

## DISTRICT DAMSELS

Diana Davis on Capitol Hill,  
September 20, 2001.  
*Opposite, from left: interns  
Beth Stesanchik and Caroline  
Chatterton and staffer  
Davis at Washington, D.C.'s  
Capital Grilles*

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# Meanwhile Back in

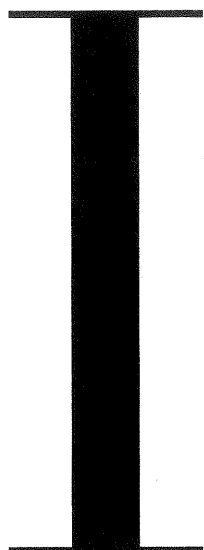
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUSTINE PARSONS

Coverage of the Condit scandal has been eclipsed by tragedy and anthrax fears, but judging from the diaries and confidences of three attractive young women, Capitol Hill never loses its sex drive. For a worm's-eye look at the nexus of lust and power, VICKY WARD went inside the interns' world, where 25-year-olds move billions and make policy, flirtation and networking are indistinguishable, cards and kisses get exchanged in after-hours bars, and idealism has a short shelf life

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o Capitol Hill.



It's 10:30 P.M. on the first Thursday of the fall congressional term, and Diana Davis, staff assistant to Representative Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), is networking in the dark depths of Politiki, a Capitol Hill bar. She holds her cigarette aloft while repeatedly pushing back her bright blond hair. Wearing a little white tank and jeans, she sports a startlingly deep tan—"fake 'n' bake," she calls it, the result of weekly \$4.30 tanning-bed sessions. Amid the sea of pasty faces and dark Banana Republic suits she stands out like a foil-wrapped candy in a box of chocolates. If Mattel ever makes a "Washington Barbie," 22-year-old Diana would be the perfect model.

Beside her, Beth Stesanchik, her best friend and fellow Fordham graduate, looks on. She's strawberry blond and wide-eyed. It's Beth's second week in town as an intern with Mobile Medical Care, a nonprofit agency that provides health care to the Washington area's homeless and indigent. Beth, also 22, wants a nightlife that is the antithesis of her day; she wants connections. She has turned to her friend for help. No one is better than Diana at making connections.

Beth remembers that when Diana got her congressional staff job in June she E-mailed jokingly, "Maybe I'll bag me a senator." That hasn't happened yet, but it's been only eight weeks. And Diana's been hit on by a married congressman, only she didn't realize who he was until afterward. "She's told me about some pretty freaky evenings," says Beth.

Tonight, Diana's priority is Liam Lynch, the press secretary to Representative Ander Crenshaw (R-Fla.). Liam is only 24, but rumor has it he is up for the job of press secretary to the House Ways and Means Committee, a post Ari Fleischer held before becoming White House press secretary. "Liam is brilliant," Diana whispers,

drinking vodka. Her little chest is puffed with pride. Liam is close enough to hear, but doesn't, or pretends not to. "He is very modest," says Diana.

Typical of the men in this yuppie D.C. tableau, Liam looks 10 years older than his actual age. He is tall and thin with blond hair and dresses in the Republican mold. His top button is done up, he wears glasses and a tie. He is chatting with his male friends, doing little to suggest there is anything between him and Diana, even though they've been on a couple of dates. It is going to be almost dawn before he makes his move.

Diana has the patience of a lioness. In the hours it takes Liam to get his act together, she can make four or five useful contacts. "The path to success on the Hill is not what you know, it's who," she says her boss has told her. She does not care if she does not sleep. Often she gets just two hours. The daytime, after all, brings only the humdrum routine of opening constituent mail and answering the phone. But Diana isn't there for the work, she's there to "get a little power, make a few connections."

Tonight the main topic of conversation is, as usual, politics. Diana does not mind this. "When I lived in New York, I was a movie freak," she says. "But here no one goes to the movies. You can't talk at the movies and you can't mingle."

Diana loves to talk shop. Like her boss she is a conservative Republican, disagreeing with him only on abortion—she is pro-choice. This difference in opinion is not something she would discuss in public. "The epitome of unprofessionalism on the Hill is speaking your own mind. You're out there to represent your congressman and that's it," she says.

Diana is confident about her intellectual abilities. She cuts through the group's debate on the Bush tax cut with a pithiness her superiors might envy. "All anyone is concerned about is P.R. control. It's shit! How're we gonna pay for all those taxes?" The guys look at her fondly when she says things like this.

Beth thinks Liam's roommate Mike Donohue, a Ways and Means Committee staff member, is cute, but she fears he is too right-wing. She corners Diana, her brown eyes anxious. "I told him about my job, and he said, 'Huh, you know what another phrase for social security is? Go out and get a job.' I can't believe he said that."

Unlike Diana, Beth does not come from a home where politics is fiercely debated around the table. She's a Republican because her father, a metals chemist, is a Republican. She says he's worried that

hanging out with Washington's homeless for a year will turn his daughter into a liberal. If Beth meets many more guys like Mike, it just might.

Diana thinks Beth's annoyance is merely frustrated attraction. To her friend she says, "Omigod," and looks sympathetic. To others she says, "I think she likes him, really." She does not share her friend's liberal social instincts.

