

35TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Los Angeles Times

December 20, 1998, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Real Estate; Part K; Page 1; Real Estate Desk

LENGTH: 1189 words

HEADLINE: HOT PROPERTY;

HIS ELVES ARE LIKE NO OTHERS;

In a Yuletide departure for "Hot Property," this week's column looks at how several celebrities are decking their halls and homes for the holidays.

BYLINE: RUTH RYON, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion in Holmby Hills is decorated inside and out for the holidays, with mistletoe hung throughout the 14th century Gothic-style house.

"Hefner likes these kinds of holidays with friends and family," said Dick Rosenzweig, executive vice president of Playboy Enterprises. "He always has a dinner and a movie on Christmas Day for his friends, but he also plans to spend part of the holiday with his family."

Hefner is separated from his wife, ex-Playmate Kimberly Conrad Hefner, but he often sees her and their two children because they live next door to the Playboy Mansion. "He usually goes there and visits regularly," Rosenzweig said.

The bushes outside the Playboy Mansion's front gate are decorated in blue lights, with multicolored lights on the bushes outside the back gate. The rest of the shrubbery and trees on the nearly six-acre estate are covered with white twinkling lights, and a large red bow greets visitors at the front gate.

From the gate to the main house, lighted 6-foot candy cane decorations line both sides of the drive, with twinkling white lights and garlands strung between them.

Wreaths decorate the front doors to the main, guest and game houses as well as doors to the seven bedrooms, including the master suite.

Hefner's bedroom also has garlands over the fireplace and miniature stockings, filled with candy and tiny toys, hanging from the mantel.

A Christmas tree sits in an alcove of the living room, the 12-foot tree's top crowned by a star, its boughs laden with tinsel, ornaments and lights. Circling

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the tree: a Big Hauler Thunderball Express.

Even as they were in the Middle East last week, Hillary and Bill Clinton were planning to spend a couple of days after they return decorating the Christmas tree in the first family's quarters of the White House.

It takes them that long because they like to reminisce over every ornament, which they have collected since they were married in 1975, said Julie Mason, the first lady's deputy press secretary. "They decorate the tree all themselves," she added, "and because they have been collecting ornaments for so long, the tree really gets weighted down."

The Clintons' tree is a 14-foot Fraser fir. The tree was donated by the same Wisconsin tree farm that gave the White House its official Christmas tree, an 18 1/2-foot balsam fir that sits in the Blue Room. There are 18 Christmas trees in the White House and 10 on the grounds.

Decorations in the first family's quarters were described as traditional, with many garlands and poinsettias. The rest of the White House is decorated in the white, silver and gold "Winter Wonderland" theme chosen by Hillary Clinton in June.

Among the official decorations is a gingerbread house in the State Dining Room. The edible castle, with towers and bridges, has miniature versions of Socks and Buddy, the Clintons' pets.

And in recognition of Hanukkah, the White House has a handmade brass menorah on display in the West Wing lobby. The menorah is on loan from the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving Jewish homestead in North America.

Phyllis Diller spent one afternoon last week filling Christmas stockings for her grandchildren, who are going to the comedian's Brentwood house today with the rest of her family to help her decorate her 6-foot tree.

"I'm going to have a ham and a family afternoon of decorating," she said. "One of my mother's favorite sayings was, 'Many hands make work light.' " Diller has five children, four grandsons and "lots of extended family," she said.

Dom DeLuise likes arts and crafts, and it's his job at Christmastime to create the nativity scene at his Pacific Palisades house. "I make a little cave with a chamois or a paper bag, and then we get trimmings from the garden, so we have rocks and small trees in the scene," he said.

He also likes to string popcorn "and take colored paper and make loops, to string around the tree." He makes some ornaments from pine cones. "And I love tinsel and old items no longer useful," he said. "If you do something interesting with them, they can become ornaments."

The comic and actor, also an author of cookbooks and children's books, likes most of all to cook. "I'm Italian," he said, "so I like to fix shrimp or calamari on Christmas Eve. We have a quiet dinner and exchange presents in the morning."

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DeLuise's wife, actress Carol Arthur, started a tradition 20 years ago of giving an annual charitable donation in the names of folks to whom she and her family send holiday cards. With their cards, the DeLuises sponsor three Amerasian children through the Pearl S. Buck Foundation.

