

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 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1.

The **CANDOER** web site and **Newsletter** may be viewed at: 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

or to my snail-mail address:

Robert J. Catlin, Sr.

2670 Dakota Street

Bryans Road, MD 20616-3062

Tel: Cell -> (301) 535-9263

Home -> (301) 283-6549

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The **Newsletter** will be available in three formats: as a Web Page; as an Adobe PDF file; and 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.

Donkeys kill more people annually than plane crashes or shark attacks. (So, watch your Ass!)

Cat's Corner

Well fall has arrived in Southern Maryland. We had some record heat in July but overall

not a bad summer.

Health problems for both Nancy and I kept us from taking our normal summer vacation back in our home town of Erie, PA. We usually go the second week of July, but this year did not make the trip until the first week of August. We spent our 57th Anniversary with friends and family in Erie.

I got a chance to get in a lot of Large Mouth Bass fishing this spring, summer, and fall. I had some good fishing days and some bad, but regardless enjoyed my time on the Mattawoman Creek.

The one-liners you see in this issue were obtained from Barbara Haaf and are titled "Things you probably didn't know!"

Oak trees do not produce acorns until they are fifty (50) years of age or older.

Suva, Fiji 1979-81

By Glenn Jones



The Fijians are Melanesians whose ancestors must have been nearly dead when their raft arrived in the islands from Madagascar. Just take a look at a map! How do we know they came from the Mascarene group of islands? Even before DNA science was on the scene, it was known that their languages had common roots. The Fijians, not some Africans, were the inspiration for the Afro. No self-respecting African would be caught dead sporting one of those.

I noticed that many Fijians had a front tooth or two missing, both male and female. This was not the case with the other half of the population, the Indians who were descendants of British indentured servants, brought there to work the cane fields.

I had heard that Fijian men often got

into brawls after bouts of heavy drinking of the national beer, Fiji Bitter. I also heard that this was the reason that they were missing front teeth. This did not explain why the women also had front teeth missing, so I decided to ask my friend Mario, who hailed from the island of Rotuma.

He said, "The men lose their teeth in fist-fights, and the women lose their teeth because they open the beer bottles for the men with their teeth." Ouch!

No piece of paper can be folded in half more than seven times. Oh, go ahead . . . I'll wait . . .

The Tank

By Mike McCaffrey

The following occurred during our first Foreign Service assignment in Paris. The year was 1976. To be honest, I still shudder somewhat thinking of it even now, while sitting here this morning with my big mug of coffee . . .

The American Embassy in Paris is located right in the middle of that highly interesting city . . . "The City of Lights." Seems odd events, concerning myself, seem to happen when we were new to our assignments, Paris being no different.

We lived in one of two Embassy Housing areas, right along the River Seine. We could step out on our second floor balcony and watch the dinner boats go by at night, and see the Eiffel Tower . . . all aglow . . . in the background, very nice. Our apartment was also a fair distance from the Embassy, and one got to it either via bus/Metro/car. I began to feel taking the Metro (20 minute walk to get to it) was more of a hassle than I wanted to put up with, so I bought a sports car, very low to the ground, but "spiffy" (driving in Paris traffic is the stuff of perhaps many stories, but not now). I was pretty sure I could navigate the streets from the apartment to the Embassy . . . pretty sure." Thus I revved up my shaky confidence and got out there, surviving the harrowing trip to the

Embassy on my initial attempt.

Turns out I had to work a bit late that night and had to return to the apartment in the dark. Anyone who knows me knows that my sense of direction is about nil. I figured that if I got on the main drag, Avenue des Champs Elysees (don't try to pronounce), I'd be fine.

As I pulled out of the Embassy parking lot, I noticed a French traffic cop in my rear view mirror running behind me, intensely waving two of those flashlight things they use to direct traffic. I SHOULD have stopped right then and there, but was so unsure of how to get back to the apartment that (in my no sense of direction terror in the dark) I decided to just ignore him, the main drag was right in front of me. He kept running and waving, I kept going . . . but not for long! In France, Bastille Day is their "Fourth of July," and turns out that night was the BIG practice night, the monster parade, etc., being the next day (I was not aware). I nosed out on the main street, intending to take the right to lead me home. Whoops! A TANK . . . a VERY BIG TANK . . . was about to run right over me in that little sports car! Thank God he saw me and stopped! Those treads were right up to the window on the passenger side! And, as my very bad luck would have it (heart pounding out of my chest), the gendarme (French cop) caught up to me. Man, was he ticked! I rolled the window down and caught a LOUD stream of (I'm sure) invectives. Since I didn't speak French, I didn't understand the bulk of it, but knew the meaning full well. I tried explaining I was new to the country and just wanted to get back to the housing area. He caught my drift and patiently pointed to my near expiration from the tank next to the passenger door. At that time, someone came along, curious as to the commotion. That person spoke English, assured the cop I was very/very sorry, and gave me an alternate way back to the housing area, many streets removed from the practice parade this obviously dumb American had caused to stop for the moment.

