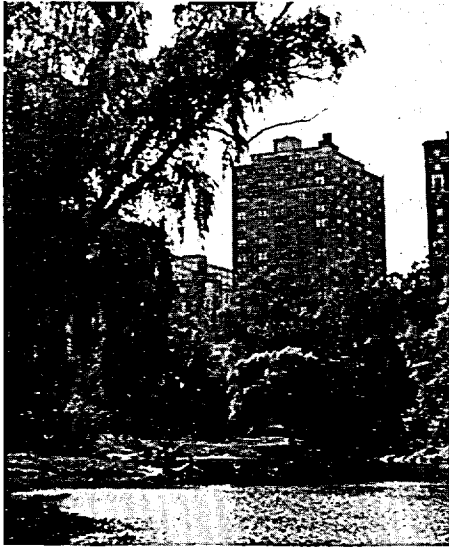


IMPRESSIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS

NEW YORK TO MINNEAPOLIS

by Marlis Blackstock

Marlis, George and their six children have spent 12 years in the U.S., the last four of which were in Minneapolis. They returned to Ottawa in 1983.



Central Park, New York, New York

New York is a fabulous, exciting city — provided you are not trying to raise a family of two teenage daughters and an infant son.

We had never lived in an apartment before, so it took a while for us (plus our animals, who had never even seen an elevator) to get used to our new environment. Our girls were the first ones to be totally integrated into the New York lifestyle. It was as if they had always lived there — walking, riding the bus and subway everywhere and adjusting well at school. My husband, who had been to New York as a tourist, loved everything about it, including his job. That left me trying to cope and manage our new and different lifestyle in this enormous, initially intimidating city.

Having spent a total of 12 years in the U.S., I can say that New York is like no other city there and its people are not like the rest of the Americans we had come to know and love.

One thing we all found out early in our posting is that the city is not as dangerous as one is led to believe, provided, of course, you use a bit of common sense. We all took turns walking the dog at night, for example, and nothing ever happened. Every apartment building has a well lit front door and a doorman just inside who prides himself on recognizing everyone from the neighbourhood.

After two years in New York we got our marching orders once again. I suddenly panicked, realizing that I would be leaving this city without having done or seen what one is supposed to do or see. So, I hired a babysitter for one complete week and went out and "did" New York.

Our new posting was to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota. Never having heard much about them, we just could not imagine why we had been chosen to go there. It felt like a total let-down after New York. Our apprehensions evaporated immediately upon our first visit.

It is a most amazing city, with a small, unimpressive downtown core but a huge, beautiful "suburbia" dotted with parks, lakes, big gardens and elegant homes. The Residence is on a small side street, right on a lake with loons, Canada geese, ducks and other wildlife and only three miles from the Consulate General in the downtown area. The neighbours made us very welcome and couldn't have been kinder.

The city offers a variety of good theatres (the Tyrone Guthrie, to name one) plus art galleries and museums to which well-known exhibitions, musicians and actors come regularly. Some little-known facts are that the great Picasso exhibition was put together there before touring throughout the U.S., St. Paul has the only permanent Chamber Orchestra in North America and the Chanhassan Theatre, with its four theatres under one roof, is the largest in North America.

What also came as a surprise was the fact that many large corporations are headquartered in the Twin Cities — Control Data, 3M, Tonka Toys, Pillsbury, Honeywell, Cargill, to name a few — adding an interesting dimension to the operations of our Consulate General there.

Was it my ignorance then that left me so unenthused when I first heard of our posting to Minneapolis, or was it the fact that the U.S. Midwest is unfortunately, all too often, a neglected area in the minds of many Canadians.

We had a marvellous four year posting.

BOSTON

by Gloria Williams

Gloria, Tim and their two children, Matthew and Caroline, lived in Boston from 1978 to 1980.

When, after only 15 months back from abroad, my husband phoned to say "It's Boston"; my incredulous (in retrospect rather explosive) response was, "BOSTON! Is that what fluency in Spanish, German, French and English gets you? We might as well stay in Ottawa".

Now, four years later with another posting in between, we remain in love with that city — the whole family "sans exception". Of six postings, it was, in most ways, the best. We still talk about our time there, we keep in contact with our neighbours and friends and a return visit is presently in the works.

Why the fascination for this near-by, English speaking city? For me, it is not because it is exotic or even very different from Canada, but rather because of an admirable combination of friendliness, culture, and creative energy. To take the most banal adjectives that spring to mind, Boston is comfortable, interesting, very hospitable, appreciative of people, armed with a strong community spirit, supportive of the arts and history, filled with pride in its past, well known for excellence in academic pursuits and in addition to all this is set in a beautiful New England countryside rimmed by sizeable mountains to the north and miles of sandy beaches and the sea to the east.

My strongest memories: A welcome party offered by the neighbours for us to meet a dozen families living around us. (A list of names complete with ages of children was supplied beforehand.) From that first weekend to the last good-bye party I have never lived in a more hospitable, warmer or more supportive neighbourhood anywhere in the world, including Canada.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra — what a treat to hear Seiji Ozawa conducting these world-class musicians with an innovative and interesting programme throughout the season. You soon knew half the people by sight plus the orchestra. Eighty per cent of the listeners are subscribers and you have the opportunity to meet the musicians personally after performances.



Boston, Massachusetts