

RADC scientist bound for China as 'People-to-People' ambassador



John Dove

By JOAN K. KAHLER

Most scientists would jump at the chance to become part of the prestigious People-to-People International Citizen Ambassador program and join a delegation of high tech experts to the People's Republic of China.

Not John Dove.

"I gave it a lot of thought," the 59-year-old Roman said as he discussed the four-week trip to Hong Kong, Peking, and Shanghai that awaits him in September.

First, it meant early retirement from Rome Air Development Center, where he has been a program manager and senior engineer for 28 years.

Second, it meant sharing his expertise in laser technology with educators and scientists in Communist China — the enemy of the Nationalist Chinese whose defenses he helped upgrade as a government technical adviser during the late 1970s.

As a Citizen Ambassador traveling under the auspices of the White House and State Department, Dove knew he would be "building bridges of friendship" between the two countries.

"And I knew the people are good people. I have no problem dealing with them on Mainland China or Taiwan," he said. A friend, who was born in Peking and is now an American citizen, encouraged him to say yes. It's a good opportunity, he reasoned. Dove agreed maybe it was time to "hear the other side."

Dove did say yes. As a volunteer delegate, he will pay all his own expenses. The holder of six patents and a pioneer in laser and electron beam data storage and retrieval systems, Dove will be presenting talks on "Laser Technology and Information Processing."

He will be demonstrating how information processing can be applied to medicine, chemistry and manufacturing, he said. "I'll be helping China to build its technology base."

"It's all a voluntary effort by roving ambassadors to promote understanding, peace and friendship among the nations of the world," Dove said. "At the same time, there will be a meaningful exchange of scientific and technical information to further the development of the participating countries."

Dove has stacked up an impressive list of credentials in the field of laser technology, and the invitation to become a Citizen Ambassador recognizes his contributions to the developing field of information storage and retrieval. He doesn't know who suggested him. "They refuse to tell me," he said.

The Columbia University graduate will attend a meeting of the International Optical Society in Peking, will have time for sightseeing in Shanghai, and visit Japan enroute home.

He said he knows only a few words of Mandarin, and will be studying tapes on the difficult Chinese language in preparation for his trip.

Dove served as technical adviser to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization from 1967 to 1970. He is fluent in Dutch, having lived those years in The Netherlands; speaks some German, French and Spanish. He has traveled extensively in Europe and the Scanandian countires as a technical adviser to allies.

As a Citizen Ambassador, Dove would like to help upgrade engineering schools in Nigeria, where he has friends, and other African countries; help spread Western ideologies in the Middle East and cement friendship in South America.

"I'll go where I'm sent, but if I have a choice," Dove said, "that's where I want to go."

Dove's wife, Zelder, is deceased. He has a daughter, Susan, who is in college in Boston.

He has many irons in the fire here at home. He is president of Dove Electronics, which he runs out of his home, 413 Ridgeoow Drive.

He's now developing a process to transfer 26 translations of the Bible onto a laser disc "so that scholars and seminarians can review the translations and determine the best meaning of the verses." He said he came up with the idea while talking with a Baptist cleric in Chicago, "and I'm very excited about it. It's something I've wanted to do for years."

He is also researching the application of laser video disc technology to education and training. "We've got all that technology and we should be using it. Somebody has to step out and say 'let's do it!'," he said. And he is.