

# The Communicator

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*In this issue:*

- ❖ Editors Ramble
- ❖ Where are they now
- ❖ Books of interest
- ❖ The Equipment Dilemma
- ❖ A Courier Snippet
- ❖ Local 70371
- ❖ Short Stories
- ❖ Final Comps
- ❖ Editors Note

## **Editors Ramble**

**By David Smith**

For those living in my part of the world, we finally have some sunshine and warmer weather. That winter was just too long! Snowstorms on April 19<sup>th</sup> are not fair. I began to think I was once again living in Alert!

This newsletter brings you more of your colleague's experiences and I will never tire of reading these good stories. I'm sure you feel the same.

I would like to offer a little plug for the website of our EL Colleagues. More stories and photos continue to be posted and you will find it easy to relate to the stories you will read. If you haven't yet enjoyed doing so, check things out at [www.ofarts.ca](http://www.ofarts.ca). Membership is simple (and cheap) and all former CM's are welcome.

It was brought to my attention that I missed a couple of names in the previous newsletters "Final Comps" section. My apologies to the families for this oversight.

Here's wishing all of our readers a happy and healthy summer. Stay tuned; we'll be back in the fall.

Happy reading



*Aroflex (see <http://www.jproc.ca/crypto/aroflex.html>)*

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)

## **Where are they now?**

**By David Smith**

Have you ever wondered how many of our former colleagues are still working for Foreign Affairs as Indeterminate employees? Wonder no longer because here is a list.

**In the CS group:** George McKeever, Lucretia Sealy, Steve Galloway, Perry Lesk, Elizabeth De Boer, John Hagemeyer, Tom Tierney, Anna Maria Braia-Salvi, Juudy Scrimger, Al Couture, Bob Hutchins, Bruce Sondergaard, Judy Bakvis, Eric Joyce, Bill Neelin, Gary Black (51<sup>st</sup> year of service), Shirley Gillette, Karn Bell, Michael Bell, Louise Deguire, Andre Huard, Denis Lacombe, Cliff Swelin, Serge Theoret, and Holley-Anne Tough.

**In other groups:** HeleneAnna Goyette (CR), Nicole Levesque, Yves Bachand (DA-PRO), Ken Ljungar, Marc Gérin-Lajoie, Michel Dargis, Paul LeBlanc (GS-MES); Bonnie Ward, Monique Barsalou, Ron Messett (AS)

**Recently retired former colleagues:** Tony Washbrook, Gilles Clermont, Guy Lebars, Rick Pomerleau, Gary Morgan and Steve Gates.

Our former CM complement of almost 300 souls has shrunk to this listed total of 35. If anyone knows of any omissions, please advise me at [drdee@sympatico.ca](mailto:drdee@sympatico.ca).

## **Books of Interest**

**By David Smith**

It has been some time since I "flagged" any reading of specific interest to you but this is one that some of you might wish to check out.

### **"Canadian Peacekeepers in Indochina 1954-1973"**

**"Recollections"**

**Edited by Arthur E. Blanchette**

Long before today's world of instant communications and Satellite TV/Phones, this is a compilation of experiences and viewpoints in story form by 14 individuals who served in Indochina during the period above. Submissions by people such as J. Ross Francis, Roy MacLaren, Daniel Molgat, Louise Pommet-Dyer, John Schioler and others provide an interesting look into life in the Foreign Service when challenges of living abroad were far different from those experienced today. Some of our own colleagues – Bernie Gamache, Roger Banville and Eugene Gullason are referred to and no doubt this publication is of special interest to them personally.

It's a small publication of 191 pages located under ISBN 0-919614-96-5.

## The Equipment Dilemma

By Buck Arbuckle

Being an organization with heavy reliance on equipment, the Telecommunications Division was always scanning the market for something better and faster; better to keep up with technology and faster to keep up with ever increasing volume of traffic. The Teletype Corporation in Skokie, Illinois, was a major supplier of equipment and with good reason. We operated 24 hours a day 365 days a year and their managers looked to External Affairs as a test bed for new equipment. They had few customers who could wear out equipment faster so we usually had the inside track on new developments in that field.

