

# CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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## Inside this issue

Cat's Corner	2
Truly Retired By James Prosser	2
Foreign Service Beginnings By Judy Chidester	3
Hungarian/Suez Crisis By Mary Prosser	4

Welcome to the latest issue of a Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERs** (Communicators **AND** Others Enjoying Retirement). This newsletter will be distributed quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for viewing on or about, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15.

The **CANDOER** Web site and newsletter may be viewed by going to the following URI: [www.candoer.org](http://www.candoer.org)

***The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need contributors.***

Do you have an interesting article, a nostalgia item, or a real life story you would like to share with others? If you do, send it to me at the following e-mail address:

[candoercat@gmail.com](mailto:candoercat@gmail.com)

or to my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

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The **CANDOER** News will be available in three formats: the first format is as a web page; the second format is as a PDF file; the third format is as a Microsoft Word document.

The PDF file and Microsoft Word document will allow you to download and print the newsletter exactly as if I had printed it and mailed it to you.

If you are unable to read the PDF formatted newsletter, you can go to [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html) and download the FREE reader. When installed on your computer, it will allow the automatic opening of any PDF file.

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**I think the freezer deserves a light as well.**

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### Cat's Corner

The picture used at the top of page 1 is of the Department of State building in 1865.

I received a big surprise this quarter. I was given full access to the REFCOM web site. I had received several requests from CANDOERs asking me if I had information on a specific TCU friend and I had no way of finding them. I sent an e-mail to REFCOM giving their members access to the CANDOER web site and asking for access to theirs.

The initial response was, NO. Due to the nature of some of the information on the site, they do not give 'outside' people access to the web site.

About a week later I received an e-mail telling me that after reconsideration that they were giving me an honorary membership and access to the REFCOM web site.

As a result of their action, if you are trying to track down an old TCU friend and have been unable to do so, please send me the information about he/she and I may be able to help you.

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This past week I received some very sad news. My good friend, **Herb Walden** and his mother died.

A lot of you newer members will not recognize Herb's name. He was not a Department of State employee but a life-time friend of mine from back in my home town. For many years he wrote humorous articles about life in a small town for the CANDOER Newsletter.

For the past 25 years Herb has been a caretaker for his invalid mother. On the 23rd of June he went to his local drug store and had a prescription filled. When he did not return to pick it up and did not answer his telephone the pharmacy, after several days, called the PA State Police and asked them to check on him. They found both Herb and his mother dead in their home.

In a conversation with the Coroner he informed me that Herb had been dead for approximately eight days when he was found

and his mother for approximately three days. He died of a massive heart attack and because his Mother was unable to get out of the chair she sat in without help, she died of dehydration after 4-5 days. Herb was 74 and his Mother, Jane, was 95. This was a sad end to a family that I had known for years.

Then to really put a kicker on it all, they have NO living relatives and neither of them left a Will.

[May they rest in peace!](#)

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The one-liners in this issue were received from Paul Del Giudice and are titled, "Random Thoughts."

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**You never know when it will strike, but there comes a moment each day when you know that you just aren't going to do anything productive for the rest of the day.**

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### Truly Retired

By James F. Prosser

Happily, about four years prior to retirement, I took the Retirement Seminar in conjunction with a home leave. My wife and I profited immensely from it. While we loved the home and neighborhood in which we lived, the daily horrendous commute of one hour each morning and again in the evening made the decision NOT to live in the Washington, DC area an easy one. Immediately prior to retirement, I wisely again attended the Retirement Seminar and was glad of it, for it had considerably improved.

I left my name with the Office of Communications for possible WAE service and maintained my security clearance for about five years. The telephone never rang. Looking back in retrospect, that was a blessing in disguise. My life and career in the Foreign Service could not have been better and I would not want to change anything had I had the opportunity to do so.

My son (also in the Foreign Service) and his family as a consequence always lived remotely from us. Regrettably, we get to visit with each other (especially the

grandchildren) just two or three times annually. On the other side of that coin, we do get to travel quite a lot, taking the opportunity to visit numerous friends along the way, both at home and abroad.

In retirement I kept up on Foreign Service issues for I never passed an opportunity to publicize the Foreign Service and careers therein to the U.S. public. I have given numerous talks on the subject before civic groups, private organizations, and academic career days at schools in Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota. Mentoring five university students at different times on pursuing careers in the Foreign Service was a particularly satisfying experience.

