

# CANDOER News



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to Communicators AND Others Enjoying Retirement

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Welcome to the latest issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the **CANDOERS** (Communicators **AND** Others Enjoying Retirement). This **Newsletter** will be published quarterly. New issues will be posted on the Web for your reading enjoyment on or about, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15.

The **CANDOER** web site and **Newsletter** may be viewed at: [www.candoer.org](http://www.candoer.org).

*The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need story 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, please 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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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.

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**Nine out of every 10 living things live in the ocean.**

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**Cat's Corner**

Late last year I was diagnosed with

prostate cancer. Luckily we caught it early. They ran tests on the biopsy and found that there was a 85 percent chance that it was a slow growing cancer. The oncologist at John Hopkins said that if left alone I would probably die of something else. BUT, I would have to have a biopsy of the prostate every year to make sure it was not growing faster than they predicted. I cannot see myself wondering from year-to-year if it was still slow growing or running rampant throughout my body. I have opted instead to have radiation treatments. A date has not been set for the start of the treatments. As a background, my Dad died from undetected prostate cancer, my oldest brother, Ernie, and my brother, Leslie, who is 18 months older than me have had it, also. Like me, it was caught early for both of them. My Dad had five brothers and four of the five died of prostate cancer. So you can understand why I have opted to treat it!

Thanks to George McKinney for the "Interesting Trivia" used between stories!

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**The banana cannot reproduce itself. It can be propagated only by the hand of man.**

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**My brief career as a Fighter Operations Clerk, Spring, 1951**

By Charles Christian

64<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Sq.

57<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Gp.

I was a cryptographer, Corporal, age 18, with the 1931<sup>st</sup> Airways and Air Communications Sq., MATS, doing a two year tour at Elmendorf AFB, during the Korean War. We were a busy outfit supporting the portion of the air lift that went through Alaska to and from the war area.

During maneuvers FIRESTEP, someone, somewhere, decided that the detachment of four F-80's from the 64th FIS be deployed to Naknek AFS on the Alaskan Peninsula would send daily mission

reports back to Elmendorf in code. As the 57<sup>th</sup> FIG apparently did not have cryptographers, so for this duty they would borrow one from an outfit that. I was the one selected. With two portable crypto devices (M-209's, one a spare) I would proceed on the next transport to Naknek AFB. With my helmet, carbine, and duffel bag I departed and arrived via a C-47 and went immediately to the WWII Quonset hut that was being used as the operations building for the detachment during the exercises. Major Van Bebber was the detachment's C.O. He immediately informed me that he was not going to do any such thing as sending encrypted mission reports back to Elmendorf. I would return to Elmendorf on the first available transport, or, as he was short one each Ftr Oprs Clerk, and as I was smart enough to be a cryptographer, he figured I was probably smart enough to be a quick learner with a few hours instructions. I could then be the FOC for the morning shift for the two week exercise. I accepted this offer.

That afternoon the 64<sup>th</sup> FIS Sgt., who was the other FOC, gave me a brief period of instruction and we both felt I would do fine. We were to be operational from sun-up to sun-down daily. I would do the typing as needed for the detachment; work the base telephone, the field phone to the AC&W (radar) installation, and a radio console to the aircraft and/or control tower.

The tower and weather office were in a small building next to our hut which was operated by USAF weather personnel and civilian CAA (previous name of the FAA) tower operators. We were billeted on the other side of the runway in broken down Quonset huts and half of them were caved in and abandoned.

Daily before dawn the four pilots would take a jeep to the Quonset hut and the E.M. would follow in a 6 by truck. The pilots would be in the ready room at the end of the hut and the Major and me at the other end. The four F-80's were just feet away from the hut. Two were always hooked up to starter carts with crew chiefs -

mechanics waiting adjacent to the planes. When AC&W called me they would say nothing other than scramble two or four. I would give one burst on the klaxon horn for two and two bursts for four and the jets were quickly started and rolling. After they got airborne AC&W would vector them to the target.

