

THE COMMUNITY COORDINATOR PROGRAM

TOKYO: THE MYSTERIES OF THE ORIENT

by Margaret Oldham, Carolyn Brereton and Debra Price, Community Co-ordinators.

Tokyo, as a large and technologically advanced community, has presented different challenges to the Community Coordinators than the provision of survival techniques necessary in many developing countries. Lack of both written and spoken Japanese is a major hindrance to easy mobility within the country. Since the Coordinators have all studied Japanese, both welcoming and orientation programmes have involved guided introductions to neighbourhood facilities, to specialized shopping and/or tourist areas in addition to explanations of intricate transportation systems.

Canadians faced with a multitude of possibilities have turned to the community resource materials made available by the programme. For example, which of the 13 international schools meets the needs of your children? In the area of health, the programme has provided assistance and reassurance particularly when dealing with medical specialists and the bewildering complexities of hospitalization in Japan.

The mysteries of the Orient remain mysterious to many and therefore providing insights into various aspects of Japanese life, society and culture is an important function for the Coordinators. There is no lack of interesting activities and accessible local trips, and through distribution of brochures, books and booklists as well as a monthly newsletter, the "Nippon Nikki", Embassy



Community Coordinators Debbie Price, Carolyn Brereton and Margaret Oldham outside the Imperial Palace in Tokyo.

staff and their families have learned more about their host country, Japan.

Future plans include the rewriting and updating of an information package for the twenty or so new families arriving in 1986.

SEOUL:

ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT

by Marjolaine Martin, Community Coordinator

The Community Coordinator program has been in operation in Seoul since early 1985. During this time we have concentrated on welcoming new Canadians and their families to the Embassy, making sure that each family receives an information kit before arriving plus a welcome letter containing a variety of information pertaining to the post. Families are met at the airport and assisted in settling comfortably into a hotel.

As soon as the family has moved into their home, they are given a tour of the major stores, supermarkets, hospitals and clubs in the city. We also ensure that fresh flowers are placed around the home when they arrive. For Canada Day, a big Bar-B-Q was organized. The weather cooperated beautifully and the Canadians at post enjoyed a day of hamburgers, hot dogs, watermelons, frisbee-throwing and football: a pleasant way to spend Dominion Day. A great deal of time was spent organizing the small office that was provided for the Coordinator. Lacking space at the Embassy, we had to settle for a section of the kitchenette that is usually used as a storage room. Fortunately, we should soon have new offices and this problem will be resolved. The Canadian Women's Club in Seoul publishes a monthly bulletin and the Embassy is relatively small, so we feel that a Coordinator's bulletin would be repetitive. We have emphasized the welcoming aspect of our services, and the enthusiastic response that we have received from new arrivals assures us that this service is being greatly appreciated.

Newsletters from Bangkok, Tokyo, Canberra and Kuala Lumpur

SAWADDEE
CANADA

NIPPON NIKKI

COMMENTS

Beaver
Tales

"SAWADDEE - KA" FROM BANGKOK

by Barbara Ryan, Community Coordinator.
"Sawasdee-ka". Sunny greetings from Bangkok, where 29 Embassy families are enjoying life in this exciting and exotic city. Since my appointment as Co-ordinator in January 1985, I have worked on a number of issues and projects, one of the most important of which was to have arranged as smooth a transition as possible for our new arrivals this past summer.

I attempted to help in this transition by planning and implementing a week's orientation program with guest speakers and videos which covered the educational, medical, administrative and cultural aspects of life here. Each family also received a "welcome basket" filled with guide books, maps and survival goodies (mainly breakfast items, so that the first day in the staff quarters wouldn't become a crisis as they tried

to find the nearest store). At a convenient time, I took each spouse and/or employee on a tour of the city to point out a few key places frequented by Embassy personnel.

Since our new families have settled in, I have attempted to keep them as well informed as possible of community events and services, by means of a monthly newsletter, bulletin board displays in my office, and "News to Know About" bulletins distributed throughout each month. I have also established a lending library in my office which has proven to be very popular as our collection nears 500 books.

Bangkok is a big, bustling and sometimes frustrating environment, where culture shock could be at its peak. I sincerely hope that my efforts have helped to make life here a little easier, and to have made culture shock a little less overwhelming.