Throughout my life I've had a number of hobbies which I enjoyed off and on according to cost, time allowed, and desire. This proved to be a perfect outlet in retirement even unto this day. The hobbies to name a few, in no particular order are: amateur radio, musicology, photography, wild life conservation, railroads, outdoors/sports, computers, swimming, and travel. To these I must add being chairman of my high school class and its frequent activities, plus assisting in the CANDOER (Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement) organization and the Upper Midwest regional AFSA Chapter. I have arranged and escorted several private wild life safaris in East Africa, two rail fan trips riding the Trans-Siberian railroad between Moscow and Vladivostok, sailed around the world on a Danish freighter, taken many other freighter trips throughout Asia, Africa, Europe, visited all 50 states, and Canadian provinces.

When I awake in the early morning, I never have to ask myself, "What will I do today?" After my one-hour pre-breakfast lap swim is over, then my day begins and there is never a dull moment until bedtime.

The pastor of our church once humorously remarked, "Why do you bother to keep a house and yard in Green Bay? Why don't you just have an apartment?" Space doesn't permit answers to those questions here.

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**I think part of a best friend's job  
should be to immediately clear your  
computer history if you die.**

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**Foreign Service Beginnings**

By Judy Chidester

I've so enjoyed reading others' accounts of their beginning in the Foreign "Circus" I thought I'd chime in.

I graduated from Baldwin High School in Pittsburgh, PA in 1956. I immediately went to work for Alcoa Aluminum as a stenographer. After about a year I was laid off and had a three-month hiatus as I looked for another job – this time with Eljer Plumbing, again as a stenographer.

While I was in Junior High School I'd done some research on various "different" employments. At that time I read a book about the Foreign Service which informed that three languages and a working knowledge of each of those countries was a requirement.

About the time I began working at Eljer (I was about 18) the Foreign Service Recruiters came to town. There was a lot of publicity and even a bit on the TV. I carefully read everything and found that one couldn't go overseas until they were eighteen – and of course, everyone knew THAT was too late to start a career!

Move on three years and the month after I turned 21 the recruiters came back to town. The publicity was much smaller but my mother pointed it out to me.

Down I went to apply. I found that I met the qualifications for clerk, stenographer, secretary, and cryptographer. I didn't WANT to be a clerk, stenographer, or secretary so I applied as a cryptographer. Then I went home and looked it up in the dictionary. Since I'd been working on an electric typewriter for four years, passing the typing test on an old manual was a bit of a problem. Nevertheless, they sent me to Washington – where I was given ANOTHER typing test. Then I began training. A week or so later I heard Mel Roane on the telephone

saying, "I don't care what she did on your test, she's doing fine up here!" While I never heard anything further! I've always blessed that man for that.

Because of the Presidential election we were held up quite awhile in D.C. During that time I met many interesting folk from several classes who were heading out for their first assignments, Bill Weatherford, Phil Hendrix, Jim Fiorani, Joe Gaffey, and Jim Steeves among them. Most of them moved out more quickly because of their military experience. I also talked to people coming back from overseas. One person in particular, Pat Bevaqua, returning from Amman, Jordan, really impressed me with her experiences. I'd had one interview with Elsie Crim, telling her I thought I might like Australia – and her telling me it would be much too boring. After talking to Pat I saw Elsie again and mentioned Amman and she opined I seemed like a real "Mid East" kinda girl. And Amman was my first assignment. And she was right. The Middle East has always been my favorite area.

I felt really lucky to have found this job which permitted moving around and changing your life, provided learning opportunities, and provided good job security and benefits. I was always the "Pollyanna" but I can say truthfully that I did always love my job and enjoyed meeting all the different people and experiencing different cultures.

I always knew that when I retired I wanted to be in a desert area and Las Cruces, NM has provided that so retirement has been exciting, too.

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**Map Quest really needs to start their directions on #5. I'm pretty sure I know how to get out of my neighborhood.**

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### **The Dabneys of Mississippi Revisited**

By Charles Christian

This is a story I submitted for the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery newsletter for April. I have been a docent and Civil War specialist there for 12 years and have done other stories over time on Civil War people

buried there.

