

September 2012

Colorado Springs
www.971WingAFAC.com



Canadian sub sinks US ship - see below.

Social Calendar

THE OLD, RENEWED, EXECUTIVE: Once again our Wing was an example to the world in the speed, efficiency (and cheapness) in railroading that some call electioneering. Even in the remote distance no hungry-for-office candidate was discernable so your old executive will continue doing what they have been doing. If I have any room left I will include their names somewhere in this newsletter just in case you are looking for someone to blame for something.

July 21 Once again Charlene was a magnificent host for a most delightful get together, this time for 61 of us. It continues to amaze us how she can look so happy and buoyant while maintaining a manicured ranch, a lovely home, and feeding so many so well. Thank you, Charlene, from all of us.

Aug 25 1600 at Richard Graham and Fran Mattavi's, 12725 Tahosa Lane, off Shoup Road. See you there.

Sep 16 1430 at the Enlisted Club (east off Murray) for our Battle of Britain ceremonies.

YOUR SCRIBE DOES GET ANNOYED! In 26 years of composing these newsletters he has received scores of promises of inputs from members to make them truly "Wing" newsletters. He has grown many grey hairs as he waits in vain for them to arrive then has to rush to dream up articles to fill the empty spaces he saved for them. This time I thank Jim Stewart, Brad MacAskill, Don Swift, and Rob Davis for inputs but some promised have yet to materialize. Your unloved scribe does need some incentive to carry on. Don's most welcomed essay arrived 16 August, one day after the September-issue deadline that gives me time to work within the busy, travelling, schedule of Bob Freimuth who runs off for us the 50 snail-mail copies. Problem: do I add Don's words as page 9 and hope the extra page will sneak in for the one ounce postal rate and, then, what about page 10? My sense of thrift hates me leaving a page empty. Decisions, decisions. I also thank Rod Cescotti (Retired Luftwaffe major general) for sending me a copy of his just-published autobiography.

CANADIAN SUB SINKS US SHIP: I should leave that true statement as is. It implies the awesome RCN can sink US ships at will without fear of retaliation. We could then forget all the mishaps with our bargain-basement purchase of 4 used subs from the Royal Navy.

Actually, this sinking saved the USN the cost of a torpedo and gave HMCS Victoria needed practice. It was part of the 2012 Rimpac exercises that have taken place every second year since 1971 and in which Canada has always participated. This decommissioned USN ship was destined to be given to the fish, with no mortgage or fear of foreclosure, as a new home in the firing range off Kauai, Hawaii.

The Belated Bomber Command Memorial

I suppose I should have attended this unveiling by our Queen on 28 June 2012, if only to honour the incredible bravery and sacrifice of the hundreds of cherished friends I lost, but emotions run too deeply. Joan, my partner of 70 years, and who had shared every night of my war, had suffered two falls, seriously impeding her mobility, and preventing her from accompanying me.

Besides, I was not a happy warrior in Bomber Command. Even in my high school days I was a history buff and knew enough about our WWI peace treaties that allowed Hitler and his Nazi party to be such a scourge on us as well as on the German population. I knew my responsibility was to assist in Hitler's defeat, but deplored the means. I joined the RCAF and trained as an Observer (Navigator, bomb aimer, gunner). But, on being posted to a Bomber Command Operational Training Unit (OTU) 20 July - 20 September 1942, I was channelled into the Bomb Aimer stream as it had become a separate trade. With inadequate navigational aids I would have to find and bomb assigned targets, mainly cities, in utter darkness illuminated only by flak and exploding bombs. Defeating the guilty by killing the innocent pained me deeply. Circumstances gave us no other way, compounding the pain of our sacrifices.

