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Summer Camp and Bill Shatner

By Fred Bild

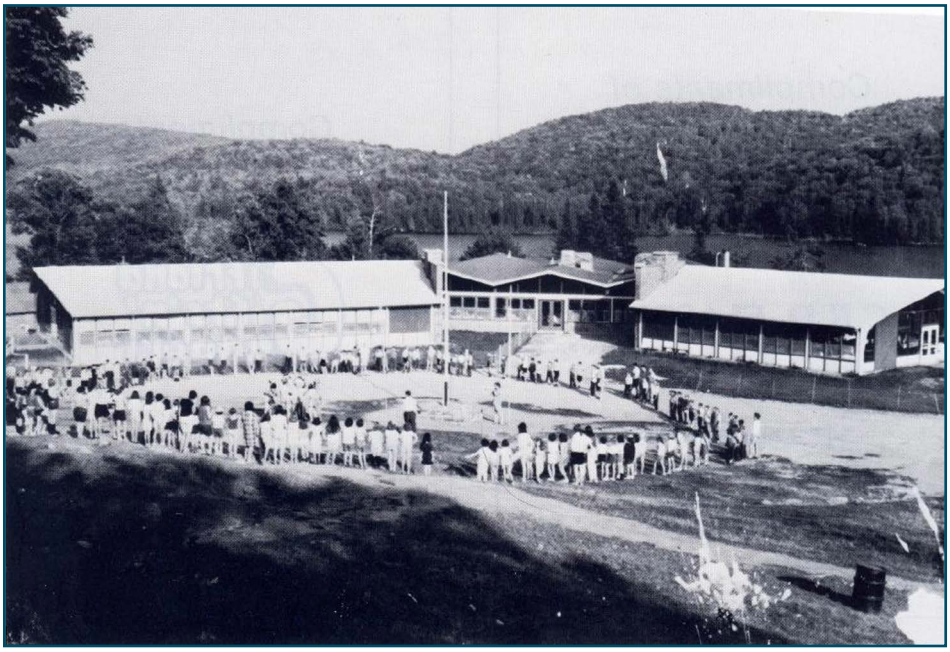

Photo Courtesy of the B'nai Brith Camp facebook page

An undated (but fairly old) photo of Camp B'nai Brith, in the Laurentians north of Montreal.

On August 2, 2025, the Toronto Globe and Mail published some of William Shatner's memories of counselling unruly boys at a summer camp in the Laurentians. Telling them ghost stories was his most effective way of enforcing some order. The text below by Fred Bild offers a camper's perspective, giving Mr. Shatner credit for more than he knows. Here is a link to the Globe and Mail article: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/personal-finance/retirement/article-william-shatner-summer-camp-ghost-stories-laurentians/?login=true.

Before my mother, my younger brother and I left Brussels, I had already made up my mind. As we were going to Montreal, where we were told everybody spoke French, I was determined that I would continue my education in French. It was only a few days after my arrival in Montreal in May, 1948, at the age of 12, that I learned that I would not be able to go to school in French. As a Jew, albeit a francophone, I would be obliged to go to a Protestant school, in English! I must confess that it crossed my mind, briefly, that under the circumstances it might be to my advantage to request baptism into

Roman Catholicism. The rhythms and traditions of the Catholic Church were familiar to me because I survived the German occupation of Belgium in the care of Catholics, both French and Flemish speaking. Protestantism was a complete mystery to me; for all I knew they lit black candles.

When my mother noticed my dismay, she came up remarkably quickly with the idea that I might spend some of the summer at a Jewish summer camp in the Laurentians. This solution surprised me at first because there was no question but that the camp would be in English! My mother reassured me that this was probably a very good solution because, come September, I would have no choice but to go to Grade Seven in English. These rather hesitant reassurances did not actually prepare me for my first meeting with Bill Shatner.

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I have never forgotten those days long ago now, and I look back on them with great pleasure. I have often thought that I would like to meet him and be able to thank him for the effective way he helped me to acquire my "fourth language" (after German, French and Flemish)!

He was the very first person to greet me when I arrived at Camp B'nai Brith. He had been assigned to me because it was known that I was a newly arrived francophone refugee. He tried to apologize for his less than perfect French. He promised me that even if I couldn't rely entirely on his translation, I would soon not need it. Furthermore, he reassured me that "all your new friends here will help you." And that's exactly what happened.

My experience from then on was one of being entirely immersed in English, and of having learned the rules of a new language without any effort! Bill Shatner turned out to be a very attentive teacher. I benefitted from his attention and all the times he would very gently correct me. That first summer I was lucky to spend six whole weeks at the camp. There was a second summer, in 1949, when I returned to Camp B'nai Brith, and Bill gave me a role in a play he'd just written.

That first time, I wasn't overly impressed by the atmosphere at the camp, partly because in my young life so far, I had learned to resent institutional life and being bossed around too much. Obviously, the second time, a year later, I felt entirely at home. I was delighted when I found out that Bill Shatner would be my counsellor again. That feeling of delight was something I shared with all the other campers!

There was one convention at the camp that I could not fathom. It turned out that at all Jewish summer camps in Canada, on Saturdays, the counsellors all dressed in white, from head to toe. The reason for my surprise was that the only other occasion on which I had witnessed many young men entirely dressed in white was in the days immediately following the Liberation of Belgium in September 1944. Dressing in white after the liberation was a way of demonstrating that they had been active in the resistance against the German occupiers. White was chosen to contrast with the black shirt uniforms worn by collaborators throughout the time of the occupation. That first Saturday I was overcome with imagining that suddenly these former resisters against the Nazis had come to Canada for a convention!

The most indelible result of my meeting with Bill Shatner and the other campers was that, after only six weeks during my first stay in 1948, I was able to return to Montreal and start back to school in Grade 7, in English, and manage to keep up with all the speaking, reading and writing that were necessary.

I have never forgotten those days long ago now, and I look back on them with great pleasure. I have often thought that I would like to meet him and be able to thank him for the effective way he helped me to acquire my "fourth language" (after German, French and Flemish)! ■

Fred Bild enjoyed more than three decades in the Canadian foreign service, capping his career as Assistant Deputy Minister for Political and Security Affairs and as Ambassador to China. Fred and Eva are now residing happily in Montreal.

Cette histoire est tirée du livre de Roger Turenne intitulé : *Dans la cours des Grands*
Le parcours audacieux d'un Franco-Manitobain

Félix

Le travail et la vie quotidienne à Stockholm étaient beaucoup plus faciles sur tous les plans qu'à Kinshasa, sauf sur un point : nous n'avions plus notre domestique, Félix. Ce dernier avait rendu notre séjour à Kinshasa tout à fait tolérable. Loyal et digne de confiance, d'humeur toujours positive, débrouillard et excellent cuisinier, il était pratiquement devenu un membre de la famille, à tel point que nous n'avions pas hésité à lui confier notre fille Christine (2 ans), même pour quelques jours. Mon épouse Pat jouissait d'une liberté dont ne disposaient pas la plupart des mères expatriées.

À Stockholm, cependant, nous nous sommes vite rendu compte de la grande difficulté de trouver des adolescents suédois qui souhaitaient assurer la garde d'enfants. Les responsabilités sociales de la vie diplomatique nous imposaient donc une recherche constante de gardiens ou gardiennes pour Christine. Il y avait aussi les dîners chez nous, mais sans l'apport de notre cuisinier.

Félix aurait bien voulu nous accompagner, mais j'avais cru la chose impossible. Une fois sur place à Stockholm, cependant, l'idée me parut moins farfelue. Notre résidence était très grande, et il y avait de quoi aménager un appartement privé à l'écart du reste de la maison. Félix pourrait y être logé et nourri gratuitement. Pour le gouvernement suédois, il serait considéré comme membre de notre famille diplomatique, et son salaire serait exempt d'impôt.

J'avais également une allocation pour frais de représentation, assez généreuse, pour tenir compte des prix très élevés de la restauration à Stockholm. J'ai alors fait la proposition suivante à Ottawa. Au lieu de faire de la représentation dans des lieux publics, nous allions tout faire à la maison, avec Félix comme cuisinier et serveur, ce dont il avait l'habitude. Je proposais d'attribuer la moitié de mon allocation de présentation au salaire de Félix. Ottawa a accepté la proposition. L'inimaginable devenait soudainement possible.

Il faut ajouter que Félix avait une épouse à Kinshasa, était père de sept enfants, et grand-père d'un. Félix était orphelin de père, et selon la tradition de son peuple, son oncle était responsable de son avenir. Un jour, à l'âge de 17 ans, ce dernier lui annonce que Félix allait se marier la semaine suivante. C'est donc le jour de ses noces que Félix rencontra son épouse pour la première fois. J'étais un peu troublé à l'idée d'être complice de l'abandon d'une famille, mais Félix insista sur le fait qu'il serait encore mieux en mesure de subvenir à leurs besoins en leur transmettant la grande part de son salaire gagné en Suède.

Nous avions fait savoir à Félix qu'il n'avait pas à se procurer de vêtements chauds, car on lui fournirait tout ce dont il avait besoin à son arrivée à Stockholm. C'est à la mi-janvier qu'il effectua le voyage. Ce jour-là, malheureusement, Stockholm était assailli par une violente tempête de neige accompagnée d'un froid extrême. À cause de la neige, l'avion n'a pas pu s'approcher de la passerelle et les passagers ont dû traverser le tarmac à pied en pleine tempête pour se rendre au terminus. Le pauvre Félix, vêtu que d'un T-shirt, fut complètement traumatisé.

Le lendemain matin, toujours grelottant, et regardant le paysage enneigé par la fenêtre, il nous annonce qu'il voulait immédiatement rentrer à Kinshasa, car il ne voyait pas comment il pourrait survivre dans de telles conditions. Il eut peine à nous croire quand nous lui avons expliqué que dans quelques mois la neige allait fondre et qu'il y aurait des jours d'été aussi chauds qu'à Kinshasa. Je lui ai aussi rappelé les termes de son contrat, à savoir qu'il serait à notre service pour une année, après quoi il pourrait rentrer chez lui à nos frais. S'il décidait de renouveler son contrat, nous lui paierions un voyage à Kinshasa pour visiter sa famille.

