

The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “Downs, Maria - Book, "Mostly Wine and Roses" (1) (unpublished)” of the Maria Downs Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. The Council donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

OUTLINE

MOSTLY WINE AND ROSES

Introduction

My Coming Out Party
- the interview

East Side - West Side
- the White House and its staff

Trial Under Fire
- my first State dinner

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
- the guest list

Musical Chairs
- the seating, who, where and why

America the Beautiful
- the Americana theme
arts, crafts and antiques

A Real Nice Clambake
- entertainment at the White House

White House Angels
- the volunteers

Is it Better to Receive than to Give?
- official gifts

Happy Birthday America
- the Bicentennial

Her Majesty the Queen
- the visit of Elizabeth and Phillip

Christmas at the White House
- an unusual guest

Thanks for the Memory
- farewell to the White House
and other thoughts



MOSTLY WINE AND ROSES

by
Maria Downs

Introduction

When a person serves a President of the United States - is part of his White House staff - particularly the senior White House staff - it is a very honored and privileged relationship. Not a relationship merely meant to boost some aspiring writer's ego and bank account.

Recent reams of self-serving exposes, supposedly based on experiences and conversations during tenure at, or within shooting distance of the White House, are downright depressing, demeaning and deceptive.

For, to me, as Social Secretary to President and Mrs. Ford, life at the White House, viewed from the lovely office I occupied, boasted sides decidedly different than the seamy, sordid portrayals some authors would have you believe.

After all, life, be it at the White House or wherever, is what you make it. If I elaborated on that old adage, I too, would be sailing into the big wierd world of the denudation cult previously mentioned.

I do not believe it was my preordained destiny to be an author. Frankly, I never ever planned to write a book about the White House, or about anything else. But after reading the vainglorious efforts of some "story tellers", I thought it timely to lend a touch or two of refreshing reality and decency to at least this chapter in the colorful history of the White House.

Mostly Wine and Roses

Introduction - 2

Speaking of history, the celebration of our Nation's 200th birthday, our Bicentennial, is chronicled in this book. And I do hope, that during the Tricentennial celebration, someone will read these chapters and have a better understanding of how life at the White House is and was viewed by the many good people who have proudly served and are serving Presidents and First Ladies of our country.

President and Mrs. Ford are two grand, grateful people who gave freely and trustingly of themselves - not only to the People of America, but to their staffs as well.

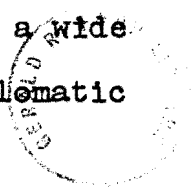
They recognized and appreciated the importance of the social side of the White House in accomplishing the goals of an Administration. The office of Social Secretary is solely responsible for a host of activities, both domestic and international, wedded to the aims and achievements of the President, the First Lady and their Administration.

To give you a better understanding, let me explain a few of the duties and responsibilities of the Social Secretary and her staff.

To begin with, we are rare birds! There have only been seven White House Social Secretaries in the history of our country. The custom began under the Franklin Roosevelt Administration. You serve, at the pleasure of the President and the First Lady, as part of the senior White House staff with a Presidential Commission.

I worked with the First Lady in the overall planning, arrangement, co-ordination and direction of all official and personal social events given by the President and his family.

The social side of the White House is responsible for a wide range of events; represented in part by State dinners, diplomatic



Mostly Wine and Roses

Intorduction - 3

affairs, concerts, receptions, luncheons, holiday balls, special dinners (honoring individuals, outstanding events and achievements), working dinners and breakfasts. It was also my duty to suggest to the First Lady new modes of entertainment.

Every President and First Lady set the tone of their Administration's entertainment. The Ford's manner of entertaining reflected their own personal life style - relaxed but correct. They felt social events should embrace charm, dignity and be enjoyable. A cherished memory for those attending! Each party must have qualities which set it apart from all other events! Each it's individual purpose and thrust; a flair and pace all it's own, thoughtfully planned and then carried out.

The planning included the form and wording of invitations, compiling of guest lists, setting menus, seating diagrams, choice of entertainment, setup and decoration of the Residence, briefing of military social aides and the theme for each event. To make sure that intent became reality, the Social Secretary's presence at each official event was a must.

A constant flow of letters, some addressed to the President, some to the First Lady, some to the Social Secretary, relating to social activities, were the concern of my office. People wrote to praise or to criticize, to ask about entertainment, wanting to perform at the White House, others seeking preferential treatment. All received answers.

There is so much to say: Of happenings - happy and sad - smiles and tears to share. Bitter memories? No!

My joys were great!



Mostly Wine and Roses

Introduction - 4

True, it was a tremendous, often tumultuous and difficult job, but I will always treasure each and every moment. And I hope when you have finished reading this book, you, too, will have experienced, in some measure, the mosaic of special feelings I enjoyed each time I entered the gates of the White House.

In the words of Wordsworth, "Mostly Wine and Roses" is "emotion recollected in tranquillity."



Mostly Wine and Roses - 5

MY COMING OUT PARTY

The Interview



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 18, 1977

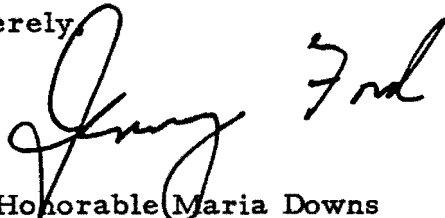
Dear Maria:

Of all the letters coming to me during these closing days of my Administration, the ones that touch me the most are those from the members of the White House staff. Legally this is a formal letter accepting your resignation, but first of all, Betty and I want to thank you for all that you have done to help make White House entertaining such a delightful experience for us. As we leave, we take with us many happy memories of our days here, but somehow I feel we will best recall the lovely -- and always lively -- social occasions which we hosted. Remembering those times, whether with foreign leaders or personal friends, we will always be proud to know that these events reflected the warm and generous spirit of the American people, and the tradition of friendship and hospitality which has always been extended by those who have had the great privilege of living in this beautiful and historic House.

I know we will remain friends, and I hope our paths will cross often in the days ahead. Betty and I send our warmest wishes to you and John for every success and happiness in the years ahead.

It is with deep appreciation for your contributions to my Administration and to our Nation that I accept your resignation as Social Secretary, effective January 20, 1977, as you requested.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Maria Downs
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500



That was the ending.

It began in the early Fall of 1975. I had been on the White House staff for several years at that time, working as Senior Staff aide to Anne Armstrong who was later to become our Ambassador to Great Britain. Anne was a Counsellor to President Nixon, then the only woman in the Nixon Administration to hold Cabinet rank. Her areas of responsibility included women, the Bicentennial, political liason, the Cost of Living Council, the Hispanics and youth. I directed a staff of 25 for Anne.

Those were interesting and challenging days, when a broom closet of an office in the West Wing of the White House (such as mine) meant more than an elaborate suite of offices with fireplaces in the Executive Office Building. It was my introduction to White House status symbols. We worked and lived through the sad days of the Watergate era and when Gerald Ford became President we all settled into the business of helping him run the country.

I had first met President and Mrs. Ford when I came to Washington in 1963 and became involved in Barry Goldwater's 1964 Presidential campaign. Later our paths crossed again when I was a member of the Republican National Committee staff and the President was Permanent Chairman of the Republican National Conventions in 1968 and 1972. Betty Ford was actively involved in both those meetings. When the President was serving as Vice President I saw Mrs. Ford frequently. I always liked her and felt quite at ease around her - thus when, through a friend I learned she was looking for a Social Secretary I proceeded to contact her.



This all sounds like a sinecure - quite natural. In reality I was petrified at the thought of applying for any job let alone this exulted position. Up to this point in my career one job had led to another - I had never pursued a position. Just before my friend's call I had made up my mind to leave the White House staff. Perhaps if this were not the case, I would not have had the courage to contact Mrs. Ford.

At the time I was White House liason to the Bicentennial. Because of personal reasons Anne Armstrong had returned to Texas. Her responsibilities had been divided amongst the other Counsellors and her staff disbanded. My new position did not offer enough of a challenge to me. John Warner, now United States Senator from Virginia, was Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA) and in charge of the Bicentennial. John had the celebration well in hand. We had faced some stormy seas in the early days of the Bicentennial but now that things were sailing smoothly, I did not feel I was earning my keep.

Whatever the case or whatever the feeling - the probability of my becoming Social Secretary seemed quite remote to me.

Shortly thereafter I received a call from Carolyn Porembka, Mrs. Ford's personal secretary. Carolyn told me the First Lady had chosen to personally supervise the search for a Social Secretary, was interviewing all the applicants and wanted to get together with me as soon as possible.



Many people may be surprised to learn that I was interviewed for the position by the First Lady.

I don't know how other Social Secretaries were chosen but in retrospect the method Mrs. Ford followed seems the wisest to me. The relationship you share with the First Lady is quite unique. You are a friend - a confidante - share a mutual trust and respect - feel free to speak out or to criticize. Being professionally capable is only part of the criteria. It is a very personal relationship that is usually reserved for close friends. If a First Lady does not have the luxury of a friend who is also capable enough to be her Social Secretary, she must be a very good judge of people to choose correctly.

Getting together with Mrs. Ford was not as easy as it sounded, particularly at that time. The First Lady had been without a Social Secretary for several months and in addition to all her other official duties she was overseeing plans for a very special State visit - that of His Majesty Emperor Hirohito and Her Majesty Empress ^{Nagako} of Japan. She was literally swamped. We spoke over the telephone several times, renewing our friendship. We discussed thoughts on how one entertains - the implications of the social side of the White House and how we both viewed the position.

She told me that as part of the evaluation process she was asking all of those under consideration to draw up a plan for an official



State Dinner. A State dinner is an official function, it is an important part of a State visit and is the most dignified, beautiful, exciting and complex of all the White House social events. It gives the President and the First Lady the opportunity to honor the visiting head of state and his mate. It is a courtesy - an expression of good will - a grandiose way of extending hospitality! Bringing to mind the old tradition of breaking bread to seal a friendship. It is an occasion to blend the historical and cultural backgrounds of our country in the entertainment of world leaders.

With her usual candor Mrs. Ford told me who the other candidates were and the countries they were designing their dinner plans around. I must admit my heart sank when I heard the names of some of my competition - all of whom I knew. If it was a challenge I was looking for - it was a challenge I was getting.

For my dinner I decided to go all out. The Bicentennial year was upon us and what could be more grandiloquent and appropriate than a visit from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Little did I realize then how much this game plan would help when the real thing came along.

Where do you start to plan a State dinner? What do you do? Who do you turn to for help? Well, first of all common sense prevails. You know you need to draft an invitation - a guest list - a menu - entertainment and a theme. In addition to reasoning that all these things were necessary, I also knew that all had to be very special.

Since I had never planned to write a book, I did not keep notes or diaries so I am relying on my memory. The sequence of some of the events that follow may be confused in my mind but the details of my first meeting with Mrs. Ford are vivid. She had called after she received my proposal to let me know how interesting she found it and to say that she wanted to go over it with me personally. She invited me



to lunch with her in the family quarters the following day.