"If you've studied economics, it just makes sense to be a Republican." She drags on her cigarette. When Beth goes to the bathroom, Diana confides conspiratorially, "Beth is a little naïve, but she is very idealistic in such a good way. So you worry for her."

This night, there is no need for further anxiety, since when the clock nears midnight, Beth, Cinderella-like, has to leave. She has to catch the last Metro to the house she shares in Bethesda, Maryland, with four other nonprofit interns, all sponsored by the United Congregation of Christ church.

Diana, who lives with her parents, Washington psychologists, in Annandale, Virginia, feels no pressure to do the same. She knows that, on the rare occasions when she actually sleeps, somehow, somewhere fate will provide a bed. Tonight she ends up at Liam's apartment, which is near the bar. By five A.M. it's time for the drive back to her parents' house, to shower, change, and then head back to the office.

Friday morning she calls Beth. For once Diana's bottomless fuel tank has run dry. After work she needs to go home and go to bed, something for which her concerned parents are extraordinarily grateful. She tells Beth the interruption in their social schedule does not matter much, as networking nights are Tuesday through Thursday. Weekends are for house parties and downtime.

Was the all-nighter worth it? asks Beth, worrying that if her friend does not get more sleep she is headed for a breakdown. "Omigod, definitely," says Diana.

In the wake of the Clinton and Condit intern scandals, you'd think Washington men would be wary of chasing young women, even ones as charming and alluring as Diana. You'd be wrong.

The Capitol buildings ooze sexual tension. The excitement begins once you pass the security guards. The windowless white marble corridors are a labyrinth in which you are isolated from the outside world. A "bubble" is how Diana puts it.

In the corridors you can hear little pump heels tap-tapping for miles, so predators know when the prey is coming; suddenly

a congressma dressed and villain, usually aides, all clut sional logos f you you're in congressman s takes his time

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a congressman swings out from his office, dressed and groomed like a James Bond villain, usually flanked by an assortment of aides, all clutching files with the congressional logos firmly facing out, to remind you you're in the presence of power. The congressman stops and stares up, down. He takes his time.

"Hey," he says in a soft drawl.

This happens again and again, even on the second floor of the Rayburn building, where Gary Condit's office is located, a chair and a handful of media outside. But the office sits sepulchral and empty, its occupant has long since been moved to a secret location.

Diana gets checked out all the time. "It's just blatant. They don't make any effort about hiding it," she says. "They'll start out conversations in elevators in the morning: 'How are you? Who do you work for? Oh, you're new around here. What are you doing for lunch?' It's just very bizarre and very forward."

Diana Davis graduated in June with good grades, but zero political experience. Still, she says, she thinks she leapfrogged over thousands of applicants to a job on the Hill because the first man to interview her liked her looks.

"As an attractive young woman, you are easily able to manipulate certain situations," she says.

Her interview—"more of a chat"—was at the office of an East Coast Republican representative. She says the chief of staff there was bummed when he was told there could be no vacancies for anyone outside his district, so he referred Diana to his friend Chris Cox, Rogers's chief of staff. In Rogers's office they were prepared to make an exception for the fact that Diana lives in Annandale, and not Michigan. The day after interviewing with Cox she had the job.

A few weeks later, she says, the man who first interviewed her tried to kiss her after driving her to her car from the Capital Grille, another congressional hangout. Diana's small face crinkles as she remembers it. "I got a little bit tipsy and basically spilled my heart out to him ... just because he looks like a teddy bear, just totally harmless ... plus he's 35. Did I ever think? No ... I don't know, it's too close to my dad's age. I was in absolute shock."

Despite her joke CONTINUED ON PAGE 319



#### PARTY LINES

*Above and left, Mike Doyle (D-Pa.), Beth, Robert Brady (D-Pa.), and Diana, and, below, John B. Larson (D-Conn.), John Baldacci (D-Maine), Caroline, and Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-N.J.), all unwinding at the Capital Grille, Thursday, September 13.*

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CAROLINE CHATTERTON



tears is not the way to help him. The one thing that does help is to make him realize that to her he is not any different from the man he was—and to assure him that in the years to come he is not to be set apart.”

That “not” is pure Emily Post, a commandment of compassion: Thou shalt not break his heart. It is no coincidence that, soon after its publication, *Etiquette* ranked second to the Bible as the book most commonly lifted from bookstores and libraries.

“She really ruled,” says Mrs. Howard Cox, archivist at the Colony Club (and mother-in-law of Tricia Nixon). “If you heard someone say, ‘Oh, Emily Post wouldn’t approve of that,’ well, that was the rule, that was law. Emily Post was taken very seriously.” In fact, at this time the two most powerful women in America were Eleanor Roosevelt and Emily Post.

And what was the powerful Post, a woman making almost \$100,000 a year at the age of 72, like in real life?

“She was a very natural person,” says Yvonne Sylvia, Post’s secretary in Edgartown for 15 years. “She was very generous. When I had my second son, I still went a full day, but she paid for a baby-sitter for my children. She seemed very content. I think she was perfectly happy with her grandson and great-grandchildren. She didn’t need the companionship that other people do.”

“She was a lovely, lovely person,” says Isabel Paulantonio, Post’s devoted secretary in New York City. “I was a little in awe of her, considering her background and *Etiquette*. But she immediately put me at ease.”