Il lui aura fallu une semaine pour trouver le courage de sortir de la maison. Au demeurant, il n'a pas trouvé ça si mal et les choses sont rentrées dans l'ordre. Pat lui a fait visiter Stockholm. L'été est arrivé comme prévu, et il nous a accompagnés dans de petits voyages à la découverte de la Suède. Pat lui a ouvert un compte de banque, et s'est assurée qu'il enverrait chaque mois une partie importante de son salaire à sa famille. Il s'est fait des amis parmi la communauté d'expatriés africains à Stockholm. Après une année, il a choisi de renouveler son contrat et est parti pour des vacances à Kinshasa dans sa famille.

Arrivé à l'aéroport de Kinshasa, les agents d'immigration ne pouvaient croire que ce Zaïrois, n'ayant aucune connexion avec le parti unique du pays, puisse être à l'emploi d'un diplomate canadien en Suède. Il a été arrêté comme espion et jeté immédiatement en prison. Il fut privé de nourriture et battu régulièrement pour lui faire avouer leur prétendue vérité.

Après deux semaines, ses geôliers ont finalement accepté ses plaidoyers de communiquer avec l'ambassade du Canada pour confirmer la véracité de ses propos. Il fut ensuite libéré. Il alla tout droit à la banque pour y retirer l'argent qu'il y avait transféré en prévision de l'achat de cadeaux pour sa famille. La banque l'a alors informé qu'il n'y avait plus d'argent dans son compte parce qu'elle avait tout soutiré en frais de service. On lui a annoncé, en fait, que c'était lui qui devait de l'argent à la banque. Il n'a donc pu passer que quelques jours dans sa famille, ne pouvant leur offrir quoi que ce soit, et ce, dans un état physique lamentable comme conséquence des sévices subis en prison.

Au retour, Félix avait voulu faire l'expérience d'une autre ville africaine; or il avait prévu de faire escale à Dakar, sauf qu'il n'avait plus un sou pour se payer nourriture et hébergement dans cette ville, et ne savait pas que son billet aurait pu être modifié pour rentrer directement à Stockholm. À l'aéroport de Dakar, il fit ce qu'il n'aurait jamais osé faire à Kinshasa : expliquer sa situation à un policier et lui demander de l'aide. À son grand étonnement, et à la mienne aussi d'ailleurs, le policier lui a trouvé de l'hébergement dans un modeste hôtel et lui a payé le taxi pour s'y rendre. Il lui a également conseillé de se rendre à l'ambassade du Zaïre à Dakar dès que possible le lendemain matin, afin d'obtenir de l'assistance.

À l'ambassade, un autre miracle se produisit. L'agent consulaire venait de la même tribu et était très heureux de converser en kikongo. Il lui donna de l'argent pour se nourrir et se loger pour une deuxième nuit. Ce fut un choc pour nous de le revoir à Stockholm tellement il avait perdu de poids. Il jura de ne plus jamais remettre les pieds dans son foutu pays.

Félix est donc demeuré avec nous durant tout notre séjour à Stockholm. Il voulait également nous accompagner à notre retour au Canada, mais il n'en était pas question. Plusieurs autres diplomates voulaient l'embaucher à notre départ (avec Félix, nous avions fait beaucoup de jaloux dans la communauté diplomatique), mais Félix n'était pas intéressé. S'il ne pouvait plus être à notre service, il voulait plutôt obtenir un « vrai » emploi, peut-être dans la restauration où il pourrait exercer ses talents de cuisinier.

Or il y avait problème. Félix, étant considéré comme membre de notre famille diplomatique, devait quitter le pays en même temps que nous. Pour demeurer au pays et obtenir un emploi, il devait être accepté comme immigrant. Or nul ne pouvait faire une demande d'immigration à partir de la Suède. J'ai donc fait appel à la Convention de Vienne sur les relations diplomatiques.

J'ai fait savoir au chef de protocole des Affaires étrangères que Félix ferait une demande d'immigration rédigée dans l'enceinte de l'ambassade du Canada, et que celle-ci, selon la Convention de Vienne, devait être considérée comme territoire canadien. Félix ferait donc sa demande à partir de l'étranger. C'est avec un sourire narquois que le chef de protocole accepta mon interprétation de la Convention. Félix a reçu ses papiers d'immigrants de justesse, à moins de 24 heures de notre départ.

Pat avait mis beaucoup de temps durant nos dernières semaines pour l'aider à se trouver un emploi, avec succès. Il fut embauché comme cuisinier du restaurant de l'hôtel Amaranten (trois étoiles) près du centre-ville de Stockholm. En moins de deux ans, il en était devenu chef cuisinier.

Lorsqu'est venu le temps de renouveler son passeport zaïrois, l'ambassade du Zaïre à Stockholm n'avait plus pignon sur rue. Le chaos et la corruption à Kinshasa avaient fait en sorte que l'ambassade ne recevait plus de fonds pour son fonctionnement. Elle avait donc cessé de payer ses factures et se finançait par de la contrebande, en revendant de l'alcool et d'autres biens achetés hors taxes. Or si la Convention de Vienne interdisait au gouvernement suédois de prendre les mesures habituelles pour forcer l'ambassade à payer ses factures, elle n'interdisait pas les coupures de services. Ainsi, l'ambassade du Zaïre s'est vue couper l'électricité, l'eau, et le téléphone. Elle a donc dû fermer ses portes et gérer les relations avec la Suède à partir de Londres.

Ses demandes répétées de renouvellement de passeport à partir de Londres étant restées sans réponse, Félix fit une demande pour obtenir la citoyenneté suédoise. Après les procédures et les délais habituels, elle fut acceptée et son passeport suédois est devenu objet de fierté et l'une de ses plus précieuses possessions.

J'ai perdu contact avec lui pendant une trentaine d'années, jusqu'au jour où ma conjointe, Vivianne (Pat étant décédée en 2013), l'a retrouvé dans Facebook. J'ai alors appris qu'il avait fondé une toute nouvelle famille en Suède et qu'ils semblaient tous heureux et prospères.

Après la sortie de Dans la cour des grands, j'ai voulu en envoyer copie à Félix. En me renseignant sur son adresse postale, j'ai appris qu'il était décédé durant la pandémie. ■

Roger Turenne a servi en poste à Paris, Kinshasa et Stockholm. De retour au Canada, il a été conseiller auprès de deux premiers ministres manitobains sur les questions francophones.

Helping the US end a Hostage Crisis, Fifty Years Ago

By Ray Fortin

This is a story by Ray Fortin, a tech at the Canadian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Ray drafted the story for his personal memoirs, and added details that were in a reporting message on the hostage crisis sent to Ottawa by our High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, David Stansfield, on 7 August, 1975.

On August 4, 1975, a well-armed contingent of the Japanese Red Army (JRA), took 50 hostages in the consular offices of the US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In a siege that lasted more than 80 hours, David Stansfield, the Canadian High Commissioner in KL and I helped the US, in a dangerous operation that ended peacefully. I'm telling this little-known story now and in memory of High Commissioner Stansfield, who passed away in 2014.

David Stansfield, a career diplomat who had served in Ottawa, Moscow, Paris, Belgrade, Athens, New York City, Canberra, Berlin, and Cairo, was in his last posting in Kuala Lumpur, with accreditation to Burma. However, a few weeks before this incident, the Department had informed him that his accreditation to Burma was being relocated to Bangkok. Upset at this, he decided to cut short his posting to return to Ottawa to retire. Regardless, he volunteered to risk his life to always accompany me. As he said to me, "if I have to ask a staff member to go into a dangerous situation I prefer, if possible, to show myself willing to take the same risk". This only shows how a great person he was and how fortunate I was to serve under such an honorable man.

I was a "tech" serving Canadian missions in the region, an occupation that no longer exists in the way it did 50 years ago. Although I travelled frequently among Hong Kong, Bangkok, Saigon, Singapore and Jakarta, I was in Kuala Lumpur on the day the siege began. After receiving the news of the hostage situation in the consular section of the US Embassy, only a few floors above the Canadian embassy, which occupied the 5th floor of the same building, High Commissioner Stansfield ordered the Canadian embassy evacuated.

Within hours, the US Embassy contacted the High Commissioner

Photo: External Affairs, c. 1970

David Stansfield, Canadian High Commissioner to Malaysia

to ask if they could use our consular offices as a subsidiary command and communications center. The JRA had taken control of the ninth floor