However, Teletype Corporation could not answer all our pressing requirements. Our labour intensive operation needed a greater degree of automation. Appearing on the horizon was a new development using computerized message switching. Such a system could have great potential for our operation so our technical and operational staff formed a competent team to investigate the possibilities. In consultation with various suppliers they concluded that we should go for it. We sought estimates and decided CN/CP Telecommunications had the better offer. Besides, they were anxious for a contract that could further their own experience and expertise in this new field. Our program had to cater for security, various circuit speeds, priorities, multiple addressed messages where many addresses carried different priorities, and of course a storage capacity for one month's traffic. The various combinations of these requirements spawned an extremely complex program such that CN/CP had never before faced.

CN/CP having won the prize, we signed the contract and they would supply, program and install the package for one million dollars. Strangely, the contract carried no provision for cost overruns. The government advanced the money which in those days was a huge commitment for a single machine, well above regular budget allotments.

CN/CP worked well with our team of experts. The months went by and so did the million dollars, with still much more work to be done. They asked for more money but we refused. They brought out the big guns but I was determined, a contract was a contract. They needed another half million dollars which they couldn't get from me. But they soldiered on to the point where they completed the contract but nearly succumbed financially.

Meanwhile our Ottawa Comcentre Automatic Message Switch was launched and it performed beautifully. Our people had gained valuable expertise and knew every little nuance of the machine. As a result of working closely with CN/CP during the whole acquisition process they could now program any updates necessary and would use this knowledge to begin laying plans for the next generation switch to be called NOCAMS.

Such were some of the truth and consequences of trying to keep the division abreast of ever changing technology.

\* \* \*



**Who?**

## A Courier "Snippet"

By Merv McBride

Gilles Lemoine gave me a good laugh one day at the Accra airport. Standing at the rear of the Caravelle (one of those strange French flying machines) I saw Gilles get off the aircraft and head my way. As he got closer I saw his usual bright smile was sort of forced and he loudly proclaimed "Hey, Merv - damn how I hate to fly!"

"But Gilles if you hate to fly so much, why the hell did you sign up for Courier duty?" And his quick reply was "I hate 'Hottawa' worse!" Although I laughed I sure could see the logic in his reply.

\* \* \*

## Local 70371

By John Kruithof

After retirement, one develops a tendency for sitting back and reflecting on the past. Enjoyment comes from having savoured the sense of the moment while historic events were unfolding. Most likely, reflections revolve around one's own involvement in them, however tenuous.

In a sense, Communicators (CMs) were a privileged lot. From the confines of Canadian missions' Communication Centres around the world, we handled countless messages to and from decision-makers dealing with happenings of the day. Our work opened a window to the world. The opportunity of actually living in places where events were taking place heightened the sense of participation. While details of work could never be revealed, CMs were not inhibited from telling stories of their adventures. After all, there is hardly a place in the world where one CM or another has not set foot. Too bad CM tales most often appeal only to other CMs.

The CMs' privilege came at a cost. Packing and moving every few years was quite stressful. A move affected the entire family. Postings themselves came after a strenuous process. One had to be in good physical health. Doctors probed, prodded and jabbed to ensure you were. Anything amiss jeopardized the posting. Not only was being in good shape a prerequisite, reliability from a security point of view was essential. We worked in a Cold War environment. Foreign agents, in their quest for secrets, regularly targeted Communicators. Again, anything amiss there, and your posting (not to mention your liberty) was in jeopardy. Then there was the necessity of being considered suitable for a posting by the Department in the first place. Personnel matters were, and remain, complex. Which candidate to choose for what post? Obviously, one's skill, work ethic and availability would influence the posting officer in selecting you, but several candidates could be vying for the same post. Put all the foregoing factors together and you either wound up with a satisfying rotational career, or a frustrating heap of trouble.

That brings me to the reason for this article. Organizationally, everything should be harmonious between employer and employees. I wouldn't be the first one to hazard the guess that people would be moved to tears of boredom if this were the case. So we, or others, make life interesting by throwing in a bit of controversy. It happens all the time, quite often with unforeseen consequences. Whatever motivation may be ascribed to disturbing a basic element, strife is rampant. How to cope with discord when it evolves into something larger than the individual can handle?