“That was one of her charms, one of

her talents,” says Elizabeth Post, wife of Bill Post Sr. (and the woman who would take over *Etiquette* after Emily’s death). “She made you feel totally at ease. She was imposing, a very large lady. She held herself very erect. But she had a very kind face. And she laughed a lot.”

“She enjoyed being Emily Post,” says Bill Post Sr. “She liked to tell stories on herself.”

When *Vanity Fair* ran a full-page Covarrubias caricature of Emily in 1933—frizzy-haired, owl-eyed, bare feet propped on the table, pinkie crooked in a question mark—fans were aghast at the irreverence, while Post thought it “too giggle-making for words.” (She had laughed at herself before in *Vanity Fair*, when in 1926 Crowninshield talked her into spoofing *Etiquette* with a quirky, anonymous serial called “How to Behave Though a Debutante.”)

Post’s great-grandchildren talk about her as if she were just like any other great-grandmother.

“She’d give us dimes so we could eat ice-cream cones at the local drugstore,” says Allen Post.

“She was not formidable,” says Peter Post.

“She was not pretentious in any way,” agrees Bill Post Jr.

“To be pretentious was the worst faux pas you could make,” continues Cindy Post Senning, who co-directs the Emily Post Institute in Burlington, Vermont. Bill Post Sr. seconds that: “If she had to go to the bathroom, she’d say, ‘I have to go where the king goes on foot.’”

She was down-to-earth.

“Almost to the day she died,” says Bill Post Sr., “she could sit perfectly happy on

the floor, bolt upright with her legs crossed. For me as a child that was neat.”

In the last years of her life, in the late 1950s, Post became increasingly forgetful, and the family believes she may have been suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. During those years her son Edwin junior wrote her column from Italy, where he had retired, and her faithful secretaries kept up the correspondence. Emily Post died of pneumonia on September 25, 1960, in her bedroom at 39 East 79th Street. She was 86. Her ashes were buried in Tuxedo Park, next to her son Bruce. Today, Post’s *Etiquette* (which has sold more than 500,000 copies since 1984) is updated by feisty Peggy Post, wife of great-grandson Allen.

When those close to Emily Post speak of her, they invariably touch on her love of color, how she impulsively, happily re-painted furniture, radios, whatever struck her as needing new life, and how she adored red—bright Chinese red. And then they remember her shoes, red shoes—a closetful! It’s a fascinating footnote. In Hans Christian Andersen’s tale “The Red Shoes,” a girl puts on scarlet slippers and cannot stop dancing, just as Post, having written *Etiquette*, could never stop being her book. But the similarity ends there. Emily Post loved the dance she was doing. And she did it with such joy. Who better to teach us the steps than the woman who wrote (under “Rules of Sportsmanship”), “If you are hurt, whether in mind or body, don’t nurse your bruises. Get up and light-heartedly, courageously, good-temperedly get ready for the next encounter. This is the only way to take life—this is also ‘playing’ the game!” □

## D.C. Interns

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 291 about “bagging me a senator,” she does not quite have the stomach to “cross the line,” as she puts it. Both an innocence she tries to hide and a deep-rooted fear of being out of her depth prevent her from becoming the next national scandal. “Girls who are confident, well rounded, and basically have their shit together, they are not in those situations,” she says.

Still, she knows that her looks give her access to the highest echelons of power. Her world is a nonstop haze of crowded bars and cheap drinks paid for, mostly, by men in cheap suits—congressional staff aides in their late 20s and early 30s—and lobbyists, the ones with the better suits and longer bar tabs. Congressmen and senators flit in and out. Some time spent navigating the incestuous, hectic social whirl of young D.C. shows that it takes Diana just days to build a Rolodex that is the envy of her bosses.

On Monday night Diana outlines their plans for the week. This evening will be low-key. Tuesday will bring a drag bingo game with Liam and friends at a bar in Dupont Circle; Wednesday she plans to go to the Capital Grille, because it will be educational for Beth. If you want to catch a congressman, says Diana, go hang out at the Cap Grille bar. This is something she’d never do herself; the few times she’s visited the restaurant, she has been escorted. There are other women, she whispers, who go on their own. “They are looking for one thing,” she says.

It’s 12 hours before the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, although she doesn’t know it, and Diana is lecturing Beth and another Fordham graduate, Patrick Power, on the etiquette of Hill life. She has met them at “Cap Lounge,” the nickname for Capitol Lounge, a bar down the street and indistinguishable from Politiki. Pat, from Brooklyn, has just turned down a job at J. P. Morgan Chase in hopes of se-

curing an internship or staff job that could pay as little as nothing and no more than \$20,000. Diana was a half-hour late because she had to go to a fund-raiser for Representative Rogers, who’d suddenly been called away by the House majority whip, Tom DeLay. She is high on adrenaline, nicotine, and the buzz of having just mingled with a group of lobbyists from the airline industry. She’s wearing a cropped Ann Taylor sweater, pants, and little heels. She looks like a child dressed up in her mother’s clothes. She says she had some wine at the party, and also made some useful contacts, including Congressman Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and Sarah, another junior aide. “She’s a congressman’s daughter,” says Diana importantly, “but she doesn’t tell anyone that.”