As I walked through the West Wing, past the Oval Office and press room and on into the Residence, I could not help but think how calm I was. I felt well prepared for my meeting. Putting together a State dinner, even though it was on paper only, had fascinated me. I had thoroughly enjoyed every step along fantasies way. If it turned out that I was not Mrs. Ford's choice, the experience was one I would always treasure. Harrison, who had been serving First Families for many years, had the elevator off the ground floor corridor waiting to take me up to the family quarters. Little did I realize then how many times this kind gentleman would be there waiting and how fond of him I would become.

As we got off the elevator and he was escorting me into the living room something peculiar happened - a strange feeling came over me, one that baffles description. It was not a case of butterflies - not fright. Could it have been the surroundings? Being in their private quarters - the inner, inner circle? Carolyn came from the study to greet me. She said the First Lady would be with me in a moment and to make myself at home. Still, that feeling persisted --not a sense of awe but rather an incredible "wondrous strange" feeling.

Certainly it wasn't Mrs. Ford who caused that curious sensation - I had talked to her and been with her many times before - No - it wasn't Mrs. Ford - it was the First Lady !

Mrs. Ford seemed to sense my feelings and after greeting me warmly she went out of her way to set me at ease. In the next two years I was to witness many people overcome by the phenomena of my "wondrous strange" feeling.

Don't ask me what we had for lunch - I remember we were served on tray tables and sat in easy chairs close to one another to make conversation easier.



We discussed the guest list in great detail - why certain people were included - others omitted. The First Lady added several names - giving me the reason why. We then talked about the food. I had submitted a wild game menu as well as one of domestic meat. She laughed when I told her the thought had fleetingly crossed my mind of an all American type dinner including baked beans and cole slaw but decided against it for fear of being criticized as being too informal. The all American dinner was used several times at other more suitable occasions.

It was during this visit that Jack Ford came into the room and Mrs. Ford introduced me to him. He was the first of the Ford children I was to meet. The change from First Lady to mother was wonderful to see. Jack had been working on his jeep and was covered with grease. He stayed for only a few minutes. It occurred to me later that he was giving me the "once over". After he had gone Mrs. Ford told me that Jack was away from Washington when it became apparent that Mr. Ford was to become President. He was working as a ranger in Yellowstone Park and barely made it back in time for his father's swearing in. All through the official ceremonies he wore the cowboy boots he had been wearing in the back country of Wyoming where the helicopter found him and airlifted him out. She laughed saying - "knowing Jack those were the only shoes he had - I guess it beats his going barefooted." She mentioned Jack's boots to me several times again after that - it's funny how incidents like that stay in one's mind.



Our discussion turned to what would be the theorem for the Queen's dinner?

I asked the First Lady how she had arrived at the Americana theme. She replied that several thoughts were responsible. The most important being the feeling she and the President shared about the White House, that it was not their house but belonged to the American people. That it should be a source of inspiration for all Americans; should represent in every way, everything good about our country. The food and wines we served; the warm hospitality, the entertainers we chose to perform and the arts displayed.

She also thought the centerpieces as American as Plymouth Rock, would have the added benefit of serving as conversation pieces - like them or not - you would talk about them. And they did! They started conversation and put people at their ease.

Another reason that prompted the First Lady's initiation of the Americana idea was that in attending White House dinners during the years the President was a member of Congress, she had seen the same monotonous white tablecloths and the same unimaginative floral pieces.

She wanted to make dining at the White House more interesting, more memorable, in every way possible. My feeling, although never confirmed by Mrs. Ford, was there had been times when being entertained at the White House, though always an honor, was not always a joy.



For the theme of the Queen's dinner, I had decided to combine two very unique lifestyles of both countries - the American rodeo and the British hunt. Appropriate art objects such as Remington and Russell bronzes, silver saddle horns, hunt porcelains and stirrup cups were to be intersperced with American wildflowers to form beautiful and meaningful centerpieces.

The American wildflowers would compliment the Johnson china which is decorated with pastel colored native American flowers. The Monroe verneil flatware and Kennedy Morgantown crystal were also suggested for for the dinner. As in your home and mine the White House too, has limitations. These are the only services we have in adequate quantity to accomodate a State dinner.

Whenever possible we did our utmost to create a theme that would mirror the personal pursuits and activities of our honored guests. Both the queen and Prince Phillip are horse enthusiasts and both ride to the hunt. Aside from the rodeo being one of America's oldest forms of skill and entertainment there was a more personal note. Steve Ford was beginning his rodeo career - participating and competing in the Western United States while attending school and working on a ranch. We would have our own in house advisor.



In contrast to the very formal dinner, I suggested informal entertainment as a followup. A rodeo on the South Lawn of the White House including exhibitions of bronco busting, bull riding, calf roping and steer wrestling. The rodeo would be followed by a performance of American country music. The Gods were with me the morning I submitted my proposal to Mrs. Ford. I came across an article in the Christian Science Monitor about a Bonnie Jean Mc Pherson, women's world champion bull rider and bareback bronc rider and included it in my presentation. Apart from appealing to Mrs. Ford's feminist views - Bonnie Jean, who looked more like a fashion model than a cowpoke, was sure to appeal to Steve Ford's masculine views.

We were still going strong when Carolyn interrupted. It was time for Mrs. Ford to get ready for dinner - the President would be home shortly. Where had the afternoon gone? I apologized saying I hoped I had not overstayed my welcome (that's how at ease I was by this time). Mrs. Ford Laughed and said - "Oh no, Maria, - we've only scratched the surface."



I had the feeling that the First Lady was enjoying this - liked being Social Secretary. In fact, in a story that appeared in Mc Call's magazine after we had left the White House, she was quoted as saying that if she ever returned to the White House she would like to do so as Social Secretary. She thought she would enjoy that most. (

Yes, we had only "scratched the surface"! My interviews totaled nine hours !

The visits that followed were equally as enjoyable and fascinating. I never had the feeling of being interviewed - of being on the firing line. Mrs. Ford is a very knowledgeable, (She knew what she wanted and what she was talking about.

A few days after our luncheon, my telephone rang and the White House operator asked me to hold, she said Mrs. Ford wanted to speak to me. When the First Lady got on the line, she apologetically asked my age. She was concerned that perhaps I was too young for the job. When I told her my age, she said she thought I was much younger - with emphasis on the much. No wonder I adored her ! She asked me to come by the following day to meet with her at 2: 00.

When we met I thanked her again for the compliment. She proceeded to explain that the reason she was concerned about my age was that she could foresee the many new acquaintances and trying experiences I would be instantly exposed to if appointed Social Secretary. The people that would try to influence decisions and seek special favors. She was concerned as to whether I was old enough and experienced enough to cope with the pressures, the abuses, the compliments and ^{had} the wisdom needed to ¹make right decisions.



General Brent Scowcroft, ^{who was} the President's National Security

Advisor, summed it up well one day. We were comparing jobs and I spoke of the awesome responsibility of his position. Brent was the first person to brief the President ~~at~~ each morning. He said "he would never ~~want~~ ^{trade} my job - ~~he~~ would find it much too difficult in many ways. The nature of the decisions I had to make were so personal - touched such raw nerves - one's pride was at stake. You've got the toughest job in the White House."

I for one was relieved that Brent Scowcroft was National Security Advisor and that I was Social Secretary. The only experience I had in foreign policy was when I was asked to sit in on a meeting Henry Kissinger had requested of the President. It was a meeting with the representatives of the Greek community to discuss the Cyprus problem. Cyprus was and still is a very emotional issue with the Greek people. My heart was with my fellow countrymen but my logic with the President's stand.

Mrs. Ford mentioned the many, many parties and other social functions my husband and I would be invited to and asked if we liked to socialize a lot. I responded that we preferred to entertain at home, usually giving small dinner parties. That we did not get caught up in the Washington whirl unless it involved friends or a cause we were particularly interested in. We discussed Washington as a working town socially and the fact that many dinners and parties would be arduous extensions of a working day. I half jokingly added that after working 10 or 12 hours a day ^{6 days a week} at the White House, I was too exhausted to do much partying at night.

However, there are certain functions one is obligated to attend. Later I was to remember this conversation often, particularly when the myriad of invitations flowed into my office - invitations to the Social Secretary - not to Maria Downs.



Another discussion that took place that day was my popularity with the boys in the West Wing, the inner sanctum of the President's advisors and senior staff. The First Lady had heard the rumors that I was being so highly recommended to her because my allegiance would be to the West Wing and to Donald Rumsfeld, who was then Chief of Staff. But after a lengthy discussion of various individuals and how they would relate to us, I think Mrs. Ford felt certain that if we had to go to war with the West Wing, I would carry her banner on high ! More importantly, I think she was confident that as her aide-de-camp, so to speak we would not have an all out war and even the skirmishes would be fewer.

In the chapter entitled East Side - West Side, I discuss the White House and the White House staff and the rivalries that exist between a First Lady's staff and the President's staff. As in most cases, many of the differences and problems could be resolved by personal communication, understanding, horse sense and compromise.



Mostly Wine and Roses - 17

I must admit I had mixed emotions when, shortly after I had received my appointment, I was listed in a Newsweek cover story as one of "Rummy's Network" of allies and proteges holding top government jobs! Rummy (Don Rumsfeld) was now at the Pentagon, serving as Secretary of Defense. It was alleged to be the first step towards the Vice Presidency and ultimately the Presidency.

There I was with Attorney General Levi, the Secretary of Transportation, Bill Coleman, our new Chief of Staff, Dick Cheney, Jim Lynn, Director of the Office of Management and Budget and Rod Hills, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. However, I don't think Mrs. Ford minded having one of her staff included in such distinguished company.

We then talked about her staff and guidelines she had set.

She took a personal interest in everyone on her staff. A kindness sometimes unappreciated and abused by some who took advantage by taking their problems to her. We were there to assist her but in many instances she was the one who did the assisting.

Mrs. Ford is a very strong lady, with an appetite for authority which she never abuses. Much of her strength comes from inner contentment and faith enabling her to take obstacles in full stride.



Next we discussed Henry Kissinger, the State Department and the Chief of Protocol's office and how we related to them. Mrs. Ford was very fond of Henry. By the time it was all over with, I was too. Dr. Kissinger was a White House Social Secretary's delight !

Although it was early fall, Christmas was very much on the First Lady's mind. Decorating the White House for Christmas is a monumental labor of love which takes months of planning. Knowing how busy she had been without a Social Secretary, I took it upon myself to offer a suggestion for the decorations. Williamsburg, to me is beautiful, traditional America ! To carry through Mrs. Ford's idea of highlighting everything American at the White House, I suggested a Williamsburg Christmas. Mrs. Ford beamed ! Just the week before, she had met with Carl Humelsine, President of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and his staff and asked them to assist with the Christmas decor. We were on the same wave length. On that high note we called it a day.

I left that meeting feeling as though I had downed a bottle of champagne and the bubbles were still bubbling. Then all of a sudden my high became a low. A feeling of sadness engulfed me ! A loneliness. What was wrong? Everything had gone so well. We were in accord in so many ways. We couldn't have gotten along better. Why this feeling? It was almost as though my beautiful experience was nothing but a



myth ! Like awakening from a dream you didn't want to end. Lying there with eyes tightly closed, heart and mind filled with overwhelming futility.

