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MARIA A. DOWNS PAPERS, 1975-77

Collection Type

Personal Papers

Extent

1.2 linear feet (ca. 2,000 pages)

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open.

Copyright

Maria Downs has retained her copyright to all of her unpublished writings in National Archives collections. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain.

Processed by

Leesa Tobin, August 1992

Biography

Maria A. Downs

1931 - Born in Chicago, Illinois

1956-63 - Professional model in Chicago

1956 - Attended the Art Institute of Chicago

1958 - Attended DePaul University

1961 - Married John Edward Downs

1964 - Staff Assistant for the Goldwater for President Committee

1964-69 - Various positions at the Republican National Committee including Director of Women's Programs

1970-71 - Executive director of the Women's National Press Club

1971-73 - Special assistant to Anne Armstrong, co-chairman of the Republican National Committee

1973-74 - Special assistant to Anne Armstrong, Counsellor to the President

February 1975- - Executive assistant in the White House Bicentennial Liaison Office

Oct. 1975-Jan. 1977 - White House Social Secretary

Scope and Content Note

Maria Downs replaced Nancy Lammerding Ruwe as White House Social Secretary in October 1975, remaining in that position until the end of the administration. The Downs Papers partially document some aspects of her role in planning White House social activities. Unique to the collection are several unpublished manuscripts written by Ms. Downs after leaving the White House which describe in unusual detail the role of the White House Social Office and what President and Mrs. Ford were like as hosts.

Prior to becoming White House Social Secretary, Downs worked in the White House Office of Bicentennial Liaison and earlier as staff assistant to Anne Armstrong, Counsellor to the President. She was involved for many years in Republican politics and had been on the staff of the Republican National Committee.

The White House Social Secretary worked closely with the First Lady and the West Wing staff in the overall planning, arrangements, coordination and direction of all official and private social events hosted by the President and his family. Downs supervised a staff of nine which included the Social Entertainments Office and the White House calligraphers and illustrators. Additionally, she oversaw dozens of volunteers who assisted with preparations for many of the more elaborate affairs.

This collection includes only selected items on some of the social events Ms. Downs planned for the Fords. Most of these are photocopies removed by Library staff from

scrapbooks compiled by Ms. Downs. While the collection is far less complete than the Downs Papers in terms of documenting individual events, it does include several unique items. Perhaps most significant is the unpublished manuscript of a book written by Ms. Downs entitled, *Mostly Wine and Roses*. It is a candid and upbeat account of social events hosted by President and Mrs. Ford during the administration. The file also includes two shorter unpublished pieces; an article about Mrs. Ford as First Lady and another concerning Christmas celebrations in the White House. Both provide unique insights.

Related Materials (August 1992)

For information on particular White House social events, researchers should be sure to consult the Maria Downs Files. This collection includes extensive documentation on individual events, especially concerning the food, entertainment, and decor each featured. A closely related collection is the Sheila Weidenfeld Files, the First Lady's Press Secretary. The Betty Ford Papers' Events File also includes material on social affairs; much of this is duplicated in the Downs Files and Papers, but there are unique memoranda between the Social Secretary and the First Lady. Additionally, the White House Central Files Subject File PP 5-1 (Betty Ford) and SO (Social Affairs) include related material.

Audiovisual holdings about White House social events are plentiful and include thousands of still photographs and video tapes of state dinners and other selected events.

Last Modified Date

2025-03-06

Subject File, 1974-77.

(Boxes 1-3, 1.2 linear feet)

Correspondence, memoranda, scenarios, press releases, news clippings, printed programs and unpublished manuscripts for a book and two articles concerning Downs activities as Social Secretary. Documentation for particular events is fragmentary and available in more complete form in other collections. Unique to this collection are unpublished manuscripts for a book and two articles written by Downs concerning social events and Christmas celebrations at the White House. The file also includes information on Downs appointment as Social

Secretary.

Arranged alphabetically with a subseries arranged chronologically by date of event.

Box 1 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Air Force One Certificate
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Appointment as White House Social Secretary, 10/75
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Appointments White House Social Secretary, 10/75 - Congratulatory Mail (1)-(4)
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Article, "Christmas at the White House" (unpublished)
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Article, "My Very Special Lady" (unpublished)
OPEN / DIGITIZED	<u>Downs, Maria - Book, "Mostly Wine and Roses" (1) (unpublished)</u>
OPEN / DIGITIZED	<u>Downs, Maria - Book, "Mostly Wine and Roses" (2) (unpublished)</u>
OPEN	Downs, Maria - Letters from President and Mrs. Ford
OPEN	Downs, Maria - List of Social Entertainment Office Events
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Egypt, 10/27/75
OPEN	Events - Cabinet Dinner, 11/6/75
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Luxembourg, 11/12/75
OPEN	Events - Dinner with Senior Citizens, 11/20/75

Box 2 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Events - Dinner for the Federal Judiciary, 11/24/75
OPEN	Events - Diplomatic Children's Christmas Party, 12/16/75
OPEN	Events - Congressional Christmas Ball, 12/17/75
OPEN	Events - Christmas Party for the White House Press Corps, 12/17/75
OPEN	Events - Candlelight Tour for White House Staff and Families, 12/22 - 23/75

Status	Title
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Governors, 1/20/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Israel, 1/27/76
OPEN	Events - Professional Athletes Prayer Brunch, 2/15/76
OPEN	Events - Dinner for Governors, 2/23/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Ireland, 3/17/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for the Committee for the Preservation of the White House, 3/22/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Jordan, 3/30/76
OPEN	Events - Reception for Arthur Rubinstein, 4/1/76
OPEN	Events - Reception for the National Alliance of Businessmen, 4/6/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Newspaper Executives, 4/7/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Senate Ladies, 5/3/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Jaycee '49ers, 5/5/76
OPEN	Events - Bridal Shower for Margaret Anderson, 5/8/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for the Queen and Prince of Denmark, 5/11/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for France, 5/17/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Spain, 6/2/76
OPEN	Events - Birthday Party for Mrs. Rockefeller on Sequoia, 6/9/76
OPEN	Events - Dance for Presidential Appointees, 6/11/76
OPEN	Events - Dance for Prime Minister Trudeau Aboard the Sequoia, 6/16/76
OPEN	Events - Political Working Dinner, 6/21/76
OPEN	Events - Dinner for West Virginia Delegates-at-large, 6/25/1976
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Prime Minister Miki of Japan, 6/30/76

Box 3 - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Great Britain, 7/7/76

Status	Title
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for the Federal Republic of Germany, 7/15/76
OPEN	Events - Diplomatic Reception for the American Bicentennial, 7/20/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Australia, 7/27/76
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for the President's Yale Law School Fraternity, 7/31/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Finland, 8/3/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Liberia, 9/21/76
OPEN	Events - Dinner for Martha Graham, 10/14/76
OPEN	Events - State Dinner for Italy, 12/6/76
OPEN	Events - Congressional Christmas Ball, 12/9/76
OPEN	Events - Dinner for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 12/11/76
OPEN	Events - Christmas Party for the White House Press Corps, 12/15/76
OPEN	Events - Christmas Party for the White House Staff, 12/17/76
OPEN	Events - Candlelight Tour for White House Staff and Families, 12/20-21/76
OPEN	Events - Dinner for the Chowder and Marching Society, 1/7/77
OPEN	Events - Luncheon for Medal of Freedom Award Winners, 1/10/77
OPEN	White House Christmas Card, 1975
OPEN	White House Christmas Card, 1976
OPEN	White House Floor Plans
OPEN	White House Memoranda
OPEN	White House Social Events - Clippings
OPEN	Museum Transfers