Diana basks in the euphoria of her recent social triumph like one who has just aced a school exam. “You will do well on the Hill if you are good with dealing with people,” she instructs Beth and Pat. People

# D.C. Interns

who can't function socially, she says, "simply won't get on. . . . It's all about P.R.—P.R. and networking."

Her chief of staff's extensive Rolodex, she says, is what got Representative Rogers, a freshman congressman elected by just 111 votes, onto Tom DeLay's deputy-whip team. "Mike is now on the deputy-whip team, which is unheard of for a freshman—but Chris [Cox, the chief of staff] knows Tom DeLay and all the big boys. He has a reputation for picking freshman congressmen and keeping them in office."

She has already told Chris—who is only 31—that she'd like to be groomed to be Rogers's press secretary. She thinks this may help her achieve her ultimate goal, landing a job as a television journalist. Representative Rogers was profiled prominently in *The Washington Post* recently. "The press secretary can make the difference between the congressman getting local or national coverage," says Diana.

Most congressmen, she says blithely, are just puppets. The chief of staff sets the agenda, while the legislative director and the legislative assistant write the bills and research the issues. "The congressman kind of just puts the vote in," she explains.

This does not worry Diana. She is "in love" with this system of government, although she has no desire to run for office herself. She considers female politicians a different breed. "They don't go out and drink with the boys. It's all business, let's do business."

She hands Pat a copy of that day's *Roll Call* newspaper, D.C.'s equivalent of *Variety*. There's a feature on the 50 most influential staffers in Congress. Pat has a friend, Dick Armey's chief of staff, who is ranked. Diana is impressed. "Pat'll get a job immediately," she says to Pat and Beth. Pat is not comforted. "I'm worried about who I'll work for," he says.

Diana nods sympathetically. She knows people so desperate for jobs on the Hill they'll even lie about their political loyalties. "They can't ask you in the interview what your allegiance is," she says. She reckons that if she had had to she could—and would—have swung a job in a Democrat's office.

Beth is horrified. "How could these guys live with themselves at night? Are they so desperate to work on the Hill they are prepared to give up their souls, their entire individuality?"

Diana is amused: "You have to be able to defend every side and see every point of view. Honestly, your wholehearted convictions, they don't come into the game until you are way up there."

Beth looks the other way. She fingers Diana's cigarettes. Ordinarily, she does not smoke. "I might have one," she says.

**T**hings always work out for Diana," Beth says when Diana is out of earshot. When they were at Fordham "she did an internship at ABC but stopped going because it was too much for her. She had to keep a journal for it and hand it in to the dean . . . so she just made it up. And her little irresponsibility is contagious because once I was working during the holidays to get money . . . One day I decided to just keep driving. I went back upstate, I didn't go back to my job. I never called. And Diana was like, 'That's the sort of thing I would totally do!' Diana helped me come up with a fabrication; she told them [Beth's employers] I'd gotten mono and could no longer come in—she's so good at speaking to people."

The two girls became friends partly because they were the only Republicans in a dorm of eight women—"We were the only ones cheering on Bush during the campaign," recalls Beth—and partly because they both rowed crew for a year, until Diana got tired of getting up at 5:30 A.M. each day. "We are [both] very concerned about staying in shape," says Beth. "She's a little bit more extreme on the vanity side than I am."

Last Saturday the two friends went shopping at Bloomingdale's. There was a sale on. Diana is delighted just thinking about it. "We bought out the store, \$110 shoes down to \$30—great," she says, wiggling her feet in the air. Diana thinks that Beth, whose monthly stipend leaves her \$140 spending money, is well-off. Beth thinks that Diana, who makes \$22,000 a year, is extravagant.

Diana would prefer to be overdrawn than skimp on her monthly Vidal Sassoon highlights, her bikini wax, and her fake 'n' bake tan. "I hate being pale with a passion," she says.

Today, Diana found herself diving behind a desk in her office when Scott, a persistent lobbyist, came by. "Do you have the number?" she asks Beth. Beth searches for a bit of paper. On it is the number of a losers' hot line—callers' messages are screened by a radio station, and the most pathetic ones are read on the air. Diana is going to give the phone number to Scott, telling him it is hers. The girls giggle, fantasizing about the embarrassment Scott will suffer when he tries to call Diana.

Diana thought Chris Cox was cute until she discovered he was married with kids. Her crush has morphed into the same adulation with which she regards her congressman. "Mike is amazing," she says. "He is the one person I am not cynical about. He used to be an undercover F.B.I. agent in Chicago and

fought against organized crime. He got into politics because he really wants to make a difference. He deserves everything he gets."

**L**ike so many potential "low-key evenings" in D.C., Monday does not end as early as planned. Coming back from the bathroom, Beth is hit on by some men from the office of Senator Conrad Burns (R-Mont.). Soon Diana, too, is at the bar, muscling in on the most powerful one in the group, a baby-faced 25-year-old named Ryan Thomas.

Ryan works for the Senate Appropriations Committee, where he gets to shuffle around up to \$19 billion, allocating funds for various projects. Ryan was put up for this job by Senator Burns, who is the ranking Republican on his subcommittee, Interior. Now his former colleagues—all under 30, a staffer named Benjamin Good, 25, tells Beth proudly—are furiously lobbying Ryan. It does not seem like they have to try too hard. Most of them grew up together.