I did not return to my office that day. Instead I walked the seven blocks to our home and proceeded to prepare an extra special dinner for my husband. That evening I told him about my afternoon with the First Lady. That I knew Mrs. Ford would make her decision soon. She would make the right decision and I was sure it would not be me.

He jokingly asked if that was the reason for the great dinner and if I was reapplying for the job of chief cook and bottlemasher. He had been terribly neglected throughout all of this, but having a mate who worked on the White House staff had made him self-sustaining long ago. He never complained. I believe Jack wanted this appointment for me more than I wanted it for myself. He knew I would do a good job for the Ford's and he also felt it would give me a chance to come into my own. He said he was sure Mrs. Ford would make the right decision, consequently, it would be me.

The next afternoon Mrs. Ford called and asked me to meet with her. She had made her decision. She would like me to be the White House Social Secretary and if I agreed she would discuss it with the President that evening. She smiled when she said she didn't see any problem with the President, but, since my position would encompass so many areas that concerned him, she felt he should be consulted.

The next day was a very special day at the White House. It marked the beginning of the visit of the Emperor and Empress of Japan, the first visit of Japanese Royalty to the United States. Large crowds gathered for the welcoming ceremony and reception which marked the opening of the State visit. The official greeting by the President



and First Lady was a very impressive and ceremonial occasion.

Knowing of Mrs. Ford's involvement in State visits, I did not expect to be hearing from her for several days. I was completely taken by surprise when half an hour before the start of the welcoming ceremony she called. She had talked to the President and "he was very pleased with my choice and so am I."

She asked if I would please go to the State floor before the dinner that evening and look at the East Room and the State Dining Room, settings for the reception and dinner. Mrs. Ford was very excited about the Emperor's visit and wanted me to see the choices in table settings and other arrangements she had made. At first she suggested that she would have Carolyn escort me to the state floor but then because she didn't want anyone to know of my appointment - she decided that would be a dead giveaway so I should go it alone. She wanted to wait to announce my appointment after the Emperor's visit was over and asked me not to tell anyone - well, almost anyone - I could tell Jack !

Half an hour later, standing on the South Lawn watching the President and the First Lady greet the Emperor and Empress, I thought, ^{Japan} what a remarkable lady - what a very special lady. And then as if in agreement the sun broke through the clouds and shown brightly. Japan is not the only land of the rising sun.



EAST SIDE - WEST SIDE

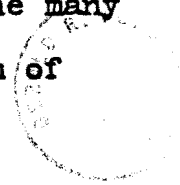
The White House And Its Staff

The White House is a museum of American history- boasting bravissimo portraits of President's and First Ladies, other works by some of America's finest artists, antique furniture in authentic settings and memorabilia of historic importance. It is also the home and office of the President of the United States and his family. From it's private offices come important decisions and policies that effect millions and millions of people. From it's home-like atmosphere comes warmth, joy, hospitality and social activity that embraces the world.

In this chapter I will concern myself with the people, the rooms and the offices with whom I worked the closest and who relate to this story. I will not go into the overall structure of the White House and it's staff. And it is not my intent to make this into a guide book, but I do think you will have a better understanding of my story if you are familiar with the historic rooms and treasures that are the White House.

Let me begin by taking you on a walk through the East Wing which was added in 1942^{and} houses the First Lady's staff, the White House Social Offices, the Military Aides' Offices and the Tour Office, as well as the Family Theatre. The East Wing lobby and garden are used primarily by the First Lady and her staff as an informal reception area. This wing is connected to the Mansion, or Residence as the Ford's preferred to call it, by a glass enclosed colonade.

The ground floor corridor provides an elegant gallery of antique furniture, paintings, sculptures and other works of art for the many visitors passing through on the daily public tours. The custom of



hanging portraits of First Ladies in this area dates from 1902, when Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt asked that "all the ladies of the White House, including myself, be relegated to the downstairs corridor."

This must be a lively place when Eleanor Roosevelt, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Lady Bird Johnson and Betty Ford get together with the four spirited cowboys of Remington's "Coming Through the Rye" sculpture. The cowboys flank the entrance from the East Foyer.

The Library, at the far end of the corridor, originally served as a laundry area until it became a "Gentlemen's Ante-room" and subsequently a library. Whereas Remington's cowboys are watching over the corridor, five portraits of American Indians guard the Library.

The Vermeil Room, sometimes called the Gold Room, serves as a display room and ladies sitting room. Pieces from the Vermeil collection bequeathed to the White House by Mrs. Margaret Thompson Biddle, date from the Renaissance to the early twentieth century. We jokingly called it the White House's Fort Knox.

The China Room displays the collection of White House china. Every President is represented either by state china, family china or glassware. Rutherford Hayes' service included a series of painted and sculpted plates decorated with the likeness of a beautiful stag and other wild animals which I used when President Ford entertained his former colleagues in Congress and other close friends and business men. They were perfect for a stag dinner.



The Diplomatic Reception Room, once used as a boiler and furnace room is now furnished as a drawing room of the early 19th century. It's striking panoramic wallpaper called "Scenic America" is based on engravings from the 1820's and depicts the Natural Bridge of Virginia, Niagra Falls, New York Bay, West Point and Boston Harbor.

The "Dip Room" as it was called by the staff, was frequently used by Mrs. Ford for small receptions, meetings and photo opportunities.



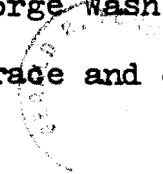
The Map Room, the last of the public rooms on the ground floor, was used by FDR as a situation room to follow the course of World War II. It is now a reception room, filled with priceless antiques and to my eyes one of the most beautiful rooms in the White House. We frequently used it as a holding room or sitting room for the artists performing at the State dinners.

In describing the ground floor I have referred to the original laundry and the boiler rooms - these facilities still exist much as they do in your house and mine. Also intermingled with the historic rooms are the kitchen, the refrigeration room, pantry, ^{and} flower shop. These rooms, particularly the kitchen, became very familiar to me.

A walk up the wide marble staircase takes you to the elegant rooms of the State Floor, the setting for most official entertainment. You enter through the large North Entrance Hall decked with portraits of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. I spent many an evening in the golden historic ambience of this setting, listening to the Marine Band play lovely melodies and watching our guests dance into the wee hours.

From the North Hall you proceed to the Cross Hall which leads from the State Dining Room to the East Room. This area should be called Peacock Alley! Elegant simplicity best describes it and oh how people loved to promenade back and forth along it's beckoning perimeter.

The East Room, scene of many historic White House events, is the largest and most formal of the State Floor reception rooms. It is used for large gatherings including balls, after dinner entertainment, concerts, weddings, funerals, church services, press conferences and bill signing ceremonies. Magnificent full length portraits of George Washington and Martha Washington hang resplendently there. Adding grace and charm.



A celebrated portrait of Abraham Lincoln hangs over the mantle of the huge fireplace. What an arresting, thought-provoking work! Painted in 1869 by the gifted artist, George A.P. Healy, who seemed to have looked deeply into Lincoln's heart and soul to capture such naked power in depicting his subject's sad, deeply concerned, hungry-looking visage; the wise, compassionate, expressive eyes, dancing with visions of another time - his time; a time of trial under fire, a time of success and failure - eyes that beam a message of faith in America's strength, of hope for all mankind.

Inspiring ! To me by far the most moving of all the portraits gracing the White House walls! An opinion shared by many a guest.

I recall a distinguished statesman, standing viewing the portrait with respect and admiration, turning to me and saying:

"Old Abe there, Honey, was one hell of a guy! A giant! They just don't come like him anymore. And God knows how badly we need them! Certainly makes a man stop and think! I'd like to see a copy of that painting hanging in every home in America! And maybe two copies in every office on the Hill!"

Neatly tucked into the corner of the State Floor is the office of the Chief Usher of the White House, Rex Scouten, responsible for the care and the maintenance of the White House and it's grounds. A most remarkable individual and one of the most dedicated I have ever met. His staff includes several assistants, the maitre d', butlers, chefs, maids, housekeeper, electricians, carpenters, florists and ground-keepers. Without these fine people the White House would not operate efficiently. When I recently asked Mrs. Ford what she missed most about the White House she replied without hesitation - "Rex and his people!"

The Family Quarter's occupy the second and third floors. Some of the second floor rooms are semi-private, such as the Yellow Oval Room, the Lincoln Bedroom, the Queen's Bedroom and the Treaty Room. Although not in daily use, or open to the public these rooms are definitely of a historic and official nature and not conducive to family living. This leaves the First Family with precious little space of their own. The Ford's quarters were at the West End of the second floor.

One morning I received an unusually early call from Mrs. Ford. It was 7:00 a.m., and she was in exceptionally high spirits for one who is not an early riser. ^{HER daughter} Susan was to leave later that day to return to school at the University of Kansas and she wanted as much time as possible with her. Susan and two girl friends were spending the night in the Lincoln Bedroom contending they wished to find out for themselves if Lincoln's ghost really did haunt the House. If he was there he surely couldn't resist joining three lovely young ladies in his bedroom.

Mrs. Ford had asked the President to awaken her when he rose at his usual time - 5:30 a.m. If Susan and friends wanted to see President Lincoln's ghost - this President's Lady would oblige! From the linen closet she took a white bed sheet and draped it over herself. In the best tradition of ghostlihood down the hall she floated. Opening the door she found the three girls sleeping.

Entering quietly to the center of the room, the "ghost" commenced raising and lowering her arms as she imagined a "hant", friendly or otherwise, might do, ^{and} she then began emitting sounds as spooky as she was able to master - her monologue, a muted rendition of Lincoln's famous "Gettysburg Address"!

I'm sorry, but the result belies description. Description that would do the scene justice !



The girls had stayed up late, talking of course, and were dead to the world, as the expression goes. But the superb performance by the First Lady was so realistic, the badly frightened girls quickly came alive and literally climbed the walls! Had the "headless horseman" galloped in they wouldn't have been more frightened! One later exclaimed:

"Frightened? I wasn't frightened! I was damned scared! She was the realest ghost I ever care to see!"

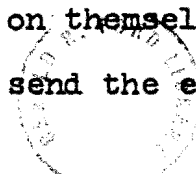
Mrs. Ford had proved that the "stage" can be both a realm of appearances and shocking reality! Later, feeling a bit remorseful about the episode, she said to me:

"You know, Maria, had I known how much I would frighten them, I wouldn't have done it!"

Originally the second floor also served as offices for the President and his staff. This inadequacy was remedied in 1902 with the construction of the West Wing. This edifice has been enlarged several times since then to accomodate the Presidential offices and those of his key senior staff. Since space in the White House is very limited, most executive personnel are located in the Executive Office Building west of the White House.

The President's office, the Oval Office, is in the West Wing overlooking the Rose Garden. His Chief of Staff, National Security Advisor, Counsellors, Personal Aide and Press Secretary were all situated in the West Wing, too.

