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Breaking with tradition

By BRIAN LOCKHART

Imagine your spouse gets a new job. A good one, working at the helm of a big company. You of course are happy about their achievement.

Several days later you get a call from one of the directors on the board asking what you are planning to do to entertain during the upcoming holiday and company party.

You wonder why it is up to you to entertain a bunch of people you don't know.

After the party, the board of directors send you an airplane ticket to some city, because they think you should go there on behalf of the company and give a sales pitch on the widgets they sell.

You're not a sales person, you tell them.

It doesn't matter, you're told. Your spouse runs the company, therefore you are automatically included in company duties. Those duties including hosting parties, giving speeches about the company and acting as leader of the company's charitable organization that teaches toe dancing to children in under privileged nieghbourhoods.

Oh, and by the way, this is Bob and Stan. They are company employees and will follow you around, where ever you go.

Sounds like a bit of a nightmare doesn't it?

Jill Biden, wife of U.S. president elect, Joe Biden, recently announced she will continue working at her regular teaching job, even after her husband is sworn in as president.

When I read that story, the first thing I thought was, ?Good for you.?

I don't know much about Jill Biden, but from what is reported, she is highly educated, and a smart person. She enjoys her job teaching at Northern Virginia Community College and says she is passionate about her work.

I'm sure she has worked hard to attain the degrees she holds and is equally ambitious in her job as a professor. Why should she give up her successful career because her husband got a new job?

There is this long standing thing in American politics where presidents must be married to one woman, and have children. Ronald Reagan broke tradition by becoming the first president who had been divorced.

The public forgave him for that error because he had been divorced 32 years earlier, and had since remarried a nice woman and they had two children together.

The U.S. would never have elected a single person because they wouldn't fit the image.

When Canadian P.M. Pierre Trudeau, at first a bachelor head of state, and his wife Margaret divorced while he was in office, it barely made the news here.

A divorce in the White House would result in absolute scandal.

I have never understood this ?first lady' status in Washington or the obsession about what outfit they are wearing.

The so called first lady wasn't elected to anything and therefore really has no obligation to be a public figure.

Then there is the ?causes,' which the first lady must announce they are going to support.

Nancy Reagan had her ?war on drugs.' Barbara Bush became an advocate for ?family literacy.' Hillary Clinton worked toward a health care plan. Laura Bush focused on education. Michelle Obama advocated for poverty awareness. Melania Trump is noted for, well, for being herself I guess, and raising her son. Although it should be recognized that she is well liked by White House staff.

It should be noted that pretty much every First Lady that did have a career, gave it up when her husband took office. Even earlier if they had been elected to other high office.

When Michelle Obama lived at the White House she had a personal staff of over 30 individuals. What were they all doing? Did she have a personal shoe butler?

I think it's a pretty brave move for Jill Biden to say she wants to keep her job.

She will obviously still be a public figure, and will make appearances at state dinners and the likes, but if she really is going to keep working, she will not be able devote the time to appearing on TV shows and showing how she is re-arranging the White House red room, or planning on planting fig trees on the front lawn.

This will also be a logistics nightmare for the Secret Service who are obligated to provide 24/7 protection for her.

It might be a challenge to stop in at the college cafeteria for a bagel and coffee if it hasn't been officially ?cleared' by the sunglass and suit wearing protection detail.

Whether she can realistically hang on to her job remains to be seen, but I applaud her for breaking precedent and wanting to be her own person.