Ryan focuses on Diana. He talks softly and quickly, sometimes in Hill jargon difficult to follow. He is one of those physically average guys who improves like a fairy-tale frog-prince with every word he utters. Diana is mesmerized.

"People—and that includes senators and congressmen—need to talk to me, partly to try to twist my arm about the delegation of money, but also because they want to know about timing," Ryan explains in a phone call later in the week. "We don't publish when bills come before the appropriations committee, and if you need to go into battle for or against a budget cut or gain, you need to be ready."

Ryan is self-effacing about his responsibilities. "There's a saying: 'You can't go above your pay grade' in terms of acting on your authority. I keep going, shuffling funds until I come up against a member or senator who vehemently disagrees. Then it goes to a vote."

Diana brings up an issue they have in common. Last term Mike Rogers voted for the controversial energy bill which advocated drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Ryan tells her he is worried. Due to pressure from Democrats and moderate Republicans, the ANWR funds had been removed from the Interior appropriations bill for 2002. Ryan says this has left him and his committee peers in the hole. They will have to find the money elsewhere.

They move on to the dispute between the General Accounting Office and the White House, which erupted when Vice President Cheney refused to release the names of business executives and lobbyists who met with administration officials about energy policy. Ryan has been sitting in on tense negotiations about it. He looks tired.

Beth absorbs much of this mutely. "I don't have anything to add when they talk about politics in this detail," she says.

Once again, Beth moves to the Metro Room the evening of the huge job—she says. She sketches his card in her notebook. She signs.

On her way home, Benjamin Good smiles in Senator Burns's office. "If the government, Diana's job

As a young woman, I tend to be a bit of a flirt. I might be inclined. . . . The scene is going to be odd to the middle class saying that aphrodisiac DC. Every day as a potential this brings a free drinks, it establishes a game. The trick to the woman here friendly with aging the woman any boundaries game that plays and I don't enjoy

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Once again, as the clock nears pumpkin time, Beth must go. As she and Diana walk to the Metro stop, Diana says she considers Ryan the evening's chief trophy. "He has a huge job—huge—and he's only 25," she says. She skips along the sidewalk waving his card in the air. "Yay, good contact," she sings.

On her way out, Beth had asked Benjamin Good why it was that every person in Senator Burns's office is under 30. He smirked. "If outsiders knew the truth about government, they'd be shocked," he said.

Diana's journal entry of that week:

As a young woman, let's say that people tend to be a bit friendlier towards you than they might otherwise be inclined. . . . The dating scene is going strong and it was odd to be thrust in the middle of it. The old saying that power is an aphrodisiac rings true in DC. Everyone is viewed as a potential, and while this brings a good deal of free drinks, it likewise establishes a guarded nature. The trick to being a young woman here is keeping it friendly without encouraging the overstepping of any boundaries. It's a game that everyone here plays and I won't pretend I don't enjoy it.

Due to the terrorist attacks, Diana's plans for the night of Tuesday, September 11, are aborted; this does not mean that she gets an early night. Rather, she stays on the phone until four A.M. with Liam. Later she admits that this was the one positive outcome from the nightmare. Liam told her how nice it was that he could share the stress of the situation with her. Diana flushes when she recalls this.

Diana writes in her journal:

The congressman was so pale, white and grim, for some reason this frightened me more than anything. Mike is not invincible after all. People were running in and out of the offices, shock, terror but still there was the constant whisper—"they'd never hit DC, no one ever hits DC." Moments later the Pentagon was engulfed in flames.

Diana is not the only young woman on Capitol Hill to keep a journal. Unbeknownst to her, three floors down from her office in the Cannon building, Caroline Chatterton, a voluptuous, dark-haired, 21-year-old English intern in the office of Representative Mike Ferguson (R-N.J.), has been scribbling

away for four weeks. She has one week left on the Hill before returning to Britain and her final year at Sheffield Hallam University. Alone, probably, of the thousands of people who work in Congress, Caroline is not chiefly concerned the day after the attack, she says, with "P.R. and damage control." She is too junior to have much input. So while the others fuss about getting photographs onto Ferguson's Web site of him handing out doughnuts to rescue workers, she worries about the fate of a constituent, a cancer patient with only four months to live. He had written to the office some days before to see if Representative Ferguson could facilitate his getting access to a non-F.D.A.-approved drug on a compassionate



#### CAPITOL GAMES

After partying with congressmen, Caroline Chatterton, here on September 20, wrote, "How often does a 21-year-old English intern get to boss around the US government!!"

basis. As is the case with much of the mail received, Representative Ferguson never sees the letter. The volume of mail is too enormous for him to deal with, but Caroline feels that the attitude of a senior aide in the office, and of the other twentysomethings, is less attentive than it could be. "Someone even said something like 'Well, he's a goner,'" she says. Today she asks the aide if she has managed to get the drug for the dying man. The aide's response is "Oh, I completely forgot about the dying guy. Thanks for reminding me." Caroline writes furiously in her journal, "This is people's lives we're talking about."

On Wednesday night Diana looks unusually tired. Not even the fake 'n' bake tan can hide the huge circles under her eyes. As planned, she takes Beth to the Capital Grille. It's empty. Outside, people stream to an eight P.M. vigil at East Front Pond. Diana does not want to go. "The congressmen and senators are having their own vigil inside the Capitol. It's not open to staff. I'd rather eat," she says.