I remember also occasionally using the radio with the tower and the F-80's plus the daily radio checks. I also remember we were Norman 7 and the two flights were Norman Blue Leader and Norman Red Leader.

One morning we were suddenly under air attack on our way to the hut. This was a no-no prior to sun-up! Two F-80's from the aggressor force flew over us with the first one dropping a flare and lighting up the jeep and truck. The plane behind him actually opened up on us with blanks from its six .50's. The trap door under the nose was open and not closed to hold the hot brass within the nose as I was told later it should have been. We were hit on top of the truck with the brass. On the next go around the jets traded positions and the lead pilot pulled his canopy eject lever instead of the flare release lever. Off came the canopy and in the cold weather he could not return to base without it and had to land. We took him prisoner and the well-known 1st/Lt. was quite embarrassed. I understand that Felix "Doc" Blanchard, with Glen Davis, had made quite a name for themselves playing football for West Point in the mid 1940's. Lt. Blanchard overcame this incident and went on to fly jets in Korea and retired a full Col. He died April, 2009.

One day AC&W rang me up and said "Scramble two, this is no drill!" They had a single bogey coming in from the west over Bristol Bay. When our two fighters got up in the air the bogey must have seen them on its radar and quickly did a 180 and went back to Siberia. It was apparently a recon jet checking out why the activity at an air field that usually did not have jet fighters stationed on it.

Soon the two weeks were up and my

fun job was over and back I went to Elmendorf. My best duty doing the exercise was blowing that klaxon horn. The C-47 trip back was at night in bad weather. We went up or down suddenly with a jolt or on our sides at times. The crew chief started to crawl back to get parachutes, but then we all decided we would be better off staying with the plane then jumping out onto the cold tundra in the dark.

Two months later I flew five search missions in an Air Rescue Service B-17 when several planes went down in Alaska and ARS was shorthanded on Scanners, but that is another fun story.

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### **Airports at higher altitudes require a longer airstrip due to lower air density.**

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#### **I Heard You Were A Marine**

by John Lemandri

My first day as a State Department employee at the American Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar, I stopped by the nurse's office to introduce myself.

"I see you just arrived," she said.

"Yes," I replied, "and I was wondering if you had any of those silly rubber things just in case I should get romantically involved."

With a straight face she handed me a box of a thousand.

"But I'm only going to be on the island for a month," I exclaimed.

"Yeah, I know," she replied, "but I heard you were a Marine."

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### **The University of Alaska spans four time zones.**

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#### **Terror on the Cliff**

By Richard Kalla

The little island-country of Malta lies in the Mediterranean Sea, 50 miles south of Sicily. My family (wife Pat, Karen 14, Elissa 12 and 6-month old Kevin) and I arrived in the sleepy Maltese village of Valletta in 1983 to start an assignment at the American Embassy.

In the 1980s, Malta was a quiet and safe environment. We enjoyed the history and scenic beauty of the island as well as the Maltese people who we found to be friendly and interesting. In those years, Malta was a vacation spot for British tourists, lured there by cheap prices and an edict by their government that limited the amount of money they could legally take out of the country.

To further enjoy the splendor of Malta, our family and another Embassy employee whose daughter was friends with our girls, decided to walk the entire 85-mile perimeter of the island. To accomplish this circumnavigation, our only rule was that we would stay as close to the sea as possible. Every Sunday, we would decide how far we were going that day, park one car at the end and the other at the beginning, and set out on foot. Early on, that meant there were sidewalks for the girls to roller skate on, but as the terrain quickly became less and less populated, sidewalks gave way to rugged and rocky shores and at least one aromatic salt flat that produced much of the salt used in Malta.