While at this OTU, near Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, my pilot, Pat Porter, and I frequented on our nights off the local dance halls. One night Pat and I were surveying the girls seated along the walls facing the band and dance floor when Joan and her girlfriend arrived. I nudged Pat saying, "*That's for me!*"

These dance halls were ideal for meeting scores of the opposite sex. Most went stag and the music was soft, encouraging the art of conversation. The agreed practice was to ask a girl for a dance, dance 3 numbers, return her to her seat, then select a different partner. If there was one you particularly liked, you would try to get her in the home waltz that permitted you to ask if you could walk her home. No problem on the way home as she knew the way but getting back in total blackout was often a nightmare as all street signs had been removed to thwart invasions of Germans who did not invade but Canadians did and we were thoroughly confused. However, I did get her in the home waltz, walked her home, and did not find my way back to base until 0400, but was still a very happy boy as I had her agreement for future dates.

Soon I had to stand her up. The base was sealed, no phone calls out. Bomber Command had launched its "Thousand Bomber" raids, but to attain this number they had to use still-under-training crews from OTUs. To us, it was another Charge of the Light Brigade. Our Wellingtons were old and discarded by squadrons that had later models as well as 4-engine bombers. Our targets were heavily-defended cities in the Ruhr Valley. Our first was Dusseldorf. Our ageing Wellington would climb to only 9,000 feet, could carry no more than one ton of bombs, and refused to go faster than 135 knots, so we were a lifetime in that very impressive flak that stretched all the way from the coast to our target. Somehow, we bombed it and got home. Two of our OTU crews were among the 32 that did not. We, in our OTU alone, were to lose a hundred good boys and a dozen instructors before this misguided policy was dropped. It was a frightening introduction to Bomber Command so Joan's arms were a miraculous tonic.

Ten days after my posting to 419 Squadron in Croft, Yorkshire, my cold Nissen hut that had held 12 officers when I arrived had two survivors. So, squadrons also endured heavy losses. Empty rooms were soon filled with new faces. I was forever making new friends only to lose them.

We knew it was stupid, and potentially cruel, to marry during a war but we did. I was uniquely fortunate when my CO, Merv Fleming, let me live off base so I would cycle the miles usually in the rain, to and from the single room we rented in a home owned by a widow who lost her husband in WWI. When taking off in the evening to bomb Germany we would detour slightly to fly over the house to warn Joan that I would not be home for another 7 hours.

We continued to frequent the dance halls, this time in Darlington, where Joan met and danced with many squadron members who were soon to be shot down to drown in the cruel North Sea, plough into the ground, or be blown apart. With me she suffered their loss. This existence continued until the morning of 28 March 1943 when Joan awoke to find my side of the bed empty. Alone, she had to raise our first daughter and wait 800 days for my return. Knowing they were there for me gave me a burning desire to survive.

Assessing my small contributions to Bomber Command: When the average life expectancy was 5 operations I survived 17 but it took me 6 months due to lots of bad weather during the winter months, our conversion from Wellingtons to Halifaxes, and being selected for the month-long Bombing Leaders' course.

Continued on page 7

THE MURMANSK RUN: To a running commentary since the May issue, Rob Davis adds: Barbara Saks reminds me of a RAF Museum display at Hendon or Cosford about a gyrocopter launched from a surfaced U-Boat, and designed to be dragged along behind at an altitude of several hundred feet, as a look-out for shipping etc. If attacked, it was not possible to haul the pilot down in time before the sub dived, so the crew just cut the towing cable. The gyrocopter then ditched in the sea and “the pilot drowned in the usual way.”

LONG LIVE THE KING! Deciding in 1985 it was time to retire our Sea King helicopters, a-shopping we did go. Our Conservatives chose the UK Cormorant, but the Liberals, winning the 1993 election, cancelled the contract as too pricey, paying a \$500 million penalty for the privilege. Maintaining the ageing Sea Kings became ever more costly and ineffective. Shunning available helicopters plus Russian offers, our shoppers sought state-of-the-future-art on drawing boards and they took their time. In 2004 they signed a \$5.7 billion contract with Sikorsky for 28 Cyclones, promised to be designed, built, and delivered by 2008. Tilt! Ship landing decks had to be modified for the different characteristics of Cyclones but the Sea Kings were still in use. When 2008 slid by Sikorsky advised of problems that would require a slight delay of 43 months which have also slid by with no Cyclones. What with the F-35 fiasco, it should make one wonder until we recall all those claims of aircraft manufacturers. Literature bragged those bomber and transport aircraft I flew cruised at 300 knots. Short of getting out and pushing we could never surpass 190 knots.

