

\*Article from the latest Deppville Tattler:\*

## THIS REALLY TAKES THE (WEDDING) CAKE!

Commander Portsmouth Denies Reports of Career Change to Wedding Caterer

by Faline Jaye LePetomaine, Staff Reporter

Despite existing photographs that indicate the contrary, Commander M. Portsmouth vehemently denies rumors circulating that she has decided to turn in her feather and position as head of Deppville's Security department to take on a new career in the food service industry. I caught up with Commander Portsmouth one recent afternoon at Chez Roux, to set the record straight.

'Absolute rubbish!' the Commander snorted haughtily while nibbling a humble salad of watercress and bleu cheese. 'It is a simple misunderstanding. I was merely waiting in the wings at the Wonka wedding, preparing to give my highly anticipated speech on the sanctity of the institution of marriage. Unfortunately, some dunderheaded amateur shutterbug happened to snap me as I was standing near the buffet table. No doubt the sneaky work of pirates, or one of my many jealous detractors.'

I commiserate with the Commander and mention that the error was understandable, due in part to her proximity to the sumptuous reception spread, but also because of her chosen ensemble for the affair – a comely combination of crisp white linen coat and slim-fitting black linen pencil skirt. My supposition brought another indignant snort from la Portsmouth, rapidly followed by her signature pounding of a well-tanned fist on the table, upsetting her Perrier and bringing the ever-conscientious Chez Roux staff running to our assist. 'What utter balderdash, that the citizenry doesn't recognize *haute couture* any better than that! That suit was vintage Versace, and if he knew his genius had been mistaken for a ... a food server's uniform ... he would be spinning in his grave! I shall include a few choice comments on this subject in my next fireside chat that my faithful followers have so come to look forward to.'

I then timidly venture to point out that, in the photos currently circulating, there is one of Mr. Willy Wonka handing a check to her. She receives this information with a narrowing of the eyes as she picks up a small bread plate and flings it at the wall. (I'm happy to report that the dish was intercepted – again, kudos to the able-bodied and quick-moving staff of Chez Roux.) 'Blast it all, I was giving that check to Mr. Wonka!' She quickly settles down, smoothes her stylish coif, calms her voice. 'Actually, it was not a check, per se. It was a much more better wedding gift than mere money, which is so vulgar, *n'est-ce pas?* It was a voucher, redeemable toward the purchase of one official paving stone, engraved with the Wonkas' name and inscription of their choice, to be included in the lavishly landscaped paved walkway that will lead to my Equestrian Statue. A \$500 value! Perhaps you would care to purchase one in your name, Ms. LePetomaine? Be a part of Deppville history ...'

I politely decline, saying perhaps later. With surprisingly quick presence of mind, she produces an order form, for my convenient future use. The form is printed on luxurious paper, gilt-edged, with the banner, "Pave the Way!" penned across the top in meticulous calligraphy, accompanied by beautifully rendered trumpet-wielding cherubs and flourishes. The Commander tells me to simply fill in the form, indicate the name and inscription I wish to have engraved on the stone, 'for all eternity,' she assures me; then include my check and post the lot, first class mail. She also reminds me that I mustn't wait too long, or all the most prominent places will be taken. I assure her that I won't forget, and I slip the form into my handbag. I then ask her how things have been in general and how she copes with times like these, when local gossip intervenes on her day-to-day. She sighs, takes a healthy swig of her robust red wine. 'Oh, I always come through it with the aplomb and good grace befitting one in my position. Sometimes I manage to turn lemons into lemonade. Take this current absurd rumor, for example. It's not the first time it's made the rounds.' She leans closer. 'After the first time I saw those photos, I vowed that never again would I wear anything that could even remotely suggest to even the most casual observer that I might be employed in some form of ... of menial servitude. That's when I adopted this style, and it has served me well ever since. Now I ask you, Ms. LePetomaine, does this look like the uniform of a simple caterer?' She waves a hand over her clothes, to indicate what is now the classic Portsmouth style: short, tight skirt, low-cut jacket, black stockings, stiletto heels. I shake my head, agreeing with her, responding that indeed it is a costume that brings to mind an entirely different profession altogether.

The waiter brings our check, and the Commander graciously offers to treat. I protest, then finally give in, thanking her and noting that it's growing late and I must return to the office. We step outside, she takes my hand, squeezes it in a steely grip that makes me wince, and invites me to visit her at Chateau Blanchefort. I tell her I would be delighted and promise to contact her soon. She smiles, though I can see that the strain of

discussing this issue has taken its toll. She almost seems to read my thoughts, and she gazes at me keenly, reminding me that despite her seeming frivolity and lack of focus at times, she is nobody's fool. I feel slightly unnerved as she fixes me with the famous Portsmouth stare; and she clucks her tongue and speaks in the oily, martyred tone that has earned her the nickname of The Great Manipulator. 'Truly, Ms. LePetomaine, anything you can do to put this business to rest will be greatly appreciated. For the life of me, I will never understand how anyone can be so preoccupied and judgmental over other people's private affairs and lifestyles.' I watch her climb into her SUV (surprisingly gracefully given the brevity of her skirt); and as she drives away, I think to myself, Madame, you speak for us all.