



## THE HALLWAY

The Hallway is the location in the Pentagon where the staff of the Air Force Chief Communicator worked for many years. Its origins go back to at least the mid-60s when the office of the Chief Communicator was in Room 5B477. It was the B and C hall between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> corridors on the fifth floor of the Pentagon. The staff occupied almost all of that hall, with the exception of a small office occupied by an element of foreign military sales and a small office occupied by the highly classified communications support team for the Under Secretary of the Air Force acting in his space management role. *Source: Maj Gen Bob Edge, USAF, Ret., Assistant Chief of Staff for Communications & Computer Resources (AF/KR), 1975-77; and the oldest living chief communicator.*

To the best of people's memory the term "Hallway" was an action-officer created, shorthand office lingo that got adopted informally. It does not appear to have been coined by any one person. Over the years the term became an endearing one and a source of pride for all who toiled there. They toiled not just from hard work and long hours, but from long walks between The Hallway and the offices of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff (PR, KR and XO) located in the 9<sup>th</sup> corridor, E-Ring. These offices were about as far away as you could get from each other and still be in the same building. *Source: Maj Gen Dale Meyerrose, USAF, Ret.* A similar version is that the name came from the action officers who had to run back and forth from The Hallway to the 9<sup>th</sup> Corridor, E-Ring -- usually in a panic to get slides, staff summary sheets, or get top cover for their bosses. *Source: Lt Gen Lee Paschall, USAF, Ret, via Maj Gen Meyerrose.*

The fact that working on The Hallway was a source of pride is recalled by General Meyerrose. When the Air Force merged the communications (XOK) and the data automation (ACD) career fields in 1983, they created the Assistant Chief of Staff for Information Systems (AF/SI). Captain Meyerrose said, *"I was moved from 5B483 (formerly XOK space) to 5C1038 (formerly ACD space) and I wasn't real happy. When Maj Gen Edmonds put me in the Firehouse in '92, I was back on The Hallway in 5B517 -- directly across the hall from the "spooks" mentioned by Bob Edge".* Meyerrose noted that he felt like he was *"home again"*.

Another view of The Hallway as a source of pride is offered by Brig Gen Bud Bell, who was there as a Major at the same time as Meyerrose. He said,

*“I started my first Pentagon tour in Feb 1984. We were still integrating with the data automation folks. Our part of the organization was housed in 5E525 which we called the "Orphanage". We were far enough away from the "Hallway" to avoid constant supervision but close enough to get there in under a minute if needed. After six months, I did move to the "Hallway" and became a member of the Joint Matters Division.”*

Lt Gen Al Edmonds, USAF, Ret., was the chief communicator from 1989-1992. During that time he held two different titles: Assistant Chief of Staff for Systems for Command, Control, Communications & Computers (AF/SC) and Deputy Chief of Staff for Command, Control, Communications & Computers (AF/SC). General Edmonds also reinforced this “source of pride” by stating,

*“My first impression when I arrived at the Air Staff was that The Hallway was where the communications family had settled and thrived for the Air Force. It was the place where the functional manager resided. All of the major decisions relating to communications systems and the people who operated and maintained them had their genesis on The Hallway. It was a place to learn how to have a successful Air Force career by supporting the Air Force mission as your only priority.*

*When you turned the corner from the fourth or fifth corridor, it felt like you had made it home. Everyone between those two corridors was a member of the same family and had a similar pedigree. Rated officers who had been assigned to the communications-electronics areas became part of us, mostly never to go back to their previous career field. Everyone seemed to know the background of all of the other hallway players. After a year or two, we would also know the blood family members either in person or by deeds. No one was ever expelled or put out to pasture—they simply moved on to the next challenge. Secretaries and action officers alike openly championed and basked in the successes of the Hallway alumni when they moved to other jobs or when they returned with more responsibilities.*

*I guess if you think of the Hallway in the way it affected me and my career—and I might add many others—it provided a place for my Air Force career to go through a metamorphosis like a caterpillar to a butterfly. Anytime I came back to visit for work or social purposes, I felt like I was coming to my Air Force home. Bottom line: The Hallway was the home that Gordon Gould, Lee Paschall, Bob Edge, Bob Sadler and Bob Blake built. The rest of us have been caretakers”*

Carolyn Mahlum was the secretary in the front office for more than 20 years from 1975 to early 1996. She inherited the role of “Mother Confessor” and “the person to turn to” from Ellie Kreamer, who had been there for many years before. Carolyn said,

*“The Hallway was the home base of the Communicators. Almost everyone cycled through there once with some recycling through on their way up the ladder. Anybody who had ever been assigned there never really left; they were still a part of the Hallway family regardless of where they were stationed. I was always getting calls from former hallway workers just to talk or for info or help with something. And I never stopped working for the Generals as they retired or moved on to another assignment; it just became long distance work.”*

The Hallway was the home of the chief communicator and his staff until 1998, when the Pentagon Renovation project began. Lt Gen Bill Donahue was the Director of Communications and Information (AF/SC) at that time. The PENREN office had decided to accomplish the renovation in five steps, doing one of the five Pentagon pie-shaped wedges at a time. The plans were to move all offices in a wedge out to swing space for the time it took to do the reconstruction. General Donahue had the vision to see that plan as a cumbersome daisy chain of inefficiency for the Air Staff. He told the planners that the SC staff would move out to Rosslyn for the duration of the construction as long as they guaranteed reliable transportation that could get action officers from Rosslyn to the Pentagon in 15 minutes or less, and if they gave the SC and his key staff suitable space in the Pentagon. They agreed and the SC moved to a new office suite in Corridor 1 between A and B rings. General Donahue noted that the SAF/AQ agreed to do the same thing and occupied the other space adjacent to SC in Rosslyn. He also recalled the following,

*“I believe the nose of the airplane that hit the Pentagon on 9/11/01 ended up in the space that would have been where the SC was to be in the old Hallway area.”*

As General Donahue’s deputy, General Bell became the landlord for all the communicators outside the Pentagon.

*“It was about this same time AFCIC (Air Force Communications and Information Center) was created and many of the authorizations we had were moved below the HAF Line. The combination of out of the building and not on the Air Staff caused some to question if our parents were married? In August 1998, Maj Gen George Lampe retired and I became Gen Donahue's deputy. Technically, I was the AFCIC Vice Commander. I had an office in Rosslyn, one in Crystal City, and one in the Pentagon. I spent most of my quality time on the bus going between offices. Of course I had 3 hats - one for each desk whether I was there or not.”*

In April 1998 General Donahue hosted a “Hallway Farewell Party” as the last of the action officers packed their files for the move to Rosslyn. He invited former Hallway members to join in the festivities. It turned into a Hallway Destruction Party as current and former action officers wielded hammers to break down the fiberboard walls. The Air Force C4 Association chipped in with free pizza and beer. While the mood was festive as action officers banged away at the walls, it was also bittersweet. There was a strong element of nostalgia as everyone viewed the Home of the Communicator for the last time.

For more than 33 years the men and women who served proudly as professional communicators called The Hallway their home. Hopefully this brief history will capture why they felt such a source of pride in their home and their profession.

Jim Lauducci  
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