Of necessity, Communicators formed an effective union Local for channelling their grievances. Our numbers, in the hundreds, constituted a large enough pool. The very birth of that Local, Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) National Component Foreign Service Communicators Local 70371, involved some strife. Granted its charter on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1979, the Local was a break-away faction of CM members

from the larger, earlier-established PSAC National Component External Affairs Local 70125. The latter was of course reluctant to see a sizable portion of its members leave, but CMs persevered. This streak of independence lasted until October 1998, when, for various reasons, Local 70371 disbanded and its few remaining members returned to the fold of 70125. Even 70371's disbandment was marked with some controversy. Before leaving the stage, it made sure its meagre financial resources were depleted. I believe members were either issued \$100.00 cheques, or a rumoured monumental party was thrown. I can't imagine CMs partying, so it must have been cheques, eventually converted to useful ends. Local 70371 was no more, but for its just less than two decade existence it left an indelible mark on the minds of its members.

The reason Local 70371 resonated with its members was because it reflected the character of the community it represented. Run for CM's, by CM's. The executive was drawn from CMs who happened to be in Ottawa at the time. Being a rotational profession, the composition of the executive was in constant flux. This was a handicap in some respects, continuity in a particular position never guaranteed. A greater benefit, however, was the new blood and ideas injected by virtue of the posting cycle. Practical problems confronting Communicators were, through experiences at home and abroad, fresh in everyone's mind. The Local became a focal point through which solutions could be sought.

How were solutions arrived at? The Local's greatest strength stemmed from tapping into the resources of both the Government and the Department. Canada is quite progressive, and whether the Department liked it or not, its employment practices had to conform. Likewise, unions could not isolate themselves from this reality. It would be counter-productive for a Local to adopt an attitude of my way, or the highway. We did not tolerate that attitude from the Department, nor would our adopting such an attitude be appreciated by the other side. Therefore the good old Canadian notion of dialogue among equals was adhered to.

Various consultative committees had unique procedural characteristics. For example, the Labour Management Relations Committee (LMRC) which was set up jointly in 1986 by Local 70371 and Telecommunications Division had specific terms of reference:

- a) To foster and maintain a consultative committee which will promote the general well being and harmony of all employees;
- b) To encourage and maintain a participatory approach to the identification and solution of problems in the workplace;
- c) To liaise as necessary internally and externally to ensure that we are well informed of current and future developments in the telecommunications community;
- d) To coordinate the ongoing training needs of all employees in their career development;
- e) To ensure that ongoing developments with regard to the introduction of technological change within the workplace are addressed in a timely manner;
- f) To encourage and solicit meaningful input and suggestions from all levels within the workplace on matters of concern or interest;
- g) To maintain an official record of LMRC activities and to provide positive and prompt feedback to all concerned.

Notwithstanding the fairly comprehensive terms of reference for the LMRC, it was a limited undertaking between the Local and the Division. Larger committees were mandated under national legislative jurisdictions, such as Collective Bargaining, Occupational Safety & Health, Employee Assistance Program, etc. The interpretation of Foreign Service Directives (FSD's) fell to the National Joint Council (NJC) to resolve. Local 70371, like others, was faced with a constantly changing legislative landscape.

All staff associations represented at External involved themselves in common issues. The PSAC therefore worked closely with PAFSO, IBEW, PIPS and ESSA to arrive at unified positions whenever possible. A slight divergence developed while drafting terms of reference for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The Department justified allocating resources (a welfare counsellor, a program co-ordinator, and appropriate office space) on the premise of a happier workplace being a more productive workplace. The PSAC, well aware of studies to that effect, nevertheless made the strongest representation that employee assistance was the key element of the program, not productivity, and that we were quite prepared to boycott EAP if productivity became its mantra. The Local showed less hesitation in becoming part of the External Affairs Joint Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (EAJCOSH). When national legislation mandated the participation of unions in Health and Safety committees, Local 70371 was the first to indicate its immediate interest to the Department.

Whatever the forum, dialogue is best conducted when both sides marshal convincing arguments for their respective positions. Because Local 70371 had an accurate finger on the pulse of its members' wishes, it was always prepared to advance the CM's point of view. The Division, and the Department, were rarely left in doubt as to where Local 70371 was coming from. Presenting our outlook with an appropriate degree of tenacity resulted in CM positions being noted.

Tenacity was particularly required when pursuing our numerous grievances covering a multitude of situations. Many grievances dealt with problems related to administration at missions abroad. The Local's Chief Steward frequently had to pursue more than one grievance at a time at various levels. The task was very demanding and time consuming. No wonder the modest honorarium allocated to executive members was highest for the Steward, above that of the President.