The couple, who are grandparents, have three grown children: Peter, a director; Michael, an actor who has appeared on "NYPD Blue" and "Brooklyn South," and David, a regular on the new sitcom "Jesse."

Zsa Zsa Gabor was planning to decorate her Bel-Air home with poinsettias and a Christmas tree with ornaments of silver, red and gold.

The actress also has a 4- to 5-foot antique wooden horse that she decorates with evergreen garlands and little lights. An avid horsewoman, Gabor owned a 21-acre horse ranch in Ventura County for many years.

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Mark Curry, the 6-foot, 6-inch comedian who starred as a basketball star-turned-teacher in the long-running ABC sitcom "Hangin' With Mr. Cooper" (now in syndication) and created a four-minute improvisational piece as a cabdriver in the movie "Armageddon," owns a small house in Studio City in which he has put a Christmas tree in nearly every room.

There are trees in the bedroom, living room, dining room, family area and kitchen. And the house, which the comic and actor has owned for five years, is decorated on the outside with icicle-like lights and Gucci bows.

There is also a city snow scene on the dining-room table, where he and his friends plan to eat Christmas dinner. His friends helped him decorate the house at a party two weeks ago.

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Bing Crosby's Toluca Lake house, later owned by Andy Griffith and then Jerry Van Dyke, looks a lot like it did at Christmastime when the famous crooner lived there in the 1930s and 1940s, thanks to the holiday decorating of its current owners, entertainment publicist Kerry Fretty-Stickney and her husband, attorney Larry Stickney.

The couple bought the house from Van Dyke a year ago for about \$ 2.3 million, and they just decorated it for their holiday party, which was also a housewarming.

The party invitation was a copy of an old Bing Crosby postcard, with the house pictured as it was when he lived there. Using Crosby's hit "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" as a decorating theme, the Stickneys also showed Crosby movies and played his recordings at their gathering.

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Howie Mandel celebrated Hanukkah on his daily talk show by having some 5- and 6-year-olds from a Hebrew academy talk to him about the meaning of the Jewish holiday.

As for decorating for the holidays at his L.A.-area home, he said, "We're just hoping to take down the Halloween things--the cobwebs on the fencing and the jack-o'-lantern on the door."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Decorated and ready for the holidays are the Playboy Mansion, left; PHOTOGRAPHER: ELAYNE LODGE PHOTO: the White House, where Hillary Clinton has a giant gingerbread house, above, PHOTOGRAPHER: Associated Press PHOTO: and the Dom DeLuise residence, which features homemade ornaments and colored paper tree garlands. PHOTO: Hugh Hefner PHOTOGRAPHER: GINA FERAZZI / Los Angeles Times

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: December 20, 1998

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Copyright 1998 The San Diego Union-Tribune
The San Diego Union-Tribune

December 18, 1998, Friday

SECTION: LIFESTYLE Pg. E-3

LENGTH: 1151 words

HEADLINE: They're dreaming of a White House Christmas -- all year long

SOURCE: COX NEWS SERVICE

BYLINE: Bob Dart WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- In a cramped hallway, about eight tiny reindeer lengths from the Diplomatic Room fireplace, White House cooks were merrily stamping out gingerbread men on an autumn afternoon.

"Every slow day is a day we use for Christmas preparation," explained pastry chef Roland Mesnier. "If there is an empty corner in the White House, you will find somebody rolling cookies there."

Like Santa's elves, some White House staffers regard Christmas preparation as a never-ending job.

On Dec. 7, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton unveiled the 1998 Christmas theme and decorations at the White House, beginning a traditional round of seasonal tours and parties at the presidential home.

During the following three weeks, about 15,000 guests will marvel at Christmas trees laden with 50,000 lights and handmade ornaments from across America, hear seasonal songs of musicians from every state, and consume 50,000 cookies, half a ton of fruitcake and 250 gallons of eggnog. parties.

"Truthfully, right now I'm making mental notes for next year of what didn't work very well this year," said Nancy Clarke, head florist at the tiny flower shop beneath the North Portico. "When Christmas decorations are still up, we start talking as a group about next Christmas because that's the best time to do it."