FAITH IN HUMANITY: Accomplishments along with Curiosity, the Olympics, and many others, CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) lessens our dismay with the faults of our species. Just 3 years after WWII, another man-made calamity, Nobel physicist, Louis de Broglie, proposed this lab, and 12 European countries signed on, but it was not until 1995 that a budget was approved for the Large Hadron Collider. There are now 20 members with Germany, France, UK, Italy, and Spain contributing the most in that order. It employs 2,400 full-time and 1,500 part-time workers while hosting 10,000 scientists from

608 universities in 113 countries. **CANADA and CERN:** 150 Canadians have each devoted 20 years as part of the 137-country team that found that Higgs reclusé. Scientists at TRIUMF in Vancouver made and installed large portions of ATLAS, the particle detector in the Large Hadron Collider. ATLAS and CMS, each with over 3,000 workers, are the two teams that work independently at CERN. Canada contributes only to ATLAS.

TRIUMF (Tri-University Meson Facility) was founded in 1968 by Fraser University, UBC, and the University of Alberta and houses the world's largest cyclotron. Six more universities have since joined giving it a staff of 450 plus 150 students. Ten percent of the data collected at the \$10 billion CERN complex was analysed here. \$100 million in Federal and Provincial money made this possible.

It may take decades for benefits to evolve from this momentous discovery but how refreshing it is to feel pride in our human species for uniting in such a search for fundamental knowledge. Yet: **PRIORITIES:** Most of our leaders for decades have displayed a frightening lack of common sense. Our basic needs are safe water to drink, safe air to breathe, arable soil to produce safe food to eat, and for our numbers to remain within sustainable bounds. Yet we allow personal greed for the moment to monopolize our pursuits to the extent that the survival of our species is questionable. We have entered a new man-made and highly dangerous climatic age and these ages last from a few hundred to many thousands of years. The warnings of experts like Rachel Carson, James Hansen, Al Gore, David Suzuki, and Prince Charles now joined by William and Harry, plus the evidence all around us was not enough. Obama does promote solar and wind farms, but lacked determination and drive at the Rio+20 Conference, Romney is still in the coal age, Harper drags his feet, Alberta is gung ho to get every dollar it can out of the tar sands, and emerging nations want more emergence. We need more Prince Charles and Angela Merkels. On 16 August she left Harper in Ottawa to visit German and Canadian climate scientists at Dalhousie University in Halifax where they are assessing the health of the Atlantic and Arctic oceans. Only 2% of our oceans is protected. International groups have done good work and the U of California-UBC group used 10 factors to index coastal healths. Some ratings out of 100: Germany 73, Canada 70, USA 63, UK 61, World 60, China 53, India 52, Sierra Leone 36.

AIR TRANSAT AIRLINES, based at the Trudeau Airport Site, Montreal, keeps piling up awards such as, for 5 consecutive years, the best charter airline in Canada judged by the Agents' Choice Awards and now the world's best leisure airline judged by the World Airlines Awards from a 10-month survey of 18 million travellers on over 200 airlines. Surveys were rated on 38 different aspects of passenger experience.

EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES: There are too many rushing full steam ahead to exploit the fishing potential of the warming Arctic, not to mention gluttons in the oil and mining industries. How soon we have forgotten how over-fishing so denuded the Grand Banks that a decades-long ban had to be imposed. Fish taken from Canadian waters currently support an export market worth \$3.9 billion annually. In Pangnirtung, Baffin Island, the sealing industry died in the 1980s, but now it boasts a large fish-processing plant that exports \$4 million worth annually to China. In the rest of the Arctic catches have tripled for turbot, Arctic char, shrimp, clams, flounder, scallops, and crabs to provide a \$75-million annual export industry. Infrastructure and long-term, co-ordinated planning gets insufficient attention. Arctic ecosystems demand more in-depth studies.

Changes in the Arctic have been profound since 1946-49 and 1962-63 when I prowled the area. Changing from a nomadic to an urban life style has been slow and painful. I made many friends among the Inuit, finding them friendly, capable, and adaptable. They now own and operate many businesses including airlines. We Southerners, who call the shots, may have good intentions but we have too many commercial and government entities that result in spotty, disorganized, and discouragingly expensive progress. Inuit teenagers now have the highest suicide rate. At great expense we move in prefabricated homes but pay too little heed to the necessary accoutrements like roads, sewers, power production and lines. How much more in taxes can we ask the South to pay to transform the North, a vital part of their country but a part few will ever see? Wealth from resource extraction is a temporary thing, but without it how do we make the North self sufficient?

There is lots of wind up there and continuous summer sun so vegetable greenhouses should do well if we design them to cope with 6 dark months and continuous 30-below weather of winter. One summer on the DEW Line, I constructed a successful tiny greenhouse, but a replacement for a week when I was away flying left a window open that froze the lot. Yes, I was annoyed.

VEN CELLS and CONSCIOUSNESS: Major scientific breakthroughs are often not recognized as such for decades or centuries. In 1926 in Trieste, then a part of Austria, a neuroscientist, Constantin von Economo discovered in human brains long, large, spindly cells that appeared out of place, but always in the same two places: anterior cingulate cortex and fronto-insular cortex. He pondered that they could be associated with consciousness but nothing further was done for 80 years. Recent work indicates that these, now-called VENs (Von Economo Neurons), originated in the brains of the common ancestor of whales, dolphin, and other mammals, but varied in concentrations and numbers to become in some animals, like humans and elephants, social-monitoring networks that underlie our sense of self. These big cells provide a super highway for efficient social communication, emotions, and empathy. But too many Vens can cause negative self-assessment. A most interesting area for much more research before answers can be claimed.

ROB DAVIS and his ANNUAL MOTORCYCLE TOUR: Rob has sent me professionally-done DVDs of his tours since 2007, this time with 3 friends from Sligo. Starting from Shropshire, they cover Western Europe with emphasis on WWI and WWII sites. This year it was the Channel tunnel, Speyer Science Museum, Neuschwanstein Castle, the amazing BMW factory, 95% automated where each car is made to order, Kloster Andechs, Munich Hofbrauhaus, Minoyecques Fortress, the V3 Museum, and an Ammersee cruise. I remember how scenic it was when we took it in 1987. On one of the docks there was a buxom, topless, lass surrounded by six boys eagerly discussing, I presume, world affairs with her.

With the seldom-publicized, impressive underground V-3 site, the tourist entrance building is in the huge crater left by an RAF "Tallboy" bomb - one of the reasons the V-3 never got launched.

Book

Review



Predator Nation

Corporate Criminals, Political Corruption, and the Hijacking of America
by Charles H. Ferguson, Random House, NY, 2012, 367 pages

Charles Ferguson has a PhD in political science from MIT. He is the author of: *High Stakes* (Internet wars), *No End in Sight* (Iraq), *The Broadband Problem* (Market Failure), and *Computer Wars*.

This book is a discouraging summary of human failures. How easy it is for money to corrupt so many people in positions of trust. Outraged, Charles wrote this book because with this recent financial crisis the bad guys got away with it - not a single prosecution up to early 2012.

