

THE COMMUNITY COORDINATOR PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, D.C.

by Valerie Judd and Marguerite McDermott,
Community Coordinators

As the first year of operation of the Community Coordinator office nears completion, we find ourselves very busy gearing up for the new posting season. Over the past year, we have been actively involved with housing and educational concerns, collecting information about the area, orientation days for new arrivals, and organizing a few social activities for the Canadian community.

We serve such a large community (over 300 families, External and military), it is surprising, even to us, how the job has expanded during the past year. Our task of trying to bring the community together presents quite a challenge but we have found our *Canadian Connection* newsletter to be a very useful tool in keeping the community informed. This past winter we visited the Family Liaison Office at the State Department and gathered several useful ideas from them. 1986-87 promises to be another challenging season for the Community Coordinators. We are looking forward to that challenge.



The Capitol

ADAPTING

Most of us will readily admit that relocating is a stressful experience. It's no secret that individuals respond differently to stress. Frankly, having emerged virtually unscathed from a South American posting, I expected adjusting to life in Washington would be "a piece of cake".

Actually it was ... several pieces of cake, cookies, booze ... anything I could get my hands on and manage to get to my face. Stress never manifests itself in me as anorexia! Even with my jaw wired I'm sure I could absorb chocolate by osmosis. However, it's comforting to know I'm not alone in this disgusting form of maladjustment.

Any of you who suffer this syndrome know what inevitably follows ... low self-esteem. And when you're not fond of yourself, living in Washington may be particularly difficult.

Remember ... everyone in Washington is a TYPE A, an over-achiever and very aggressive. At your first cocktail party (wearing your dress with the elastic waistband) you are most likely to be asked that terrifying question, "What do you do?" Being honest, you may have to reply "spouse", or (to borrow a famous phrase) "wife of". Their eyes glaze over and you move quietly to the hors-d'oeuvres tray.

By now food bills are mounting. You may decide to take advantage of the seemingly lower prices at Magruder's. And what a novel experience that turns out to be! You can't really recall being addressed as "hey, you" by a cashier before and while you couldn't get near the "ten cukes for \$1" you managed to come away with two packages of stale doughnuts for 50¢.

By this time, you conclude that a new (albeit larger) wardrobe would make you feel better about yourself. You try Bloomingdales (friends in Canada said it was 'THE' Place), but alas, you couldn't get the saleslady's attention ... she was busy filing her nails. You go off to a discount place (damn that Canadian dollar) and find something cute in size 18. Entering the communal fitting room with great modesty (embarrassment even), you look around (discreetly of course) and immediately feel a wave of relief. It's BLIMP CITY!! Comparatively speaking you aren't half bad.

CONGRATULATIONS! You are on the road to recovery. Now go home and eat your salad!

Valerie Judd



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WASHINGTON VOCABULARY

- Beltway — the multilane circumferential highway that bypasses the city's clogged arteries
- Beltway Bandits — small high-tech companies that have sprung up around the beltway
- The Hill — referring to the Capitol building where the Senate and the House of Representatives meet and have their offices
- 1600 — the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
- Foggy Bottom — the area where the State Department has its offices, refers to the fact that it was built on a swamp and often foggy but now is "foggy" for other reasons
- The District — shortened form of the District of Columbia which is the city of Washington proper versus the greater metropolitan area where the majority of the people reside
- The Skins — the Redskins, Washington's up and down football team
- Langley — place name used as euphemism by people reluctant to admit they are referring to the CIA Headquarters.