One sunny Sunday, near the end of our circuitous journey, we set out on a particularly rough stretch. There were high cliffs with pounding surf far below and few trails through the boulder strewn, barren landscape. As I had since the sidewalks ended, I was carrying then 2-year old Kevin in a backpack when the trail we were walking split. One way went closest to the sea toward the towering cliffs. The other led away from the sea and the cliffs with the crashing waves. We had a choice: follow the seaside trail or go around further from the water. Telling myself that I was following our quest to always stay as close to the sea as possible, I opted for what appeared to be the nice wide seaside trail. Others, because the other fork looked easier, headed that way, expecting that the two trails would merge again after the cliffs.

At first, the trail was wide and scenic. Kevin was quietly asleep on my back and I enjoyed the view below as I

walked along. Imperceptibly at first, the trail which now cut into the cliff face began to narrow. I watched as the waves far below pounded and crashed onto the rocks causing spume to shoot high into the air. Distracted by the sight, I didn't notice that the path had narrowed to a point where it was now nearly impossible for me to turn around and go back with the heavy load counterbalanced on my back. Had I made the wrong choice, I wondered. Ahead, there was a short gap where most of the trail had been broken off, but it was an easy step over to the again wide path on the other side. Unable to force myself to attempt turning around on the narrow ledge, I chose to step over. It seemed the safer of the two options. Back on a safely wide trail again, I confidently resumed my walk. Just ahead, the ledge turned a corner. I couldn't see what was on the other side, but certainly this trail must lead somewhere. Otherwise why was it here? Surely, it wouldn't just end. I stepped around the corner, only to find that the path narrowed almost immediately. Once again, I was unable to turn around and afraid to go forward.

As I stood there paralyzed, hugging the cliff face with a now squirming two-year old on my back, I understood that pig-headedness and stupidity had brought me to this point. I clung as close to the cliff as possible, afraid to move for what seemed an eternity, berating myself that machismo had gotten me into a situation that could now cost me my life and, more importantly, the life of my son. I probably deserved the fate that beckoned me far below, but there was no way I was going to let my bad choice end Kevin's life. Somehow, painstakingly, I willed myself to inch backward, step by terror-filled step, all the while hugging tightly to the cliff, feeling Kevin on my back, and praying that my step would be true. Finally, the trail widened enough that I was able to turn around and head back to safety and the easy trail.

Kevin is now 32 years old and lives in Minneapolis, where there are no cliffs.

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## Everything weighs one percent less at the equator.

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### Entering the Foreign Service

By James F. Prosser

The spring issue of the **CANDOER News** contained Dick McCloughan's first chapter of his unique and exasperating experience of trying to enter the Foreign Service. No doubt we all have had variations of Dick's. I encourage others to send in theirs as well, here is mine.

In the first stages of the Korean War, I joined the U.S. Air Force in 1950, and after basic training was assigned to a troop carrier wing of the Oregon Air National Guard (OANG) in Portland, Oregon which eventually was moved to Japan.

I was trained as an airborne radar mechanic, but the OANG already had too many radar mechanics. One day my 1st sergeant called me in and said, "Prosser, we've got too many radar mechanics and are desperately in need of a couple of cryptographers in the base communications unit. You can type and I think you'll make a damn good cryptographer! Report to Sgt. Hemingway in base communications and he'll explain what it's all about and train you." Being a young A/3rd class, I had no idea of what he was talking about, but followed his order. Little did I realize it at the time, but that eventually was a major turning point in my life.

It turned out that I actually enjoyed the work, for in some respects, it was like working crossword puzzles, which I liked. Like many communications centers, the cryptographic operations were often overwhelming. That certainly was the case in Portland. But I became accustomed to it.

Then came the good news the troop carrier wing was being transferred to Japan. Great, I thought! Here I go! I really wanted to go overseas.

But the communications center commanding officer (CCCO) called me in to

say that while most of the others were going overseas, I was to remain in Portland for my services/experience in the crypto center were too valuable for me to be included in the move. I was very disappointed, but nevertheless did like my assignment in Portland. Eventually I was promoted to A/1st class. Before the CCCO departed for Japan, his replacement arrived and he told him "Don't ever approve any of Prosser's requests for overseas transfer! He's too valuable to the unit." Nuts. I was stuck until my four-year enlistment was completed in September 1954.