I did manage to get back to the

apartment (via a few missteps . . . horrible sense of direction, plagues me to this day), but was too ashamed to tell anyone of this event. Thus, I'm telling all of YOU today . . . keep it our secret, OK? Au revoir.

The liquid inside young coconuts can be used as a substitute for Blood plasma.

The Melting Pot

By James Hardesty

The below story was sent to me by Dick Kalla. Dick said, "The story below was written by a good friend of mine who owns a bar and live music venue here in Bellingham. He entered it in a national contest and won Honorable Mention for his effort. The story is Fiction but based on conversations he's had with customers like the one in the story."

 "Is it okay to ask how you got those burns?" he asks as he places a pint in front of me. Hot dogs come to boil in a battered stock pot behind the bar, permeating the stale air with the odor of cooked meat.

He seems interested, but I know the type. If I told him the story, he'd go on about that one friend in middle school who was burned in an accident. The question always ends up being a vehicle for their stories, and that's fine.

He means well. Bartenders always do. They are better than shrinks; once they realize I'm not in the talking mood, they back off. There's a kindness in being left alone.

He looks like he wants to press the issue. It must be the start of his shift; not one noticeable beer stain and his hair is combed just so. This is likely his first conversation of the day. He stirs the pot. I wonder when it was last cleaned.

"It's fine, man," I start. "It happened in Iraq."

"I only ask because I have this friend ..." but I've stopped listening already. I know when to bob my head or change my expression.

I take a pull from the beer in front of

me, something fresh in my mouth to rinse away the vomit. The straw makes it easier, but I still dribble some down my chin. He's kind enough not to comment.

He's talking about another soldier.

"... lost his fingers, too."

I glance at my hands, my nubs and right thumb. Thank God for that thumb. I use both palms to bring the sweaty glass back to where my lips used to be.

"I bet you have a bunch of combat medals, don't you?" he says, like pendants can make it all worth it.

"A couple, yeah," I say. "I don't like to talk about it." A whiff of the electric burner brings bile to the back of my throat. I choke it down.

A lifetime ago, I stood, framed by the American Flag, while the President who sent me into battle told the television cameras my story before adorning me with the Medal of Honor. It's the only time I've worn it; a hero's trinket. It cost me my face, my hands. It cost the government \$29.98 and my pension. I cash the checks, but I don't talk about that day. The shrinks say it's unhealthy. I lost my trigger finger and can't tie knots. What the hell are they so worried about?

To tell it now, I'd have to mention the strangers lost as well as the friends who were saved. I'd have to see again the enraged eyes of the suicide bomber as I pushed him through an open doorway, away from my platoon and into the shortened lives of the parents and children who lived on the other side of it. I'd have to relive the shrapnel ripping my fingers from my outstretched hands and the fire that engulfed me. I'd have to face the accolades and thank yous and the whispers of "he's a hero."

I'd have to close my eyes while I described the smell of those people, torn to bits by nails and ball bearings, melded into the upholstery of their sofa by flames that sucked the breath from their lungs without allowing so much as a scream. The same fire that would blister my skin into this scarred mess.

I'd have to recall the view from my

back, lying in a dirty street as dust and smoke swirled from the doorway at my feet, the acrid electrical smell forever cemented in my psyche, the blood pooling from wounds I hadn't yet felt, and the pain I could not yet imagine. I'd choke on the heat of the words, gag on the memory.

Worse yet, I'd have to admit to this stranger, my bartender and midday savior, that I am drawn to The Melting Pot because the only culinary offerings are those boiled hot dogs and all I think of is that family when I smell the element of the burner, the churning water, and over-cooked meat in the worn aluminum pot. I don't want to think about it, but I have to. As long as I continue to remember them, the innocents who died because I saved my friends, they will retain a whisper of life. I owe them that.

His silence is palpable. I look up and find myself under careful and curious scrutiny as I snap out of my daydream. I'm sweating. His lips quiver but he's no longer producing sound. I may have spoken out loud. I do that sometimes. His gaze breaks from mine, diverting to the bubbling pot with horror. An errant strand of hair hangs across the deepening crease in his brow, his wet eyes regretting the question.

I lift the pint, directing the straw to my mouth with an awkward, searching tongue. It's nearly time to switch to bourbon, but I only drink beer in the afternoons. Standards, I guess. After carefully setting the empty glass on the damp coaster, I look at him, give my best version of a smile, and order another round.

The frosted glass feels good in my hands, soothing. The late-afternoon sun peeks through the dirty window, warming my back and highlighting the stagnant dust in the air. The Man in Black comes on the jukebox, a gospel number. I study the steam, the dust, the scent of this place, and for one fleeting moment, I can feel the tips of my fingers.

