

The original documents are located in Box 9, folder “4/1/76 - Presentation of the Presidential Medal of Freedom” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files 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. Gerald R. Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections.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.

Some items in this folder were not digitized because it contains copyrighted materials. Please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library for access to these materials.

3/25/70
Star

Rubinstein Not Quitting, Reports a Local Friend

The Great Pianist Doesn't Need Good Eyes

Quotes and notes from Washington parties, as uncovered for The Star by Ymelda Dixon.

kind-of theme. You got it . . . Bicentennial, what else?

D.C. stockbroker Bill Cook disagrees with reports that 89-year-old Polish-born virtuoso Artur Rubinstein will retire soon because of failing eyesight.

Cook, who plays the piano well enough to join Rubinstein in duets, spent three days recently with the great pianist and his family in New York attending what has been hailed as probably the last concert Rubinstein will give at Carnegie Hall, where he made his U.S. debut.

After the concert, the maestro and his wife had a seated dinner for 12 in their apartment at the Drake Hotel. The next night, the entire Rubinstein family including his son John Rubinstein, the star of the musical Pippin; Henry and Eve Curie Labouisse and Zbigniew Brezinsky, the Slavic and Russian expert, attended the Polish Ball.

One of Rubinstein's daughters, commenting on Brezinsky's brilliance, remarked, "What a secretary of state he would make, but the name Brezinsky would be as bad as being named 'detente.'"

Rubinstein, dancing with his wife, led the Polonaise waltz with no apparent visual difficulty beyond that of any 89-year-old.

The only problem, asserts Cook, is reading music, a minor detail, as the artist knows everything he plays from memory. His hands, said Cook, are like a baby's and his complexion is still peaches and cream. Also his sense of humor remains intact. When Cook borrowed a collar to wear with his white tie, Rubinstein said, "When you return it, please autograph it."

The Rubinstein's plan to return to Washington after he completes his concert tour. When here, they are always guests of one of the last of the city's grand dames, Mrs. Robert Lowe Bacon.

They also plan to spend more and more time in their home in Malaga, Spain. Rubinstein loves Spain and when here recently, Andres Segovia said of him, "He is the only pianist who can capture the true Spanish rhythm."

* * * *

The annual Senate Ladies luncheon for the First Lady will have a guess-what-

* * * *

Anne Richardson will take off from Washington rounds to return to England May 16. This time, however, she will travel in the role of an alto member of the River Road Unitarian Church choir.

Not only has Richardson practiced strenuously for the last few weeks, but she helped make arrangements for the trip by writing to an English Unitarian paper, which resulted in at least 50 invitations.

The choir of 26 has a full company of 58 and their schedule includes Wormswood Prison, Manchester, Malvern, Canterbury, London and the Bethesda Choir will perform at Bethesda, Wales.

* * * *

There was a strange smell of bacon and eggs frying in the executive suite of the D.C. National Bank last week. Leo Bernstein was giving a kick-off luncheon for members of the committee of the Second Annual Justice Awards Dinner, May 21, which benefits the Antioch School of Law.

The aroma came from the many-flavored omelettes being cooked on the premises and served to guests.

Bernstein has moved over to the National Savings & Trust Co. as vice chairman of the board, so he had to borrow his former board room from his successor, Irving Rudd. Bernstein explained, "I had to ask Rudd to let me use this room. In my new job all I have is a desk in the lobby. I want to be where I can see people and be seen." Bernstein is the largest private stockholder of National Savings & Trust.

For women guests, it was an unusual and happy ration of 15 men to one woman. Charles Camalier, Ward Chamberlin, former Associate Justice Thomas Clark, Henry Glassie, Agnes Williams whose husband, Edward B. was one of the awards winners last year; Fred Vinson Jr. and Norman Diamond of Arnold & Porter were among the guests.

Paul Porter formerly of Arnold & Porter, is one of the posthumous nominees for an award along with Mrs. Ford and former Associate Justice William O. Douglas.



THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1976

Notes on People

Freedom Medal for Rubinstein

"One of our national treasures" was how Arthur Rubinstein was described by President Ford yesterday as he presented the 89-year-old pianist with the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, in the



DAILY NEWS, FRIDAY, APRIL 2, 1976

Touch of Greatness



Mrs. Betty Ford touches shoulder of Artur Rubinstein, 89, yesterday at White House after famed musician was honored by the President. Ford presented Rubinstein with nation's highest civilian award, the Medal of Freedom. UPI photo



This ageless hero, Rubinstein

He cannot go on like this forever (though some would not bet on that). In fact, there are now some troubling signs.

By Donal Henahan

One day, in what we may only hope is the distant future, an archeologist sifting through the detritus of Western civilization may come upon certain puzzling artifacts. A pair of tennis sneakers, perhaps, with 4-inch platform soles. A goose-quill pen with a felt tip. A petrified senator holding a Pentagon budget request. Or, if Western civilization is lucky, some piano recordings made by Arthur Rubinstein when he was on the brink of 90 and still playing with astonishing vigor, virtuosity and panache. Like Heinrich Schliemann pondering the myths and legends of Homeric Troy, the excavator will have a mystery on his hands. Did such a hero really live in those benighted times?

We know the answer, of course. Rubinstein made his New York debut 70 years ago at Carnegie Hall, performing with the Philadelphia Orchestra on Jan. 8, 1906. But actually he has been playing in public for 85 years. Although he did not make his formal debut until he was 7 years old, he was performing for small audiences of family friends in his native city of Lodz, Poland, by the age of 4 and at 6 was appearing at charity concerts. He had taken to the piano unbidden and uncoerced, at 3, when his parents brought an old upright into their home so that two older sisters could take lessons.

Tomorrow night, he has another recital scheduled at Carnegie Hall. Nothing special. Just one of 20 appearances on his United States itinerary this season. And yet, each time Rubinstein steps out on a stage nowadays, it is something to note, for the man's spirit and prowess at 89 make him a musical, not merely a gerontological, phenomenon. By his latest reckoning, he was born on Jan. 28, 1887. He cannot go on like this forever, probably, although there are people who know him well who would not care to bet on that. Max Wilcox, for one. Wilcox, who has produced more than 60 Rubinstein records for RCA and five concerto performances for television, has several sessions planned for next month when the tireless Arthur is scheduled to record two more Mozart concertos. More fuel for the Arthurian legend.

The other day, while Rubinstein was stopping off in New York during a midwinter break in his concert schedule, I spent several exhilarating

though eventually quite sobering hours with him in his suite at the Drake Hotel. The first minutes, as usual, were taken up in making sure the visitor had the most comfortable, the softest seat in the room. Rubinstein insisted on a plain, hard chair for himself. "All my life I have been sitting up straight, you know. Which reminds me of a story, a very funny story. . . ." (And off he goes. If you have questions to ask Rubinstein, you had better get them in early or it's no use.) "Not long ago in Boston, they gave me what is called the Agnon Award. You know who Agnon was? S. Y. Agnon, the old Hebrew poet who died a few years ago. He won a Nobel Prize and they named this award for him. Well, as it happened, I had been giving a concert in Jerusalem some years ago and a friend of mine brought Agnon back to see me. I said to him, 'Do you like music?' And he said, 'I don't know, this is the first time in my life that I go to a concert. But I like how you sit so straight at the piano.'"

You are never far from a good laugh when you are around Rubinstein, but his is not a mindless good humor. An Academy Award-winning documentary film about his career, made in 1968 but released here only last year, was titled "Love of Life," and it is true, he says, that "I love life unconditionally." He shrugs impatiently. "But it is not that I walk around stupidly smiling [pantomime of a slack-jawed, grinning lout]."

