



I become an "Asset" ...

Taken from Camel Tails – A Sage of the RSMC

Now here's one that always seemed a bit surreal to me, as it totally disillusioned me and my opinion and misconceptions of our National Intelligence weenies, the much vaunted Central Intelligence Agency. We had been in country for over a year when this one occurred and I had just returned from R&R back in the States. Skip Hartnett had recently returned to Florida to unscramble the loss of his retirement pay, having been the apparent victim of a vindictive Lady Lt. Col. USMC Disbursing Officer that found out that he had not applied for permission to work out of country on our Marine Corps training contract. I had done so much by accident, and at the direction of Hartnett himself. Skip came over a bit later than I, but when he mentioned the requirement to obtain permission from your service to Basil (our parent company), Skip had been told by Basil that such permission wasn't necessary, and not to worry about such things. Skip took Basil at their word and came without his authorization. It turns out this was an exceptionally bad move!



**"ASSETS" MUST
ALWAYS BE
INCONSPICUOUS,
CLANDESTINE AND
ENIGMATIC!**

I had *my* permission slip (note from Mommy?) but much like Skip, no one else had applied for one. I received my authorization the day before I left the States, but truthfully I had forgotten all about even submitting my application, and would have left without even thinking about it if it hadn't shown up! For some inexplicable reason, Hartnett was the only one taken to task for his directed (by Basil) oversight. Skip claimed that his unwarranted attention was due to some altercation with the infamous Lady Lt. Col. he had while still on active duty, and knowing Skip, that certainly wasn't out of the question. For whatever reason, he took the brunt of the vendetta, and everyone else, including all the retired Army and Navy Personnel sat around much afraid of quarrying their respective services to find out if they were on shaky ground.

Pat and Paul were understandably silently cursing Hartnett for having called down the thunder on the situation, and no doubt wished he'd simply shut up and take his loss of retirement and not stir the pot. Nothing was said, but the mood of the men in the entire Basil gaggle of military retirees was an ugly one. Internally, I'm sure our Marine Folks weren't serious, but I got the idea that the rest of Basil *was*! The biggies of Basil took the same stance. Some were retired Navy Captains and their retirement pay had been substantial – give it back? Five or six years worth at approximately \$50,000 per year? Hey guys, here

we're talking one quarter million dollars here! Give it back? Right, and my name is Mickey Mouse! They'd have to have disappeared into the "Empty Quarter"² never to return to the States.

Poor S.M. got the short end of the stick without so much as a smidgen of sympathy from any of the other Expats working the Navy contract. As best I can figure, they didn't want to (or to have him) attract undue attention to a really bad situation – who wants to give back literally years of already collected retirement pay? And as I have already pointed out, in some of their cases it would have amounted to over one quarter million dollars! What's worse, Basil denied ever having told Hartnett not to bother with his "permission slip!"

Don't forget, they **always** shoot the messenger, and S.M. had become the bad guy by default... Don't forget the treatment the Lady FBI agent got when she pointed out the FBI's refusal to act on her memo just prior to 9/11. Hummm...

I, of course, sat around rather smugly, being the only "legal" one in the crew and didn't let any of them forget it, although I walked rather softly around Pat lest I become a tent peg. The entire situation eventually simply went away, and the Marine Corps quietly let the entire thing drop, and as far as I know it was never addressed by the Army.

The lesson I learned from this evolution was that you never want to get involved in any bureaucratic nonsense with **any** agency having a three or four letter designation (Army, Navy, USMC, FBI, CIA, BATF, etc.). When the going gets greasy, everyone runs for cover, and you my friend, are on your own. If you don't have your tail feathers covered, you ain't gonna' have any friends in the "hood"! I think they call it plausible deniability?

I should have remembered my lesson well, having been one of two individuals who wrote a letter blowing the whistle on the M16 malfunction problems in 1967. My XO, a certain 1st Lt. Mike Chervenak was the real hero of the evolution, but since I had helped compose the letter, honor required that I take my share of the blame. The letter got published in the Washington Post (not the original intention at all), but as I recall it had been originally written to Mike's congress critter. The lesson wasn't in writing the letter, but rather that when the feces came rolling down the hill, many if not most of our former compatriots who had screamed just as loudly when we were losing lots of Marines, ran for cover when it was THEIR mammary gland caught in the ringer! Men with cleaning rods stuck down the bore of their Matty Mattel Specials (trying to dislodge stuck shell cases in the chambers) loomed largely in our minds, but suddenly the individuals without the appropriate amount of chutzpa didn't remember a thing about it once the problems began to work themselves out with redesigned parts.