"It's certainly a year-long project," agreed Capricia Marshall, the social secretary in charge of all White House events. "We start in early January thinking about the theme for that year's Christmas."

This year, New York cake designer Colette Peters is the coordinating artist.

A series of meetings began in February between White House staffers and Mrs. Clinton. Mesnier was consulted on how to portray the theme in the gingerbread house he makes each Christmas. Clarke envisioned ornaments for the Blue Room tree. Mrs. Clinton had the final say.

Then the White House enlisted creative people from around the country -- everything from glass blowers to fashion designers to needlepoint artists -- to come up with ornaments and decorations. Governor's spouses helped select artists from their state.

By early summer, Mesnier had begun to prepare the Christmas party fare. Fruitcake is first because it keeps well in refrigerators.

"We have a fruitcake recipe that was designed for the White House," said Mesnier, who was born in France and was working at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia when he was hired by Rosalynn Carter in 1980. "It has been changed every year since I've been here. We always try to make it more earthier, if you will, by reducing the sugar content, the calories and all that. We use naturally dried fruit.

"Many people have come to me who swear that they hate fruitcake. They detest it. But when they taste this one, they absolutely love it," said Mesnier.

Also months ahead of time, an assortment of unbaked Christmas cookies is cut out and frozen raw. During the party season, "we bake them as we go along to serve fresh," the chef explained.

Other traditional White House Christmas treats are completed months ahead and put in freezers. Yule logs are made of coffee mousse with walnuts and coated with chocolate. There are Christmas cakes -- a raspberry and chocolate combination, pumpkin cake, double applesauce cake, and an orange cake similar to pound cake.

"In all, there will be 120,000 cookies or pieces of cake served," Mesnier estimated.

Plans for this year's gingerbread house were finished in August. The sheets of gingerbread were baked in mid-November.

"The gingerbread must be very dry," said Mesnier. "I do not use any support that is not food. Many people use cardboard or plastic to support the house. This house is totally food -- gingerbread, chocolate, sugar icing. It weighs close to 150 pounds."

Florist Nancy Clarke can't freeze her creations for later presentation, but plans decorations down to the last red bow and poinsettia.

Months ago, she focused her digital camera on all the public White House rooms. The digital images were converted into computerized stage sets where the virtual furniture could be moved around and would-be decorations inserted or removed.

"That's the easiest way to do it. We have an instant visual," she explained. Then she and Marshall, the social secretary, made a presentation to Mrs. Clinton on proposed Christmas decorations for each room.

The first lady "is very hands-on in the entire process," said Marshall. Once the presentation is made, Mrs. Clinton "starts tweaking it. She has wonderful

ideas."

Clarke oversees a staff of four full-time floral designers and 11 part-timers. They are reinforced by 60 volunteers to decorate the White House for Christmas.

"The volunteers come in the Monday after Thanksgiving. They go to our warehouse in Riverdale, Md., and start working on bows and all of the arrangements and getting everything prepared," said Clarke, who was a White House volunteer herself for several years before being hired by Nancy Reagan in 1981.

Everything is readied to move into the White House on the Friday before the Kennedy Center Honors feting prominent artists, which are always held on a Sunday (this year on Dec. 6). The decorating is finished on Saturday night, and the next afternoon the first family welcomes the Kennedy Center honorees to a White House freshly decked out in holiday finery.

This busy weekend requires some precision. Wreaths are ordered from a company in Oregon -- 168 small wreaths, 92 larger ones. Last year, 486 feet of garland was draped inside the White House and another 862 feet on the grounds. The official Christmas tree in the Blue Room, chosen by the National Christmas Tree Association, has more than 6,000 lights and 2,000 ornaments. There are a dozen or so other Christmas trees in the White House and on the grounds. The traditional White House creche has 47 figures. The decorations will include more than 1,000 bows.

All must be in place for about 50 official parties and for thousands of visitors who will go through on special holiday tours.

Menus and guest lists are planned months in advance, said Marshall. About 2,500 entertainers are recruited from around the country for three weeks of activities. Security checks must be completed on everyone long before they actually enter the White House.

Marshall attends all the parties, making sure everything goes as planned and taking mental notes on how to do the 1999 holidays.

"And oh, yes, there's the Christmas card," remembered Marshall. In February or so, Mrs. Clinton selects an artist to paint the traditional White House card. They talk about what to depict -- the first lady picks the scene -- and the finished cards are mailed in early December.

