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FORD AD

## China Assignment

# Adjusting to Life In Peking

By Don Oberdorfer  
Washington Post

### Peking

"Back in Washington or at the U.N. the telephone was ringing all the time. George would come home and say 'excuse me' and pick up the phone. It's very different here. In his first five weeks I think he received two telephone calls, except for the ones from me. I try to call him once a day. I think he misses the phone as much as anything."

George Bush looked across the breakfast table with intensity and a hint of surprise as his wife, Barbara, described the adjustment process to life in the People's Republic of China. "I'm getting used to it," he added quickly.

After a busy, extroverted life as congressman, U.N. ambassador and Republican national chairman, Bush asked for and was granted the appointment by President Ford this fall as chief of the U.S. Liaison Office (America's unofficial embassy) in Peking.

"A lot of people said, 'You don't know what you're getting into' but on the basis of a month I'm very happy. Sure, the pace is very different but I wanted a change of pace. What the hell, I'm 50. It won't hurt anything," Bush said.

As the Bushes are well aware, a China assignment these days is a challenge to personal temperament and equilibriums as well as a diplomatic challenge of high order. Foreign residents, no matter what their rank or nationality, live extremely cloistered lives.

China-watching, Peking style, offers the fascination of living amidst — and yet apart from — a vast nation marching to a strange and different tune. Once the sounds and sights become familiar and the situation is



GEORGE BUSH  
He misses the phone

explored superficially, curiosity often turns to frustration. As in a classical Chinese landscape painting, the mists are more in evidence than visible objects.

The U.S. Liaison Office and the Bush residence are in a walled compound beside similar compounds in a special "embassy row" section of Peking's suburbs. A guard-post just outside is manned by People's Liberation Army soldiers in olive drab with red trim.

The Bushes begin the day at 7 a.m. with the Voice of America shortwave news (a good world summary but not much about domestic U.S. politics) and a breakfast of yogurt, which is brought from a Chinese shop in small returnable jars. Bush then walks a few steps across the compound to work at the liaison office headquarters building.

Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, as well as Sundays, are time off, and the Bushes often go cycling on their newly-acquired bikes — a "Shanghai" and a "Flying Pigeon."

On several recent evenings the Bushes turned up on their bikes at diplomatic parties. "Everybody was astonished, particularly because it was so different from the dignified manner of (former liaison office chief) David Bruce," said a fellow partygoer. "I think the Chinese probably thought they were doing it for effect."

Both Bushes look for chances to make some contact, however slight, with the Chinese people — the osteopath George found to treat his back in a public bathhouse, the small markets discovered, the "Bible Society" church services every Sunday conducted in Chinese for a total attendance of about ten diplomats and four elderly Chinese.



DAVID BRUCE  
Dignified memories