To me, an ex-banker, it is unbelievable how such fraud could ever exist. In 1938 I was hired by the Royal Bank as a new junior at \$400 a year, then sent to a branch in a small town 75 miles away with a population of 4,000 and 3 competing banks. About 2 months later I was about to perform one of my many chores - locking the entrance door at 3 PM as it would take us several hours to complete by hand all the ledger work and balance the books. As I approached the front door, in burst 5 men showing Inspector authorization. What a blitzkrieg! They politely had the manager, 2 accountants, 2 tellers, 2 ledger keepers, and secretary (our only female) stand aside, but they flattered me by asking for my help, thinking I, as a young junior, would not recognize I was being used to reveal any wrong doings. For instance one was very apologetic as he admitted his pen had made an incorrect mark on a ledger page he was checking and would I mind getting him our bottle of white-out - a tool strictly forbidden. I knew enough to inform him we did not have any. For several nights we did not get home until after midnight as the inspection continued and we still had to perform normally during business hours. In my 3 years in the bank prior to RCAF service I was to endure several of these surprise inspections.

Ferguson does claim that the world's fairest societies are Canada, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. He laments that the greatest disparity among developed nations is in the US where the current rot started in the 1970s. He gives a long story of how both major political parties have evolved to exist while serving the new oligarchy and how both co-operate to exclude 3rd parties.

One of many examples he details in the decade of Greed that included the Savings and Loans debacle, oil shock, hostile takeovers, politician bribing, junk bonds, and electronics introduction, is that of Michael Milken who engineered a personal \$500 million annual income. Caught in a brief wave of prosecutions, he was indicted on over 90 counts of fraud, given a \$330 million fine and 10 years in prison. He was released after two, still a billionaire, and able to return to his old practices.

Behind a facade of economic well being and some clever innovations bankers convinced officials to deregulate. Clinton's mistake was to leave Larry Summers, Alan Greenspan, and Robert Ruben in charge of regulations. This set the stage for the crash that came under George W. Bush, taking the world economy with it. Although still better than the opposition, our last great hope, Obama, lacked the courage to fulfill his rhetoric and Ferguson doubts that he could have even with a strong stand. He left in place those whose fraud got us into this mess thus dooming us to another decade or two of inequalities that ranks the US 95th in equality. With job loss, he cites, among others, Apple with 70,000 worldwide employees and using such firms as Foxcom of Taiwan with its 1.3 million workers and 300,000 robots. The explosive costs of US education deprives all but the elite access to the best schools. He does praise such movements as Occupy Wall Street and predicts an eruption of US patience but he worries about the arsenal of guns and growing number of hate groups. The future is not bright.

Bomber Command Memorial, continued

On my 3 mining operations, all at night and usually in the rain, 100 feet above the waves and the numerous flak ships that consigned so many of us to watery graves, I was able to plant six 1500-pound mines exactly where the Royal Navy wanted them. I was later informed that they sank two German ships. I often think of their crews. This accuracy was obtained by flying over unfriendly islands with ever-changing tidal coastlines, finding a definite pinpoint, and making a timed run to the shipping lanes. Of my 14 night bombing operations I managed to find and bomb the docks in Kiel, Lorient, and Saint Nazaire. Over Wilhelmshaven, Duisberg, Hamburg, Cologne, and Berlin, in spite of dangerously lingering amid the flak, looking for military targets, I could see no ground detail so, with heavy heart, bombed the cities as ordered. During these 17 raids I was on we lost 138 aircraft and 828 crew. Only 17% survived to become POWs.

A great friend to Joan and me was Pat Porter from northern British Columbia who sacrificed his life by staying at the controls to fight the plunge long enough to permit us to cut our way out of a burning and plunging aircraft with an axe. He saved six lives. I was last out. My parachute jerked open and I was in a tree. Pat did not make it. He is buried in Hamburg.

Post war we Bomber Command veterans were shunned because the politicians who gave us this nasty duty were now ashamed of what had to be done to win the war.

Joan lived through all of this with me so, after 70 years and still being on my honeymoon, there was no way I could go without her to the London unveiling that was quite impressive but far too late for the vast majority of us who have left this life.