The White House Press Room is in an area connecting the West Wing and the Residence. This was once the swimming pool, but Richard Nixon had flooring laid over it to provide more adequate press facilities. The story the White House press corps told on themselves was that someday Richard Nixon would push a button and send the entire



press corps floundering.

One of the most important people in the White House is the President's Chief of Staff, singularly one of the most powerful positions in any Administration. During my tenure at the White House I worked under four Chiefs of Staff, Bob Haldeman, Don Rumsfeld, Al Haig and Dick Cheney.

The one I knew the best and worked the closest with was Dick Cheney. Dick reminds one much of the President in temperament - and a little bit in appearance, too. At 34, he was the youngest White House Chief of Staff! And very capable, easy going, reasonable and fair. If you were doing your job well and didn't waste time indulging in games of intrigue and sordid attempts to promote self and friends, you had his full support. And believe me, his support was more than welcome at times when the odds seemed overwhelming! He kept a low profile but there was very little, if anything, going on that he was not aware of.



I will always remember walking into his office one morning, in the heat of the 1976 Presidential campaign, and, to my surprise, finding him with a cast on his leg. He had slipped on one of his daughter's toys the night before, breaking his leg. This was early morning, only a few hours after the accident and he was still in pain, but did not complain.

Dick was quite a sight in the weeks that followed, hobbling around the West Wing, his leg in a cast, on crutches. He became quite adept at hopping on and off Air Force One during the frequent, hectic campaign stops and was the brunt of many a reporter's joke. But Dick Cheney was very popular with the press. A popularity well deserved.

There is an old theatrical expression "Break your leg!" which means do your best and good luck and is often wished one just as he or she is about to go on stage. When we left the White House on January 20, 1977 Dick left his crutches in his office for Hamilton Jordan, President Carter's Chief of Staff. This was his way of wishing his successor good luck.

I attended a reception in his honor on the occasion of his swearing in as a United States Representative from the state of Wyoming. It was good to have him back in Washington.



The President's National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, whom I spoke of earlier, was a jewel! I don't think any Social Secretary ever worked as closely with the National Security Council(NSC) as I did. This is not as ominous as it sounds. The NSC was there to serve and advise the President on affairs of national security. This covers a lot of territory and I do not presume to know or understand affairs of national security. That was not my job. I do know however, that personally, Brent Scowcroft did what his position called for - he made me feel secure ! He was ever ready to advise, to help. Whenever I had a "ticklish" situation the "Little General" as we affectionately called him, always had a logical, decent solution or sage advice.

It seems the National Security Council breeds giants. Henry Kissinger originally headed the NSC. Then for awhile he wore two hats as Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. Al Haig succeeded him and when General Haig became Chief of Staff, Brent Scowcroft took over. These men are an invincible combination. Three Musketeers - American style!

It is not my intent to make Wine and Roses of everyone and everything at the White House but there were truly some exceptionally fine and talented people surrounding the President and First Lady.



Nelson Rockefeller's untimely end made me feel very sad. Sadder still that some of the publicity about his death made it appear that in death, as well as in life, he was one of Fate's stepchildren.

But why?

He gave generously and unselfishly of himself and his fortune; seemed to have a fine respect for living and was cognizant that satisfaction counts most in life. Yet in his final years he seemed to be seeking something beyond his reach.

A kind of Promethean desire? Maybe ...

On the other hand, it is easy to understand that perhaps he became disenchanted with politics. The human absurdity, the overwhelming futility of trying to do good, to help people, to right a topsy-turvy, chaotic world through politics. That politics, and history bears witness, is just a lot of old faces with old skeletons!

My first encounter with Nelson Rockefeller was during the bitter contest between he and Barry Goldwater for the 1964 Republican Presidential nomination. I was on Barry Goldwater's team. Nelson Rockefeller was a foe - a very formidable foe; an impression that lasted long after the campaign.

I don't know when my feeling toward him changed. Perhaps, one Spring afternoon, years later, at the White House. He had come to discuss his newly formed "Critical Choices for America Committee" with Anne Armstrong.

After his meeting he asked to use a telephone on one of the secretaries desks. I offered him the privacy of my office and started to leave and close the door. He asked me to stay, saying he would only be a moment and did not want to evict me from my office.



When he finished his call he did not get up to leave but instead began telling me more about his Commission and the high hopes he had for it. He also spoke of his earlier days as a public servant with the State Department.

Perhaps it was my tiny office, the kind of setting for reminiscing and friendship. It was warm and cheery and cozy. He did not seem to want to leave. This was a different Nelson Rockefeller than the one formerly imprinted on my mind! This was a kind, sensitive, concerned man!

I saw much of Nelson Rockefeller after he became Vice President. Both he and Mrs. Rockefeller attended many of the ^{White House} social events and seemed to genuinely enjoy them. They mingled freely and sought out timid guests to make them feel at home. I never had to ask them to help in this way - they just did it instinctively. There was nothing pretentious about them. They were old shoe!

He will be missed by many.



The President's Counsellors Jack Marsh and Bob Hartman were as different as day and night. Jack, a typical Virginia gentleman, soft spoken, conservative, a former Democrat Congressional colleague of the President's. Bob, a stereotype of the old Front Page reporter. Their counseling had to be as diverse as their personalities. These were the two "in house" gurus.


Dean Burch, Anne Armstrong, Bryce Harlow and Mel Laird had served as Counsellors at one time and continued to make themselves available. The President sought and received counsel from many.

If, as many people believe, close proximity to power is power, Terry O'Donnell should have been the most sought after person in Washington. Terry, the President's Aide, practically sat in the President's lap. He was responsible for the hour to hour schedule workings of the President. He was the one who made sure all went according to plan.

To insure that our plans became reality, for certain events Terry, Rex Scouten and I held what we called a "walk through". We did not leave anything to chance where the President and the First Lady were concerned. We would assemble the electrician, the sound man, military aide, press aide and pertinent staff person and literally act out a scenario.

This precautionary activity yielded dividends although it sometimes brought to mind the old proverb - "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

Let me tell you about the "walk through" for the ceremony at which the President would present Arthur Rubenstein with the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award given by a President. Comparable to the Medal of Honor given to the military. So it was a very special occasion for a very special man.



Arthur Rubenstein was giving his farewell American concert tour and would be coming to the White House from an appearance in Cleveland, Ohio. Mrs. Rubenstein and their children would also be arriving that morning, but from different parts of the country. Rex, always the most thoughtful, suggested we have the Lincoln Sitting Room and Bedroom available should our honored guest wish to relax or freshen up. We discussed the arrival and seating of the guests, the location of the platform in the East Room, the receiving line, the positioning of the television cameras and photographers and all other physical aspects of the event.

We then decided to run through the presentation itself. Terry played the President, Captain Lee Domina, the Marine Presidential Aide, portrayed himself and Rex was Arthur Rubenstein. I was the director.

We were all set to collect our "Oscars" when Terry tried to pin the Medal of Freedom on Rex's lapel. He fussed and he fumbled, without success. The clasp defied him! Actually there was nothing wrong with the clasp. It was - a clasp.

We panicked! What if this happened during the ceremony?

Our alternative was to have the President present the dress version of the medal to Mr. Rubenstein. But that was not correct. The dress version was meant to be worn with evening clothes and a sash. Finally Lee came up with the idea of making up a cardboard placket that could be easily slipped into the breast pocket of a gentleman's suit coat. The medal could be affixed beforehand thus avoiding any problems. The Marines had made another successful landing!

Suffice it to say - Mr. Rubenstein's suit coat did have a breast pocket but the President chose to affix the medal, as intended, ceremoniously to his lapel without any trouble. I think the President was politely telling us something!

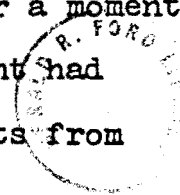
There was a very close relationship between the President and Terry - almost like father and son. He was the person with the greatest access to the President, a most opportune position. To my knowledge Terry never abused the trust the President placed in him.

The only concern I ever gave Phil Buchen, the President's Counsel and long time friend came during the Bicentennial year. The jeweler Bulgari had designed a magnificent ^{Quintessential birthday} collection around rare early American coins. Nicholas Bulgari offered to let us borrow any pieces from the collection, for use by the First Lady during the Bicentennial celebration. There was nothing wrong with this legally, but I was quite sure it would not fly. Too many people would cast suspicious glances upon an arrangement of this kind. I called Phil and told him of Mr. Bulgari's offer and said the collection was so outstanding, I thought Mrs. Ford would enjoy seeing it anyway.

Phil Buchen and I were scheduled to meet with the First Lady about several matters the morning they learned of the death of their close friend, Jack Stiles. Jack had been killed in an automobile accident in Michigan. It was a terrible shock to everyone.

I don't know why Mrs. Ford didn't cancel our appointment that morning. You could tell she was very upset, not outwardly, she was grieving inwardly. Friends are very dear to the Fords. She and Phil talked for a long time about Jack, their days in Michigan and recent times in Washington. I found it hard to keep the tears back.

We turned our thoughts to matters at hand. She thought the Bicentennial jewelry lovely and particularly admired the craftsmanship. She spoke of how much gifts of jewelry from the President meant to her and how much she enjoyed wearing them. She left the room for a moment and returned to show us a gold Liberty Bell pin the President had given her a short time before. It was quite clear those gifts from



Jerry Ford were the only precious jewels his lady would ever treasure.

Arthur Burns, then Chairman of the Federal Reserve and Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers were familiar figures often seen in tandem in the West Wing. I often met Dr. Burns going in to meet with the President on Saturday morning. Saturday was a sort of relaxed workday for everyone at the White House. Dr. Burns would always apologize for his appearance, saying that Saturday was the one day of the week that he did not shave. He wanted to give his face a rest. He still had that distinguished look, even without a shave and in an old sport shirt. And it certainly didn't effect his monetary genius.

Later I will have cause to mention Jim Lynn, who was Director of the Office of Management and Budget - an office Bert Lance was to make into a household word; Bill Seidman, the economic advisor; Bill Baroody, public liason assistant; Ron Nessen, press secretary; Jim Cannon, Domestic Council chairman; Milt Friedman, speechwriter; Bill Nicholson, scheduler and David Kennerly, the President's photographer.

Before I forget, there is an interesting story to tell about Milt Friedman. I had joined him and several other colleagues at the staff table in the White House Mess (dining room for the senior staff) one day in the early part of January, 1977. Our days at the White House were drawing to a close and understandably spirits were not as high as they could have been.



The staff table usually provided the setting for one-upsmanship brought to it's highest art form by the likes of Nessen and Kennerly. They were the undisputed champions, but this day belonged to Milton Friedman.

He had taken some time off during the recent holiday season to get himself organized and to look for a job. During this time his phone rang one evening about 7:30, and it was the White House operator announcing that the President-elect would like to speak to him. Milt thought this a bit strange! Mr. Carter came on the line and wished him a very happy holiday season. Said he hoped he wasn't interrupting anything and would appreciate it if Milt could take the time to join him at St. Simon's Island where he and his key advisors were meeting and vacationing. The White House would make any necessary travel arrangements for him.

