the cranky old cuss). On this occasion he was quite genial and also agreed to give his agreement. At the time of my call he was in the company of another MP, James McGrath (who became Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland several years later), who said he would like to add his name to the submission.

With this in hand, I re-submitted the nomination. The SSEA of the day, one Flora MacDonald, through one of her minions, asked us if we would withdraw our nomination as the SSEA wished to sponsor all the members of the Tehran staff. We indicated that we would prefer to let our nomination stand as it was.

We received notification from Gov't House that the presentation would take place in the Parliament Buildings. Ed Schreyer was GG, I believe, and Jeanne Sauve was Speaker of the House, who acted as host for the occasion. The recipients paraded in and I remember Mary coming over to me and saying something to the effect "I'll get you for this".

As you know, she didn't like to flaunt her award and didn't make much of a fuss over it. It always bothered me that the Division didn't take an active part in the awarding of this the one and only such distinction given to a Communicator.

I liked to note that she was/is the last CM, because of the letters after her name.

To complete the file on this important phase of our existence, perhaps you could retrieve the copy of the letter which, as I said, I passed on to George. We really missed the boat on this one- I think I was the only one of our mob to attend the unveiling of the plaque near City Hall. As usual, we didn't toot our own horn. Regards, Ray

● * *

Update on David Hamilton

By the man himself

Hi Dave (Smith)

It has been a long time and even though only about six years has passed since I left Foreign Affairs, it seems like a lifetime ago. As you may know I did a tour in Bucharest as the SA and even though I did enjoy the freedom of movement (as a CM we had to plan our holidays a year in advance), my wife (Catherine) missed her old job and decided life in Canada was better. You know what's it's like when a wife makes up her mind. She came back and signed on with an advertising firm in Toronto and I stayed overseas. I decided it was a hell of a lot easier for me to get a job here than for her to get one abroad so I quit. I took a hit on my pension but figured it was worth it. We rented a house in Toronto for about a year which gave me time to take a long overdue vacation. After that we bought a house in Oakville (Glen Abbey) and have been here for almost five years. I tried my hand at car sales, furniture sales (Leons), wire pulling with Cogeco Cable Networks and finally signed on with a Tech firm in Oakville named Veltronix. The company does across-Canada warranty and retail repairs for Mazda Canada, the same thing for all of Ontario for Ford Canada and Nissan trucks. In addition we do the Speedos and Clusters for Ford Windstars. I'm one of three Vice Presidents in the company with lots to do and too many fires to put out each day, but it keeps me busy. For example, last week I had a three day meeting in Ohio(drove down),

yesterday a lengthy meeting with the head of Panasonic Canada and next month I get to entertain the head of FMS who is flying in from Malaysia. Because of my daughter I expect to be doing this for at least another ten years and then hopefully pull the plug. Catherine is the Account Exec with a Mississauga based Advertising firm called "As You Like It". My Daughter is going into grade seven next year and we do the usual family things whenever possible. Stu Greer also lives in Oakville so we get together at a local pub once in awhile and have a few brews. He is a security guard somewhere and his wife works at my bank.

I promised to take the family to Ottawa for a short holiday later in the year so we may see you at one of those monthly gatherings George organizes. I'm sorry I missed the last reunion but I was just too busy. With the next one being held in BC I will pass on that also. I find myself comparing prices and what it would cost us to fly to BC, plus room and board, we can take an All Inclusive somewhere hot. We went to Cancun on our last trip and had a great time. Also, we have friends abroad who try to meet up with us. Unfortunately my life is not as exciting as yours but I seem to have a purpose for living and generally enjoy myself. Catherine says I need a hobby but can't think of anything I really enjoy doing. Well there is one, but I'm married now. Ha Ha. So I spend a lot of time working, making wine, BBQ'ing and attacking my wife. I managed to put on about 15 pounds since I left External so I am working on that also. Catherine says I look the same and who am I to argue with her. I tell her she looks great all the time but she still says no. What can I do? I put in a fish pond three years ago and we enjoy sitting at night with a glass of wine watching the little demons swimming around. We are the typical family. A four door sedan, a MiniVan, a three bedroom house, one daughter, a dog and about forty fish. OK, the fish are a little unusual. I do miss the overseas life at times but it had to come to an end and things have worked out pretty good for me.