"There is a lot of pressure this time of year," conceded chef Mesnier. "I wake up in the middle of the night and think of Christmas."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 19, 1998

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Copyright 1998 The Washington Post
The Washington Post

December 14, 1998, Monday, Final Edition

SECTION: STYLE; Pg. C02; CHRONICLES

LENGTH: 706 words

HEADLINE: The White House's Holiday Corps de Decor

BYLINE: Sarah Booth Conroy, Special to The Washington Post

BODY:

Warm sunshine melted some holiday spirits. Never mind: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's "Winter Wonderland" is the most glittery and glorious White House Christmas decoration the Chronicler remembers. The theme was chosen last spring, Mrs. Clinton said during last week's balmy weather, "but the only winter wonderland this season is inside the White House."

On the Blue Room's 18-foot balsam fir, given by the Chapman family's Silent Night Tree Farm in Endeavor, Wis., 2,700 lights shine on 2,343 ornaments. The snowmen, mittens and hats, wooden sporting equipment, balls, glass icicles, bead strings and some indescribable objects were made by 737 artists from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

Another 18 trees are on view, five in the West Wing. A centuries-old brass menorah in the West Wing lobby was lent by the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving North American Jewish homestead. The East Garden Room tree has 400 ornaments made in 65 countries where Peace Corps volunteers served. The Oval Office tree was decorated by students from the Fillmore Art Center, a D.C. school.

Some 80 volunteers, paying their own expenses, come annually from near and far to deck the White House halls in a three-day dawn-to-midnight marathon.

Nancy Clarke, who volunteered some 20 years ago, now is the White House's chief florist. She and Robert Isabell, a noted New York floral designer, collaborated on the decorations, with Isabell and his staff of 40 spending almost a month gilding long garlands of magnolia leaves. They also made a 600- to 700-pound wreath topped with flickering candles that hangs from the East Room ceiling, and a massive 2,000-pound, 24-foot lighted wreath mounted from the South Facade roof to the Truman balcony.

Ed Gage of Nashua, N.H., has volunteered for 25 years. "I remember the years when the decorations in the big house were very traditional, magnolias on the mantels, poinsettias in the hall," he said. "In the Blue Room, we used to put a

The Washington Post, December 14, 1998

wreath of wet moss, dripping all over the place. This year everything is different. I hung the grand staircase with ferns, silver branches and baby's breath greens. I said 'wow' when I saw the huge wreath in the East Room. The president and Mrs. Clinton walked through and spoke nicely to everybody. They're very gracious."

Charlie and Wendy Heather Elsasser of Heather and Honey Florists in Alexandria volunteered 15 years ago. Back then, she lived in New York, he in New Jersey; they courted while trimming the White House. Charlie Elsasser still volunteers -- this year ornamenting the West Wing. His wife is now on the White House's florist staff and this Christmas was charged with festooning the second floor, where the first family lives. "They have a real tree in the Oval Yellow Room," Wendy Elsasser said. "We use silk flowers in deference to President Clinton's allergies. We wouldn't want him to lose his voice."

The most traditional trappings are the green tree skirt sewn by needle artists from every state, territory and the District for the Clintons' first White House Christmas, and a kissing ball by Washington needlepoint master Hyla Hurley and associates.

Even the gingerbread house seems to have been built with a magic wand. This legendary castle is built of 40 pounds of chocolate and 80 pounds of gingerbread, and features a sugary Socks and Buddy. White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier and his colleague Franette McCulloch, wearing the high white hats of their profession, accepted congratulations at the preview. Fondant fantasies by New York confectionery artist Colette Peters adorn mantelpieces. In the Green Room are an edible (you wouldn't dare) ice palace and garden and in the Red Room an igloo, penguins, icicles, snowflakes and trees.

Buddy, from all reports, is under 24-hour guard.

White House visiting hours are 10 a.m. to noon, Tuesday through Saturday. For information about free White House tour tickets, call 202-208-1631 or go to the White House Visitors Center at 1450 Pennsylvania Ave. NW.

Putting on the dog (and cat): First pets Buddy, left, and Socks are the subjects of this ornament displayed in the White House State Dining Room.