Silence ! The President-elect was waiting for his response. Milt fought off his wildest fantasies. His good sense prevailed.

He said: "Mr. President, I think you have the wrong Milton Friedman. I am Milton Friedman the speechwriter for Gerald Ford. But I thank you very much for your good wishes and a Merry Christmas to you too."

It was a natural mistake. After having the President ring up and ask for Milt Friedman, his speechwriter, for the past several years, how were the White House operators to know there was another Milton Friedman, the economist.

Everyone in the White House works for the President - including the First Lady.

The East Wing, however, is the First Lady's domain. It houses her personal secretaries, press office, correspondence section, speechwriter and scheduling secretary, which deal exclusively with affairs of the First Lady, and the White House Social office, Military Aides' office and Tour office which have a myriad of responsibilities for both the President and the First Lady.

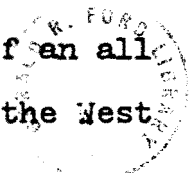
Earlier I made reference to the rivalry that exists between the President's staff and the First Lady's staff. Don't ask me why or when it started. It seems to be a malady all Administrations (Republican and Democrat) have been afflicted with.

We had our share of it in the Ford Administration, but it was not as rampant as some journalistic exploits would have you believe. A great part of it was male chauvanism raising its ugly head, for with the exception of several technicians in the Social office, Peter Sorum, the First Lady's advance man, Fred Jefferson, my driver, and the secret service agents, all members of Mrs. Ford's staff were females. Given the reality of the business world today, these conflicts would have existed wherever we were.

What bothered me most about a lot of these so-called East Side - West Side rivalries was their seamy foundations. Many tended to be nothing more than petty, self serving complaints disguised as professional endeavors.

Neither the President or the First Lady were well served by constantly bickering press secretaries or so-called aides.

Some rivalries are well founded. I landed in the midst of an all out war when I became Social Secretary. Mrs. Ford had caught the West



Side boys with their fingers in the cookie jar! The cookies being the guest lists for all social events. Especially the state dinner guest lists! She raised uncharacteristic hell!

I wish to state here that most of the time, and particularly when times were really trying, Mrs. Ford would exude a feeling of understanding and helpful advice. But ask any of the Presidential aides she called on the carpet that day and they'd disagree!

Some argued that, at that time, the guest lists were not doing the job they were intended to do, were not being used to their fullest potential in furthering the aims of the President. And many sought to use them as a vehicle for personal gains.

The problem of the guest lists was thoroughly discussed. The First Lady issued an ultimatum to the effect that names would continue to be contributed from various sources, but all input would be channeled through the Social office.

"Control of the guest lists would stay with the Social office and not be taken over by the West Side." She had made her point!

I do not wish to leave the impression that Mrs. Ford was a meddler who habitually called the President's aides on the carpet. On the contrary, to my knowledge this was the only time she did so - and I vowed, if I could help it, she would not be put in that position again.

It's quite conceivable that the altercation arose because prior to the incident the position of Social Secretary had been vacant and the guest list, a coveted plumb, had been left unguarded.

When Mrs. Ford welcomed me aboard she did so with the realization that I was in an unique position relative to any friction that might develop between the East Wing and the West Wing, for I was the only one on her staff that had worked in the West Wing. In other words, I had

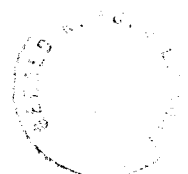
a camaraderie with the President's aides - had excellent rapport with many of them.

Suffice it to say that we didn't have any more problems over the proprietorship of the guest lists. Most involved were even happy with the lists after a while.

Why the Military Aides' office was located in the East Wing with the First Lady's staff I will never understand. They were as compatible as a family of foxes in a hen's coop. You never knew what to expect when you ventured down to the Military Aides' end of the hall. You could always count on a current anti-ERA cartoon or some other form of pure art, usually straight from the pages of Playboy, but in their hearts they were a good group. They kept moral up and managed to see the humorous side of a situation. If there wasn't one - they created one! Sort of a White House M.A.S.H. scenario.

The military is involved in many facets of White House operation. Given the nature and enormity of their responsibility to the President, it stands to reason the Military Aides' office had far reaching power.

This office was made up of the President's military aides, Army Major Bob Barrett, Navy Captain Charlie Mead and Marine Corps Captain Lee Domina and was headed up by a crusty former Marine named Bill Gulley. It was further manned by personnel from the various services as well as several civilian employees.



Bill Gulley is somewhat of a legend in White House lore - a rebel one minute, an avowed patriot the next! Both sporting an impish sense of humor. But what a staunch able ally if he sided with your cause!

When the occasion demanded - which was quite often - Gulley could cut through hampering red tape with the fearless dexterity with which Alexander the Great severed the Gordian knot!

Bill was a good friend and we worked together harmoniously - at least most of the time. When we had our differences - it was like a wild-west shoot-out between two characters on the main street of Dodge City - all action out in the open!

My introduction to Gulley came when I was still at the Republican National Committee. Richard Nixon was President and had just appointed Anne Armstrong his Counsellor. We were in the process of moving to our White House offices, but had not yet done so.

Our first assignment was for Anne to represent President Nixon at the swearing in ceremonies of Carlos Romero Barcelo, the newly elected Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Carlos, a charming Yale graduate, is now Governor of Puerto Rico. Anne was a logical choice for this job as Nixon's aide for Hispanic affairs.

Alexander Butterfield, the Secretary of the Cabinet, was to brief us, make any necessary arrangements and assist in every way. As time was short, I immediately placed a call to Mr. Butterfield. I left message after message with no response. I was to learn later that he was holed up in a closet in the basement studying for his upcoming confirmation hearings for the Chairmanship of the Civil Aeronautics Board. He had completely abandoned his duties with no regard to consequences.

It's difficult enough to learn your way around the White House once you're there - impossible to solve White House related problems

from an office at the Republican National Committee. I didn't think it was wise to call Bob Haldeman back, although it probably would have been easier to get through to him than to Butterfield at this point.

A friend suggested that I call Pat O' Donnell who was then a member of the Domestic Council staff. He said: "Pat would be helpful." Pat was helpful - he introduced me to Gulley.

As I've said, Gulley was the one who could get things done." And in a twinkling he had us airborne with:

"Anne is representing the President of the United States so she will be assigned a Lear jet to take her to Puerto Rico. When you know who they are, give me the names of the other members of the official party for the flight manifest."

"A White House car and driver will pick you up at your home one hour before departure and take you to Andres Air Force Base."

"There will be telephone and communication apparatus on board the aircraft."

"Upon your return we will have car and driver waiting to take you home."

After talking to Gulley I realized how many important matters were still unsolved. Who was to compose the official party? Make suggestions for Anne's remarks! Brief us on the issues - Statehood, Calegra (the controversial Naval shelling base), Protocol regarding the Democrat Governor. There could be some very touchy moments in what at first appeared to be a simple ceremonial appearance.

Thank goodness we had Pat O'Donnell and Bill Gulley! Who needs a Butterfield?

As a post script to our first White House related venture, I must add all went extremely well. One of the most touching moments of the

trip came during a visit to the widow and family of Roberto Clemente, the baseball superstar who had been killed in an airplane crash the week before. He had been on a goodwill mission flying food and supplies to earthquake victims in Nicaragua. We delivered a message of sympathy from the President and his family. At Anne's instigation, Mrs. Clemente and the children later visited the White House and the President paid tribute to Roberto's memory.



The Military Aides office was involved in and did many important things for us, including providing the music for all events and ceremonies. The Services have some of the finest musicians in the country and can supply anything from rock to harp.

The lovely refrains of the Air Force harpist always welcomed our guests upon arrival for a dinner, ^{and the} Marine Band and Army Strolling Strings provided the music for mingling and dancing later in the evening. The Navy Rock Band and the Midshipman's Choir, from the Naval Academy were recruited for many parties.

Service musicians have performed with many renowned artists at the White House, some on a very impromptu basis. Take for example the evening Harry James stopped in after a performance at the Kennedy Center. It was late in the evening and the guests were dancing in the foyer. Upon seeing Harry James, the President introduced him and asked him to play with the Marine Band. He borrowed a trumpet from one of the musicians and proceeded to delight all with renditions of many of his classic favorites such as "Ciribiribin" and "You Made Me Love You."

The day President Ford presented the late Maestro Arthur Fiedler with the Medal of Freedom, Mr. Fiedler graciously took a few moments to conduct the Army Band which was playing for the occasion. What a thrill it was for the men and women of the orchestra!

These talented players often provided the backup music for the artists entertaining at the White House.

The Military Social Aides, a group of thirty young men and women from all branches of the Services are an invaluable part of the support staff. They serve as aides on a volunteer basis in addition to their regular military duties.



They assist in all events, greeting guests, engaging them in conversation, escorting them, directing them and assisting in many ways. They are looked upon as representatives of the President and the First Lady as well as aides. As Social Secretary I praised them highly and had a great respect and appreciation for the roles they played. Betty Ford was one of their biggest fans and severest critic.

In private life, the First Lady had followed the concept of social aides when entertaining. When giving a party she would call upon several friends and ask as a favor, if they would assist her - ask them to be special hostesses - to keep an eye out for people not mixing - seek them out and put them at ease - to look for people who are "stuck" for one reason or another.

The Social Aides were the first impression ~~of~~ the White House many of our guests had. Let's say you are a couple invited to a State dinner. Your engraved invitation bearing the gold Presidential seal had arrived in the mail three weeks earlier. Enclosed also was the small admit card which you now present upon your arrival at the Southwest gate - you proceed thru the South portico to the Diplomatic Reception Room.

You are beautifully attired in gown and black tie - a bit apprehensive - a little nervous. This may be the first time you have been invited to the White House - it is something new - something very special to you.

You enter the Diplomatic Reception Room and are greeted by an attractive aide who is there to welcome you on behalf of the President and the First Lady. It's amazing how a smile and a friendly hello can set you at ease.

The President and First Lady are not able to be there to greet you, because they are awaiting the arrival of the visiting head of



State and his wife, the honored guests this evening. They do however want their guests to feel warmly welcomed - made feel at home! That is what Social Aides are all about.

The Diplomatic Reception Room is lovely - a fire crackling in the fireplace, warm and cozy; the flowers on the mantle in perfect harmony - the Air Force harpist strumming a lilting melody.

You leave your wraps with Violet, a wise smiling lady who has been assisting White House guests for many years.

The aide invites you to walk through the rooms on the ground floor. First you stop to admire the beautiful historic muraled walls of the Diplomatic Reception Room - then you view the treasures of the Vermeil Room and China Room, and pause to relax and reflect in the Library. Shortly it's time to ascend the beautiful marble staircase leading to the Grand Foyer of the State Floor where the Marine Band is playing, a tradition started in 1801 by President Adams.