CANAM GOLF

A not-so-bad day on a golf course will always beat a good day in the office and the 34th Annual Canadian-American Golf Tournament (CANAM) proved just that as 144 players enjoyed a great day on the links. On Friday, June 15th, golfers from military installations across Colorado gave up a day in the office to pack the Silver Spruce Golf Course at Peterson AFB for a day of whacking and hacking. A group of 72 golf carts were given the Green Flag shortly before 8:30AM after opening remarks by the NORAD Deputy Commander, LGen Tom Lawson, and a review of the rules by the tournament organizers.

As with previous CANAM Golf Tournaments, the Vegas and Hockey Holes provided an added level of difficulty to test each golfer's skills. The team's mental skills were also put to the test with a trivia question posted at each tee box.

After five hours of fun in the sun, each team found their way back to the clubhouse to enjoy a worldly feast and to see who would own bragging rights as CANAM 2012 Champions.



Team "Close Enoughs"

CANAM 2012 Winners:

Al Meinzinger, Bob Chekan, Tom Westfall, Chris Carper.

Bgen Meinzinger accept the trophy from LG Lawson and Paul Ellis.

The CANAM tournament committee extends a big thank you to 971 Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association for graciously donating the individual trophies for the members of the championship team. Hope to see you all again next year.

Major Brad MacAskill, RCAFA 971 Wing Liaison Officer

GIRLS WITH WINGS

Jim Stewart sent me the September newsletter for the US National Museum of World War II Aviation. It features WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots). I never had the good fortune of meeting any but I did with their sisters in the UK, so let me praise, and give thanks to, both.

I remember that cold winter morning that my crew of 7 stood waiting for a brand new Halifax to replace our "K" Kitty that had been badly mistreated by the Luftwaffe. It came in to one of the smoothest landings I have seen. It taxied up to where we were shivering and out from the 4-engine monster climbed a pretty, diminutive, girl, carrying the two cushions she needed to raise her high enough in the pilot's seat to see out over the instrument panels. We had barely time to thank her before she was driven off to town to catch the train to a different factory to deliver a different-type aircraft to a different squadron.

Courageous women in the US had a more difficult fight in overcoming prejudice. It was not until September 1942 that Nancy Harkness Love, with the help of Air Transport Command, was able to organize 25 women pilots into the WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Service). They had to buy their own uniforms and were 40 strong when merged into the WASP. Jacqueline Cochran failed in her attempt to persuade the Army Air Corps to accept women so took her group to the UK to fly with the RAF's Air Transport Command. On returning to the US to recruit more she was able to initiate a class of 25 into the WFTD (Women's Flying Training Detachment). It and the WAFS merged into the WASP 05 Aug 43. Entrance requirements were set at a higher level than for male pilots and the salary was only 65% of what males got. RAF women got equal pay with men. WASPs were to ferry 12,000 aircraft of 78 types. WASP records were classified and sealed until 1977 when President Carter gave them the recognition they deserved. In 2009 three of the 300 surviving WASPs, out of the 1,074 total, were in Washington as President Obama awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the WASP.

In the UK the WRAF (Women's Royal Air Force) originated in April 1918 when the RAF was formed out of the RFC (Royal Flying Corps) and RNAS (Royal Naval Air Service). With peace it was disbanded in 1920 but re-established in June 1939 as the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force). One of their most difficult jobs was in manning over 1,000 balloon-barrage sites. Actual woman-piloting was limited to the civilian ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary) with 168 female pilots and 1,152 males considered unfit for combat due to age or other disabilities so referred to themselves as "Ancient and Tattered Airmen". Together, they delivered 308,000 aircraft of 130 types with 8,489 flights being to overseas destinations. Ten percent were killed, including 16 women.

