



Spartans Summer Newsletter August 2017

The change in location from the still defunct Linguini Restaurant to the Felix Residence in Vaudreuil was a successful experiment and only one member failed to find the location. Bring a map next time Paul. Felix resident **George Larder** was our host, and helped **Gil Kerr** and **Al Lawson** with the luncheon arrangements. Special thanks to George for proposing this location and the screen and projector for an experimental presentation replacing the usual news report. We considered calling the event “the Larder show” as daughter Tracy provided the lap top, and granddaughter Sophie acted as “Operator” The presentation was well received and will be considered for some future luncheon. No senior MDA staff representative was available to brief us on current business, and particularly, the significant changes in MDA Corporate governance and ownership.

Surprise, surprise **Mary Buchanan** joined us after a long absence. She has stopped doing volunteer work at the Lakeshore General that had prevented her from attending our luncheons.

Susan Sztyk has returned to Montreal and joined us for the first time and may be attending future luncheons. Her former neighbor in Panama and former general manager, **Ken Perry** also joined us as a new member and first time visitor. Welcome to both.

Thanks to all committee members for their valuable contributions to the maintenance of our group.

Al Lawson	Photographer and list maintainer
George Larder	Treasurer, jam maker and Felix host
Gil Kerr	Luncheon organizer
Nicole Bourdeau	Chief recruiter
Margaret Gross	Webmaster
Ed Sorochan	Member at large
Gus Gross	Member at large



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Correspondence with members

Old colleague and friend **Terry Cagney**, aka The Red Train, started a flood of memories with this opening:

Hi Lorne: I just thought I should say hello, after all these years, and to say how much I enjoy reading your Spartan newsletters. It is so nice to hear news about so many old friends and colleagues. It brings back many pleasant memories. I am still living and enjoying life here on Vancouver Island - in Canada's evergreen playground, though it hasn't been so green this winter. My wife Catherine, whom I'm sure you will remember, unfortunately passed away a few years ago, so I am on my own again. I have finally given up golf for good – mostly because of age catching up to me. However, I have many other hobbies and activities to keep me busy, both indoors and outdoors, so life is still interesting and full of pleasures. I do however miss my old friends and remember well the good times we used to have. Take care Lorne and say hello to everyone for me.

To which I replied:

Dear friend Terry:

I am pleased that you enjoy the newsletters although the references to our colleagues, diminishes steadily. As a quirk of memory or association, the name Paul Caden came to mind as I was reading your message. Paul had a fertile imagination; lateral thinking or thinking outside the box it would be called now, when he would suddenly come up with some idea that had nothing to do with the job at hand but was endlessly fascinating, and distracting. Why else would I spend an hour calculating the performance of an electromagnetic rail gun for launching payloads into orbit when I should have been doing something more relevant to ISIS A. I also think of the Divcon episode when I believe Bob Clark came up with a truly original idea of raster generated symbols for display on regular TVs that did not get the recognition and support that it deserved. If you don't find typing too painful I would really appreciate an insider story for the newsletter and web site. I was an



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outsider but certainly recognized ideas of worth and was pained to see one squandered. My own limited perspective was that we spent too much of our limited effort in satisfying individual customers instead of doing good standard product development and marketing.

I have always had great respect for your skill set and have often recounted to my colleagues an ISIS situation when I was completely snowed under with system engineering tasks and entreated John Stewart to get someone to help out with the increasingly complicated digital telemetry system. This must have come at the time that Divcon was in decline and you appeared one morning and I asked you to create a master timing diagram for the system. As you left, with minimal discussion, I thought, that will keep him busy for a couple of weeks. I was astonished when two days later you presented a complete response with a large diagram in your impeccably drafted style, you may not have noticed my sigh of relief and appreciation. Many years later I recall asking you to prepare a work statement for some important project, a task I truly abhor. The result that you presented shortly was a model of clarity, scope and precision. One last recollection from the early days of satellite communications: I pondered whether a satellite in geosynchronous orbit could be “seen” from the earth. Without even having the time to define properly what I meant by that, I immediately thought of your broad intellect and left it to you. My only clarification was to assume that the satellite was a one meter diameter ball, half black and half white. I recall that the answer you came up with shortly was yes; with a modest size telescope and a relatively long photographic exposure you could see the trace of the satellite on the star field background.