At the head of the steps stands Mr. Bruce, the butler, waiting to greet you and hand you your escort envelopes with table numbers. From there a Social Aide escorts you through the Grand Foyer to the East Room where an aide is waiting at the door to formally announce you to the other guests already assembled. The Social Aide ushers you into the East Room and introduces you to those nearest you. Unbeknownst to you, you have been positioned in the order you will be received. Guests are lined up alphabetically, unless they hold a position of rank in the Administration, or titles in another government. In that case, they are lined up according to protocol.

You are served refreshments and mingle with the other guests until the President and First Lady and the guests of honor are ready to receive. In the interim, the aides keep an eagle eye out for wall-flowers, hastening to introduce them to other guests or engage them



in conversation.

Shortly after eight o'clock the members of the official party arrive - the Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller, Secretary and Mrs. Kissinger - the Foreign Minister and his lady as well as the Ambassadors of both countries and their wives.

When the Marine band strikes up "Mail to the Chief" you know the President is on his way. A military Color Guard proceeds the four - the President, the First Lady, the visiting chief and his lady to the East Room where they will greet their awaiting guests. The line of guests begins to move as Ambassador Henry Catto, the Chief of Protocol, presents each guest to the President of the United States. He in turn presents each guest by name, to the visitor and on to the two ladies.

After you have been received the Social Aides direct you through the Green Room back into the red carpeted Cross Hall where an honor guard of military social aides forms a coterie leading from the East Room to the State Dining Room. There John Ficklin, the maitre d', is waiting to greet you and direct you to your table.

What an impressive sight! Enhanced by the Social Aides in full dress uniform, standing at attention in the Cross Hall!

As the receiving line ends, President Ford escorts the wife of the head of State and our guest of honor accompanies Mrs. Ford to the State Dining Room for dinner.

While dinner is being served in the State Dining Room, the Social Aides retire to the White House Mess for a quick dinner, then hasten back to assist with the evening's entertainment and dancing. The night is young! There is a full evening of excitement ahead!

When dinner is finished the guests adjourn to the Parlors (Red Room, Blue Room and Green Room) for demitasse, liqueurs and champagne and an opportunity to visit or walk around the rooms of the State floor.



From there they proceed to the East Room which during dinner, has been transformed into the setting for the evening's entertainment. Again the ever present Social Aide is there to assist.

It was the custom of our Administration, as it was by many before us, to invite additional guests for the entertainment and dancing after dinner. This enabled more people to meet the visiting head of State and partake of the festivities of the occasion.

The Social Aides were also instrumental in greeting and presenting these guests to the President, First Lady and honored guests, and escorting them to the East Room for the entertainment.

The program which usually lasted thirty minutes may be a performance in symphony, jazz, musical theatre, pop, opera or dance depending on the preference of our honored guests.

At the conclusion of each performance, dancing in the Foyer was always joined in by the Fords, whose love of "whirling around the floor" is well known. The dancing was usually entered into and enjoyed by most guests of honor too, with a few exceptions, usually for religious reasons.

This was an especially busy part of the evening for the Social Aides, but one looked upon as a labor of love. They not only circulated amongst the guests, but were ever ready to "trip the light fantastic" with the lady whose husband was dancing with Mrs. Ford or Susan, or perhaps share a few terpsichorean moments with the husband or escort of the woman Charlestoning with the President.

I have mentioned but a few of the ways in which the Social Aides assisted the President and the First Lady. They were a very special group; their services indispensable to efficient, elegant entertaining at the White House.



The Tour Office, more formally known as Office of White House Visitors, was directed by Mike Farrell. On a daily basis he and his able staff serviced thousands of visitors through the White House on public and private tours. A monumental task performed by a gifted juggler practicing his art through the aid of a swinging looper.

The Social Office, Tour Office and Chief Usher's Office worked closely together to avoid having to close the White House to the public when we had to prepare for a major social event. The First Lady was determined not to disappoint or turn away people who came to visit. We almost always managed to work around the hours the White House was open to public tours. Most of the credit for this should go to Rex Scouten and Mike Farrell.

For accuracy, let me mention the East Wing was also home for the Congressional Liaison Office or "Lavender Hill Lob" as we called them. They were away most of the time, on Capitol Hill lobbying Congress for the President's programs. More on their colorful antics later.



I have saved for last what I think was the best - my personal staff. Everytime a compliment was expressed regarding an event, I quietly thanked Heaven for having them. True, there were times I felt I was being blasphemous, but not often. I had three assistants, Pat Howard, Linda Baker and Ann Watwood, who was a full time volunteer.

Pat is a true Southern belle, with an accent right out of "Gone With the Wind." Her charm and grace drove Gulley and crew to distraction. They were always plotting pranks on her. Usually the outcome in the way of repartee was a photo finish.

Linda resembles an Oriental doll, tiny and petit. She is extremely capable and smart, with a Masters in music from Smith. I will always have a warm spot in my heart for Linda. She is one of the best things that happened to me as Social Secretary.

Annie, my volunteer, spent more hours at the White House than at home. She was a walking encyclopedia on sports and especially helpful at making our guests from the sports world feel at home. She knew their batting averages and completed pass records better than they.



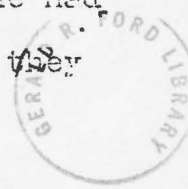
The White House Social Office harbored the technicians on my staff and included the Director, Russell Armentrout; the calligraphers, Bill Gemmell, John Scarfone, Kathy McCann and Alex Schiavone. Also Jan Ingersoll and Barbara Pesednik who were in charge of records and guest lists. They could tell you on a moments notice who had been invited to what and when - how to address a person (literally and figuratively) - what was going on around Washington socially - and much, much more.

Their duties included answering the Social Office telephones which were always lit up like pin ball machines and often caused us to wish a curse upon the soul of Alexander Graham Bell.

They answered any and all queries from our guests: "What do I wear? May I bring the President a gift? Is it alright to bring an escort? Would so and so be ok? Do I write a thank you note and does it go to Mrs. Ford or the President? Can I drive my car or should I take a taxi?" These two girls had all the answers and their friendly reassuring tones made them many friends.

Once in awhile, not often, they would receive a query they could not handle and would come to me for help. One day they received a call from the Chief of Protocol's office - Shirley Temple Black had the position at that time. She wanted to know why a certain party had not received their invitation to the State dinner honoring the President of Liberia, an event only a few days away.

Ambassador Black was told they did not receive an invitation because they were not invited - not on the guest list. She insisted they were and would not take no for an answer. Claimed that she had been assured that they were on the list and had informed them they were. In fact, they were enroute from California.



It was a bad situation. I was certain that no one on my staff had assured the Chief of Protocol that the couple had been asked to the dinner, but I also did not want to have two innocent people suffer great disappointment. Fortunately we were able to accommodate them at the last moment, but you can be sure that the Protocol Office did not assume squatter's rights after that!

Usually when Jan or Barb came into my office to excitedly tell me about a call it was about a conversation with Fran Thornton, Irving Berlin, Sir John Gielgud or a Mr. John Doe. The latter received the same attention and assistance from these wonderful girls as did their celebrity counterparts.



The calligraphers, on my blights of the quill, as we jocularly referred to them were indispensable. In these days, when many consider a telephone call a formal invitation, calligraphers are fast becoming an endangered species. But lately, I am pleased to see a resurgence of interest and appreciation in this art of fine penmanship and I plan to enroll in a calligraphy class myself.

When I spoke earlier of the engraved invitation for the State dinner, it was the calligraphers who had the responsibility for transforming the somewhat stilted language of the invitation into an eye-pleasing work of art.

The invitation arrives in a white envelope with "The White House" embossed in gold in the upper left corner. The invitation inside is engraved with the Presidential seal in gold at the top and reads:



*The President and Mrs. Ford
request the pleasure of the company of*

at dinner

on Wednesday evening, July 7, 1976

at eight o'clock

White Tie



With the invitation is a small enclosure card which gives the name of the person being honored at the dinner. For example:

*On the occasion of the visit of
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
and
His Royal Highness The Prince Philip
Duke of Edinburgh*

Enclosed also is a small card engraved with the instructions:

*Please send response to
The Social Secretary
The White House
at your earliest convenience*



Enclosed, too, is another small card upon which is printed in pale delicate blue ink a South view of the White House - printed thereon is the following:

RX

with please present this card at
THE SOUTHWEST GATE
The White House
Wednesday, July 7, 1976
at eight o'clock
NOT TRANSFERABLE

The responsibilities of the calligraphers were many. For a dinner alone, in addition to the invitations, escort envelopes and place cards were needed. Programs for the entertainment had to be authored and designed - menus provided and photographs inscribed - identification cards for the centerpieces penned.

The recipients of these coveted invitations and mementos had every reason to admire and to treasure the beautiful flowing steel engraving penmanship belonging to another era - another time - a time of patience and proud craftsmanship - an art befitting the dignity and the grandeur of the office of the Presidency.

And proud they were of their artistry - as witnessed one day when I frantically ran into the office with several very last minute additions. Kathy McCann upon looking at my scribblings - my caca-graphy as she called it, said - "Boss, I'll never have to worry about losing my job to you!"



The people in this part of the Social Office remain at the White House from one Administration to the next and provide an invaluable wealth of experience. They are true professionals.

Speaking of true professionals, how remiss I would be if I neglected to sing the richly deserved praises of the aforementioned and lamented Fred Jefferson!

Jeff was my pride and joy!

I've never met a man or woman who entertained a finer respect for living than Jeff. Or a man or woman more worthy of the respect of our fellow human beings!

Inexpressivly gentle, kind and understanding - a courtly gentleman of the old school, Jeff reminded of the Victorian age. A time when prominent people kept their skeletons locked in closets and buried the keys - for Jeff was a staunch believer in the dignity of history.

For many years Jeff enjoyed a seat - front and center - in the turbulent theatre of big league politics. General Eisenhower brought Fred Jefferson to the White House with him when he became President. Jeff had been a trusted aide in the Eisenhower entourage all through World War II.

A keen, quiet observer Jeff looked into the hearts and minds of many of the high and mighty but the confused comedy of their private lives, remained private so far as Jeff was concerned.

What a fountain of information he could have been to the ever-prying, ever-preying press in our nation's Capital.

Jeff could have taught many a scribe the difference between philosophy and propaganda.



By now you know that in my book, Fred Jefferson deserves to be wrapped in the golden fleece of immortality!

God bless his beautiful soul.

With the exception of the calligraphers, and sometimes they too, were not excepted, everyone on my staff was a jack of all trades and most pleasant about it.

The people I had to deal with were, in the main, a pleasure to work with - a fact attested to in this chapter, which at times, may have sounded like a testimonial. However, like in any form of human endeavor, there's always a few inhouse misfits who spend all their time trying to promote themselves socially and materially, and are of no use to the people they are supposedly serving or to those they are suppose to work with. Politics and bureaucracy provide an atmosphere and opportunity favorable to the antics of such ambitious creatures. And at times they put on a show for us that was comic opera! By way of example, on one occasion we featured, and publicly, a woman screaming:

"Why didn't you tell me President Sadat brought his own chef? Doesn't he trust us?"

This from the queen of snoops who bragged she knew everything that was going on.