The M16 had become a **VERY** hot potato, and the Commandant had stood up on Television waving one of them around stating that the only thing wrong with them was that we didn't have enough of them! The Corps wanted someone's fanny for all the unfavorable publicity, and for contradicting the Commandant's public statement. I had no idea that I *had* contradicted Wally Green's³ contention, as it had been over 2-years since I had watched TV! I'm sure that the Commandant wouldn't have deliberately hung his Marines out to dry, but he sure had some low-life underlings who had put their "chop" on some questionable data and weren't about to be contradicted by some mere Captain or 1st Lieutenant whose troops were dying in the field!

I spent about a year in Limbo over the infamous M16 situation, and former friends often wouldn't speak to me unless I ran them down. Being seen speaking to a pariah was not a good career move. Action in the field had saved my somewhat stalled career, and with a

promotion and having been kissed on both cheeks, all of a sudden I had lots of friends again. But with the exception of a few good guys (Skip Hartnett being one of the few who never wavered), I never trusted any of them totally again. I maintained a reasonably cordial relationship with most, but always slept with one eye partly open if you catch my drift.

OK, OK, we've heard the sea stories, but what do they have to do with your becoming an "asset?" ...And exactly what IS an asset? Good questions, and I'm "afixin' to 'splain' as they say down in Kentucky.

With Hartnett gone, and Patrick tending to his moon-shining enterprises in Jeddah one Saudi weekend, I got talked into going to one of the occasional bashes held by the Marines assigned to the Consulate Security Detail in Jeddah. This is what we in the Marines call Embassy Duty, and while you have to be especially squared away and talented to be selected for such an assignment, the duty itself is not exactly a piece of cake.

The Non Commissioned Officer in Charge of the Jeddah detail was a very squared away young Staff Sergeant named Tom Crawford who had literally been born into the Marine Corps, in the Navy hospital at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. His Dad had paid the final price in Vietnam, and had gone on to secure his place in Valhalla. Not to be deterred, Tom was determined to carry on in his Dad's footsteps. We struck up a friendship that lasted for many years; one that came under the heading of an instant bonding. The Royal Saudi Marine Instructors had a standing invitation to the various bashes held in the "Marine House" on the Consulate compound and it became essentially our second C.P.⁴ The Consulate compound being considered sovereign American soil of course, and was the preferred watering hole for all the U.S. Expats.

A month or two after we had developed a sort of standing 'invite' to the compound, even when there *wasn't* a bash going, I got what I considered a strange request from Tom.

"Hey Dick," sez Tom, "there's a guy here at the Consulate who wants to have a long talk with you!"

"Ok," I agree, "But what does he want to talk about?"

"I'll let him tell ya'," sez Tom, "but I think you'll find it interesting!"

Hummm, I'm thinking, wonder if I insulted a member of his family or the staff at one of the parties? I don't think so, but then ya' never know with these State Department guys?

A meeting was set up, and about a week later I get a call asking me to come down to dinner at Tom's house, and afterwards meet the mysterious Consulate gentleman who wants to talk to me. Well, I've never turned down a free meal, and besides I'm almighty curious about this pending palaver.

To cut through the unnecessary BS, it turns out that the individual who wants to talk, worked in the communications section of the Consulate. Now this sends up a warning flag, as the Comm-Shed (as the Communications sections are usually called even in the Marines), are often thinly disguised "spooks" working a cover job to allow them access to all incoming and outgoing communications traffic, and to send what they need to maintain contact with the appropriate headquarters. Needless to say, the gents working in Comm with an Embassy or Consulate have security clearances that even omit Allah himself from the access list!