The new CCCO, trying to ameliorate me, said he would arrange for me to be sent to the Air Force cryptographic school at Scott AFB, Illinois for two weeks advanced training which might result in another promotion. While at Scott AFB I became acquainted with one of the instructors, T/Sgt. Larry Meyers.

One evening after class, T/Sgt. Meyers and I went out to get a bite to eat and I mentioned how disappointed I was at not being unable to get an overseas assignment. He suggested I contact the State Department and see if they need a cryptographer in any of their many Foreign Service posts. At that point I had never heard of the Foreign Service. Then he explained to me what it was and that he used to be in the Foreign Service as a diplomatic courier in Europe until the Korean War! Then he joined the U.S. Air Force! He gave me contact information for the State Department, and my path from thereafter was along the time lines that Dick McCloughan reported for himself. This resulted in another major turning point in my life.

Amazingly, T/Sgt. Meyers subsequently had a major turning point in his life as well. He left the USAF and entered a religious seminary, was eventually ordained a Catholic priest and is now a retired Marist father in upstate New York in his 90th year! How's that for multiple career changes; Foreign Service diplomatic courier, USAF instructor, priesthood!

In submission of my application for

employment by the Department of State, I had to have my fingerprints taken and included in the paperwork. I happen to be one of those rare individuals that does not have fingerprints on any of my 10 fingers! This caused the police official some problem, but I just told him to certify that I don't have any. Apparently this was acceptable by the Department of State for I heard nothing further about it.

The Department of State security investigator conducting background interviews of contacts he had to do in Green Bay chose the worst possible day for the task. It was mid-January 1955 and unbelievably cold, more than -20F. I really felt sorry for the guy, for he had flown from Washington, DC where the temperature was only at the freezing level. He gladly accepted my offer to drive him to all the contacts he had to make. I would remain in the car. When dropping him off at the airport later that day, he was so glad to get out of town!

About three months later, while working in a local paper mill, I began to wonder if I ever was going to be accepted into the Foreign Service. Then one day in April, I received a phone call from the famous Elsie Crim with the good news to report to Washington as soon as possible. I gave the required two week notice at my job and was happily on my way to a 41-year career in the Foreign Service!

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### **The letter J does not appear anywhere on the periodic table of the elements.**

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#### **Hiring on With State**

#### **Chapter II - First Experiences in Washington**

By Dick McCloughan

In early March of 1972 I flew from Los Angeles and arrived at Dulles early on a Thursday evening to begin my training on Monday. On Friday I was scheduled to be sworn in and visit a number of offices to fill out still more paperwork at State. At Dulles

I collected my bags and caught a cab for Washington. When I gave the driver the name of the hotel where I had reservations he turned around and asked if I was sure I wanted to stay there. Before I left California, State had sent a list of hotels and apartments they recommended. I wrote both Sherry and Michelle Towers, but neither could accommodate me for about a month. I called a hotel which appeared to have a good rate and decided to stay there. The cab driver explained that this hotel was not in the best area of D.C. and he would definitely not recommend it. I had no other place to stay and told him to go ahead.

After about a half hour's drive he pulled up in front of this less than new hotel. I registered and was given a room on an upper floor. One corner of the room's ceiling was sagging and looked as though it could collapse at any moment. The bed looked as though it was of WW II vintage and I discovered the mattress was of the same era. Nonetheless, I spent a not too comfortable night and the next morning with a street map of Washington given to me by my cousin, walked 10 or 12 blocks to State. I entered the building at the Virginia Ave. entrance, checked in with Security, and took a seat, while he called Personnel. There were three or four other guys of my age sitting there. We eventually introduced ourselves and discovered we were all newly hired communicators. After 15-20 minutes someone from Personnel collected us and escorted us back to her office. We waited for a few more minutes until the rest of the guys showed up. There were a total of seven in that class. As we talked, I learned two were assigned to Paris, one each to Abidjan, Bangkok, Hong Kong, La Paz, and then there was me, to Dacca.