Usually when confronted with such uncalled for childish behavior, my sense of humor would take over. Not always - not this time! For seated beside me was President Sadat's personal physician and friend. Henry Catto, the Chief of Protocol and his wife Jessica were there, too, ^{as well as Admiral Bill Lukash, the President's physician.} They cringed! Even the Chief of Protocol did not know how to handle this one.

The doctor looked the other way. He was most gracious. More than I can say for my hysterical co-worker!

If we had been told the press was going to be given a privileged tour of the kitchen, a taboo in the first place, we would have made it known that, for dietary reasons, it was necessary for our guest of honor to have his own chef. A practice not unusual and certainly with no mistrust or sinister reasons behind it!

I try my best to believe that such unhappy, such unliked, such poor frustrated souls as the screamer are more to be pittied than scorned. Maybe. Maybe not? Anyway, I had more important things to occupy my mind.



TRIAL UNDER FIRE
My First State Dinner

The announcement of my appointment was made over the weekend of October 7, 1975. Earlier that week while wrapping up my affairs in the Bicentennial office, calls began coming in from reporters who had been tipped off that something was brewing. As usual, U.P.I.'s White House correspondent, Helen Thomas had the story before anyone else and was calling to verify it and scoop her colleagues. Helen is a friend, someone I respect. There is nothing I would have liked better than to confirm her inquiry, but I had made a promise to Mrs. Ford that nothing would be said until she released the story. I did not return Helen's calls until after the announcement was made.

This was the beginning of a new but wonderful and lonely experience. I would never become accustomed to or particularly like being center stage. There are many who relish this posture. Not me! I prefer to receive my applause from the inner satisfaction that comes with knowing that I did well - that I did right by those who placed a trust in me.

Wisely Jack insisted that before I start my new job we spend a weekend at our farm in Virginia - which, by choice, did not have a telephone. We both realized we would not be seeing much of our lovely retreat and our horse Jonathan, until my days as Social Secretary were over.

I have a habit of talking to my horse - we communicate well. When I told Jonathan about my new position he was neither impressed nor happy. He may have known something I did not know.

When we returned to Washington on Sunday evening our answering service had scores of telephone messages waiting. Many from friends

which I deeply appreciated - some from people we did not know, had never heard of. The calls from my hometown of Chicago surprised and pleased me. I never thought a city as sophisticated as Chicago would get excited over having one of their own chosen White House Social Secretary. The call from Irv Kippinet, the Chicago Sun-Times columnist was especially appreciated. There really is no place like home and friends there.

The following morning Mrs. Ford took me to the East Wing to introduce me to her staff, show me my offices and acquaint me with the people who were on my immediate staff. As she walked me from office to office, I noticed the walls of the second floor of the East Wing were lined with large photos of members of the First Family taken at different events. There were similar photographs on display in the West Wing. One picture was of the Fords with the Emperor and Empress of Japan waving from the South Portico balcony - a reality only a few days earlier. Another photo, this one of Susan Ford, with her father, serving as hostess for the Diplomatic reception when Mrs. Ford was recovering from her mastectomy. Still another picture of Edward Villella, the dancer, performing for Walter Scheel, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs. Scheel.

Later I recommended to Mrs. Ford that these photographs be sent on tour throughout the United States for many had such historic significance. They were a pictorial story of the Presidency, really, but apparently the cost of such an exhibit prohibited it.

My offices, which looked out over the White House portico and grounds and Pennsylvania Avenue, had to be the loveliest in the White House. Of course I am prejudiced, but many thought so, too. They are now being occupied by Mrs. Carter.

My appointment as Social Secretary and my introduction to the East Wing could be likened to a young bride marrying an older man with



children and becoming instant mother. } The following day was a trying one - my moment of truth! The Williamsburg people were arriving early that morning to discuss and finalize plans for the Christmas decorations. This was to include a walk through the White House (inside and out) to decide what decorations should be placed where. The Christmas season at the White House is so exciting and interesting, so beautiful that I have devoted an entire chapter to it which will include the particulars of this meeting.

Another matter that demanded immediate attention was the State visit of His Excellency the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Mrs. al-Sadat. This visit was less than three weeks away. There were numerous other receptions and events to be concerned with but one had to set priorities - President and Mrs. Sadat were a priority - particularly their State dinner.

Usually we had a six week period to prepare for a state visit. Although the Social Office had been notified of the visit they were hesitant to start preparations knowing a new Social Secretary would be aboard shortly. To their credit they were primed and ready to go as was usually the case.

Our initial involvement in a State visit began with a call from General Scowcroft's office at the National Security Council (NSC) advising us of an upcoming visit and setting the date for the State dinner. We in turn checked with the Chief Usher's office to make sure there were no conflicts with other events. We then made up a sample invitation providing several options as to dress for the occasion. These choices included business suit, black tie or white tie. These options as well as many of the other details involved in a State dinner serve as symbolic significances watched closely by those involved. The finished invitation itself was a beautiful engraved memento affixed with the Presidential seal with the guest's name inscribed by the

White House calligraphers.

Next came the compilation of the guest list - obviously one of the most important facets of the dinner. First a memo was sent to certain senior White House staff requesting input for the list. Their suggestions were usually in accord with the individual's area of responsibility. This was what we called requested input. The unrequested input sometimes provided the comic relief necessary to keep one going when things got extremely hectic. One gentleman called after each State dinner was announced requesting an invitation. He claimed to be related to the visiting head of state in each instance. After awhile we gleefully anticipated his call to learn about the latest limb he was claiming for his family tree.

The State Department automatically submitted a list, although in all honesty I always thought they saved their best suggestions for the luncheon Henry Kissinger, as Secretary of State, hosted for the visiting head of state. President and Mrs. Ford were great about input to the guest list but more about that later.

Next came a check with the State Department "Desk Man" to inquire of any dietary restrictions and likes or dislikes of our visiting guests. A call to the White House chef, Henry Haller with a request for two sample menus, usually one of game or fowl and one of meat. Another call, this time to John Ficklin, the maitre d', advising him of our needs for specific wines in quantity for a State dinner. There is not room enough to maintain a large wine cellar at the White House, so finding the wines we wanted in the quantity we needed always posed a problem. In keeping with the Ford's desire of representing everything American at the White House, we served only American wines.

The White House Situation Room (usually the scene for most important security meetings and discussions) was the setting for a briefing which

took place prior to every State visit. This meeting was chaired by the senior staff member of the N.S.C., whose area included the country of our visiting dignitary. In attendance were State Department personnel including members of the Protocol Office and the aforementioned Desk Man, N.S.C. staffers, pertinent White House aides, the President's Military Aide, myself and my assistant. Discussed were the purposes of the visit and the tone that should be set. These meetings covered any and all things that might occur during a visit. At this time requests were made for any additional information needed to make the visit a more memorable one.

It was at one of these sessions that I requested a separate briefing paper be done for Mrs. Ford. I was told the First Lady received a copy of the President's briefing book - "certainly that was ample." But not for me!

Mrs. Ford spent an hour and a half seated next to the head of state at each dinner. It was up to her to keep the conversation lively and our guest entertained. Certainly the talk was not to center around economic developments, treaties or fiscal policies. Those belonged to the President's side of the coin. They got my point. A more personalized paper was drafted for her for each visit thereafter. She told me later her brief proved very helpful to the President, too.

From the State Department Desk Man we had already secured the honored guest's preference in entertainment from which suggestions were recommended to Mrs. Ford. Providing the right entertainment was a delightful chore but difficult at times, mostly because of previous long term commitment^S many artists work under. We always informed a performer that we did not want him or her to cancel an engagement in order to appear at the White House. We preferred to ask them again at another time.

Learning of President Sadat's interest in the early American West,

Mrs. Ford had invited Country Western singer Johnny Cash to perform after the dinner. That was one less great responsibility to be concerned about - or so I thought.

We also made a request to the Military Aides' Office for the Social Aides and music for the evening.

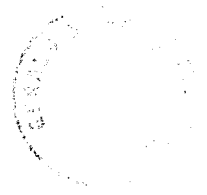
With the groundwork laid and options ready I was prepared to meet with Mrs. Ford to discuss the Sadat visit. We always met in the family quarters to talk over plans for upcoming visits. The First Lady had converted one of the rooms into an office for herself but it seems we always ended up in the living room with our papers and diagrams spread on the floor. Several times when we were working late and the President would come home, he would jokingly offer to let us move into the Oval Office. Liberty and Misty, the Ford's Golden Retrievers, were not always as patient as the President and many times Mrs. Ford and I were the one's retrieving papers scattered by the mischievous canines.



Betty Ford is an easy person to work with. She gets deeply involved in everything she does. She amazed me with her interest in and understanding of the smallest detail - the design of a fabric being considered for a tablecloth, the need to dip the vermeil, plans for a new desert. After all, she was the First Lady and a very active First Lady, with many other responsibilities and projects on her mind. But she has a way about her that makes you feel you and your plans or problems are her only concern.

To begin with we would discuss the welcoming ceremony and reception which was the first official event of a state visit. Even though it was late in October, we felt the weather was such that the welcoming ceremony could be held outdoors.

The official greeting by the President and the First Lady is very impressive for it includes the herald trumpet salutation, honors to the President, Ruffles and Flourishes, both national anthems, a 21 gun salute, reviewing of the troops, the welcoming remarks of our President and the honored guest's response.



Some criticize this ceremony as having too much pomp - a sign of an Imperial Presidency. I completely disagree. Perhaps I disagree so whole-heartedly because I am a first generation American, my parents both coming from Greece. This gives me a better understanding of the mentality of our foreign friends. In their homeland, millions of our guest's countrymen would be scrutinizing the manner in which their leader was being received. The respect shown - the guests present - all these details and many others are looked upon as significant symbols.

After the welcoming ceremony a small reception is held in the Blue Room from which the President and the head of state proceed to the Oval Office for their meeting. Mrs. Ford and the visiting First Lady usually take this opportunity to become better acquainted and to have a personal visit. This part of a State visit was much the same for every dignitary coming to our country.

Next, Mrs. Ford checked the sample invitation. We discussed the dress for the dinner. The Egyptian government had requested business suits for the men. Of course, we obliged. The ladies wore long gowns. There have been very few State dinners that are not either black tie or white tie, the exception usually being the Communist countries, again at their request.

She then reviewed the suggested menus deciding on a game. She was very particular about what we served and put a lot of thought into every course on the menu. The chef's suggestions were always given a Betty Ford touch, ^{which added immeasurably.} She felt a broiled tomatoe was fine, but not for a State dinner. She loved to match the guest with the food served. For example at the Egyptian dinner Supreme of Pheasant Smitane with wild rice and eggplant Fermiere was served.

The First Lady had met President Sadat and his daughter Jehan in Salzburg, Austria the earlier part of the year and became very fond of them. She especially liked Jehan whose betrothal had just



been announced.

I remember asking Mrs. Ford if she didn't think Jehan, who was only sixteen years old wasn't a bit young for marriage. She responded that she had found her quite mature for her years and that in the Arab countries women marry at a younger age. She then went on to tell me about the many programs Mrs. Sadat was initiating to assist in the advancement of Egyptian women. It was an interesting blend of the old and the new world. We then returned our thoughts to the dinner and the wines I had selected, which met with her approval.