After about an hour or so, a very scary scenario had presented itself – especially scary in retrospect in light of the world situation that has subsequently unfolded since 1990. It seems that “*The Company*” had minimal intelligence sources in the Mid-East⁵, and those in and around Jeddah and the Saudi Naval Establishment were essentially non-existent! Hummm... While I am always up for assisting my Country, and indeed have offered to pay the ultimate price a number of times, mercifully, up until then at least – it had not been my time to hang it up.

Not having worked in the Intelligence Community since the late ‘60s or early ‘70s I had some small doubt that I would be of much use. Calling on my patriotism (drat!) and intelligence gathering skills of long ago when working in the Reconnaissance outfits, he was sure I’d do just fine. Upppsss... This *ain’t* going exactly how I had planned! Changing the thrust, I told him I’d do better than that, and I’d personally take him aboard the Navy base while we were actually training the Saudi Camelnecks, and let him look for himself!

“No good,” sez he, “we’re not allowed to do any ‘overt’ spying under our current guidelines, and must (emphasis on MUST) obtain all our information from U.S. Expats⁶ with appropriate credentials!”

“Credentials?” I reply, “What credentials? All I’ve got is a Life Membership in the NRA and a card saying I’m a member of the Force Reconnaissance Association! I don’t even have a credit card!”

“So much the better,” sez he, “we don’t want our assets too well known, and you come highly recommended!”

“Highly recommended by who? My Mother?” I ask. “Exactly what do you want to know? I can give you an in-depth analysis right now! These gents are the consummate douchebags I started to explain! If the Israelis ever attack Saudi Arabia, the worst injury they’ll get will be a case of whiplash from stopping too suddenly at the Red Sea!”

“Yeah, yeah, I believe you,” my prospective ‘controller,’ replied, “but I need orders of battle, names, dates and pictures of the insanity you are talking about!”

Oh good, I think, now I’m gonna’ be a damned spook, and I didn’t hear him say a thing about how many Hollalas⁷ they were going to contribute to my war bag!

“Tell me sire, exactly what is the pay scale for an ‘asset’?” I inquire.

“Assets do it for love of country and adventure,” the slick talking Commo says!

Now I’m asked to be an unpaid, but highly patriotic asset I think. Somehow this does not bode well, especially in light of my previous experience with three and four lettered organizations. Careful here lad, everything is not as it seems I would guess!

“Sire, just how am I supposed to get this information to you?” I ask.

“Just make the parties at the consulate, and we’ll always have someone there to take your latest stuff. Worst case, you can always just relay it to Tom Crawford if something suddenly comes up,” he replies.

“What happens if I get my fanny in a crack?” I inquire.

“Well, you’d better hope that doesn’t happen, as the State Department has a very definite hands-off policy when it comes to ‘urinating-off’ the Saudi Government, ...oil prices you know! If you get your butt captured, you’re on your own, and we will deny all knowledge!” My only reply at this point is “Arrrggggg”...

“You’ve gotta’ be kidding?” sez I!

“Nope, but there’s not much chance of getting caught if these guys are as incompetent as you say!” my slick-talking prospective controller replies.

My mind is reeling with *deja vous* of earlier swindles where I (and others) were left hanging out to dry. The late retirement pay debacle instantly came to mind!

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph, you mean that I am to be an unpaid ‘asset’ hanging my skuzzy fanny out in the breeze, you guys won’t help, and I’m on my own if the feces strikes the ventilation?” I summarize!

“You’re quite a smart fellow” he says, “you’ve got it down pretty well pat!” “Now the question is, will you do it?”

Now the rotten SOB was appealing to my latent patriotism, this wasn’t fair at all! Worse yet, I could feel my resolve weakening! Culver, you **know** better than this line of bull, tell him no and get it over with! Look at what Basil did with its own employees after **they** had given the advice not to worry about getting permission from your former military service to work in the dunes! The only thing going for the Agency is that they have *always* been known for using the plausible deniability routine – at least they’re up front with it, no illusions, just fact! Those clowns play dirty and seem to thrive on it. On the other hand, there would be a chance for some adrenaline in this one... Hummm...

“Just one more question,” sez I. “What about the Navy Captain in charge of the Military Training Mission? Doesn’t he supply you gents with good information?”