GRAPHIC: Photo, ap/RON EDMONDS

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 14, 1998

63RD STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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St. Petersburg Times

December 13, 1998, Sunday, 0 South Pinellas Edition

SECTION: FLORIDIAN; PEOPLE; Pg. 10F

LENGTH: 831 words

HEADLINE: Engineering winter at White House

BYLINE: MARY EVERTZ

BODY:

America's home, the White House, has been transformed into a Winter Wonderland for the holidays.

When first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and her staff came up with the idea for this year's decorations they never dreamed it would be 76 degrees in Washington in early December.

"When we picked the theme last spring, I'm not sure we could have imagined that we'd have the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," Mrs. Clinton said as she unveiled Christmas '98 at the White House on Monday.

In keeping with the theme, the White House is festooned in "a shimmering excess" of silver and gold garlands and swags, with white birch trees twinkling with lights and walls drenched in glitter. The mantle in the Red Room is decorated as a Polar Bear Christmas at the North Pole, complete with igloo, penguins, snowflakes and ice cube-shape presents.

The centerpiece of the White House's "Winter Wonderland" is the 18 1/2-foot balsam fir that stands in the center of the Blue Room. The tree has 2,700 lights, strings of small silver balls and colorfully painted wooden ornaments and miniature snowmen for all 50 states.

Designer Robert Isabell also came up with 18 gold and silver faux trees and the 14-foot gold and silver wreath that hangs from the ceiling in the East Room.

A handmade menorah decorates the West Wing Lobby. The menorah is on loan from the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving Jewish homestead in North America.

Coordinating and masterminding the Christmas decorating along with the first lady is her social secretary Capricia Marshall.

"You try to dream up ideas, how the house, the decorations, the ornaments will go, how to find artists," Marshall says.

She contacts and contracts with artisans from around the country to create

St. Petersburg Times, December 13, 1998

ornaments and other crafts that perpetuate the year's theme. Some are for one season; others, such as the green velvet tree skirt that circles the Christmas tree in the Blue Room, can be used year after year. The tree skirt was made by quilters from the 50 states and seven U.S. territories. "People love walking around the tree and finding their state," says Marshall.

Florida is well represented in this year's White House Christmas decorations. Some 40 painters, knitters and artists have contributed original works. Among the artists creating snowmen were Rebecca Gifford and Laura Militzer Bryant of St. Petersburg. Martha Street of Largo was one of the knitters, and Michelle Shrover and Betty Dowe of Tampa and Jill MacFarlane of Seminole were among the decorative painters.

During the holiday season, some 150,000 visitors will come through the White House to see the 23 decorated evergreen trees, 344 wreaths, 720 lengths of garlands and 47,950 tree lights.

Equally involved is White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier, who last August already was thinking about Christmas 1999. His responsibilities include the White House's gingerbread house. A professional architect draws up the plans for Mesnier's gingerbread masterpiece. "We don't fool around," says the pastry chef. The masterpiece of edible architecture holds the place of honor in the State Dining Room.

A mountainous forest surrounds the gingerbread castle and its towers and bridges. Miniature versions of Socks and Buddy, the White House cat and dog, are included in the display.

"Christmas 1999, we will really have to come up with something special because of the passage from one century to another," Mesnier said. "To show you that we have not been wasting any time, I have been thinking about the things the president has said in his speeches."

Could this mean a gingerbread bridge to the 21st century? asks the Washington Post's Annie Groer. White House Holiday Card

The Clintons have sent out 300,000 Christmas cards this year. The card, painted by noted artist Ray Ellis of Martha's Vineyard, is of the newly redecorated state dining room, decorated for the holiday. The painting is awash in shades of gold and cream. The message inside: "May peace and joy be yours at the holiday season and throughout the year." Charity Bags Purses

Sotheby's, one of the world's master auctioneers, raised some \$ 253,905 Wednesday night to benefit the Community Research Initiative on AIDS. Among the items auctioned were the elephant-head minaudiere with garnet eyes and rhinestone tusks created by Judith Leiber, and donated by former first lady Nancy Reagan, and a green-leaf patterned silk crepe bag carried by Madonna to the London premiere of Evita.