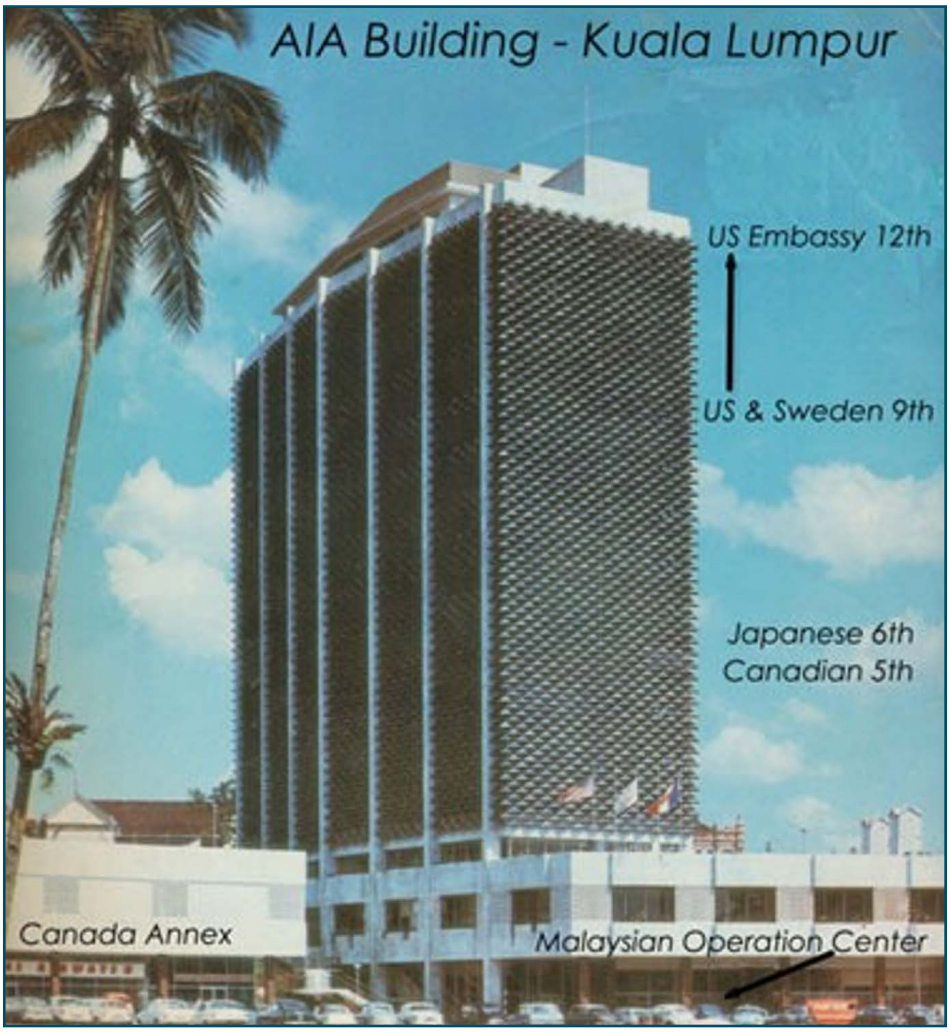


Photo: Ray Fortin

The American International Insurance building in Kuala Lumpur, with notations as to the location of the main offices

Photo from Ray Fortin

JRA member leaving the AIA building with the hostages and boarding a bus to the airport. The JRA member has a grenade in his left hand. At the time the photo was taken, Ray Fortin was 15 feet away, having vacated the building and returned to street level.

of the building, but the US still had control of the floors above that, which housed their secure communications with Washington. The US believed with good reason that access might be cut off at any moment, and they needed to have a continuous channel of communications to Washington for as long as possible. The JRA were thought to have enough plastic explosives to destroy the ninth floor of the building and do extensive damage to adjacent floors, and they were threatening to 'blow up the building' as a suicide gesture if there were any delays in meeting their demands. They wanted the release of JRA leaders in Japanese jails, and they threatened a massacre of the hostages if this did not happen.

The Canadian consular offices seemed ideal as an alternative site for communications. These offices were in the "concourse" section of the building, almost a separate wing, which incidentally commanded an excellent view of the main entrance and foyer. High Commissioner Stansfield quickly agreed with the US request. As a first step, we got through police and army lines on the ground floor of the building and found the freight elevator, which, oddly enough, remained in service throughout the crisis. We immediately proceeded to the 12th floor, where we met the US chargé. He explained that they needed a "hot line" established to Washington, one that could be kept alive continuously, plus other telephone lines for the operation if necessary. He would be grateful for my help since their communications technician was out of the country. In the meantime, Canadian High Commission offices would serve as the sole "unclassified" link with Washington.

However, before proceeding, the US Chargé asked us to sign a release form, relieving the US of responsibility and acknowledging that we had been informed of the danger and that our contribution was voluntary. We duly signed the form. Although he was under no obligation to risk his own life in a perilous situation, especially so close to the end of his assignment in Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Stansfield accompanied me as we embarked on our mission. We were the only ones involved on the Canadian side in the 80-hour operation that followed.

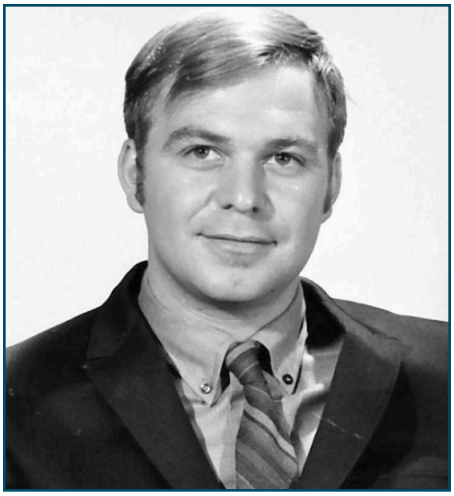
Mr. Stansfield and I then proceeded down to the Canadian concourse offices, using the same freight elevator that we had taken to reach the 12th floor. The elevator was still not under JRA control, but as it crept its way downwards, it stopped and reversed itself and climbed back to the 9th floor, where it stopped again. We were all convinced that it was now being controlled by the 9th floor, where the JRA and the hostages were located. When it stopped, our US escort threw himself against the doors to prevent them from opening. After a few moments, it re-started downwards to our great relief, reaching the ground floor without incident. It turned out that a US Marine who was operating the elevator manually had pressed the wrong button and then corrected himself at an unfortunate moment. That it had reversed itself at the 9th floor was only fortuitous.

Back at the concourse offices, we quickly established a long-distance connection with Washington. This connection remained open without a break for sixty hours. Mr. Stansfield, in a later report to Ottawa, noted that "to relieve any anxiety there may be in Ottawa, I hasten to note that the Americans have undertaken

to cover the resulting long-distance bill." The US operations team then used their seemingly unlimited supply of two-way or "walkie-talkie" radios to establish communications with the upper floors of the building and with another US liaison team in the Malaysian operations centre.

It was soon evident, however, that our alternative communications centre could not function effectively unless it could be reached by ordinary in-coming telephone, and this could only be done if we connected our switchboard on the 5th floor to our concourse offices. To get to our offices on the fifth floor, we had to take the freight elevator to the 4th floor, cross in front of the other elevators to the staircases, walk up to the 5th floor, and then go through the complex routine of keys and combination locks that constituted security in those days. I proceeded to the 5th floor, with Mr. Stansfield and a US military escort.

A couple of hours later, the Malaysians Telecom, at US request, attached a line on the lower floors of the building to the telephone line on the 9th floor, which they believed the JRA would use to call accomplices or colleagues at the airport. They ran a wire from this "tap" into our consular offices and hooked up a telephone handset to allow US operations officers to monitor all calls. The only problem was that it didn't work. I thought that it might be possible to monitor that line with a different kind of tapping equipment, but I was surprised to learn that neither the Malaysians Telecom nor the US embassy had this item. I had the equipment, but it was on the 5th floor, in the Canadian High Commission. So, I had to make the same journey again, up the freight elevator to the 4th floor, to the 5th floor by way of a staircase, and through the secure doors. I rigged up my own "tap", and the US kept watch, with a Japanese-speaking US officer within reach. Hours passed with no telephone calls. Then, early the next morning, we intercepted a fifteen-minute conversation between the JRA and their colleagues at the airport. At a crucial moment, the US knew the intentions of the JRA in departing the building.



Official photo of Ray Fortin, c. 1974.

The US then decided to evacuate the upper floors of the building to our consular offices on the concourse. The US believed that explosives had been placed all over the 9th floor, set to blow when the JRA left. Early the following morning, the JRA demanded that the entire building be evacuated. We concurred in the demand. Mr. Stansfield and I were the last to leave, after I had removed all evidence of my telephone tap.

After a couple of hours of nerve-wracking waiting, the JRA left the building for the airport, taking 15 hostages with them. Local police and army squads proceeded to the ninth floor to bring out the remaining 30 plus hostages who had been told to wait there in the US consular office. We then re-occupied our offices in the concourse and terminated the communications with Washington, which had been the only communications centre for the US for a couple of hours. We then went back upstairs and re-occupied the Canadian High Commission on the 5th floor. Our job was done.

Late that day, on August 7, after 80 hours of high suspense, the crisis ended peacefully. The 15 remaining hostages were released at the airport, and the JRA members, along with 5 JRA prisoners held by the Japanese (and flown by Japan to Kuala Lumpur), plus two Malaysians government officials and two Japanese officials who acted as exchange hostages, were flown to Libya on a Japan Air Lines DC-8 aircraft. This type of aircraft was specifically requested by the JRA, since it had a "jump seat" in the cockpit which an armed JRA member could use during the flight to watch the pilot.

During the duration of this crisis High Commissioner Stansfield and I ate "C" rations (supplied by the Americans) and slept when we could on the carpeted floor of an adjacent office. I never had occasion to discuss this issue with him again. He left the mission to retire within weeks of returning to Ottawa, while I remained in KL for another year.

A day after the crisis was over, a US embassy officer called on me and asked whether we had received a note "from Kissinger". I asked Mr. Stansfield to check with Ottawa, and sure enough, we got a reply that a note of thanks had gone from Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, to Allan MacEachen, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs. They were sending a copy of the note to us "by bag" which arrived by bag 15 days later. ■

Ray Fortin graduated from the Radio College of Canada in Toronto in 1965 in Electronic Engineering Technology and joined Northern Telephone in New Liskeard. After one year in Val d'Or, he was transferred to the Ramore Radar base, which was part of the Pinetree Line. After joining External Affairs in 1969, he was posted in 1970 to the International Control Commission in Saigon until 1971, and then to Kuala Lumpur. He was seconded to the British Commonwealth Office in Hanslope Park, UK, for three years, after which he returned to Ottawa. Ray retired in 2005 after 36 exciting years of service.

Photo: External Affairs, c. 1974

Setting sail on the lower deck

By David Brown

I joined the Foreign Service in the class of June 1973, the last intake before the opening of the Pearson Building. My first assignment was in the Daly Building at the corner of Rideau and Sussex. Originally a department store, it had large offices with windows that opened in the summer, vintage office furniture and linoleum floors. One particularly muggy summer day, a thunderstorm produced golf ball-sized hailstones that got in and bounced around before melting under foot.