Grievances from overseas included those involving diplomatic privileges that excluded non-diplomats from being provided the same considerations as diplomats. This exasperating existence boiled over into a "class action" best summarized in an action plan drawn up by Local 70371:

THE EFFECT OF THE VIENNA CONVENTION ON  
MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT  
CATEGORIES AT CANADIAN MISSIONS ABROAD

Our Local is interested in ways and means of revising the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations in order to achieve equality of treatment accorded diplomatic and non-diplomatic personnel at Canadian missions abroad

Drawn up in Vienna in 1961, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations entered into force for Canada on June 25, 1966. It promotes friendly relations among nations, irrespective of their differing constitutional and social systems. In reality, friendly diplomatic relations are often severed at the first sign of friction.

What the Convention has achieved during its quarter century existence is the maintenance of diplomatic privileges and immunities for members of the diplomatic corps. For the same length of time it has, unfortunately, also maintained limitations on privileges for administrative support staff members at Canadian missions abroad.

This disparity in treatment of diplomatic officers and administrative support members, extended to their respective families, should be a cause for concern to all Canadians who believe in equality.

Members of the administrative support categories enjoy the same privileges and immunities accorded diplomatic agents under Articles 29 to 35 inclusive, except that the "immunity from civil and

administrative jurisdiction specified in paragraph 1 of Article 31 shall not extend to acts performed outside the course of their duties”. Further discrimination is practiced under Articles 36 and 37. Article 36 states “the receiving State shall... permit entry of and grant exemption from all customs duties, taxes, and related charges... articles for the personal use of a diplomatic agent or member of his family forming part of his household, including articles intended for his establishment”. This exemption from customs duties applies for the entire duration of the diplomatic agent’s stay in the receiving State. Article 37.1 extends that exemption to “the members of the family of a diplomatic agent forming part of his household”. Article 37.2 limits the exemption for members of the administrative and technical staff of the mission, together with members of their families forming part of their respective households, to “the time of first installation”. This means that for administrative support staff exemption is accorded only on articles brought in on first arrival.

During the last quarter century progressive social changes have taken place in Canada, exemplified by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. No such liberating influences have affected the Vienna Convention.

Canadian civil servants in the administrative support categories serving at Canadian missions abroad, aware of the degree of equality achieved in Canada, are offended when discriminated against under the Convention. Members of the administrative support categories therefore call for the elimination of discriminatory Articles from the Vienna Convention.

Members of our Local have frequently drawn to the attention of the Department the disparity existing in the treatment of diplomatic and non-diplomatic civil servants. We have called for the equal treatment of all members of Canadian missions abroad. Little progress was made. Our Local is now looking into the possibility of obtaining legal advice to bolster our campaign.

The Canadian government has the ultimate power of designating all members to diplomatic status. It has, in the past, justified the granting of diplomatic status for exceptional reasons. We now call for this implementation based on the equality practiced in Canada.

Morale in Canada’s Foreign Service will be boosted by the removal of constant irritants brought on by the discriminatory Articles of the Vienna Convention.

February, 1987.

An intense battle ensued, lasting a year. Local 70371 marshalled all the support it could muster, moral and legal. The Department had to sort out the pros and cons of supporting this radical notion. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1988, at a meeting of the External Affairs Joint Council, the Department rendered its decision:

The Department of External Affairs recently undertook comprehensive review of its policy regarding diplomatic (or consular) status for members of support staff. Review revealed following, among other things:

- (a) International practice has moved considerably beyond narrow interpretation of Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations which in theory limits diplomatic status to personnel performing precisely defined diplomatic functions;
- (b) Canadian practice reflects this fact in that diplomatic status successfully has been sought for support staff in 18 countries representing more than 22 percent of support staff abroad for reasons largely unrelated to above-mentioned diplomatic functions;
- (c) Canadian practice, while roughly similar to that of several countries with which Canadian practice normally is compared, is behind that of other similar countries.

Such factors led to recommendation by senior management that diplomatic (or consular) status should be sought for all support staff, recommendation which was agreed to by the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

The entire story of the ins and outs of this development could fill a book, much too lengthy for this short overview of Local 70371. Suffice it to say that through hundreds of small incremental workplace improvements brought about through grievances, consultations and negotiations, and larger issues like diplomatic status and technological adjustments through COSICS and SIGNET eras, Local 70371 played a pivotal role in protecting and promoting the job security of those who originally joined the Department as CMs.

This leads to the final thought. Local 70371 was the embodiment of its diligent members. Nothing could have been accomplished without the resolution of its collective membership. I would like to think we are all proud of the role we played in this vibrant, albeit short-lived, entity.