“This is not for publication,” sez the prospective controller, “but the Captain just ain’t that smart, and besides, he’s trying to advance his career by writing glowing reports to his bosses indicating that he (the Captain) is doing a marvelous job of training the Saudi Naval Forces! He’s worse than no help at all!”

“Hummm... well, my question is, do you have an extra Heinekens Beer floating around somewhere?” The resident spook produces the requested brew and the deal is sealed, albeit with some small feeling of discomfort growling in my stomach.

I left the compound that evening with a feeling of duty, honor, country and an overwhelming desire to screw with the Saudi Naval Establishment. The question was, what to do? Well, Pat already thinks I ain’t always playing with a full deck, and he’s convinced I’m trying to get him locked up anyway. No problem there, I’ll just be myself... Heh, heh, heh...

Well, I continue to take pictures, and always place the blame on Commander Ammar al Quatani, who wanted to fill his photo album with pictures of his fledgling Camelnecks⁸!

All goes well for awhile until one day we get a young Navy snail⁹ into one of our training classes. This little maggot is very concerned that we are taking pictures of Marine Training. Now even though this gent has a GCT slightly above room temperature, he is becoming a major pain in the @\$\$\$. I always ask him if he’d like to tell the Commander that he can’t take

pictures of our training cycle? He of course, demurs, not willing to take on the Commander, but he's anything but happy.

Almost as if by magic, a Navy Lieutenant named Esau shows up to monitor our training, and he always looks most unhappy when I am doing a Photo Op of our young Marines. I strongly suspect that this clown is a plant, egged on by our young and very objectionable snail. When I get some of the pictures back from the photo shop (in the Souk¹⁰), Lt. Esau expresses great interest, and would like to know if he can have them to show to his fellow Naval Officers. I smell a large rodent, but give him the stack of freshly printed flicks. What he doesn't know, is that I ordered two sets of prints and have slipped the other set to the "resident spook at the Consulate."



AN ASSET IN PLACE

After the weekend, Esau is again in attendance, and I ask him for the photos back. He hedges, and allows as how we are not allowed to have them. I explain that we are taking them at the behest of the Marine Commander, and he then tells me that we are not allowed to take them even for the Commander¹¹. Now I know something is rotten in Denmark, and tell him that I'll run the situation past Ammar. He still refuses to return the photographic artwork. I check with the Commander giving him a rundown of Esau's machinations. The Commander being a shrewd old duck (slight pun here) tells us that it's OK to continue to take pictures, but not in front of Esau. I grin and agree – now I have an unknowing fellow conspirator in the spook business, and things continue to go smoothly, with Ammar unknowingly spying on himself!

Pat continues to chide me about being a bit obvious in flipping the Lieutenant the paw¹², and continuing to chronicle our activities. I began to smell another mouse in the cheese factory and strongly suspect that our Comm Shack spook has shaded his bet and brought Pat into the intelligence fold as a just in case. Shrewd maneuver, I'll give him that. I often see Pat at the Consulate also talking to our "Company Man" and I now rest assured that this guy is a pro at his job, even if he won't come out and hang his fanny in the breeze personally. Maybe that's how you survive in the clandestine business?

Occasionally a couple of guys in "suits" will show up at the parties in the Marine House and sit in on our discussions. I'm beginning to see that these gents are serious about gathering intel info on the Saudi Forces, and I'm beginning to hope that unlike "Tigger,"¹³ in the kiddie cartoons, I'm not the only one! Surely the "Boys in the Band"¹⁴ have other snitches and amateur photographers in their fold?

One contact with the U.S. Navy Captain running the Military Training Mission on the Red Sea side of the country convinces me that my spook buddy was absolutely right about this clown's grasp of military knowledge and training procedures! I then knew why they were desperately looking for



LT. ESAU, "THWLY DISGUISED" SAUDI INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

a creditable source of information. Bureaucracy is the same everywhere it would seem. The Captain was a self-serving bureaucratic tool!

As our original contract was coming to a close, Pat, Paul Shomper, Rod Roper, Lee Barta and I get our heads together and decide to sign on directly with the Saudi Navy with no American Company as a buffer. We're not too sure just how legal it is, but it sounds like a likely adventure. A last party at the Consulate results in my man in the Company giving me a lecture and an introduction to his counterpart on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula working in the Consulate in Dhahran. My last caution is to be careful, and with instructions to stay in touch. He is now preaching to the choir, and I'm beginning to develop a case of mild paranoia.