In Personnel I was also told Dacca was a hardship assignment meaning I would receive an extra 25% in salary. Being a hardship tour, there was also an R&R if I opted for a two year tour. If I didn't take the R&R, the tour was 18 months. I asked where the R&R point was and when the woman said Hong Kong, I chose to make it

18 months. I'd been to Hong Kong in the Navy.

My classmates and I were given a number of forms and told to take them to a list of various offices. Before leaving Los Angeles and thinking I really should make a good impression, I purchased a new pair of shoes. Bad mistake. By noon with all the walking the hallways seeking this or that office, blisters were developing. Around noon I discovered the cafeteria, had lunch, and continued looking for different offices. I can honestly say I've never been so lost or so often in one building as I was that day. Around 4:30 I had seen all of the offices on my list and made my way wearily back to the decrepit hotel. I finally got my shoes off and yes, I had some good sized blisters on both feet.

Around 7:00 I ventured out to find a place to eat and fortunately discovered a small restaurant within a block of the hotel. I don't remember what I ate, but recall it was nothing like one of my mother's meals.

I spent a restless night on the aged mattress and was awakened Saturday morning around 7:00 a.m. by someone furiously pounding on the door. I got dressed, opened the door and a very large black woman announced she was from housekeeping and I had to vacate the room.

It was cold, being early March, and my feet were tender, but I decided I would trek out and go sight-seeing. I headed toward the mall and on the way got a cup of coffee to warm up at a small café on Virginia Ave. I walked to the Washington Monument and then made my way to the Lincoln Memorial. As I was walking up the steps at the Memorial I recognized one of the guys in my class I'd met the day before. We took in the sights and I told him where I was staying and was less than enthused with my accommodations. He said he was staying at the Michelle Towers and invited me to see his place. As we had a drink he could see I really wanted to move out of where I was. He graciously invited me to stay with him, split the rent, while I waited for my own place there. I think I nearly

dropped my beer, rushed out, got a cab, checked out of the dump I was in, and was back, with my luggage, on his doorstep within fifteen minutes.

Monday morning the class began orientation at FSI. Our instructor asked where we had been assigned. He got to me and when I said "Dacca" he exclaimed "Who did you tick off?" I didn't have a clue, but was learning Dacca wasn't going to be a great assignment.

For a week at FSI we attended lectures where we were indoctrinated with the workings of State. I, and my other colleagues, quickly learned that communicators at State were about on the same level as enlisted personnel in the military.

The following Monday we were back at Main State and began formal communications training. Once again when our instructors learned of my assignment they all said I must have done someone dirt. One of our three instructors had had a tour there a few years previously and said it was unquestionably the worst tour of his career. The instructors came to the conclusion the reason of assigning me to Dacca was undoubtedly because I'd had a tour in Viet Nam and was accustomed to privation.

One morning during my first or second week of communications training Eugene Lindburg, who was in charge of training, came back to my classroom and told me I had a call from the Senate and could take it in his office. I answered the phone and a secretary told me to hold for Senator Allott. Both my mother and uncle were good friends with Gordon Allott, who was the senior Senator from Colorado. He came on the phone and advised he had had a devil of a time tracking me down. Senator Allott said my uncle had told him I had hired on with State and he wanted to invite me to lunch at the Senate the next day. I turned to Lindy and asked if I could have a little longer lunch break the next day and explained I had been invited to the Senate. Of course he gave his O.K. and said to take as long as I wanted.

The next day around 1130 I went to the Diplomatic Entrance and was picked up Senator Allott's limo driven by his chauffeur.

At the Senate one of the Senator's aides met the car and I was escorted to his office. The Senator introduced me to his staff and then we went to the executive Senate dining room. I can't really remember what we had for lunch, but I do recall it beat out anything I'd had at State. During lunch several Senators stopped by our table and exchanged greetings with Senator Allott. He introduced me to all as being one of his constituents and was working for the State Dept. I remember a number of them wishing me "Good luck" and when I told them where I had been assigned, although few knew where Dacca was located.