John Kruithof,  
October 2006

*\* See “Editors note” below*

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*“Short Stories”  
by Marty Byzewski – the Polish Prince*

#### *A Day over Haiti.*

During one of Haiti’s frequent political quagmires, I was elected along with my partner to fly in some satellite equipment for emergency purposes to be used by the embassy if all-hell-broke-lose in Port-au-Prince. As luck would have it there were no airlines flying into the capital from Miami because of the shooting and riots. So we got inventive. We flew the next day to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic because they are on the same island. From there we booked with Haitian Provincial Airlines a local carrier to fly the blockade over the mountains. When we arrived at the airport we found out that we were the only passengers and were to fly on an ancient DC-3 (circa 1941). The Captain was a big Brit with a belly that rivalled St Nick who could hardly breathe and went around the aircraft kicking the tires. (Oh Oh I thought to myself, I’ll never see my pension). After takeoff we were asked by the one girl on board what we would like to drink. I asked for champagne and she rolled her eyes. The flight was fantastic as we were only flying at about 3,000 feet over the mountains, I had goose bumps. I happened to notice that our right engine was losing oil at a very steady rate. After about a two hour flight we made an uneventful landing threw our gear into a waiting jeep as there was no police or customs and left. As I was leaving I noticed the Captain motioning to a mechanic to that engine. I am surprised that we made it. There is a God!

#### *Bogota Via the Mists.*

When I was flying from Lima Peru to Bogotá in Colombia I was really taken by the contrast between flying first along the Pacific coastline and then across the mountains while all the while on our right we could see the Amazon winding through the Brazilian Jungle. Every 10 or 15 minutes we could see massive fires in the jungle which were probably road clearing projects. I had not realized that Bogotá is 8300 feet above sea-level and our approach would be through the mountain passes. It was very spectacular as the Air France 747 had to follow a series of valley approaches left, right, left and all the while you could see the mountain sides so close. On our approach to the airport all one could see was thousands of greenhouses where they raise the local vegetables because of the height of the city. It was truly a glorious feeling seeing that part of the world and its unique situation.

***Final Comps “In memoriam” – 2006/2007***  
***Members and friends of the CM/EL community to whom we have said goodbye***

Bruce Hamman January 31, 2007



Larry Manns December 19, 2006



Vince Hunter, June 26, 2006



Harry Richards September 14, 2006 (No Photo available)

Paul Dunseath December 17, 2006



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**\* Editors note: *The Story of the Century:***

In the spring issue of “The Communicator”, I promised readers the “Story of the Century”. The promise holds true but there is a slight impediment to publishing it in this newsletter. Allow me to explain.

For some time, I have been after the author, John Kruihof, to write about the machinations that he and others went through in their attempts to gain diplomatic status for all members of External Affairs (as it was then called). I was working with John in MITO during the period when “negotiations” were reaching what could accurately be described as a feverish pitch. John was kind enough to share his experiences with me as he presented his arguments to senior management on an almost weekly basis. It was fascinating to hear then and I am sure you will find it just as fascinating now. This is a story that just had to be documented. Employees who joined DFAIT since 1988 will likely have little if any knowledge of the days when there existed a distinct two-class system and this story will not only “set the record straight” on just why and how diplomatic status was very grudgingly granted, but will provide a historical document that changed the face of not only Canada’s Foreign Service, but that of other countries as well. More than just Canadian Foreign Service employees owe a real debt of gratitude to John and his little band of busy bees during those days.

As the title of Part I states; “It all began with a grievance” – and it did. Thanks to our old friend Merv McBride, his tenacity to inject a sense of fairness into our working lives abroad resulted in John’s persistence with the power brokers in External right up to and including the Minister of the day, Joe Clark. The story is told in two parts, the first describing the processes followed which resulted in the assigning of diplomatic status a reality and the second describing the actual implementation. Both are fascinating. So where is the story you ask ? Here’s the rub. The two parts total 78 pages. I don’t think an explanation is necessary so here’s the plan. Those of you who receive the newsletter via electronic will also receive “Diplomatic Status, Parts I and II” thereby allowing you to choose to print it or read from the screen. Please note that electronic copies come in MS-Word or Adobe format only. Those without computers who are keen to read this important and fascinating piece of history need only contact me and I will mail you a copy. A fair deal? I think so. You can contact me at 613 841-5863 or via regular mail as follows:  
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