

□ ANECDOTE CONTEST □

a malaysian adventure

Dear Ms. Gauvin,

Enclosed is my submission to the LIAISON anecdote contest. I realize it is somewhat lengthy, but somehow all the details seemed necessary to the telling of the tale.

I am an enthusiastic reader of your publication. I feel it contributes a great deal to communication between those of us "at home" and abroad in the Foreign Service.

Sincerely,

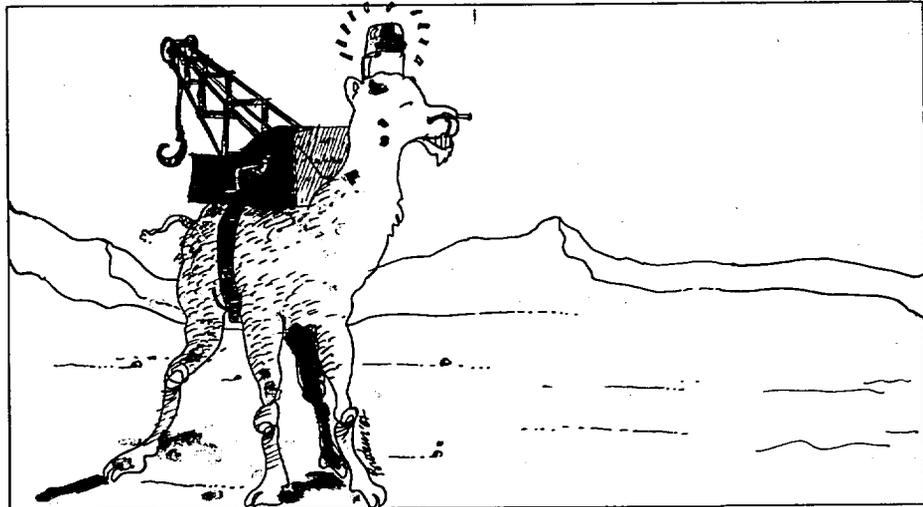
Judy Holton
(Mrs. Philip)

A MALAYSIAN ADVENTURE

It had been an idyllic weekend. The fabled beaches of Malaysia's east coast were everthing we'd hoped for: miles of white sand, fringed with palms and casuarinas. Reluctantly, our family of four prepared to return to Kuala Lumpur.

The car's engine began to falter. "It must be the heat," Philip said. The engine gasped again and died. There wasn't a soul in sight. Who would choose to venture out in this blazing mid-day sun?

As we peered into a grove of coconut palms just down the road, however, we saw a small hut bearing the notice, "Pondok Polis". We approached the rural police station where Philip spoke to the young officer on duty. Although we had been in Malaysia for nearly two months, this was the first person we had encountered who spoke not a word of English. Our command of Bahasa Malaysia extended only as far as the



social pleasantries of "thank you" and "good morning". We did not know the word for "towtruck".

Eventually, though, through vigorous sign language and some artistic skill, Philip communicated our predicament. Looking around, he realized that, aside from the desk and chair, the hut was empty. There was no telephone. Through further wordless negotiations, the policeman indicated that he would arrange transportation to the nearest telephone. The children and I were escorted to a tiny building, which turned out to be the local "kedai" or provisions shop, and social centre as well. We sipped our cold drinks amid the friendly stares of most of the community. Meanwhile, Philip hopped on the back of the motorcycle which mysteriously emerged out of the palm grove, apparently driven by a friend of the policeman. Since there was only one helmet, the cyclist gallantly declined to wear it. With some misgivings, I watched my husband and his nameless rescuer roar down the dusty road.

In due course, Philip and his "driver" reappeared, with news that a towtruck was on its way. The "truck" turned out

to be a jeep, fitted with a derrick to which our fire-engine red Toyota was hitched. It seemed incapable of pulling our car, let alone all four of us as passengers, but by late afternoon we completed the 30-kilometer journey to Kuantan. The garage was closed for the day, and we began to think about finding accommodation for the night.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, two immaculately dressed mechanics arrived, each carrying a briefcase filled with tools and looking for all the world like surgeons called in to consult on a serious case. They diagnosed a broken water pump. A young boy was dispatched on his bicycle to the parts depot, which was to be opened especially for this emergency. When the new pump arrived minutes later, the two mechanics set to work with extraordinary precision. As the sudden darkness of the tropical night descended over Kuantan, we paid what seemed a modest sum in view of the services rendered, and drove off.

The happy ending to our small misadventure proved a warm introduction to our three delightful years in Malaysia □