Keep the grey cells working Terry.

Terry was perhaps a little too modest about his involvement with the Divcon project in his initial decline to provide some insider insight, but I do not give up easily, so I am still hopeful that he will share recollections from this or other projects that stick in his memory.



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I shared this prospect with our regular contributors and went on to comment on the Divcon project with the following:

Some of you may recall that Divcon was an initiative of Bob Clark (and Ross Warren) who came up with what I believe to be the original idea of generating symbols digitally using a raster technique, compatible with regular TV screens. The immediate application was to replace the awkward chalk board and closed circuit TV method for displaying departure and arrival information at airports and the like. In the late 50s even computers did not use standard monitors, but specialized cathode ray tubes (CRTs) with shadow masks containing symbols through which the electron beam was steered to create an image on the screen. In spite of the profound effect that digital generation of symbols was to have, it was not a commercial success at RCA and I hope Terry may give some insight into this milestone technology for which little recognition has been given. Dick Colt is another potential source of information as he was directly involved, but is currently out of touch. My recollection was that Conrac, a manufacturer of quality TV monitors immediately appropriated the technology as a good mechanism for selling more monitors, and was commercially successful.

Regular contributors **Ian Grier** (A Norwegian visit), **John Barkwith** and **Mike Morris** (Brazilian Earth Station) continue to inform and entertain us with accounts that are posted on our web site of memorable field trips. (See the Brazil earth station story by John and Mike in two chapters) I encourage you to not only consult the site but also consider adding to our shared heritage with your own accounts. I conceded grudgingly with Mike that I was probably the right person to provide a chapter three on the subsequent Brazilian satellite contract, commenting as follows:
Gentlemen:

Well done all, the stories were so interesting and engaging that I forgot my second cup of morning coffee. I am probably the only person who can report first hand on the Brazilian satellite contract so I will put the task on my “to do” list.



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Briefly I made my first visit to Brazil in 1976 while still part of RCA. We were confident that we (RCA) had a good satellite design as we had successfully built and launched RCA Satcom for which Jack Keigler and I received the 1976 Sarnoff medal for outstanding technical achievement. Unfortunately from my perspective, when the engineering assets of RCA were sold to Spar in 1977, Larry Clark was deeply committed to Hughes as the leader in communications satellites. We were obliged to adapt our payload design to an improved but still inferior design of the Hughes HS 376 spinner. Considering the complex and difficult corporate changes that RCA was about to experience, it is problematic whether the Hughes option would be better or worse than RCA. It was abundantly clear to me that the close partnership between RCA Montreal and RCA Space Systems division in Hightstown would not be duplicated with Hughes, or likely any other eventual American corporate winner. I respected but was never in awe of Hughes technical competence but was deeply suspicious of the ruthless and sometime illegal marketing of Hughes where Spar was simply a lamb to slaughter. I noted with some satisfaction in later years that marketing lead hand Paul Visher of Hughes was caught out by US federal authorities and spent some time incarcerated for illegal activities.

I agree that Spar credibility on Brasilsat was helped by the prior earth station work, not because of technical content but because of the demonstration of a willingness to work cooperatively as equals.

Lorne

An Old Employee List

There was a flurry of detective work early this year by regular correspondents and luncheon attendees, on an old RCA employee list unearthed by Milt Lillo. The objective was to determine the date and the specific reason for this puzzling and clearly incomplete record. The hiatus in this historical research was broken in this report period by a search for **John Stovman** also missing in the list



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although remembered by many. I knew John well as I met him in the early 50s while we were both university undergrads and members of the RCAF Reserve Officers Training Plan (ROTP). He subsequently worked at RCA in both the aerospace and earth station areas and ultimately for the Spar robotic division in Brampton. He unfortunately passed away nearly a decade ago.

Terry Cagney commented on John Stovman and the Divcon project as follows:

Like you folks, I have totally lost contact with John Stovman – I didn't know that he was living in the Vancouver area. John was a very good engineer and I had a great deal of respect for his abilities. Lorne: I think the article by Bob Clark and Dr. Warren would be a much better source of info about the Divcon development than anything I could provide. I had only a peripheral role in that project. One thing I do recall is that Bob, Dick Colt and others once went to Iran to install and operate a Divcon system in Persepolis, the ancient capital of the Persian Empire, where they were holding a major do to celebrate the 2500th (I think) anniversary of the accession of Darius the Great. The demonstration was very successful, but I don't believe that it resulted in any important business opportunities for us.