She sits down at the table and looks wearily around the room. The turmoil of her office is forgotten. For once, she asks Beth about her day.

Matter-of-factly, Beth says that she examined a woman whose uterus has been falling out. She also interviewed a former political prisoner from Ethiopia who could not hear because his ears had been mangled by torturers. She speaks very fast and lucidly. At the end, she says, "I needed to get that out. I've been thinking about it all day."

Diana is aghast. "Omgod, this is what Beth does," she says. "It makes me feel so small in comparison."

Diana's cell phone rings. It's Liam. They arrange to meet after dinner. Diana orders a round of Kir Royales; Beth has never had a Kir Royale. Diana was introduced to them in Paris, "the same place where I made the acquaintance of Vidal," she says, pointing to her hair. Yet Paris did not quite give her the full Sabrina-style makeover: "What's 'filet mignon'?"

she sweetly asks the waiter.

She looks dreamily around the room. "The first time I came here it was packed, and it blew me away," she says. She is back in the Capitol Hill version of *Melrose Place*.

Her first dinner—just days into her job—was like the first kick of the most intoxicating cocktail she'd ever tasted. "There is something about the marble halls, the high ceilings, the state flags, news cameras, and men walking that took my breath away," she says.

Her date had been a 29-year-old southerner who opened car doors for her and picked up the tab. "He was powerful," she says. "He knew Tom DeLay."

She says she developed a "crush." She catches herself. "It was a little more than a crush." She envisioned herself Mrs. So-and-So and dreamed about meeting his parents.

"We came here and I ordered lobster,"

## D.C. Interns

she says. "I was so impressed I slept with him that night. I wish I hadn't. It was too fast. He stopped E-mailing me. The last time we came here after a party he left with a legislative aide.

"It was after this that the guy who first interviewed me found me, consoled me, and tried to kiss me."

Diana shrinks into her clothes. "So I'm taking it real slow with Liam," she says.

After dinner Beth finds Ryan Thomas sitting at the bar with a man he introduces as Benjamin Cline, the chief of staff to Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.). With them is Brett Scott, a lobbyist, and an older man, Bill McSweeney, his client.

Diana is eager for gossip, and Ryan has plenty. There is an overriding feeling of guilt, since the House felt the attack had been avoidable. "The meltdown is the breakdown in communications between the agencies, the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. . . . Everybody apparently had little snippets of something like this happening. But nobody was communicating, so they could never put together a full picture," Diana reports afterward.

While the House had spent the day looking for answers from the F.A.A., C.I.A., and F.B.I., Ryan and his peers were coming up with the recommendations they'd need for the following day's debate about how to fund the country's extra security and defense requirements. "The \$40 billion aid package? We don't have that money free and clear. We'll have to dip into something else. . . . It's clearly changed the structure of the debate—before, it was thought we must not let the normal bills dip into Social Security, but it's highly likely that, now, this big emergency will dip into the, quote unquote, 'surplus,'" he says later. In his sector he expects to have to put aside more money for domestic oil production. "It may mean less money for purchasing more land for the Forest Service or for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service."

Around 11 a news report flashes on the television over the bar. People strain to see what it says. Brett's gaze is elsewhere. "I was looking at you and was wondering which of you would be least offended if I hit on you," he says.

Bill McSweeney tries to put his arm around Beth. "I'm experiencing all of the seven deadly sins tonight," he says. Someone adds, "It's lust, lust, and lust."

Senator George Allen (R-Va.) enters and makes a beeline for Ryan. In this crowd, the senator looks like a parent picking up his kids from school. He does not give Diana a second glance. For 10 minutes he lis-

tens intently to what Ryan whispers into his ear and then goes to drink with his aides.

"He wanted to know the mood of the Democratic senators, members of the House, et cetera," Ryan explains later. "The senators and members are just too busy to deal with the minutiae of every bill and every issue. They have to delegate."

Beth thinks it strange that a senator should have to ask a 25-year-old for news of the House on the second day of the biggest American crisis since World War II.

Ben Cline is annoyed. "Just because the people who are running the government are young, it doesn't mean they are unqualified," he says primly.

It's after midnight, and Diana goes on to meet Liam. As far as her career prospects are concerned, this is something of a false move.

The next day she E-mails: "Ryan from Appropriations came over to say hi at Politi-ki and actually hung out very late as well. He was a little less friendly though when Liam put his arm around me . . . Oh, well."

No one could have predicted that the Thursday after the attack Diana would inadvertently pull off the networking coup of her career.

She and Beth are introduced to the English intern Caroline Chatterton at the Capital Grille. The place is empty save for a couple of young women at the bar. Their hair has split ends and they wear suits that strain against the flesh. "Those girls are Chandra Levy types," says Diana. Her own size-2 frame looks in no danger of denting her crisp blue shirt and dark pants.

Caroline has dressed in a shorter suit than usual, in case she finds a congressman to flirt with for an article she has planned on writing for the British newspapers. Her office colleagues have told her this is the place to come. She doesn't really believe it will happen. No one important is dining out this Thursday. The gaze of the restaurant's few patrons is fixed on TV screens by the bar. AMERICA AT WAR, reads the banner headline on every set.