Once in Jubail (located on the Persian Gulf side of the Arabian peninsula) with our new headquarters at Ras al Gar, we continue the same drill as we had in Jeddah. Organized training was beginning to taper off, and we would get classes starting that would suddenly disappear only to have a new class with no experience show up the following week. Frustration abounded, and we were beginning to look and feel more and more like Christmas Tree Ornaments (probably an unfortunate choice of comparisons) designed to give Ammar a bragging point that he had American trainers/advisors for his newly formed Marine Corps.

A reestablishment of my bonafides required a contact with the U.S. Consulate on the Persian Gulf side of the Country. This wasn't exactly a hardship as the Consulate provided a convenient and pleasant watering hole in an otherwise dry country. I supposed we'd simply have to make the ultimate sacrifice and make the social functions in our new digs. Trips to the Consulate in Dhahran were always welcome of course, and Pat and I would often visit the American Officer's Club at the U.S. Airbase where we could order pork and appropriate libations free of the restrictions of the Muslim culture. Things at the Consulate were a bit more formal than those in Jeddah, and my contact(s) now all wore suits, and usually made an effort to greet me soon after crashing the various bashes. All of a sudden, I noted that I was becoming something of a pariah at the gatherings, and I was left pretty much alone with the "suits"! Not nearly as much fun as in Jeddah, but things were running along smoothly.

I only had one more major clash with the Saudi Intelligence people, and again it was over some photos I had taken of our newly arrived 81mm Mortars, and our mortar drill. Rather than waste bandwidth here, I will refer you to *"Tweaking the Beard of the Prophet"* chronicled elsewhere in the Camel Tails, but that was one that gave me a feel for what it is really like to play spook and almost get caught with my drawers down around my ankles! It worked out fine, but I had to call in some of my markers with our Navy SEAL cohorts to bury the evidence! The Saudis thought they had me dead to rights, but Yankee ingenuity outdoes rag-head arrogance every time! I eventually got on the plane with my carefully hidden evidence and gave it to the Agency when I got back to North Idaho.

At my last get together at the Consulate, I was presented with an American Flag that had flown over the U.S. Territory in Dhahran,¹⁵ a lot of handshakes all around and a rather ominous piece of information that I would be visited by a representative from the Company when I got home. I began to feel like Scrooge who had been told to expect to meet three ghosts after the clock struck 0100!

They were as good as their word, and sure enough, a gent in a suit pulled up to my Quonset Hut after I was re-ensconced in my hill top fortress. This guy was like a comic opera figure – he showed me his credentials, and we sat down at the kitchen table with cookies and

coffee, and went over the whole thing again. He took damned near all of my extra photos (except for some I had kept for my self of course, heh, heh, heh...). He spent about two days debriefing me, and at the last minute he pulled out *another* set of credentials that he assured me were his REAL identity! Huh? How many sets of paper do these guys carry¹⁶? He asked me if I would like to continue to work for the Company, and I assured him that I would love to, but alas I never heard from him again! This spook stuff gets under your skin!

That was almost the end of my experiences as an “asset” and probably would have been if Saddam Hussein hadn’t rolled into Kuwait with his tanks during the Summer of 1990. Thinking I might have some interesting observations that might be of some use to my beloved Corps, I called them almost immediately. They yawned a bit, wanted to know if I was an Arabic Linguist (which of course I was not), and politely told me to go pound sand. I steamed for about a week, and called the Training Branch at HQMC. Same thing, only seemingly a bit more bored! Aarrggg... A third call to the Intelligence Branch engendered a bit more interest, but they allowed as how if they needed my services, they’d be in touch. School¹⁷ was starting, and I gave it up – terrible to be a has-been, sigh...

About a week later I got a call from Colonel Dave Willis, the Commanding Officer of Weapons Training Battalion at Quantico who wanted to know how soon I could get packed and get back to Quantico? Huh? “What gives?” I said. “Don’t ask a lot of questions,” says Dave, “but the CG wants you to brief the General Staff!” Dear Allah, nobody had ever asked me for directions to the head (Navy/Marine for restroom) before, and now they want my skuzzy fanny to brief the General Staff? I was charmed!