Following lunch we returned to his office, had coffee, chatted for a few minutes, and I was then driven back to State. Naturally, Lindy, my instructors, and classmates had to know all about my lunch and I don't think much more training was undertaken that afternoon.

Needless to say, I was kind of handled with kid gloves during the rest of my training. Lindy said he couldn't recall another new hire being invited to the Senate for lunch.

Training went well and was basically a re-fresher course for me since I had done nearly the same type of work in the Navy.

Towards the end of training my fellow classmates began obtaining visas for the respective countries they had been assigned. However, I learned from the NEA desk officer the U.S. had not recognized the new government in Bangladesh and I would have to make a stopover in New Delhi in order to obtain one. The rest of my class were also making flight reservations to their posts, but when I went to Travel I was told they could get me as far as New Delhi, but weren't sure about flights to Dacca. Travel said they would issue me an open ticket to Dacca. I was then told to see the Travel Section in the Embassy in New Delhi in order to get to Dacca.

I was frequently wondering if hiring on

with State had been the smartest decision I had ever made. About a week before completing training I met the CPO I would be working for in Dacca who was passing through Washington on his way to Bangladesh. He seemed to be a nice guy and also had been in the Navy which gave us something in common.

(Getting to Dacca will be Chapter III).

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**For every extra kilogram carried on a space flight, 530 kg of excess fuel are needed at lift-off.**

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### **My Meeting with Ali**

By Steve Newberg

This morning I woke up to the sad news that one of America's greatest sports figures had died. Muhammad Ali was 74 years old. His death has a special significance for me. In 1995, while working for DS, I led a team of IT security analysts to conduct a series of audits of embassy and consulate IT systems. This particular trip took me to South Africa. The South African Embassy at that time was located in Cape Town (the embassy relocates between Pretoria and Cape Town).

The country was in the throes of political upheaval. Several prominent anti-apartheid activists had been killed and there was a great deal of unrest throughout the country. The day my team arrived we booked into a hotel across from a major bus station. As we checked in a riot erupted at the station and we were forced to remain in the hotel for the better part of the day. By late afternoon things had returned to normal in the city.

Several years before, in 1990, Nelson Mandela had been released after having served 27 years in prison. He was elected president of South Africa in 1994. Ali was visiting the country to meet with Mandela.

My team began our work and was informed that Ali would also visit the embassy to meet with the Ambassador and staff. My point of contact at the embassy was the Regional Security Officer (whose

name escapes me after all these years). He called me into his office and invited me and my team to meet with Ali when he visited.

We were all thrilled at the opportunity to meet this great American sports icon. We assumed we would be part of a large group of people at the gathering. At the appointed time four of us arrived in the RSO's office. Aside from two or three members of the RSO's staff no one else was there. A few moments later Ali, and several of his aides, walked in. From the moment I saw him I was shocked at his size. He appeared massive, both in height and width. To say I felt intimidated and insignificant standing next to this man is an understatement. He was introduced to and shook hands with each of us in turn. His demeanor was gentle but it was obvious from his movements that he was suffering from some form of nervous disorder, later to be identified as Parkinson's disease. He spoke very little other than when he greeted us. However, despite his trembling hands he proceeded to perform several acts of prestidigitation. When he concluded these sleights of hand he posed for pictures with each of us.

I can honestly say this truly intimate encounter was one of the most memorable moments of my career, to be in the presence of such "greatness". My only regret to this day is that the embassy staffer who took the photos never sent them to me. Nevertheless, the memory of that meeting is still with me. Muhammad Ali was not only a great boxer; he was also a great man. He was the greatest! May he rest in peace!

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**See you next quarter!**

**KEEP THE STORIES COMING!**

**Enjoy life, but be safe!**