News

Ed Sorochan had the misfortune to slip on the ice and break his left ankle. Even in a cast he could still drive and by this time is fully recovered.

Peter Landovskis kept us updated with this account:

I have finally settled (well almost - I still have to unpack the little things and put pictures up on the wall) so I thought I would bring you up to date on what has been happening.

I arrived out in BC on February 11 and started work on Feb 14. I was assigned a project that was running very late and did not



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have good customer relations. Final testing is in Quebec City in August and there is still a lot of work to do on it. Our equipment was installed on the superstructure that was being built in Finland so on March 3 I went there for a week. The superstructure (weighing 2,000,000 kilos) was put on a barge and is currently being towed across the Atlantic to be put on the ship in Quebec City where we will go to finish our work.

It took a while to find a place (even rentals are more expensive here) but I have now settled in. The address is 35 Wildwood Drive in Port Moody and you are all welcome to stay with me when you come out for a visit. (Ed can we arrive singly or in groups?) I am using the second bedroom as a den but it does have a fold out couch (if I get enough visitors, I will get a better bed). My mailing address is PO Box 72103 Old Orchard, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4P9. I would be very pleased to have you visit and to host you.

I played my first golf game of the year last Saturday at a golf course called Furry Creek (This was recommended to me by one of my friends in Ontario and it was worth the one hour drive. The weather was rainy and the grounds were still very wet but I started the year with two pars. The picture is of me standing on the first tee. The fairway is in the background 165 feet lower.





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The signature hole here is the 14th. One of the guys at work told me that one time he played here and looked out over the water and saw a whale and then looked down the fairway and saw a bear - ah the excitement of BC golf. Here is a picture of the 14th hole.



I have saved the most exciting news for last. I became a grandfather on Thursday the 13th - a girl 7 lbs 4 oz called Samantha Ryan (see picture below - I have a lot more pictures - just ask if you want them sent your way).



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That's it for now. Please keep in touch and I hope that some of you will plan a trip out this way.

Deaths

We note with sadness the passing of many colleagues and friends. Death notices and links to obituaries that we are aware of are posted on our web site

Claude Couillard informed us that **Gilles Lachapelle** has died.

We were alerted that **Marcel Morin** has died. Marcel was not a Spartans member but worked at RCA, and then Spar Aerospace until he was elected Mayor of Pierrefonds.

Charlie Morton noted the passing of **Denton Clark** in Florida on August 20th. He was president of RCA Ltd for several years following John Houlding and had a distinguished career in business and charitable organizations.



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<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/montrealgazette/obituary.aspx?n=george-denton-clark&pid=186490304>

Nicole noted the passing of **Ginette Cain** on Sunday June 11. She worked at Spar for quite a few years and she was the secretary for Philippe Quenneville, Director, Finance.

While Mike Morris was searching for for a photo of **Mel Lopes** (no luck) to accompany one of his stories he came across an obituary referring to "Murillo Lopes, of Pointe Claire QC" dated April 2016. That was Mel's full name and correct spelling and Mike knew that he lived in Pointe Claire opposite Fairview shopping centre at least until 2014. The obit was just a simple statement with no comments. Mike knew his son, Helder, who worked for SRT years ago but had not spoken to him for some time.

George Larder commented on the passing of **Paul Callaghan:**

I was very sorry to hear of Paul's death, another one of the old timers gone. I remember him as our treasurer in the early days of the SPARTans. Everything was a lot less formal then. As treasurer when we met he would pull out a piece of paper and read out our financial statement and that was it. In private life he had an extensive Gazette route which he delivered every morning before departing for work. He used to carpool and I know one of his fellow travel companions was Maurice Perron, one of our (and often the only one) technical writers. We had a group of five or so of us who played "Hearts" without fail every lunch hour and whenever we were short of a player he was the one we most often called on to join us. I was always pleasantly surprised at how upbeat and enthusiast he was about everything.

