KAREN On Tuesday

Big news in the suburban lane. **Robert Maxwell,** the British media mogul, is not only acquiring U.S. publishing properties but also opening a headquarters in suddenly media-chic Northern Virginia. Gannett's USA Today got there first, followed by **Emmett Tyrell's** American Spectator and then by Gannett's corporate headquarters, and before you know it Lee Highway may be our own little Fleet Street. Crews are working around the clock through Easter weekend to complete the 18,000-square-foot state-of-the-art, high-tech office space on West Park Drive outside Tysons Corner. It opens April 19. Initially, the bouncing Czech-born Mr. Maxwell is moving four of his many operations to the newly outfitted office space across the river: Pergamon Orbit Infoline Inc. (an on-line data base), PergaBase, SASC (Society and Association Services Corp., the meeting planners), and Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers. He's just purchased interests in television operations in France and China, but they'll presumably stay in Paris and Beijing. On the other hand, with press lords you never know what to expect.

Residents of Rehoboth Beach, Del., are up in arms. The asking price for each of three gay bathhouses is close to half a million. But no one is buying. Attorneys for the estates of the owners, according to insiders, are talking about converting the properties to AIDS hostels similar to what's been done with great success in Palm Springs, Calif. If the Delaware beach community follows the lead of the West Coast, it'll be a first in the East and will likely throw the beachside community, and Washingtonians who summer there, for a loop.

Don Regan is bitter because he hasn't heard from **the president** or **the first lady** since he left the White House. He's confided to friends that he knew little about politics when he took the Treasury post, and hadn't learned much more when he became the chief of staff, but he thought he could count on some help. His first disappointment was when he learned that a course in White House Op 101 wasn't available. But life isn't so terrible. The price of his talk-talk has climbed to $20,000 an appearance.

Actress **Maggie Smith** flew in from London in time to read excerpts from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on the balcony at the Folger for its annual Founders' Dinner the other evening. When she realized she'd left behind her reading glasses, she rushed out to Peoples Drug store, tried on various magnifying glasses and, after enlisting the opinions of nearby customers, selected a pair. The read went on with nary a stumble.

Washington sometimes makes for unlikely dinner companions. **Jane McLaughlin,** the gal who leaked the story on Spitz Channel and the Contras, dined at the Prime Rib with none other than **Adolfo Calero,** a top leader of the Contras, just the other evening.

The mood was jubilant at the annual Democratic Congressional Dinner at the Washington Hilton last week. Sens. **Paul Simon** and **Joe Biden** attracted crowds of well-wishers at their pre-dinner receptions, as did California Attorney General **Leo McCarthy,** who's looking covetously at **Pete Wilson's** Senate seat. There was lots of other buzzing, about who will challenge whom for what seat. Even **Bella** is thinking of running again, this time for **Ted Weiss'** House seat on Manhattan's West Side.

Jose Eber, the Beverly Hills makeover artist who lists among his clients **Liz Taylor, Victoria Principal, Cher, Linda Gray, Farrah Fawcett, Ann-Margret** and **Barbara Walters,** was in town last weekend talking about his new line of gardenia-scented hair products with PABA sunscreen that he's about to launch with Faberge. "What I do becomes a fantasy to every woman," says Jose. "I make them look like Queen for a Month." We all know it takes a month for haircuts, color and perms to grow out. He says women today are copying TV stars, rather than film stars. That's because TV stars such as **Joan Collins** and **Linda Evans** have taken the glamour away from film stars such as **Meryl Streep** and **Sissy Spacek.** "Women's roles in film are unglamorous and unsophisticated."

— Karen Feld