We knew we were moving to the Pearson Building, but when the move came at the end of the summer, it was a change, even a shock. For the first time in the modern Department, everyone was in the same building, meeting in the elevators and hallways as well as in the sunny cafeteria. But the building also brought home the organizational pecking order, with senior management literally on top and the lesser orders in the outlying towers. Underlying this mustering of the troops, however, was a sense of unease at being cut loose from Parliament Hill and the power brokers downtown, not to mention easy access to the restaurants where they met. It was the beginning of a long-running existential angst.

But the glass was more than half full. Canada was riding the bow wave of Pearsonian diplomacy and fully stepping up to our place in the World. Our Official Development Assistance was at a historic high-water mark – no difficulty getting on to the Security Council then. And the World was coming to Ottawa, in the form of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, with a full turnout of national leaders and the Queen to set the tone. The Pearson Building, with its distinctive setting and modern balance of form and up-to-date function, was the capstone, a statement that Canada had arrived and was ready to move forward.

I missed the official opening of the Building by the Queen. It was just ahead of the start of the CHOGM. Like many of my fellow FS-1(D)s, I had been assigned to be the liaison officer for one of the delegations, in my case Botswana, led by the storied Sir Seretse Khama. We were spending our time downtown, in the delegation offices in the Chateau Laurier and the meeting rooms at the Government Conference Centre, but the bright modern new building on Sussex, in its imposing setting on the way to receptions at Government House, was an important backdrop, a quiet reminder that Canada was taking its place and mattered.

In the meantime, my new, utilitarian, office in the Pearson Building had no windows, metal furniture and industrial carpeting. I felt my own small sense of loss. But this was more than surpassed by a sense of optimism: I had my place on board the great new flagship of Canadian diplomacy, and we were about to set sail. ■

David Brown went on a posting to Canberra but on his return was seconded to the central agencies and their downtown homes and a little to his regret never got back to the foreign service or the Pearson Building. He took early retirement and recycled into the academic World – he is currently Adjunct Professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa.

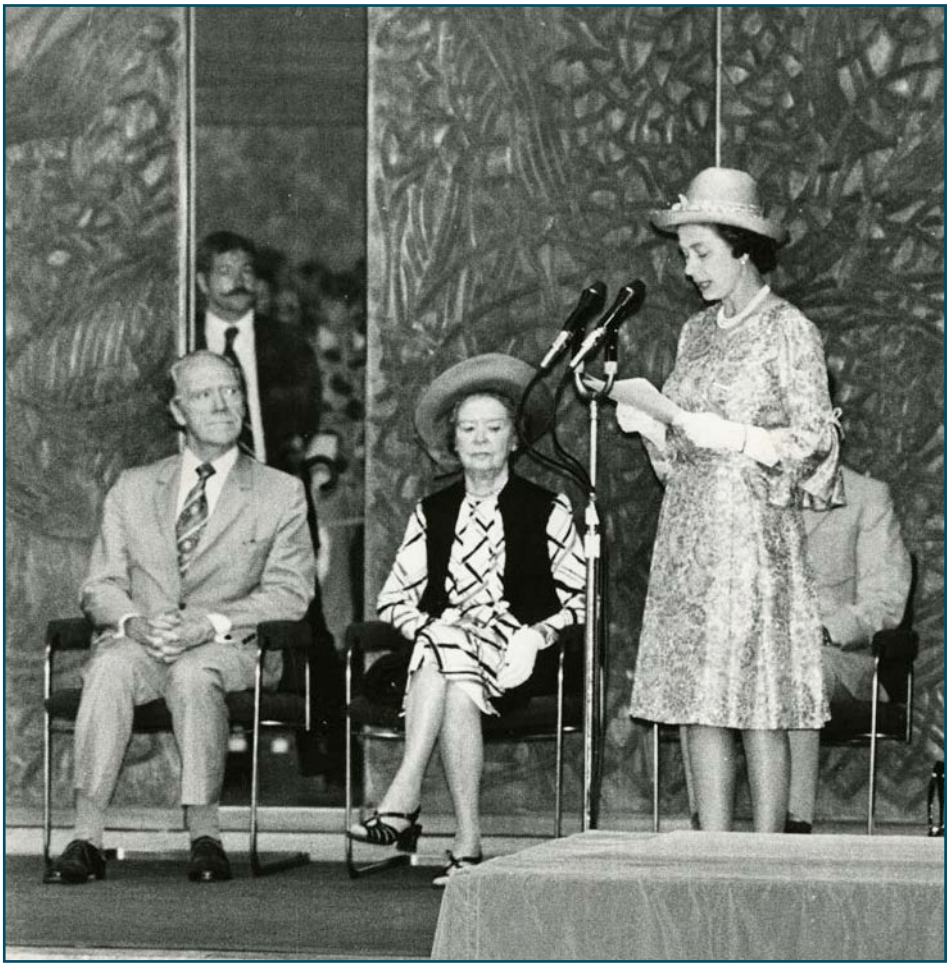


Photo: National Archives of Canada

Queen Elizabeth opens the Pearson Building at its front doors, 1 August, 1973. The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp, is seated at the left.

Keep Canada's foreign aid program, but with some major changes

By Paul Hitschfeld

Canada's foreign aid program does not have the profile and reputation it once had. The latest federal budget reduced the aid allocation, the first time (in dollar terms) since its inception. Why is aid perceived as less important now, and what can we do with a smaller aid program?

Following WW2, Canada entered a period of peace and growing prosperity. While there were continuing conflicts in many parts of the world – the new Cold War, the wars of liberation against colonialism, and the arrival on the scene of dozens of new countries – we were spared most of these tribulations and concentrated on our own internal growth. With increasing prosperity in Canada, it was relatively easy to secure public support for "sharing the wealth" through a new federal program, international assistance, generally called "foreign aid." Aid was motivated principally by two forces: helping newly emerging nations, and getting ourselves better known internationally. With our high profile in the Commonwealth and later in the Francophonie, we had a ready-made list of target countries to work with in all parts of the world. Canada, previously perceived as hidden away in northern North America, emerged in the '60s and '70s on the world scene with a good reputation, despite our limited trading relations with most of the world.

Aid between countries was an unknown concept until the Marshall Plan was launched in the late 1940s. As a new instrument, aid did not have a tradition or a recipe book. Along with other donors, we winged it. It was only decades later that the Development Aid Committee of the OECD spelled out what was defined as aid, ie, what was "ODA-able" (Official Development Assistance). Generosity and ambition were the principles which guided the Canadian government in its aid choices, while playing by the rules, with strong support from prime ministers, from Diefenbaker through to Mulroney, under whom aid reached its peak in the mid-1980s with the aid budget reaching one half of one percent of our national wealth (GDP).

At that point the ratio started to fall steadily; now our aid program is in the +/- 0.30s percent range of GDP. Later, Chrétien, then Harper, did not show the same appreciation of aid. In fact, Harper shut down CIDA in 2013, which had been set up by Pierre Trudeau in 1968. Justin Trudeau, for his part, did not show much interest, and the aid program became a minor activity in his government. The decline continues, as Mr. Carney's priorities are understandably focused on threats we did not have to face before. The aid envelope was reduced in the latest budget, and Canada's Crown Corporation aid agency, the IDRC, has also seen a budget cut. Reaction has been muted. Most Canadians share the view that we have some major issues to tackle, and these do not include prosperity in far-off countries. In a switch of self-appreciation, instead of seeing ourselves as powerful and generous, we see ourselves now as fragile and more obliged to look after ourselves first.

Some aid specialists have complained about the budget reduction, mostly saying that, despite our problems, we are still a rich country, and it is our ethical, social and political obligation to continue helping the less-well off. But I sense that this view is not resonating with the current government, and even less so with the opposition parties.

Ironically, it should be added that aid, with its strict OECD/DAC rules, is also not as appreciated by the recipient countries as it used to be a generation ago. Most of them are two or three generations beyond the decolonization period, and their leaders are now more savvy about how the world works, and where money comes from, mostly from increased trade, or from non-DAC donors, such as China, which is now very much more present in most recipient countries than Canada is. As a foreign policy tool, aid is now a boutique program, no longer a source of Canadian flag-waving pride.

As for the recipient countries, many of them have forgotten our generosity of years past, leading some of them not voting for Canada to get a seat on the UN Security Council. The word "aid" itself, for some leaders, is becoming demeaning, perceived as a sort of neo-colonial construct. As the finance minister of Ethiopia said to me one day "Poverty is not a disease, and even if it were, Canada is not a doctor."

Maybe aid's decrease in profile and funding should have been predicted. Foreign aid seemed like the right thing to do. But it was unnatural in a way, not a traditional or time-honoured way for rich countries to work with poor ones. While we state in every forum that Canadian aid is open-minded, non-political, provides grants only (not loans), is not tied to other considerations, is free of ideology, etc., we cannot say, after 70 years, that it continues to be an effective development or foreign policy instrument. For many developing countries, aid was the only link we had with them in the second half of the 20th century, so they did not complain about its shortcomings. But we in Canada are having trouble getting beyond the donor/recipient relationship, which is perceived increasingly as demeaning.

The time has come to completely overhaul this program. To insist that the aid budget be restored, or

even increased, but with no change in purpose or impact, will get no traction. Instead, aid must be reconfigured and restructured to get better results, even with a reduced budget. The aid program, currently a one-way transfer channel, could be refreshed by becoming a two-way tool for our improved relations with some developing countries, based not on pity or generosity, but on mutual benefits and interests.

Running an aid program is expensive. In order to reduce fraud to a minimum, many safety mechanisms are in place to see that aid projects are well planned and delivered. These mechanisms take time, and are very bureaucratic, so that a request from a developing country for aid in a given sector may take years to be planned and delivered. Another major cost is the number of aid officers, consultants and technical experts. And our physical distance from many developing countries implies a large travel budget. Aid is top-heavy and top-down, and projects must meet "Canadian values", even if those are foreign to the recipient. We used to say: "The recipient country is in the driver's seat!", but we never achieved that reality. It's hard to give away money, then continue to be accountable for its use. Trust is not the aid manager's forte. It's control.