I would usually review the proposed guest list with Mrs. Ford at this time. This was sort of a dry run before she and the President made their decisions. The list was broken down into categories such as the official party, the Executive branch, Congress, business, the arts, sports, etc. This made it easier for them to make any changes.

The President usually reviewed his copy of the same list with his Chief of Staff, Dick Cheney before he went over it with Mrs. Ford.

In many instances the people who comprise a guest list share an interest with the guest of honor. To cite a few examples the Sadat dinner guest list included Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Murphy, Chairman of the Board of the General Motors Corporation who was also Chairman of the United States-Egyptian Business Council; C. Douglas Dillon, President, Metropolitan Museum of Art - the museum was then building a new wing to accommodate the Temple of Dendur, a gift from Egypt to the United States. It was also announced during this visit that the Tutakhaman treasures of Egypt would tour the United States. Other guests included the late Vice President and Mrs. Rockefeller; Egyptian born actor, Omar Sharif; The Chief Justice and Mrs. Burger; Mrs. Charles Engelhard, philanthropist; former Senator and Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and Mrs. Mansfiels (now U.S. Ambassador to Japan); Edith Head, fashion

designer; George Allen, football coach; Mr. and Mrs. John Swearingen, Chairman, Standard Oil of Indiana; ^{Mr. and Mrs. Genard Ringgold} Mrs. (Penny Tweedy,) owner of Triple Crown winner, Secretariat; Mr. and Mrs. Edmond Howar, President, National Association of Arab Americans; Mr. and Mrs. H. Virgil Sherrill, President, Shields Model Roland, Inc. (Betty Sherrill, a friend and very talented interior decorator had assisted us with the decor for the Sadat dinner).

The First Lady asked me to make sure when I briefed the Social Aides to remind them to circulate among the guests. It seems my "wondrous strange" feeling was contagious. Many times, I was to see a familiar face, perhaps it was one of a well known television personality or recognizable celebrity. This person would seem unusually quiet and withdrawn - almost shy. At other times you knew him to be outgoing, talkative - the center of attention. Mrs. Ford was quick to note this happened ^(ing) to people, and wanted us to be on hand to ~~to~~ ease our guests through this period.

Long after I had left the White House, I was having lunch with Donnie Radcliffe of the Washington Post, ^{who frequently covers WH events} Donnie mentioned that she and her husband Bob had been invited to a ^{State} White House dinner by the Carters and that she too, had been overcome by this strange mystique. She was amazed and puzzled and could not describe the feeling. It seems there are certain moments in life that are too special to share.

Mrs. Ford felt the best way to make ^{our} (your) guests feel at home was to learn of their fondnesses and try to be as accomodating as possible. She knew that President Sadat had a deep appreciation of America's old West and was a Zane Grey buff. This brought to her mind the beautiful Remington and Russell bronzes we had discussed during ^{my} interview. We had several Remington sculptures, including "Bronco Buster," at the White House. The President so admired "Bronco" that



he kept the bronze in the Oval Office. Mrs. Ford decided that these beautiful works of art would provide the theme for the Egyptian dinner. We proceeded to contact the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art in Fort Worth, Texas which houses the world's finest collection of Remington and Russell bronzes and paintings. They were kind enough to lend us their entire collection of bronzes.

Mrs. Ford later told me that during the evening, President Sadat expressed great pleasure with the centerpieces and inquired about them in detail. After dinner, he took the time to personally view each sculpture. "Bronco" had been moved from the Oval Office for the occasion and placed on the mantle in the State Dining Room, under the watchful eye of Abraham Lincoln.

One day I asked Mrs. Ford how the Americana theme idea had come to her. She replied that several thoughts had prompted her. The most important being the feeling she and the President shared about the White House. They felt that it was not their home but belonged to the American people - that it should represent in everyway, everything good about America.

Many times, while we were working in the family quarters, she would stop and look out the window at the tourists passing through the White House. How surprised they would have been to know the First Lady was watching them. She was especially careful not to close the House to the public when we had to prepare for special events. She did not want to disappoint or turn away people who came to visit. We always, or almost always, managed to work around the hours the White House was open to the public tours. This too stemmed from the feeling that the White House belonged to the people.



Providing a suitable theme for each State dinner was both an interesting and exciting task. But very time consuming, however, because of the necessary research wedded to its success.

Whenever possible, as with the Sadat dinner, we did our utmost to create a theme that would mirror the personal pursuits and activities of our honored guests.

Mrs. Ford authored many of the ideas, and a host of suggestions came from my colleagues who expressed avid interest in striving to come up with novel themes.

Most of the art displayed came from museums or private collections. On loan, of course. Paul Mellon was one of our benefactors, and his beautiful bronze "The Thoroughbred Horse" by Herbert Haseltine graced one of the tables at the Irish Prime Minister's State dinner. Extremely fitting, because Prime Minister Cosgrove is a horse fancier and the theme for his dinner was "The Winner's Circle."

Nicholas Brady, the President of the Jockey Club and Mrs. Brady were guests that evening too, and he told me that Paul Mellon had said he had a wealth of treasures to loan us for the upcoming visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip.

Not only were our foreign guests pleased to see these works of art but Americans too took pride in the exhibits. And how appropriate it was, that during our Bicentennial year, so many Americans artifacts and antiques were displayed at the White House.

We were delighted to see that Mrs. Carter admired Mrs. Ford's idea so much she has carried on the Americana theme at the White House functions.



Another reason that prompted the First Lady's initiation of this idea was the fact that she had attended White House dinners all during the years when the President was a member of Congress and there seemed to be a certain sameness to every dinner. She wanted to make these occasions more interesting for the guests. My feeling, although never confirmed by Mrs. Ford, was that there had been times when being entertained at the White House, though always an honor, was not always a joy.

She also thought the art objects displayed as centerpieces would have the added benefit of serving as good conversation pieces.

Every State dinner is followed by a performance by an American artist. Again the entertainment is based on the honored guest's preference. As I mentioned earlier, Johnny Cash had been invited by Mrs. Ford to perform for the Sadats, but two days before the dinner he became ill and was hospitalized. As if the impending two day deadline was not bad enough, it also happened to fall on a weekend when it was virtually impossible to reach anyone. Well, as usual, Mrs. Ford came to the rescue, as the White House cowboys would say. She called on her old friend, Pearl Bailey and Pearl performed magnificently. The year before Pearl had been awarded the First Order of Arts and Sciences of Egypt by President Sadat. It was a happy reunion between two old friends.



Pearl put on quite a show! She coaxed Omar Sharif to the platform and serenaded him with the refrains of Lara's Theme from Dr. Zhivago. Her attempts to persuade Omar to dance were unsuccessful but the irrepressible Pearlie Mae managed to get President Sadat to his feet.

The photos in the newspapers the following morning showed Pearl and a smiling President Sadat dancing.

The State Department briefing had advised the President and First Lady not to engage the Sadats in dancing - it was a taboo. Devilish Pearl had been told this too.

I asked Ambassador Catto, on his return trip to Blair House with the Sadats, to test the waters and if necessary to offer our apologies.

Henry Catto returned smiling!

"They had thoroughly enjoyed the evening. Couldn't recall when they had a better time. The dancing posed no problem. It was just that in his youth the Egyptian leader did not have much time for social activities . He did not consider himself the best of dancers and usually stayed off the dance floor. "

A crisis overcome.



Once Mrs. Ford had made her decisions regarding a State dinner there was much to do and many people to involve. We had a corps of volunteers I called the "White House angels" who came in and assisted us. With their help we were able to accomplish many of the niceties that go into creating an evening that will be long remembered.

The most hectic of all times is

the afternoon of the day of a dinner. On that afternoon the State Floor looks like a tornado has ^{just} swept through and it staggers the imagination to believe that everything will be in place by dinner time! Workers are wheeling in trees and shrubberies to decorate the foyer, butlers are setting tables, volunteers are all over the place assisting florists with centerpieces and decorations, Pearl is in the East Room rehearsing, the network people are in the State Dining Room setting up and adjusting television lights, the phones are ringing off the hook and business is going on as usual!

In the midst of all this Mrs. Ford comes down to thank everyone and to make a final check. A model or representative table has been set up for her so that she can judge the theme and settings in their final form. ^{JUST DEC PIECE} She is very pleased and makes one last circle of the room to admire the sculptures. She stops to have her picture taken with Betty Sherrill and some of the other volunteers, many of whom she knows by name. After Mrs. Ford returns to the family quarters, I scurry back to my office to work on the seating plan for the dinner.

Since this was my first dinner and I wanted to look especially nice - I managed a quick trip to Elizabeth Arden's for a comb out and makeup. This was the first and the last time I enjoyed that luxury on the day of a dinner. Back to the White House and a quick change into a gown, a final briefing of the social aide in charge and a race to the State Floor for a last minute check.



The evening is like a dream fondly remembered.

I recall the Marine Orchestra striking up "Maria" in my honor when I arrived at the State floor.

Seeing Mrs. Bruce, the butler, greet the first couple to arrive and hand them their escort envelope with table number.

Watching the social aides escort and announce our guests into the East Room for the reception.

Being introduced to the members of the official party.

Watching the President and the First Lady welcome President and Mrs. Sadat on the North Portico and proceed to the Yellow Oval Room for refreshments.

The thrill of seeing them descend the Grand Staircase with military honors and colors and enter the East Room to receive their guests.

The colorful promenade through the Cross Hall to the State Dining Room.

The dinner, elegantly served by John Ficklin and his efficient staff.

The charming and haunting melodies of the strolling strings.

The exchange of toasts by the two leaders. A continuation of the serious dialogue engaged in earlier in the day.

Pearl Bailey's after-dinner program in the East Room. A musical tour of the United States starting in "Manhattan" with stops in "Chicago" before reaching Texas with "The Eyes of Texas."

The dancing till the wee hours with the Fords loving every minute of it as did their guests.



The Sadat dinner was my premiere!

And my trial under fire!

Thanks to the President, Mrs. Ford, Pearl Bailey, my staff and others involved it was a huge success!

My responsibilities as Social Secretary included a legion of State dinners and other important functions following the Sadat dinner. The State visit of England's Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip, for example. An exciting example!

But because it was my first - like a first love - the dinner for President Sadat and his First Lady will always remain one of the chapters in my life touched with enchantment!

It was like watching a happy reunion between old friends when President and Mrs. Sadat greeted President and Mrs. Ford upon their arrival in Egypt recently.

With a kind of devastating swiftness, so much has taken place in the world since that happy occasion. History making events sweeping President Sadat headlong into new and startling situations! Where he's forced to face formidable obstacles and make momentous decisions while holding in his hands the destinies of millions of his and other peoples.

Thoughts of Presidents Ford and Sadat, their contrasting backgrounds and worlds, what their futures may hold, reminded of "The Bard's" -

"Their is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries."

I do hope that history will record that neither President Sadat nor President Ford missed his flood tide