Well that's about it. The ball is back in your court now so I look forward to the continuing life of Dave Smith (world traveller) and I will try to supply additional information about mine. Take care Dave and give my best to your family. In the end they are probably the only people who really like us.

Cheers
David H

(Ed's note: David Hamilton has opted for a change in the working world. He has left Veltronix and is currently taking a break before taking on new challenges. He can be reached at dhamilton95@cogeco.ca)

* * *

Ghost or Guardian ***By Gene Gullason***

Beirut in 1983 was a city in turmoil, virtually under siege - street fighting, gunfire, rocket and mortar attacks a constant reminder that a civil war was raging. Buildings shook with the sounds and reverberations of rocket attacks, the air, at night, streaked with tracers, like bizarre fireworks, deadly in their intent. And yet, it was also a miraculous city.

At times, when fighting was ongoing in one part of the city, the section of the city in which I lived and worked would be rife with life, pulsing with humanity, street stalls and shops open, sidewalk cafés laden with folk, cars honking incessantly in grid-locked intersections - and suddenly, within the space of half an hour .. it would be eerily silent, like and uninhabited metropolis, still .. not a trace of life to be seen .. the only evidence the sounds of automatic fire in the very near proximity .. life had ceased momentarily.

It was on one such day, a Sunday, I had one of my infrequent day's off and decided to leave my hotel and walk a few short blocks to a very popular restaurant called the Captain's Table .. where the most excellent steaks could be had, and which was full of vibrant exuberant people, mostly expatriots, enjoying a break .. journalists, businessmen, people on a mission and temporarily displaced to negotiate supplies etc. I started down the street and should have been more attentive, for it was sparsely populated .. a bit of sounds of traffic, but it was early and I gave it no second thought.. until I had turned a corner and walked a short block to the next intersection and was struck by absolute silence .. not a murmur .. and looking down a very short block to where I could see the sign of the Pirate Captain .. I realized it had shut down .. something was coming and it was going to happen quickly. I turned and retraced my steps to the main artery which would take me back to my hotel, the al-Hamra street, and was stunned to see it absolutely deserted .. entrances and windows shuttered and boarded .. not a soul to be seen .. an eery feeling crawled along the back of my neck as I stuck close to the buildings to begin my way

back, and to be out of sight of the 'Tower of the Snipers' at the top of the street on a hill about a mile away... the dividing line between the Christian sector of Ashrafieh and the Moslem sector, where the Embassy and my hotel was situated in Ras -Beyrouthe.

From a side street opposite emerged two very disreputable looking individuals who crossed the street and walked close behind me.. muttering things I cud not hear, then one of them, in French asked me where I was going, and I replied that I was returning home, they then asked if I wished to purchase gold, a bizarre request at such a time, and at point I noticed one had come up close to my left side, and the other was trying to get on my right.. I cut him off and walked very close to the buildings forcing him to give up the right side and come up alongside his partner, muttering to each other again. At this point I became quite nervous .. and braced myself for something untoward .. looking up and down the street to see if there was anyone at all who could come to my aid .. there was no one.. the street was completely abandoned. Suddenly I was shoved against the wall of the building and I turned to face my attackers and to give one hell of a fight if need be .. when suddenly their appeared on the face of both the attackers facing the "Tower of the Snipers" a look of shock, surprise, and then terror .. they let me go and turned tail and ran as if the devil himself was behind them back the way from which we had just come. I turned and looked up the street and received a surprise myself for there, a few yards ahead, was a soldier, slowly walking, almost gliding, relaxed, confident, steady, casual almost ethereal .. dressed in uniform, hip holster, waist jacket, maroon beret on his head, in one hand his gloves and in the other, in the crook of his arm, a beautifully wrapped package, as for a gift. He was obviously not Syrian, nor was he of the Lebanese army, but appeared a foreigner, fair, very well turned out, clean, well pressed and had an air of absolute calm about him, unconcerned as to the unrealistic silence of the city. I am not certain if it was because of the relief of being free of the miscreants or if it actually was him, but as he approached there was an air, a feeling of such peace, and utter silence; a feeling of complete well-being ..As we passed, we acknowledged each other with a look and a smile and continued on our way. Not five paces on I turned to see if the Thugs had perhaps stopped their flight and were circling back toward me.. but to my surprise they were running even faster than the impossible pace they had already set for themselves before.. and to my own utter surprise .. there was not a sign of the soldier .. he had completely disappeared. I know for a fact, that in that short period of five paces, there was not a doorway, window, or space into which he could have disappeared. I was nearly mesmerized with puzzlement.