It seems the General had read my Camel Tails and was in hysterics! Elly Land, the Memsahib of my old compadre from times of old, Jim Land, had given Colonel Dave Willis a set, and he had relayed them to General Paul Van Riper. The only thing I could think of was they were short of laughs, and wanted me to amuse them! How embarrassing!

Actually the briefing (briefings really, there were a series of them), went quite well, and they even seemed interested in my observations (knock me over with a feather!). I was asked what, in my opinion, was going to happen once the ground war started? Well now this was in September 1990, and the ground fracas wouldn’t start until February, but I began to catch a whiff of gunsmoke. I told them that the war would last between three days and three weeks, and the biggest problem would be 200,000 troops with their hands in the air (little did I know that 100,000 of them would E&E before the hostilities started). As for the time frame? I missed my calculations by 12-hours on the high end of the low side... They initially rolled their eyes and gave me the “*yeah, right!*” look, but when the actual hostilities had ended, they though I was some kind of genius? In all honesty, if they’d been there with our stalwart crew training the Camelnecks, they too would have come up with a similar figure.

General Van Riper wanted to know if I’d be willing to go back in country, and I readily agreed as long as I could go as a Marine, and not a civilian. The General said he understood and had me fitted out with desert cammies and I began to plan my entry back into the fray. I got as far as Twenty Nine Palms just as the war ended – seems that I was a victim of my own predictions. Trudging wearily back to Idaho, I was sitting in the ROTC Office in Kellogg, Idaho one afternoon not too long after my return when I got a call from Counter-Intelligence at HQMC asking if they could come out and visit for a day. I readily agreed and awaited their arrival. The Master Sergeant in charge of the detail wanted to know exactly **how** I knew what the drill was gonna’ be? “Top Secret stuff,” I replied, “I’m not sure you’re cleared, I’ll have to

check it out with Langley!" They shook their heads, packed their briefcases, grinned and headed back to D.C. Who says playing spook ain't fun? Heh, heh, heh...

ROC

End Notes:

¹ While this isn't an "exact," generally the operational forces of the three lettered Agencies fall into three tiers. You have the career spooks, Langley Trained, but who usually act as "controllers" for a set of scoundrels usually called "contract agents" who are paid professionals, but not necessarily in the business as a career. Many are foreign nationals who simply spy for money as opposed to a love of country. The third tier is/are the "assets" who are usually patriotic (or possibly those who the Agency blackmails into service) individuals who happen to be located for various business or traveling purposes in a country of interest. Most "assets" work for love of country and come under the "unpaid" segment of spooks.

² The "Empty Quarter" is a section of the Arabian Peninsula so remote and without amenities that no sane man wants to go there. Pictures of the dune formation in the "Quarter" give rise to the usual vision of a mid-eastern desert clime. Abdul Aziz is rumored to have holed up there around the turn of the last century to avoid detection when they were planning on retaking Riyadh from the Rasheeds. A very barren and seldom visited piece of desolate turf.

³ Wally Green was the Commandant of the Marine Corps at the time.

⁴ C.P. stands for "Command Post"

⁵ This is no longer the case of course. The place is now swarming with agents, pseudo-agents and intelligence types, but you must remember this was prior to the 1st Gulf War, and the invasion of Iraq. Saudi Arabia and the Diaper-Heads were an operational and intelligence backwater in 1986.

⁶ Expat is the slang term for Expatriate, usually the term used for foreign nationals working in a country different than their own.

⁷ A Hollala is a fractional Saudi coin of little value. Counting your "hollalas" is sort of like counting your pennies – usually used in jest.

⁸ Camelneck is a term we jokingly used to refer to our fledgling Saudi Marines. Essentially a comical take off from the American Marines being called "Leathernecks," or the British Royal Marines being referred to as "Bootnecks"...

⁹ Snail was an uncomplimentary term usually applied to an individual with a low station in life. We also had cleaning snails, coffee fetching snails, etc. Not a complimentary term!