One way to relieve ourselves of the high cost of control and trust, is to increasingly make payments to trustworthy partners, for instance, large UN institutions, which have a larger field staff and who can report how Canada's money has been spent. The only loss here is Canadian visibility in developing countries, one of our original objectives. But this is still a one-way paradigm. We could look at other ways to engage with developing countries, mostly to improve trade with them. This would also complement Mr. Carney's commitment to broaden our trade links with other countries. Allowing our aid program to be linked with our international trade ambitions would go a long way in developing new markets, for Canada and for developing countries. Our image as a traditional aid donor, with its paternalistic overtones, would shift to building commercial links, healthier for both parties, and more self-sustaining. The OECD/DAC rules may not support the use of aid money for this innovation, but the time has come to unlink ourselves from the 20th century aid rules and traditions.

A major rethink of aid is required now. We did what we thought was the right thing for poor and emerging countries in the second half of the 20th century. The time has come and to look afresh at what we want, and what we can do, to foster stronger relations with developing countries. The ball is in our court to think of these issues. If we don't, then Canada will be tagged as an old-fashioned donor, increasingly irrelevant on the world scene. Generosity is good for the soul, but, at this time, good trade deals are easier to understand and to operationalize. ■

Paul Hitschfeld worked 34 years in CIDA, and was involved with NGOs for 10 years, including chairman of the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada. He also gave courses for six years on international development issues at Carleton and McGill universities.

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Film as a Foreign Policy Medium

By Gary J. Smith

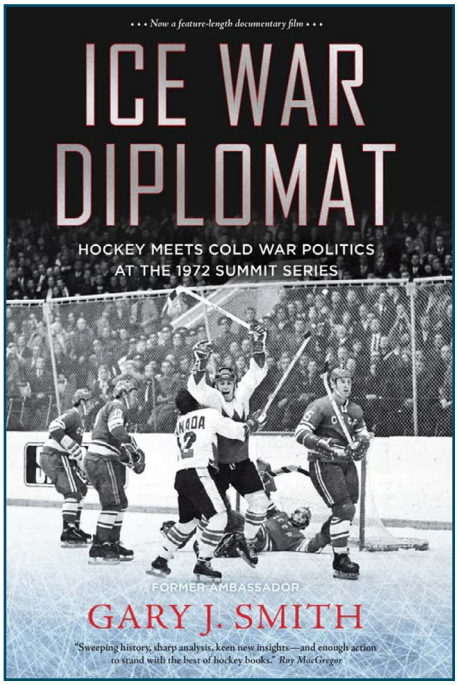
There had been a fresh snowfall at the renowned British Columbia ski resort during the night of December 02, 2022. As dawn broke, we were greeted with the spectacle of a Canadian winter wonderland. Meandering through the lineup to board the gondola to the top of Whistler Mountain with me were the heads of two Canadian documentary film companies: Peter Raymont of White Pine Pictures of Toronto and Robbie Hart of Adobe Productions International of Montreal.

At the summit's Roundhouse Lodge, we transferred to the unnerving "Peak 2 Peak" gondola- one of the world's highest gondola points above ground (436 metres/1,430 feet) and with the record for the longest free span lift between towers. The eleven-minute journey took us to Blackcomb Rendezvous Lodge on Whistler's sister mountain. Peter's last-minute smooth talking secured us a much sought-after luncheon table at Christine's, with its spectacular alpine views.

Our purpose was two fold.

First, to lift a celebratory glass for the red-carpet participation in the Whistler Film Festival of our feature length documentary film: "*Ice-Breaker: The 72' Summit Series*". The film was well received by the audience, the media and critics. It told the story of the fabled eight-game hockey series at the height of the Cold War in 1972 between the best players of Canada and the Soviet Union. It mesmerized Canadians and brought the country to a literal halt. CBC Sports in Canada's sesquicentennial year of 2017 would call the series and Paul Henderson's epic last minute winning goal: "the greatest moment, bar none, in 150 years of Canadian sports history".

The three of us had worked well together ever since White Pine



Pictures had purchased the film rights to my book "*Ice War Diplomat: Hockey Meets Cold War Politics at the 1972 Summit Series*". Robbie – the film director- and I had gone to Moscow together in September 2021, just months before Russia invaded Ukraine, to do filming with several players from the Soviet hockey team, at locations like Red Square, the Metropole hotel (where some of the 2750 rowdy Canadian fans had been lodged), plus the Luzhniki Palace of Sports, the location of the four USSR home games.

I had been pleased that the largely unknown diplomatic back story of the series was depicted manifestly in the film, starting with the seminal role of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He had observed, in creating Hockey Canada, that sport was part of culture; that culture was part of national identity and that national identity was an essential part of national unity. Internationally, Pierre Trudeau wanted to create "breathing space" from the USA (sound familiar?); sought to bring China in from the diplomatic cold, and, in pursuing the policy of "détente" to reduce the risk of war, became the first serving Canadian Prime Minister to visit the USSR in a groundbreaking twelve-day visit. When the hockey series began in Montreal on September 02, 1972, the Prime Minister dropped the puck for the ceremonial face-off.

The Department of External Affairs in Ottawa, with the active participation of Under Secretary Ed Ritchie (a former Oxford Blues hockey player himself), played an extensive role in preparations, while the front-line organization fell to the Canadian

Photo courtesy of Gary J. Smith

Prime Minister Trudeau, with Gary Smith (left), 1972.

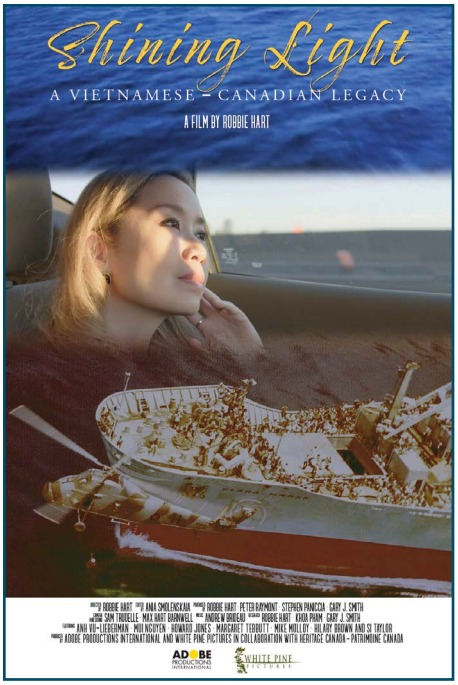
Poster courtesy of Robbie Hart and Eric Serre

Embassy in Moscow, under the experienced direction of Ambassador Robert A.D. Ford. Heritage Canada provided funding for the film from its Celebration and Commemoration Fund, while Super Channel, a private broadcaster, also stepped up with financing. In terms of audience reach, New York-based Cargo Film and Releasing acquired distribution rights. "Ice-Breaker" continues to be shown on cruise lines such as Cunard and Royal Caribbean, as well as on WestJet flights. It was also televised on SportsNet.

In support of showcasing Canadian diplomacy in action, the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) sponsored a special screening of the film at the ByTowne Cinema in Ottawa in February, 2023. The event was also a fundraiser for the AmbCanada-PAFSO Deborah Chatsis Indigenous Scholarship in International Affairs at Carleton University and drew an audience of close to five hundred persons.

The second purpose of the mountain luncheon was to talk about "what's next": were there other historical anniversaries we could focus upon? Robbie mentioned the 1976 Montreal Summer Olympics and the unprecedented provincial election of the Parti Quebecois the same year. Putting on my diplomatic glasses, I noted the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War would occur on April, 30, 2025, and Canada had played a significant role in various ways which had largely been forgotten at home and abroad.

Asked to expound, it was easy to start with Canada's diplomatic and military participation (with India and Poland) in the International Commission on Supervision and Control (ICSC) which saw the end of French control of Indo-China. We cut our Southeast Asian teeth in 1954 with that eighteen-year involvement. Then Canada undertook another six-month tour of duty (with Poland, Hungary and Indonesia) as the



US ended its direct combat role. A third of all Canadian diplomats at the time served either in Hanoi, Saigon, Vientiane or Phenom Phen. Their experiences are well documented in interviews compiled by Arthur Blanchette in 2001 in his book "Canadian Peacekeepers in Indochina 1954-1973: Recollections", and in the 2023 digital book, "Supervising a Peace That Never Was: Recollections of Canadian Diplomatic Staff in Indochina, 1954-1973" edited by Nick Etheridge, Phil Calvert and Helen Lansdowne.

Adding to the list, I mentioned other items of potential interest.