Caroline has never seen anyone like Diana on the Hill. "Did you ever model?" she asks. Diana shakes her head no and wriggles about. The effervescence of youth and the promise of budding romance—Caroline has her eye on Brandon Waters, the 25-year-old press secretary in her office—mean that their spirits cannot be dampened by external events for long.

"I must come by and check out Brandon," Diana tells Caroline. In return Caroline volunteers to inspect Liam. In the comfortable confines of the almost empty Cap Grille the idea of international conflict seems very far away.

"I've always been a conservative Repub-

lican," Diana tells Caroline. "This is a time to back the government."

That morning Chris Cox held a strategy meeting on damage control, briefing them all on what to say to the huge numbers of angry constituents calling in. Mike Rogers had been there listening.

"We were told to be confident, talking to constituents, told to tell them everything is under control, it's business as usual," Diana recalls.

Caroline says she, too, had been inundated with angry callers: "I didn't know what to say to them. One woman was demanding to know the number of the F.B.I. because she had seen a white van full of Arabs yesterday on a street she couldn't remember the name of." She says she's gotten some sympathy from her office colleagues, who told her that each month each legislative correspondent has to bring a "crazy constituent" letter to entertain the rest of the group.

"We often forge our congressman's signature," Diana says with a shrug. "And we hand over constituency mail requiring answers to the district office. They can sort out what is valid against what is not."

The conversation moves inevitably back to men. Diana is in the middle of explaining how Liam romanced her with champagne and dinner in a restaurant overlooking the White House when 11 middle-aged men trickle past.

Diana immediately sits up, antennae alert.

One waiter, Cliff, apparently well known to the men, shuts the swing doors on either side of their table, transforming the space into a sealed room. Every 10 minutes or so the women can hear the high-pitched *chink, chink* of cutlery being hammered against glass; they can see through the window that one by one, cigars in hand, the men stand to give toasts before drinking deep into the red wine and breaking into fits of loud laughter.

Diana thinks one is giving her the eye. She thinks she recognizes him. "I'm sure he looks like a senator," she says.

One bursts through the doors, clutching his cell phone. His bald patch is shining from overexertion as he exclaims in the direction of the women, "If people knew how the government was really run . . ."

He asks the table to join the men for a drink when they have finished dinner. The women look at one another, startled.

He leaves them alone with their dessert and their deliberations. Even Diana looks uncertain about actually venturing into the "boys' club" sanctuary. "Not a woman in there," she remarks.

Then Caroline, the aspiring journalist, feisty and hungry to taste everything Washington has to offer before returning to Brit-

ain, settles balding guy the men's room. Why are you asking.

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ain, settles it. Leaning back, she taps the  
balding guy on the arm as he returns from  
the men's room. "What's going on in there?  
Why are you all having so much fun?" she  
asks.

The man grins. "Those are a group of  
congressmen who are friends of mine. I  
thought they were hungry. They needed to  
kind of let themselves go." He pauses. "And  
they are doing that.

"Come in and meet the rowdy crew," he  
says. And with a toss of her hair, Caroline  
stands up and goes in.

**T**he women are heckled as they enter.  
"Tell us your name and where you are  
from," says one of the men. As if on a game  
show the women comply, one by one. When  
Caroline says she is an intern, the largest of  
the group, a white-haired man with a big  
belly and big laugh, roars, "We're afraid of  
interns." He throws his knife at a lean man  
named Mike, at the other end of the table.  
Mike is unamused. He threatens to throw it  
back. Another guy, rotund and jolly-faced,  
stands up and does an impression of Mar-  
lon Brando doing Don Corleone. The others  
think it's hysterical.

Diana whispers that there is no way they  
can be congressmen. She figures they are  
businessmen. She wonders how she is going  
to get out.

They *are* congressmen—although at first  
they pretend not to be. One, the youngest,  
with a tiny goatee, introduces himself as  
Anthony, an auto-parts salesman. The oth-  
ers call him "the Jewish kid" and make fun  
of his beard. Their real names and states  
are as follows: the auto-parts salesman is  
Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.); the lean Mike is  
Michael Capuano (D-Mass.); the jolly guy  
who imitated Brando is John Larson (D-  
Conn.); the man who was worried about  
interns is Robert Brady (D-Pa.).

Sitting silently at the head of the table  
is John Baldacci (D-Maine), now running  
for governor; also there are Bart Stupak (D-  
Mich.), Tim Holden (D-Pa.), Bill Pascrell  
Jr. (D-N.J.), and Mike Doyle (D-Pa.). The  
hosts are Paul Magliocchetti, a former  
member of the Appropriations Subcommit-  
tee on Defense, now a lobbyist, and his col-  
league Daniel Cunningham. "Normally,"  
says Magliocchetti, "there are four Republi-  
cans in this group. They just couldn't make  
it tonight."

The evening glides along in a gently tipsy  
manner. "You are very beautiful girls," one  
man keeps repeating. Their jokes are old  
and hoary. "I just want you all to know, to-  
day we've been through a very classified  
briefing," one says. "We watched CNN."

Larson leads the others in song—Motown,  
the Beatles, Frank Sinatra, and the Rolling  
Stones. Mick Jagger might not have been  
disappointed by the energy with which they

infuse a somewhat tuneless version of "Sat-  
isfaction."