You burn more calories sleeping than you do watching television.

Humor

Received from Rob Robinson

A few years ago, my wife and I moved into a retirement development on Florida's southeast coast. We are living in the "Delray/Boca/Boynton Golf, Spa, Bath and Tennis Club on Lake Fake-a-Hachee". There are 3,000 lakes in Florida; only three are real.

Our biggest retirement concern was time management. What were we going to do all day? No longer. Let me assure you, passing the time is not a problem.

Our days are eaten up by simple, daily activities. Just getting out of our car takes 15 minutes. Trying to find where we parked takes 20 minutes. It takes a half-hour in the check-out line in Wal-Mart, and 1 hour to return the item the next day.

Let me take you through a typical day: We get up at 5:00 am, have a quick breakfast and join the early morning Walk-and-Fart Club. There are about 30 of us, and rain or shine, we walk around the streets, all talking at once. Every development has some late risers who stay in bed until 6:00 am. After a nimble walk, avoiding irate drivers out to make us road kill, we go back home, shower and change for the next activity.

My wife goes directly to the pool for her underwater Pilate's class, followed by gasping for breath and CPR. I put on my 'Ask me about my Grandchildren' T-shirt, my plaid mid-calf shorts, my white socks and sandals and go to the clubhouse lobby for a nice nap. Before we know it, it's time for lunch.

We go to Costco to partake of the many tasty samples dispensed by ladies in white hair nets. All free! After a filling lunch, if we don't have any doctor appointments, we might go to the flea market to see if any new white belts have come in or to buy a Rolex watch for \$2.00.

We're usually back home by 2:00 pm to get ready for dinner. People start lining up for the early bird about 3:00 pm, but we get there by 3:45 because we're late eaters.

The dinners are very popular because of the large portions they serve. We can take home enough food for the next day's lunch and dinner, including extra bread, crackers, packets of mustard, relish, ketchup and Splenda, along with mints.

At 5:30 pm we're home, ready to watch the 6 o'clock news. By 6:30 pm we're fast asleep. Then we get up and make five or six trips to the bathroom during the night, and it's time to get up and start a new day all over again.

Doctor-related activities eat up most of our retirement time. I enjoy reading old magazines in sub-zero temperatures in the waiting room, so I don't mind.

Calling for test results also helps the days fly by. It takes at least a half-hour just getting through the doctor's phone menu. Then there's the hold time until we're connected to the right party. Sometimes they forget we're holding, and the whole office goes off to lunch.

Should we find we still have time on our hands, volunteering provides a rewarding opportunity to help the less fortunate.

Florida has the largest concentration of seniors under five feet and they need our help. I myself am a volunteer for 'The Vertically Challenged Over 80.' I coach their basketball team, The Arthritic Avengers. The hoop is only 4-1/2 feet from the floor. You should see the look of confidence on their faces when they make a slam dunk.

Food shopping is a problem for short seniors, or 'bottom feeders' as we call them, because they can't reach the items on the upper shelves. There are many foods they've never tasted. After shopping, most seniors can't remember where they parked their cars and wander the parking lot for hours while their food defrosts.

Lastly, it's important to choose a development with an impressive name. Italian names are very popular in Florida. They convey world travelers, uppity sophistication and wealth. Where would you rather live: Murray's Condos or the Lakes of Venice? There's no difference -- they're both owned by Murray, who happens to be a cheap bastard.

I hope this material has been of help to you future retirees. If I can be of any further assistance, please look me up when you're in Florida. I live in the Leaning Condos of Pisa in Boynton Beach.

Humor

Actual Australian Court Docket – Case of a Pregnant Lady

A lady about 8 months pregnant got on a bus. She noticed the man opposite her was smiling at her. She immediately moved to another seat. This time the smile turned into a grin, so she moved again. The man seemed more amused. When on the fourth move, the man burst out laughing, she complained to the driver and he had the man arrested.

The case came up in court.

The judge asked the man (about 20 years old) what he had to say for himself.

The man replied, "Well your Honour, it was like this: when the lady got on the bus, I couldn't help but notice her condition. She sat down under a sign that said, 'The Double Mint Twins are coming' and I grinned. Then she moved and sat under a sign that said, 'Logan's Liniment will reduce the swelling,' and I had to smile. Then she placed herself under a deodorant sign that said, 'William's Big Stick Did the Trick,' and I could hardly contain myself. But, Your Honour, when she moved the fourth time and sat under a sign that said, 'Goodyear Rubber could have prevented this accident!' ... I just lost it."

'CASE DISMISSED!!'

See you next quarter!

KEEP THE STORIES COMING!

Enjoy life, but be safe!