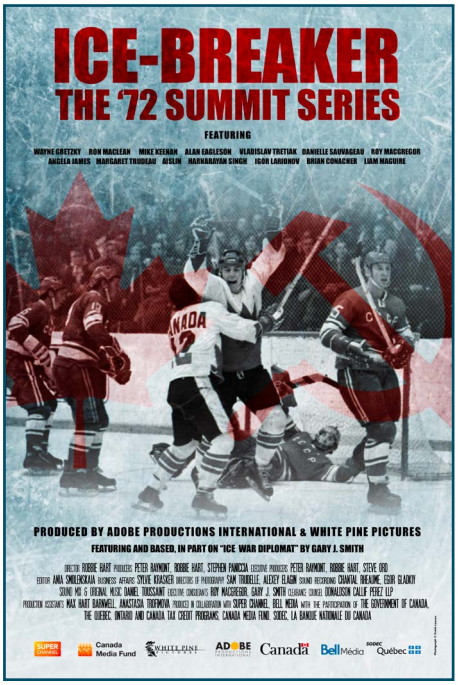
- Two Canadian diplomats were involved in separate secret missions to Hanoi to determine if it was possible to initiate peace talks between North Vietnam and the USA: Blair Seaborne on five occasions in 1964 and 1965 and then Chester Ronning twice in 1966.
- Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, at Temple University in Pennsylvania in April 1965, publicly called for a US bombing pause. The next day at Camp David, US President Lyndon B. Johnson grabbed him by the lapels, admonishing Pearson's remarks as akin to coming into Johnson's house and pissing on his rug.
- Then there were the thirty thousand or so Canadians who signed up to fight with the US military. One hundred and thirty-three died while doing so, including the son of the then Canadian Chief of Defence Staff. They are recognized on the "North Wall Memorial" in Windsor, Ontario.
- Our 2.5 billion dollars in sales as part of the Defence Production Sharing Agreement with the US took us down some contentious paths involving napalm and agent orange. For decades the town of Elmira, Ontario, did not have its own clean water supply, due to alleged chemical pollution from the Canadian subsidiary of a US company. The Canadian Government announced in 2007 that it would pay $20,000 per person in a one-time, tax free ex-gratia payment to those persons with an illness associated with exposure to Agent Orange when the defoliant was tested at Camp Gagetown military base in New Brunswick in 1966 and 1967 (over 5,000 persons received that payment).
- Vietnam was the first "television war". Embedded journalists and nightly news reports brought the gruesome aspects of war directly into our living rooms and campus dorms. Body bags and body counts, carpet bombing, defoliants, napalm, collateral damage, VC and gooks were but a few of the military words and expressions to join our lexicon. The images were sheering.
- In the nineteen-sixties, young Americans began appearing in droves; desperate to avoid the military draft or to desert the units they already had joined. Few if any questions were asked at the Canadian border as thousands became tens of thousands. Many were exceptionally talented and expanded Canada's arts and

academic communities. Protests for and against the war sprung up across Canada, as they had in the United States.

- The Canadian Embassy closed its doors the week before Saigon fell and drew criticism, justified or not, for loading official vehicles into a Hercules but leaving local staff behind. Lost in that controversy, was the exceptional story of the many orphans who were assembled in Vietnam and then subsequently escorted back to Canada by spouses of immigration and other officers at the Canadian Commission in Hong Kong as part of the "Baby Lift". This episode was well described by Elizabeth Heatherington in the RHOMA book "Not Mentioned in Dispatches".

Peter and Robbie agreed there was more than enough substantive material for a feature documentary or television series. They asked me to write a twelve page "pitch document". Heritage Canada came on board with some financing, but we struggled to find a broadcaster and money to film on site in Vietnam. One network said it was not interested in a survey narrative. There would be no Ken Burns-style Canadian story; at least not by us.

So we fell back on the idea of creating a shorter human-interest story. Fortunately, Robbie's Montreal network led us to Madame Thi Mui Nguyen Bui and her daughter Chieu-Anh. Mui – nine months pregnant- her husband and two year old son were on the roof of the CIA building waiting for helicopter evacuation as part of "Operation Frequent Wind". The last helicopter was driven off by ground fire, leaving them stranded. Fleeing to the port, they boarded the last South Vietnamese freighter to depart with more than 3600 other refugees. As its engine quit and the ship was flooding, Anh was born on the crowed deck at sea. All were rescued by a Danish freighter that reversed course to assist. But Mui and Anh needed emergency



Poster courtesy of Adobe Productions International and White Pine Pictures.

medical assistance, and two British RAF helicopters were dispatched from Hong Kong to winch them off the deck. They landed in a British military hospital in Hong Kong and were then sent to a local refugee camp. Enter 26 year-old Canadian immigration officer, Margaret Tebbutt, who selected them for entry to Canada.

This was a powerful story in its own right. But for the film, forty-nine years later, we reunited in Montreal, Mui, Anh, Margaret and an RAF crewman. We also added, via former Canadian Ambassador Mike Molloy, the immigration policy context and how in 1979 and 1980 Canada welcomed over 60,000 "boat people". This was achieved by means of a precedent-setting public-private partnership program - an innovation that was copied by other countries and repeated later for Syrian refugees. The Nansen Refugee Award, issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was presented to the "people of Canada" in 1982- the first time it was not awarded to an individual.

At my suggestion, we added the international political context, including a clip of an interview with James "Si" Taylor, former Under Secretary, who had served with the ICSC in Hanoi in 1955 and had met the now legendary North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh.

The resultant short documentary, "*Shining Light: A Vietnamese Canadian Legacy*," premiered in June of last year in Montreal and Ottawa (the latter at the ByTowne Cinema to an audience of about 450, again sponsored by PAFSO). Toronto followed in October, and there will be a screening in Vancouver on Sunday, March 08, at the Rio Theatre. It was part of a Berlin festival and the Lunenburg Doc Fest in September and will be shown at the Hudson, Quebec, festival in late April and the Stratford Film Festival later this year. A streaming service is being sought.

Following each screening we have had a panel discussion. It invariably leads to one of Canada's big, controversial policy issues: immigrants, refugees and migrant workers. How many, if any, there should be. Shining Light makes it clear that the Vietnamese example has been a net positive for Canada in social and economic terms.

Is there another lesson here? It is said attention spans and reading are down, while technology usage and text messaging are up vastly- Tik Tok being a leading example. Tweets are timely, and a superb quote can be repeated and have an impact. But film, with its big picture visuals, accompanying music and length, can leave a lasting impression and deliver a powerful message of its own. If it has a dash of entertainment, so much the better.

Film, in my experience, is an effective foreign policy medium in reaching the general public.

Gary J. Smith had a thirty- plus year career as a foreign service officer and ambassador specializing in European, Asian and International Security issues. He is an acclaimed published author and now documentary film co-producer and story consultant.

Des Casques Bleus aux Casques Verts : Un nouveau rôle pour les FAC au Canada et dans le monde

Par Dr. Rémy-Claude Beaulieu

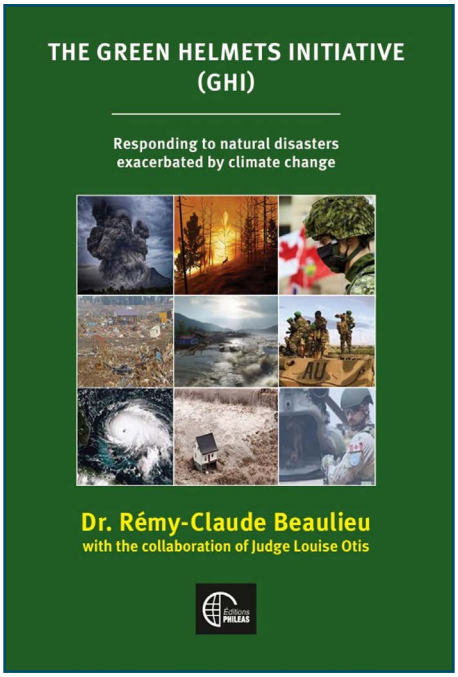
Le concept de « Casques verts » a été évoqué pour la première fois au Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies en 2011. À l'époque, la proposition visait à élargir le mandat des Casques bleus afin d'y inclure les conflits générés par le changement climatique. Cette proposition a été rejetée par la Russie et la Chine, et a donc été abandonnée. Par la suite, l'Union africaine a lancé une initiative de maintien de la paix en Somalie, dont les forces ont été désignées comme « Casques verts » afin de les distinguer des Casques bleus des Nations Unies. La proposition actuelle est très différente à bien des égards.

Au cours des trente dernières années, dans le contexte du changement climatique, de nombreux pays ainsi que la communauté internationale ont investi des milliards pour protéger les territoires à risque de catastrophes naturelles. Cependant, ces catastrophes ne cessent de croître en nombre, en ampleur et en imprévisibilité, ce qui nécessite des investissements non seulement en matière de protection et de prévention, mais aussi en interventions d'urgence pour aider les pays à sauver des vies, des communautés et leurs infrastructures.

Ainsi, l'Initiative des Casques verts (ICV) vise à fournir des réponses rapides, audacieuses et bien organisées à ces catastrophes. L'initiative propose d'élargir le rôle traditionnel des forces armées, généralement associé à la protection des citoyens et des territoires dans le cadre de conflits armés, pour inclure la défense et la protection des citoyens et des territoires dans le contexte de catastrophes naturelles aggravées par le changement climatique. L'ICV intègre l'Unité internationale de médiation climatique (UIMC) lancée par la juge Louise Otis, bien que les deux initiatives puissent être promues et mises en œuvre séparément.

Plusieurs textes ont été rédigés au cours des récentes années pour expliciter comment l'ICV pourrait prendre forme. Le texte intitulé « L'Initiative des Casques verts : Document conceptuel » a été publié en 2021 à la suite de graves inondations dans la région de la capitale nationale du Canada. Il présente les arguments en faveur des Casques verts et propose d'utiliser les Forces armées canadiennes (FAC) pour aider les communautés locales confrontées à de telles catastrophes grâce à des forces bien équipées et formées. Il suggère également, compte tenu de l'expérience des militaires canadiens dans le cadre d'interventions de maintien de la paix à l'échelle internationale, que les Casques verts canadiens apportent leur aide à d'autres pays dans le monde. Cet article initial a été reformulé et révisé à plusieurs reprises pour aboutir à sa version actuelle.

À la suite de la conférence de La Haye, l'auteur a publié une brève note technique intitulée « Comment l'Initiative des Casques verts (ICV) pourrait devenir un mouvement », qui aborde la question de la faisabilité de la mise en œuvre de l'ICV dans le contexte international actuel. Lors de la conférence, certains participants ont fait valoir – et l'auteur a acquiescé – que le retrait des États-Unis des institutions multilatérales ne faciliterait pas la création d'une nouvelle organisation onusienne. Dans ce contexte, l'auteur



a proposé que l'ICV devienne un mouvement volontaire, fondé sur des accords mutuels entre pays et leurs forces armées pour collaborer dans la réponse aux catastrophes naturelles. Ces accords de collaboration, appelés Accords de secours en cas de catastrophe (ASC), pourraient être conclus sur une base bilatérale ou multilatérale, à l'échelle régionale ou internationale.