¹⁰ Souk is a Saudi shopping area varying from a mall to strips of shops in a certain area. We also had "specialty Souks, i.e. "The Main Souk," "The Gold Souk," The Syrian Souk," etc. each usually alluding to the goods to be found there. In some segments of the mid-east, the Souk is also known as the Bazaar.

¹¹ There is an unspoken hierarchy within the Saudi Military in which the intelligence people apparently override the operational folks. This is probably much like the Gestapo or the SS in WWII Germany. Rank apparently is not the factor in the intelligence community keeping the rag-heads safe for the Monarchy! A really weird set up making you wonder who's really running things?

¹² Flipping me the "paw" is a term I have always used to describe the action(s) of the family puppies, who when told to do something that they understand perfectly, but deliberately choose to ignore; instead giving me the canine version of an extended middle digit! An extremely useful term, mercifully not instantly understood by the diaper-heads when used in casual conversation.

¹³ If you'll remember the old cartoons, "*Tigger's*" famous song points out that the most wonderful thing about *Tiggers* is that I'm the only one!

¹⁴ “The Boys in the Band” is an often used slang term for the employees of the Agency or the CIA.

¹⁵ I suspect that the American Flag was in lieu of a traditional gold watch (gold sundial?) given to retirees in any line of work! By diplomatic convention, the grounds of a country’s consulate or embassy is always considered to be an extension of the soil of the country involved.

¹⁶ Sometimes these guys reminded me of Curley, Moe and Larry. I’m sure there are some really first rate operatives out in the field somewhere, but simply being employed by a “three lettered organization” didn’t make you James Bond!

¹⁷ I had taken a job as the Senior Marine Instructor with the USMC High School ROTC program when I returned from the dunes. Pat Teague had held the job of Marine Instructor there before he departed for Saudi, and sorta’ nosed me towards the job with the school district. It was a great job, and I really enjoyed it, but it was a 100-mile round trip jaunt to work and back every day. The School Superintendent thought *HE* ran things, and I kept pointing out that I could make more picking dingle-berries than they were paying me. He was convinced that he was doing me a favor allowing me to work there, and I took the stance that it was really the other way around. Things came to a head during the spring of 1990 after the fall of the Berlin Wall when the hierarchy of the School Board made the statement that NOW the kids could get real jobs and not have to associate with the military. They surreptitiously attempted to do away with the ROTC Program, but by marching on the School Board Meeting (aided most ably by Pat Teague) we broke it off in their fanny. They were NOT amused and made every effort to terminate my contract. I prevailed by using the press, the TV channels and a whole gaggle of enraged parents. The Marines at the 12th District Headquarters in San Francisco kept me informed and secretly giggled at my yanking the School District’s chain. The School Superintendent was not happy but was caught between a rock and a hard place. Initially he stated that he had really enjoyed my tenure with the school district, but he thought it was time to get some new blood in the position. I grinned and told him that he was going to teach the kids a bad lesson, that if you fight for something you believe in, you are punished for it. He assured me that was NOT the case, but I pointed out to him that I was sure that he was correct, but that the newspapers and the TV stations would probably see it differently. He visibly blanched and left the office. About two days later he called me dripping good will and allowed as how they really **needed** me (yeah, right!) and renewed my contract. I was fuming but had stayed two more years just to make it my idea! When Colonel Dave Willis (now retired) called in 1993 and asked if I’d like to go back to Saudi, I readily agreed. This time it was to be a weapons’ instructor for the Royal Saudi Air Defense Force (similar to a Hawk Missile outfit). I did an in-house change of command with my Sergeant Major, shook hands with all the teachers and the Principal (totally ignoring the School Superintendent), and headed back to Saudi with no regrets! I LOVE winning!

I tried to get Pat to tag along on the second sojourn to the “World’s Largest Litter Box” but he was gainfully employed by the Idaho Veteran’s Services Department and had become something of a key man in the organization. Hartnett on the other hand, came along, this time armed with permission to work out of country. We tried to get Paul Shomper, who had settled in Cyprus with his new wife, to come back. He was willing but alas, all the billets were filled and he was scheduled to come on board if (and when) we got the much desired “follow-on contract” which unfortunately never materialized.