In the April 2007 issue of The Cemeterian we learned about the Dabney family along with the husband of one of them, Judge W. W. Porter. He was featured in the July, 2001 issue. To briefly mention them here is that the Judge Augustine Dabney family all participated in the Battle of Raymond, MS, caring for the wounded of both sides for two weeks in May, 1863. Judge Porter, Captain CSA, led a Tennessee Infantry company in the battle. Augustine and his wealthy brother, Thomas, came with other family members in a three month wagon trip in 1835 from Virginia to Raymond. Augustine opened a law office in the new town and Thomas was the leader of the other family members who all together had 20,000 acres at the Burleigh Plantation south of town with 154 slaves. Augustine had eight. In their old age Augustine and his wife came to live with a daughter, Elizabeth Porter, in Santa Rosa in 1878 and shortly thereafter he died.

The legend stated that during the boring of a tunnel "in W. VA" one of the laborers, a large and very strong black man, was in a contest with one of the new Ingersoll steam drills to see if he or the drill could bore the fastest. The man won, but died of exhaustion. This is the gist of the legend and the song "John Henry, the steel driving man."

Recently a noted historian has come up with a story of what really happened and where. John Garst, Department of Chemistry, University of GA, Athens, presented evidence, along with his high standing with other researchers, which supports that it was a true story and not just a legend and song.

Augustine had a son, named Fred, who was a CSA Captain in the war. He was the Chief Engineer for the C & W Railroad and was responsible for building the line through the Dunnavant Valley, near Leeds, Alabama. There is a tunnel there that Fred worked on according to Mr. Garst.

John Henry is believed to have been John Henry Dabney, born 1850, and was a slave owned by either brother Thomas or

Augustine Dabney. It is known that Augustine had a slave named Henry. Mr. Garst says it was probably him as the age of the hammer man was the same as the age of the Henry that Augustine owned.

John Henry is also believed by Mr. Garst to be one of the first people buried (in an unmarked grave) at San Ridge Cemetery, about two miles from the C & W line. He says the contest occurred Tuesday, September 20, 1887. My source also states that Mr. Garst has presented a very compelling case. The source also reports that soon Mr. Garst will be able to offer more compelling evidence to support his theory.

Not only is there a long and famous story about the Dabney family, we also learn that more of the family's story can still be told as time goes by. A daughter of Thomas wrote a long history of her father and family which is available online at:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/smedes/menu.html> or Google "Author, Susan Smedes" and "John Henry, the steel driving man".

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**I'm always slightly terrified when I exit out of Word and it asks me if I want to save any changes to my ten-page research paper that I swear I did not make any changes to.**

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### **Hungarian/Suez Crises**

By Mary V. Prosser (nee Lamurey)

I arrived in Bonn, my first post, in January 1956. For the entire two and one-half years of my tour the code room, working 24-hours daily in three shifts, was woefully undermanned. In many respects, it was a sweat shop. We had 13 code clerks (subsequently known as communicators and now as information specialists) in which the normal complement was supposed to be about 20.

When the Hungarian crisis broke out in October 1956, with Russian tanks rolling through the country, it really caught us by surprise. Consequently, we simply could not cope with all the voluminous coded telegraphic traffic.

Embassy officers would complain because their home offices in Washington in

turn complained they had sent immediate (or NIACT) precedence telegrams which had not been answered. Of course, we would find that their messages would be in the piles of tapes lying on the floor which we had not yet decoded!

Everyone in the code room was working hours of overtime every day, seven days a week. Everyone, that is, except one clerk (who shall remain nameless) who refused to work one second of overtime. If I, as assistant shift supervisor, asked him to take over a task a few minutes before the end of the shift, he absolutely refused to start it because it might take him into overtime. Needless to say, Bonn was his first and (thankfully for the Foreign Service) last post.

While the code room was still reeling from the Hungarian crisis, the Suez crisis struck with Israel occupying the Sinai Peninsula; France and England the Suez Canal; all at war with Egypt. Naturally we were all spread very thin, all three shifts having to be covered by our small staff.

There was no time off for weeks on end.

One night, in the middle of all this, with all bodies needed in the code room, I finished the midnight shift and sat down in the break room before going home. When trying to get up to leave, I was so exhausted that it was physically impossible to get up from the couch. I had to be helped home and a doctor called. He gave me shots for a week to build me up from the complete exhaustion I was suffering. I was able to return to work in a week. This made things even worse for those remaining.

For those who worked through it all, it was a memorable experience that no one would ever wish to repeat.

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**I disagree with Kay Jewelers. I would bet that on any given Friday or Saturday night, more kisses begin with Budweiser than Kay.**

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**See you next quarter!**