Le Premier ministre du Canada, Mark Carney, a annoncé le 9 juin 2025 que le gouvernement fédéral entendait atteindre l'objectif de l'OTAN de 2 % du PIB consacré aux dépenses de défense au cours de l'exercice budgétaire en cours. L'article intitulé « Comment l'Initiative des Casques verts pourrait aider le Canada à atteindre l'objectif de l'OTAN ? » propose des pistes pour utiliser judicieusement les sommes considérables que cela représenterait. L'article soutient que la population canadienne pourrait être plus favorable à une augmentation des dépenses de défense si celle-ci bénéficiait directement aux citoyens et à leurs communautés en cas de catastrophes naturelles telles que les inondations et les feux de forêt.

Le document, intitulé « L'Initiative des Casques verts : Comment

fonctionneraient les centres régionaux ? », a été rédigé à la suite de la publication du rapport final de la conférence du Centre d'excellence pour la coopération civil-militaire de l'OTAN à La Haye. En résumant la présentation de l'ICV, l'équipe organisatrice indique que « l'ICV propose des centres régionaux d'expertise pour une réponse rapide, la formation et le déploiement technologique, garantissant que les capacités logistiques, d'ingénierie et de déploiement rapide des militaires soient mises à profit pour l'aide humanitaire tout en respectant la gouvernance locale et les principes humanitaires ». La note technique vise à approfondir l'analyse et les détails concernant ces « centres régionaux ».

Conclusion : Pourquoi lancer l'Initiative des Casques verts maintenant ?

Le lecteur pourrait se demander : pourquoi lancer l'Initiative des Casques verts maintenant ? Bien qu'il existe des facteurs limitants, plusieurs considérations majeures justifient la proposition de lancer cette initiative à ce moment précis.

- Premièrement, à l'échelle internationale, tous les acteurs s'accordent à dire que le monde est confronté à des défis historiques, avec des coûts humains et matériels considérables.
- Deuxièmement, l'OTAN a développé une nouvelle expertise à travers le Centre euro-atlantique de coordination des interventions en cas de catastrophe (EADRCC), qui répond désormais à un nombre croissant de demandes d'assistance de la part de ses membres et partenaires.
- Troisièmement, un nouveau leader a récemment été élu au Canada. Selon son livre récemment publié, intitulé Value(s): Building a Better World for All, il plaide pour la construction de communautés plus sûres, équitables et résilientes, comme le propose l'Initiative des Casques verts.
- Quatrièmement, les pays européens et le Canada ont récemment convenu d'accroître leur capacité commune en matière de défense et de forces armées, en réponse aux nouvelles incertitudes nord-atlantiques. Ces augmentations pourraient inclure des interventions militaires face aux catastrophes naturelles aggravées par le changement climatique.
- Cinquièmement, le vide créé par le retrait des États-Unis de l'aide internationale et de nombreuses institutions multilatérales pourrait offrir à d'autres puissances mondiales, comme la Chine, l'opportunité de combler ce manque. Le contentieux entre ces deux superpuissances pourrait créer une situation où aucune ne voudrait être perçue comme celle qui s'oppose à une initiative visant à aider les pays les plus à risque et les plus vulnérables face aux catastrophes naturelles dans le contexte du changement climatique. ■

Dr. Rémy-Claude Beaulieu a travaillé pendant 27 ans à l'Agence canadienne de développement international (1985–2012). Par la suite, il a poursuivi sa carrière au sein d'organisations internationales.

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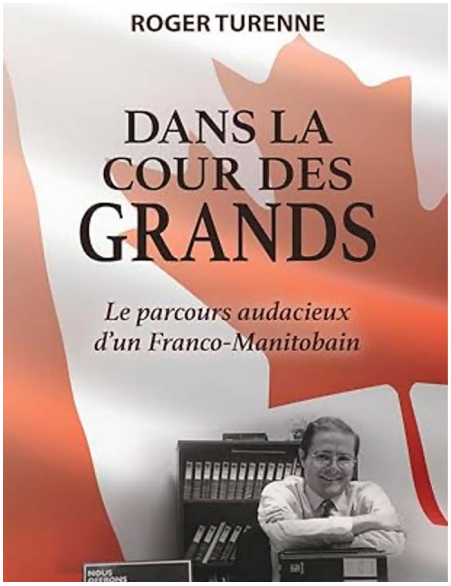
Books in Revue/ Critiques de livres

Roger Turenne, *Dans la cour des grands* Le parcours audacieux d'un Franco-Manitobain, Les éditions du blé

St-Boniface, 2025, 510 pp.

Par Gérald Cossette



Avis à ceux et celles qui pensent encore que le fait français hors Québec est du folklore. Les chapitres du bouquin de Turenne sur les relations entre Francophones et Anglophones au Manitoba, devraient vous convaincre, encore une fois, que le réel dépasse souvent la fiction. Et, pour les amateurs de questions fédérale-provinciales, ils/elles y trouveront également leur compte. Ces chapitres sont riches en enseignement de faits et de situations dont nous entendons peu ou pas parler dans l'Est du Canada, submergé ad nauseam par les discussions sur les conséquences – bonnes ou mauvaises, d'un Québec indépendant. Dans un chapitre intitulé : Le Québec et moi : « Cé compliqué », l'analyse de l'auteur nous semble juste lorsqu'il dit : « L'un des aspects du fait que les nationalistes québécois se soient détournés des francophones hors Québec est que nous avons rapidement cessé d'exister dans leur psyché collective. Notre dynamisme ne correspond pas à la vision de dead duck des médias québécois, majoritairement nationalistes. Ou encore : « Les minorités ont souvent été utilisées comme des pions dans la partie d'échecs fédéraliste-nationaliste. » La participation de Turenne aux sommets de l'ACCT ne fait que confirmer cette compréhension de l'ignorance et du peu d'intérêt des « élites québécoises » pour les Francophones hors Québec.

Pour le reste, le livre se divise en trois parties très inégales, représentant le parcours personnel et professionnel de Turenne. D'entrée de jeu, les premiers chapitres à propos de sa famille fournissent des détails croustillants sur la vie franco-manitobaine dont le lecteur voudrait en savoir davantage. Qu'en est-il de l'équilibre démographique et religieux entre Francophones et Anglophones dans le Manitoba des premières années? équilibre qui disparaît, peu après l'accession de celui-ci au statut de province, avec l'arrivée de colons Anglo-protestants de l'Ontario? ou encore du rôle joué par le Klu Klux Kan? Bien que le bouquin n'ait pas pour but d'analyser, ou même de décrire, ces phénomènes, le lecteur reste sur son appétit.

La seconde partie du livre, la plus considérable, traite des affectations de l'auteur à l'UNESCO, au Zaïre et en Suède. C'est la plus pertinente pour des agents du services extérieur qui voudraient comparer leurs expériences personnelles à celles de l'auteur. Les agentes qui ont servi en Afrique y reconnaîtront des situations similaires à celles qu'ils/elles ont vécues, peu importe l'époque de leur passage sur le continent. Certains des vignettes, contrairement à ce qu'on lit habituellement dans les récits de voyage ou les autobiographies, racontent comment les activités de Turenne ont été modifiées suite au changement de politique(s) du gouvernement canadien envers les pays de la région. De plus, il ne craint pas de rendre hommage à son domestique Félix, plus un partenaire de la famille qu'un subalterne dans cette grande aventure africaine.

Que ce soit au sein du ministère des Affaires extérieures ou de la bureaucratie manitobaine, Turenne ne ménage pas sa critique de certains choix politiques, et n'hésite pas à reconnaître ce qu'il considère comme des erreurs commises par ses interlocuteurs ou par lui-même. Il est évident, à la lecture du livre, que l'auteur n'a jamais caché ses opinions lorsqu'il croyait que ses interlocuteurs/trices faisaient fausse route.

Les histoires qu'il raconte ne tentent pas de cacher le manque de préparation, pour ne pas dire le manque de sérieux, du ministère et du gouvernement, pour certains enjeux pour lesquels des deniers publics sont toujours versés. Lorsque Turenne, sans qualification particulière, dit avoir dû remplacer deux personnes en même temps à l'UNESCO, il ne fait qu'en témoigner. Lorsque sa demande de congé sans solde d'une année est refusée, cela s'explique par le manque de planification du ministère, qui refuse toute demande de congé, parce ce dernier se retrouve à court de personnel. De même en est-il du chapitre consacré à Allan Gotlieb, ce « monstre sacré » du ministère qui fustigeait tout le personnel. Ce qu'implique l'auteur en ce qui touche la toxicité du milieu de travail ressemble beaucoup à ce qui m'a été conté par certaines personnes lorsque Gotlieb était ambassadeur à Washington.

Le travail à Ottawa est aussi mis en cause dans la déconfiture du ministère. Vers la fin des années 70s, début 80s, période pendant laquelle Turenne effectue ses derniers pas de danse à titre de diplomate, il dira que la carrière à l'étranger est quelque peu dévalorisée, au point « que certaines ambassades ressemblaient

presque à des agences de voyages pour fonctionnaires itinérants. » Les missions à l'étranger sont parfois ignorées des initiatives de politique qui ont des incidences sur leurs territoires d'accréditation et les opinions divergentes de la mouvance officielle ne sont pas bienvenues. Certain.es, qui comparent ces années à la réalité actuelle d'AMC, diront « plus ça change plus c'est pareil ».

La dernière partie du livre porte sur son implication pour la sauvegarde de la nature. Avant même de prendre officiellement sa retraite du travail, Turenne est devenu le premier président manitobain de la Société pour la nature et les parcs du Canada, un groupe voué à faire pression sur le gouvernement provincial envers ses objectifs de conservation. L'auteur retrace les campagnes menées pour protéger divers sites environnementaux avec la même attention apportée aux détails des négociations entre les parties que ses descriptions des relations entre Francophones et Anglophones ou les débats qui ont mené à la reconnaissance du fait français au Manitoba.