Tiffany Dublin, Sotheby's fashion director, said the monies raised from the auction will make it possible for the AIDS group to pack its bag and move to a new location. "Collecting high-fashion accessories may have been spurred by the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis auction, but the real impetus may be the difficulty in finding things with great craftsmanship," Dublin notes. "Besides, people love

St. Petersburg Times, December 13, 1998

collecting things as social history."

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO, Associated Press; COLOR PHOTO; First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton poses with a gingerbread house in the State Dining Room of the White House.; a roach

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 17, 1998

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Copyright 1998 Plain Dealer Publishing Co.
The Plain Dealer

December 9, 1998 Wednesday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: EDITORIALS & FORUM; Pg. 11B

LENGTH: 801 words

HEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE DECORATED IN PURE FANTASY

BYLINE: By Marianne Means

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Outside the White House, life is neither festive nor traditional as the House of Representatives lurches erratically toward impeachment and the unseasonable hot weather produces furry buds on the tulip magnolias outside first lady Hillary Clinton's office window.

Inside the White House, 'tis nonetheless the season to be jolly in a lavishly decorated winter wonderland enveloping the president's house in fir boughs and wreaths, frosted magnolia leaves and birch trees, gilded pine cones, glittering gold and silver ornaments and delicate, edible confections depicting elaborate Christmas scenes.

This year, the great mansion gleams with 344 wreaths, 18 decorated Christmas trees, 2,700 lights on the central Blue Room tree, 843 fancy bows and countless hand-crafted ornaments. Plus, a chandelier dripping with gilded holly, golden swags, silver icicles, golden garlands and silvery bows. And similarly draped grapevine angels tooting their horns before each of the East Room's four mirrors.

This is a wow. It is the most elegantly dressed-up Christmas White House in my memory, although the decorations there always are spectacular. You cannot try to duplicate them at home.

This year's display is pure fantasy in every sense. The atmosphere is magical and serene.

On the public floors of the White House, outside reality dare not intrude. The holiday social cocoon is impenetrable.

What life is like in the off-limits upstairs family quarters or in the his-and-hers offices is strictly private. We cannot know about that. The Clintons are practiced at compartmentalizing. They never let their opponents see them cry.

Composed and smiling, the first lady showed reporters the cheerful seasonal transformation Monday, revealing nothing more serious than a minor struggle to keep their dog, Buddy, away from the tempting gingerbread castle in the State

Dining Room. Blandly, she said she hoped the White House parties and special events would be "as beautiful and welcoming and hospitable as they always have been."

That evening, the Clintons were hosting their annual Christmas party for Congress, a bipartisan affair that included some Republicans panting to impeach the president. The parties for other groups and even the press also will go on as usual.

She had barely finished her tour when her husband's press secretary, Joe Lockhart, began in a nearby undecorated room to explain to other reporters how President Bill Clinton's lawyers intended to defend him before the House Judiciary Committee.

This could be the most dangerous period of the Clinton presidency, with only a few days left of final impeachment arguments before a committee vote at the end of the week. It is not inconceivable - although not likely - that this could be their last Christmas as occupants of the White House.

Yet it is the symbolic burden of the president and his wife to carry on in public as though all is well, no matter how trying the moment, how ominous the future. Only in this way does the republic, and the White House, endure. We cannot be strong if our presidents are weak.

That the Clintons are so skilled at keeping what the British call a stiff upper lip is one of the reasons the public still gives them both high marks for performance and does not want to see him kicked out of office.

What a difference a year makes. At last year's Christmas celebration, Clinton was as strong and popular politically as he had ever been. The Paula Jones suit was chaotic and stalled, independent counsel Kenneth Starr had been unable to produce an indictment in the Whitewater probe that reached into the White House, and Clinton had pulled off a widely hailed balanced-budget deal in Congress.

He could not run again, which made him a lame duck vulnerable to defiance from various political rivals. But he seemed comfortably positioned to maximize the remaining three years of his second term in productive ways.

We learned of Monica Lewinsky the following month. And that was that for the year 1998.

But Clinton is not the only president forced to soldier on through the Christmas holidays with a smiling face and heavy heart.

In 1990, President and Mrs. George Bush celebrated with outward normality, although between their joyful holiday rounds the president was weighing whether to go to war. One month later, on Jan. 16, he opted to attack Iraq's Saddam Hussein for invading Kuwait, mounting a risky military confrontation that had won Senate approval by only five votes.