Thomas Mann, hardly one to be impressed by a stupid smile, called Rubinstein "that civilized man," and a story of my own may illustrate his deep-grained civility. The city was Buffalo, where on a bitter midwinter's night four years ago I went to talk with Rubinstein on the occasion of his 85th birthday, the trip being necessary because his concert schedule at that time was to bring him no nearer to Manhattan. I arrived at his hotel in the evening at what I believed was the agreed-upon hour, called his room and found to my horror that Rubinstein had not been told of our date. A communications breakdown somewhere in his entourage, I later learned. Moreover, the voice on the phone instantly suggested itself as that of a man who had been aroused from sleep. He grasped finally that I was from a newspaper, but apparently thought it was a local one, and my attempts to explain did not penetrate. But he said, "Please, can you give me 15 minutes before coming up?"

When I arrived at his room, unexpected and, I am quite sure, unwanted, Rubinstein had gotten into a dark blue suit, with the rosette of a Commander of the Legion of Honor in a lapel,

and was ready to receive me, all apologies. He had the flu, he said, and his wife had been calling him to tell him to cancel his tour. "But when I am at the piano, my sickness goes away and that makes me terribly happy. I won't cancel." Despite all, he managed to be vivacious and full of stories I had not heard before. Since then, I often have thought of Rubinstein in that Buffalo hotel room, trying to sleep off the flu, and at the mercy of whoever might pick up the house phone. And I try to imagine how gracious I would have been under similar circumstances. Not very, I'm afraid.

Grace under pressure is a gift not given to most people, and for a long time now Rubinstein has been graceful under the ultimate, inescapable pressure of being old. How did he get that way? And more puzzling, how does he stay that way?

To answer those questions with confidence, one would have to know exactly how to solve the old equation in which nature and nurture are both unknown factors. As far as he knows, Rubinstein does not come from particularly long-lived ancestors, although the pogroms and wars that swept over Poland in the last century or so seem to have made that question academic. His six brothers and sisters, for instance, disappeared along with six million other Jews during World War II. Physically and mentally, he has been a living refutation of the old wives' tale about the weakness of children born to older fathers: He was the seventh child, born when his father was past 40, a ripe age in the Poland of that day. Rubinstein's physique has often been mentioned as a reason for his continuing puissance. He is not tall (5 feet 8 inches) or heavy (about 165), but he has a powerful chest, blacksmith biceps and disproportionately long legs.

Until now, at least, he has suffered from almost none of the usual human infirmities. He has no arthritis or rheumatic aches, and subscribes to no fanatical health-food regimen. He arises at 8 or thereabouts, hungry for breakfast, but first does about 20 minutes of setting-up exercises. However, he gets his most strenuous exercise by playing the piano—which is perhaps exercise enough if you play as flamboyantly as Arthur Rubinstein. According to his wife and other intimates of long standing, he takes no pills of any kind other than vitamin C. For many years, he has enjoyed the best wines and the most expensive cigars (two or three a day, only with coffee) and, in his sybaritic approach to daily existence, has long been the Winston Churchill of the piano. His adherence to the Pleasure Principle is no doubt rooted somehow in his genes and nurtured by a lifetime of adulation. But he also

Donal Henahan is a music critic for The Times.

AUGUST 5, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM

The Medal of Freedom as it now exists was established by President Kennedy in an Executive Order (11085) of February 22, 1963. The award was first set up under President Truman in 1945 to reward meritorious, war-connected acts or services. The Kennedy Executive Order expanded the award to include those that should be honored for meritorious contribution to (a) security or national interest of the United States; (b) world peace or (c) cultural or other significant public or private endeavors.

Persons are selected for receipt of this medal by the President.

President Ford is making his third Medal of Freedom presentation today. The previous two were issued on February 10, 1976 to David K. E. Bruce and on April 1, 1976 to Artur Rubinstein, joining the list today is Jesse Owens.

#