Peu importe le domaine d'activités dans lequel il a été impliqué, il est évident que Turenne ne faisait pas les choses à moitié et que ses analyses des différentes situations étaient plus souvent qu'autrement les bonnes. Il est à noter que l'auteur ne s'approprie jamais seul le succès de certaines initiatives. Dans le chapitre de clôture, il souligne généreusement la contribution de ceux qui ont facilité son parcours.

A la lecture du livre, on peut aisément tirer des leçons de comportements organisationnels sains qui se sont perdus au fil des ans. Que ce soit l'humilité, le leadership, le travail d'équipe ou dire la vérité aux instances politiques même si ce n'est pas très populaire. De plus, la variété des événements décrits dans le livre devrait satisfaire un large éventail de lecteurs : des spécialistes des affaires francophones aux adeptes de la nature.

Lors de sa dernière affectation à AMC, Gérald Cossette était sous-ministre délégué.

Bodil Jelhof Jensen (ed.), *Denmark's Forgotten Holocaust: My Family History in Letters*

Ed. Livres BSM Books, Laval, 2025

By Kurt F. Jensen

This is a book of many facets. It is a loving memoir honouring the author's grandparents, the genealogy of one branch of her family, and, importantly, a documentary insight into one strain of the Holocaust through the prism of one family's experience. Most of all it is an emotional path to understanding scarring aspects of the author's family history.

Bodil Jelhof Jensen joined the Canadian foreign service in the Political Stream in 1972, and her first posting was to Oslo, Norway. She subsequently took education leave to pursue a law degree and later left the foreign service to focus on a legal career.

The book is somewhat unusual in that the narrative text is only about 40 pages long, followed by the documentary copies of the correspondence between her maternal grandparents, who were Jewish and sent to Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in 1943, and family members who had escaped to Sweden. Her grandmother died in 1944 in the camp, while her grandfather survived and lived a long life. The narrative tells the story of Bodil being unaware that she was part Jewish and that her family had been directly affected by the Holocaust. Her family kept this secret until Bodil was in her early 20s, when she slowly began to unravel what had happened, a quest which took years and, as she writes, affected her greatly. The secrecy of her family history was likely inspired by parental fears and complicated by Bodil's immediate family emigrating to Canada (Edmonton) in 1954, when she was very young. With settlement in a new country, Bodil's mother shut the door to the past. The family in Edmonton remained in close contact with those remaining in Denmark (and some in Sweden), but little of the family's history was revealed in this correspondence.

Her mother's family, which was Jewish, had been in Denmark since the 1600s and 1700s, with full Danish rights and entitlements. They were affluent and led comfortable but not ostentatious lives. They led lives similar to those of other Danes and merely had a different religion. There was little discrimination towards Jews in Denmark.

Bodil's husband jokingly called her family history pursuits "ancestor worship," but more likely it reflects a tendency among many immigrant children, happy, content and prosperous in their new homes, to seek knowledge and understanding of who they are and where they came from, exposure to which would have been revealed if remaining in their original homelands and disclosed, over time, through various family tales.

Bodil's grandparents were elderly when war come to Denmark. Pursuit of the Jewish segment of the population did not occur until 1943. Knowledge of the impending arrests and deportation by the Germans was leaked to Danish authorities by German embassy officials, and efforts

were launched to save the Jews, all of whom were welcomed by Sweden, still neutral and unoccupied. Bodil's grandparents had a keen faith in Danish law and could not accept that the Germans might be able to arrest them. Bodil's mother, her then husband, and her siblings sought to convince the parents unsuccessfully to go to Sweden with them. Of Bodil's immediate family, only her grandparents were arrested and sent to Theresienstadt; all other members of the family fled to Sweden.

Prisoners held in Theresienstadt experienced better treatment than in other camps; they were among the elites of their nations and viewed as potential hostages. And the prisoners from Denmark fared even slightly better. Controlled and limited correspondence was permitted in both directions. All had to be in German, to ease censorship. Coded requests for food were often embedded in innocuous messages. Primarily, the correspondence constituted a "proof-of-life," as well as assurance of not being forgotten.

As the war moved towards an end, the Swedish Red Cross negotiated permission to send the White Busses convoys to Germany to retrieve Scandinavian prisoners for care in Sweden. There were several of these convoys, which eventually included the Danish Red Cross in the days after the German defeat. Bodil's grandfather had saved all the correspondence from his family (primarily one daughter, a nurse, likely charged with being the contact). The Germans went to great efforts to destroy all evidence of their war crimes and searched the luggage of persons leaving on the White Busses. Bodil's grandfather secreted the correspondence on his body and brought the documents to safety.

As Bodil matured, she asked too many questions about the past. A cover-up began. But items around the house, family heirlooms, suggested conflicts in what she was told. It came to a head in 1967 when Bodil realized the hidden side to her family history. She does not know how that realization materialized but recalls telling her mother that now she understood but could say little more. There followed years of unwrapping the details of her family's past. When on posting to Oslo she developed closer contact with her Danish relatives. One cousin provided her with much of the Theresienstadt correspondence. And after that much more followed.

The narrative in this book is short but intense. The emotions involved are palpable. The book is important not only for detailing a quest for family knowledge but also for capturing an important series of documents which reveal the reality of one family's experience in a concentration camp.

Kurt Jensen was a long-serving foreign service officer in both Immigration Canada and Foreign Affairs and is a member of the CFSAF board. He notes that he and Bodil are not related. (Jensen is a patronymic adopted in the 1860s as permanent last names.) They did, however, know each other in Grad School at the University of Alberta, from which both joined the Foreign Service in 1972.

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Shivering in Selfridges

By W. Donald Graham

Many years ago, after completing one posting, Cyprus, or perhaps a second, Dar-es-Salaam, I was assigned as a grunt and gofer to the famous Stan Dabrowsky of the IT communications team in External Affairs. Our job was to complete an enclosure at our High Commission in London, where the construction job had gone terribly wrong. The Department decided that the project needed Stan's expertise and my sweat to complete the installation, predicted to last upwards of three months of temporary duty.

Accordingly, travel plans were made, scheduling us to take the evening flight from Montreal to London via British Airways (or possible BOAC in those days). We travelled to Montreal, boarded the plane, and went to the rear of the bus, settling in in anticipation of dinner, or perhaps a cognac or two before arriving in London.

Alas, it was not to be. Somewhere over the Maritimes, the aircraft was ordered back to Montreal because of a bomb threat, and after a hasty landing, we spent the next eight hours being investigated while the aircraft was searched. The amenities were sparse, and there was no chance of sleeping. We finally re-boarded the plane only to find that there was no dinner available. After a boring and uneventful flight, we arrived in London. We made our way to Selfridges Hotel after more than 24 hours without sleep.

To set the scene for the upcoming calamity, a description of the hotel is necessary. Selfridges was then a very new hotel built behind Selfridges Department Store on Oxford Street, not far from the High Commission, then located on Grosvenor Square. This hotel was British posh, and snooty to boot, especially to casually dressed, jet lagged EL's like Stan and me. It was so posh that the porters wore spats and spoke without moving their lips. However, the rooms were ordinary British, i.e. SMALL. The entry door and the door to the bathroom had affixed mirrors and automatic door closers attached. These were the crux of my upcoming demise and the creation of a legend.

Another point to add: I always sleep the way I was born…naked. Being thoroughly bagged, I went to bed around 1 a.m. Later I got up to visit the loo, went in, the door closed behind me, and I wondered why the loo had elevators. I quickly realized that I was standing stark naked outside my room in the halls of Selfridges hotel. And locked out as the door closed. WHAT TO DO?

Every time an elevator stopped, I hid behind a potted palm tree while trying to sort out my options, since there were no phones on the floor. Travelling to the lobby was ruled out, because I envisioned being arrested as the first Canadian streaker in Selfridges and having to awaken the High Commission to bail me out. But what about Stan? We did not know each other that well, but I had heard that he was a kind soul. But what room was he in? Was it room 615 or 651? What if I knocked on the wrong door to face an elderly spinster? Jail time for me! ! ! !

I made my way to the 6th floor and timidly knocked on door 615. A sleepy Stanley Dabrowsky finally opened the door and immediately slammed it in my face! I think he misunderstood my intentions. After all, we hardly knew each other, and I guess he was reluctant to deepen our friendship at that particular time. After much persuasion through the closed door, he finally believed that my intentions were noble and that I needed to borrow a pair of trousers. In those days Stan was quite large, whereas I was a lot slimmer. (The comparison reversed over the years.) He loaned me a pair of trousers that I had to hold up with two hands, and off I went to the porter's desk and a chilly reception indeed. "Are you sure you are a resident here?" "Are you sure you wish to continue being a resident here" said he, with his fiercest anti-colonial look.

Heated words were exchanged, and remaining at a discreet distance, he returned with me to unlock the door and let me get back to bed. Lesson Learned. Since that fateful night, I always slept with a chair against the door in every hotel I subsequently stayed in!

Think SIGNET is fast? The news of my peccadillo was circulated around the London High Commission within hours, and the world in a day, during an era when most missions were served by telegraph lines. From that time on, whenever I passed by the hotel desk, I could see the staff trying to contain their mirth. I finally moved to another accommodation! In the end, Stan and I worked together for over a month, successfully completed the enclosure, and I found that he was indeed a nice guy. ■

Don Graham served for many decades as a "tech" in the IT Division of External Affairs. He passed away in 2008. His obituary noted that Don was remembered with respect by his colleagues in the international technical security intelligence community where he quietly made many significant contributions.

Many anecdotes and stories have been written about the IT "techs" in External Affairs. See the website of their organization, the Old Foreign Affairs Retired Technicians, at ofarts.ca. Additional articles can be found at: OFARTS Articles – Formerly Story Land

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CFSAF produces a bulletin, FORUM, published three times per year. Individuals may subscribe to FORUM without becoming a member of CFSAF by sending an email to: edit.forum99@gmail.com.

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