Caroline, inevitably, is treated to a ren-  
dition of Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline."  
Diana is wooed with "Oh Diane," by Fleet-  
wood Mac. They try to think of a song for  
Beth, but by then both their enthusiasm and  
memories are waning.

Toward midnight Caroline slips out to  
the bathroom. The restaurant's lights are low  
and the waiters look like they want to go  
home. One man sits alone at the bar nurs-  
ing a drink and a cigar. It is Caroline's boss,  
Representative Ferguson. He is pale and  
tired. "I've been in the district today," he  
says. "So many of my constituents have  
died." She tells him she is in the back with  
a rowdy bunch of his peers. "I don't think  
many of my colleagues from elsewhere  
round the country completely get what has  
happened," he says sadly. "I think you real-  
ly have to be in New York to feel it proper-  
ly. . . . That's why I had to come here and  
have a drink. It's so awful."

He pauses when she tells him some of  
the names of her hosts. She expects him to  
grimace, perhaps grumble, about Democ-  
rats. Instead he says, "Bart Stupak is a  
really great guy. I love him." It is a remark-  
able moment, encapsulating the unity that  
not just Washington but America feels in a  
new climate of fear and uncertainty.

Ferguson joins the group, his face fixed  
in a frown halfway between unease and  
alarm. But the high jinks are over. Every-  
one stands and sings the national anthem  
and "America the Beautiful." There is a  
round of patriotic toasts and then the men  
kiss the girls good night—chastely. The girls  
are ecstatic at the contacts they've made.  
"Mr. Baldacci said he'd write me a refer-  
ence for medical school," trills Beth. Diana  
clutches a wad of business cards. Her face  
is pink. "Do you know how many people  
would die for this?" she says. Caroline has  
taken photographs; she is focusing on the  
article she'll write. She waves her camera  
and mouths, "A successful evening."

Caroline's journal, Thursday, September  
13:

Dinner was fabulous and to cut a long sto-  
ry short we ended up in a private room with 9  
congressmen! How weird is that. They all want-  
ed us to introduce ourselves but they wouldn't  
stop being rowdy so I had to stand up and  
shout at them to be quiet. How often does a  
21-year-old English intern get to boss around  
the US government!! They'd been voting all  
day and in classified meetings so they were in  
desperate need of a good old singsong and  
some laughter. We sang lots of songs and had  
a really good laugh. They were a real collec-  
tion of characters and we had such a good  
time! Everyone proposed toasts to the dead  
people, to America and to revenge and the  
people who will be giving their lives in the  
next week. That part freaked me out. We real-

ly are having a war. . . . It was totally amazing  
to be in a room in the biggest crisis in Ameri-  
can history with the elected leaders of the  
country and to see their strong spirits, their  
hope, and their union as a team. It was a very  
touching experience that I will never forget.  
They were so hospitable, genuine, and truly  
lovely. It was very reassuring to see that the  
country is led by some of the kindest, most  
down to earth guys you could meet. What a  
fantastic and totally random night!

The next day, New York's Anthony Weiner  
finds the time to hunt down Diana's E-mail  
address. He writes that he hopes they might  
meet again. Diana is overwhelmed that he's  
managed to think of her on a day that must  
be heavy with import and emotional intensi-  
ty. Last night he mentioned that he'd be go-  
ing to Manhattan to inspect the World Trade  
Center wreckage with the president. They'd  
be traveling together on Air Force One.

Caroline records: "Went for lunch with  
Diana. Anthony Weiner has emailed her  
and she didn't know he was a member of  
Congress. She died when I showed her his  
card! It was so funny!! I think she likes  
him, but she doesn't want to admit it. In  
fact, I know she likes him 'cos she's been  
on his website this afternoon looking at the  
photo gallery."

A week later, two nights before Caroline  
will leave for England, the girls return to the  
Capital Grille. Now they know the drill, and  
they capture their prey with ease. "Three  
more congressmen," Diana gloats. "Republi-  
cans—got their cards and everything."

She has left Anthony Weiner dangling,  
after he E-mailed her that she should come  
and visit his office "in person." "I thought  
that was kind of cheesy," sniffs Diana.

**A** few weeks later Diana is evacuated from  
Congress, following the discovery of  
anthrax in Senate majority leader Tom  
Daschle's office. Diana is not entirely dis-  
pleased. After all, it's a five-day weekend,  
she says. "This is great . . . I mean, not  
great obviously . . . But I'm getting so much  
sleep. My body's in shock. It's wonderful."

The previous Tuesday, however, 24 hours  
after Daschle's office had received contami-  
nated mail, there was a lot of hostility among  
her colleagues, she says. At a briefing by  
Dr. John Eisold, attending physician to Con-  
gress, "they [the doctor] didn't even say they  
were going to be screening for anthrax from  
now on—they said they were gonna be screen-  
ing for biological agents. People asked did  
that include anthrax, and they said, 'We  
can't answer that.'"

Diana's main concern about returning to  
work is the mountain of mail she will have  
to open, since it has all been put on hold  
while the offices and mailroom are being  
inspected. "Couriers are not allowed in,"  
she says. A further thought occurs. "You  
cannot accept flowers." □