Our most popular bombing instructor was an RAF female. She was most knowledgeable and a superb instructor so it was puzzling on how quickly we all became slow learners, forcing her to squeeze into the narrow confines of the bomb-aimer position individually with us so we could learn, slowly, about the intricacies of new bomb sights. Did I mention she was also a real beauty? What a sad day when she was killed in a crash.

We should not forget that the Soviets had women fighter and bomber squadrons and the Luftwaffe used females as test pilots.

Canadian women? A few were among the 168 in ATA and in 1989 Canada was the first Western nation to accept female fighter pilots when Deanna Brasseur and Jane Foster qualified as CF-18 (Hornet) fighter pilots.

NEXT VERSE SAME AS THE LAST SEVERAL - THE 2012-2013 WING EXECUTIVE:

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MUSINGS ON A TRIP TO THE IBERIAN PENINSULA - PART I: GIBRALTAR, by DON SWIFT

Gib – the Rock – was towards the top of my Bucket list and we were able to pay it a visit which was one of the highlights of our vacation. I had flown into Gib in the early sixties when I was with the RAF but it was an in and out thing and beyond the briefing hut and what they called the officers mess I did not see much. This was about to change.

We were fortunate to have a city guide that was born and raised there and, even though I had done a lot of research prior to our trip he filled in the gaps which were plentiful.

The Rock is actually a giant hunk of limestone that was created by the continental shift. It rises 426 meters above sea level and is riddled with caves which created a fortress within a fortress. The Moors occupied it in 711 and used this as their base to conquer Spain and parts of France. The castle that they built still exists and is a major tourist attraction. England took control in the early 1700's, realizing as a great seafaring nation the importance of controlling the Straits of Gibraltar which was the only entry from the North Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea. They built a massive network of tunnels finishing with the Great Siege Tunnel in 1779 (an amazing project as dynamite and jackhammers were not available). Large rooms and even a chapel and a theatre for the occupants were chiselled out. During WW11 an additional 30 miles of tunnels were built. All this we saw on our tour but of special interest to me was the "100 ton gun" which was built in England, shipped to Gib, hauled up through the tunnels and placed overlooking the Straits. This was in 1870 and it packed a 2,000 lb shell which would probably do grievous harm to any vessel that got in its way.

The country has a population of about 30,000 packed into an area of 2.7 square miles! It is considered a British Overseas Territory and is in the European Union as part of the Southwest England Constituency -- all Gibraltarians have full British citizenship. The currency is the Pound Sterling, and, even though they have their own flag, the Union Jack was to be seen everywhere especially since the Queen's birthday was only a few weeks away. We found to our delight that it was more English than the old sod and the Bowler hat and the stiff upper lip still prevails. The British Empire is alive and well, old chaps!

The significance of Gib's strategic location has diminished somewhat in the last few years especially in the military aspect, but its port with the deep water harbours and its tax free status is one of the reasons the country is thriving. When we were there the port was a beehive of activity and in another area there were hundreds of ships at anchor waiting for assignments at no charge – quite a good incentive to standby in Gib!

The economy of Gibraltar is thriving, especially compared to the southern European countries that have unemployment in the 25% range - Gib has below 1%. It has attracted banks and other financial services companies from all the major countries of the world and is a safe harbour for all currencies because of its special tax treatment for international businesses. It also is a VAT and duty free city which of course brings in hordes of tourists via Spain and the many cruise ships that make Gib a favourite port of call. I'm happy to say that Carm however bought only one thing! **THE PLACE IS BOOMING!**

Now for some fun stuff – the Barbary apes. Not really apes but are Macaques – tailless monkeys that migrated from N. Africa and are now a protected species. Our guide drove us up to an area where there were several families and he knew most of them by name! Priscilla took to me right away (a long lost relative?) and insisted that we had a photo taken. Charles, a very large male, took to Carmen but all he was interested in was the contents of her pockets! A great ending of a magnificent day playing the role of tourists.

Editor's note: There is no need to label this Gibraltar photo . . .

Don is the better looking and more intelligent one of the two.