While he was our treasurer, one of our luncheons was held in the back room of a small restaurant on Taschereau Blvd. on the south shore. He proposed a contest to come up with a name for our group, the prize being a free lunch for you and your companion if you had one. I proposed SPARTans and it was accepted, resulting in a free meal for Dorothy and I. SPAR, as a lot of people know, stands



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for Special Products and Associated Research The “tans” was added to 1) make a full word, and 2) to represent our group. It stands for **t, trendy, a, adventurous, n, new, s, seniors.**

Some members noticed the obituary for **Nick Piszcyk** and recalled fondly this soft spoken man of Polish origin. Roger Rak confirmed that he worked in aerospace as a senior drafting checker until his retirement. He executed his work with precision in the days when everything was done manually, with such human effort and accuracy now replaced by computer aided design.

An obituary was also noted for Peter Oswald’s wife, but there was no service at her request.

From his son John Duk: (Val) **Wladyslaw Duk** passed away at age 93 on Monday July 24, 2017. He started with RCA St Henry, Qc in 1960 and retired with Spar Aerospace in Ste Anne's. His funeral was held Wednesday Aug. 2nd at St Veronica's Church in Dorval, Quebec.

New Members

We welcome old colleague and friend **KK Chan** as a new member and hope to see him at some future luncheon. He updated us with the following information:

I apologize profusely for my late reply. We were away in Asia in February and March for work (still working full time) and vacation. When we got back, it was Taxation time! Hotel Wi-Fi services sometimes were not too reliable. I could have missed your earlier email. This problem is solved by becoming a member of Spartan. A cheque for the membership fee has been sent to the club, so soon I should have access to your website and get all the information needed in advance to plan my trips so that they do not clash with the Spartan lunches.



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When the lunch was set for May 11, I planned to attend the Spring luncheon. Since the date was moved forward to May 4, I was not able to come, unfortunately. Priscilla was going on a tour with her friends to Germany and Austria on May 8 and we had events on May 6 & 7. Now I have to wait till the fall for the Spartan lunch if there is one.

All the best and wish you all a fantastic time at the lunch meeting. I am looking forward to the pictures.

Best regards, KK

Marguerite McKinnon has accepted our invitation to be a SPARtan member and to attend our Fall Luncheon as our guest. She is looking forward to meeting some friends that she worked with. Some of you may not remember her as she worked quietly, mainly out of sight as a telephone operator at SPAR.

We were surprised and pleased to welcome **Ken Perry** as a new member. We hope that he will find future opportunities to join us from his retirement hideaway in Panama.

Sending regrets

Unfortunately once again I am out of town on that day. I am teaching at an ESA Summer School in Malta (tough assignment!!!). I hope everyone has a great lunch and I wish everyone well. **Peter Garland**

Dave Barnby: I ordered and received a copy of the book: '*A Heritage of Excellence*', about SPAR (and some RCA) recommended in last newsletter - it has a picture of Doug Jung receiving an award.

It's almost entirely about the satellite side of things. It's a pity there's no equivalent for M/W and Earth Stations. With all the historical accounts now on the SPARTANS site I would have



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thought it wouldn't be too difficult to edit the accounts into some sort of publication (Ed. Do I sense an experienced volunteer editor?)

The other day doing some clearing out I came across a SPAR (actually RCA) sales record of all the terrestrial projects from 1959 til 1976, some impressive list - there are also some good pictures. Dave subsequently provided scans of the subject documents to us.

Also sending regrets

Dave Barnby	Colette Besner	Nicole Bourdeau	John & Jacqueline Burrows
K K Chan	Dean Collis	Peter Garland	Pat Hammond
Walter Hrycyna	Brian Ito	Al Lawson	Roger Louie
Richard Lubelsky	Fred and Tanis Markhauser	Claire McCole	Bill McMath
Dan Mercik	Les Meszaros	Tony Raab	Roger Rak
Gaetan Robert	Jan Robinson	George Rout	James Sisley
Joe & Mary Soul	Elia Tallon	Paul Weijers (Forgot the map)	Bromwen (Kathy) Williams

A special thanks to former members of the communications group who responded so generously to the challenge of sharing some of their interesting experiences.

Your editor
Lorne