I turned and continued on my way back to the hotel and had just entered the doorway when gunfire and a massive attack had begun somewhere in the vicinity ... and which lasted but half an hour at the most .. then all was silent again. All through the walk back to the hotel I pondered this strange apparition, this soldier of mystery who instilled such a feeling of calm and peace within me .. and simply accepted he was either Ghost, or Guardian... perhaps both .

* * *



Can you name this CM/Terrorist ?
(Hint: It's not Osama!)

The Good Samaritan

By Ted Arbuckle

I've had to reach into that fragile tissue of approximation which is my memory, to reproduce this story. But I feel this should be brought forward lest it be lost and forgotten.

Passengers were loaded, including our diplomatic courier Ken Ljunger, and the giant 707 airliner was preparing for take-off in 1971 from Bombay airport. Seats were upright, seat belts fastened, and the cabin crew were seated. A little push out from the terminal and the plane taxis to the runway. Cleared for take-off, four throttles pushed forward and the big bird thundered down the runway. Suddenly, without warning, the brakes locked on, the aircraft shuddered and shook violently, the tires blew out and the end of the runway approached with frightening speed. But the aircraft stopped short with wheels on fire and a thoroughly shook up passenger cargo. The first thoughts in the cabin were to escape. With emergency chutes deployed, rapid evacuation of the fuselage was accomplished. Fortunately, the passengers were all using their seat belts so physical injuries were limited, apart from a few abrasions and bruises, but many suffered from deep shock when the reality of the situation dawned.

Meanwhile, outside the aircraft the emergency crews swarmed around the accident site, including a big foam truck, but when they tried to put out the fire they found the truck was empty. No foam! The aircraft literally burned to the ground with a full load of fuel.

Uninjured passengers fled the crash area as quickly as possible though not all passengers escaped injury. Those needing assistance were hurriedly removed from danger, taken by ambulance to hospitals or rushed for first aid at a temporary treatment area at the airport. Fortunately Ken Ljunger escaped unscathed and was doing what he could to help others. In the confusion of bewildered passengers and helping hands and in spite of having just experienced a serious aircraft accident he was offering a hand where needed. He witnessed a "doctor" fondling a young Australian girl who was lying on a gurney apparently suffering deep shock. The doctor's interests were obviously focussed on other than his professional duties. Ken interceded on behalf of the young lady and the "doctor" beat a hasty retreat. Ken then introduced himself to the highly distraught girl and attempted to comfort her until more professional help arrived. Thus he frustrated what might have developed into a serious crime that could easily have been overlooked in the confusion of the moment.

There were no reports of missing diplomatic mail so it can only be assumed that our man on the spot did pursue the recovery of mail in spite of the distraction of circumstances. That is nothing short of amazing. An account of the incident was sent to the Canadian Governor General's awards committee but, for whatever reason, it was omitted from subsequent honours lists. However, the girl's parents did fly from Australia to Ottawa to seek out Ken and personally thank him for intervening on their daughter's behalf. This very personal gesture of appreciation from so far away was much more touching a gesture than any formal honour might have been forthcoming from the Governor General.

* * *

Web sites you will find of interest (Our thanks to Jerry Proc) – Happy surfing

<http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/menu.html> (Scroll down and click on familiar equipment)

http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/canadian_comm_center.html

http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/canadian_embassy.html (We need help with the in/out service dates)

http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/cdn_courier.html (Copy still to be done – any former Courier volunteers?)

* * *

Final Comps "In memoriam" - 2006

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

Ernie Kelm

February 2006

Peter Smart-Foster

November 1998 (recently notified)