Then, as now, the mood in Washington beyond the White House was one of tension, partisan suspicion and a mounting sense that the president was a flawed link in the majestic sweep of history.

The Plain Dealer, December 9, 1998

History, however, takes care of itself. In the meantime, a temporary holiday spirit of peace and good will is a good thing.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 10, 1998

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Copyright 1998 The Atlanta Constitution
The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

December 8, 1998, Tuesday, CONSTITUTION EDITION

SECTION: FEATURES; Pg. 03D

LENGTH: 316 words

SERIES: Home

HEADLINE: First lady unveils White House 'Wonderland'

BYLINE: Bob Dart

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

With the weather outside more delightful than frightful, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton opened the holiday season in the nation's capital Monday by revealing a "Winter Wonderland" inside the festively decorated White House. "We wanted to try something different this year," said Mrs. Clinton, showing reporters a White House gleaming with chilly shades of white, silver and gold instead of the season's usual red and green. With temperatures in the 70s and sidewalk Santas sweltering beside their iron kettles, a family of snow folk welcomed White House visitors to the East Colonnade. Mantels over fireplaces in historic rooms were filled with penguins, polar bears, igloos, an ice palace, an ice garden and Christmas packages wrapped in icy silver and white. The mantelpiece decorations were all edible --- the sugary creations of Colette Peters, a confectionery artist from New York. Beside being starkly beautiful, the decorations "are wonderful to smell," the first lady noted. In addition to announcing "A Winter Wonderland" as the holiday theme --- a tradition begun by Jackie Kennedy in 1961 --- Mrs. Clinton presented this year's White House Christmas card. It's a watercolor painting of the State Dining Room, showing a table set for a holiday dinner and a cheery fire in a hearth below a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. The painting is by Ray Ellis, an artist from Martha's Vineyard, the Massachusetts island where the Clintons have spent several summer vacations.

Following the Winter Wonderland theme, this year's gingerbread house is a castle with oversized versions of presidential pets Socks the cat and Buddy the dog ice-skating at both ends. The official White House Christmas tree is the centerpiece of the Blue Room. Its ornaments were made by artists from all 50 states, and a handmade green velvet tree skirt has a panel from every state and territory.

GRAPHIC: Photo LVwhitehouse - xmas_288855:
Hillary Rodham Clinton shows off this year's White House gingerbread house. / RICK MCKAY / Cox Washington Bureau

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Copyright 1998 McClatchy Newspapers, Inc.
Sacramento Bee

December 8, 1998, METRO FINAL

SECTION: MAIN NEWS; Pg. A2

LENGTH: 282 words

HEADLINE: DECKING THE HALLS IN D.C.

BYLINE: Deborah G. Guadan, from Bee news services

BODY:

The mood might be chilly on Capitol Hill, but at the White House the holiday decorations are top news, with frosted birch trees in the Grand Foyer and sugar-coated likenesses of Buddy and Socks ice-skating in the State Dining Room.

"Winter wonderland" is the theme chosen by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and brought to life by the artistically inclined from across the nation who designed their ver-sions of snowmen for the 18 1/2-foot balsam fir Christmas tree that stands in the center of the Blue Room, sparkling with 2,700 lights.

President Clinton and the first lady are hosting a series of Christmas parties in the White House, starting with Monday evening's annual Congressional Ball for the 535 members of Congress.

The centerpiece of the White House's winter wonderland is the Blue Room tree, which was donated by Jim and Diane Chapman of the Silent Night Evergreens tree farm in Endeavor, Wis. Its branches are stuff-ed with lights, strings of small silver balls, colorfully painted wooden ornaments and miniature snowmen from all 50 states.

Also hanging from the tree are knitted mittens and hats made by Knitting Guild of America members. The tree's green velvet skirt has individual quilted panels designed by artisans from all 50 states.

Conspicuous in the collection of holiday decorations are the first family's pets, Buddy the brown Labrador and Socks the cat. They are featured in an elaborate gingerbread castle crafted from 100 pounds of gingerbread dough, 20 pounds of icing and 30 pounds of chocolate in the center of the State Dining Room. Edible likenesses of the pets also stand on either side of the castle, ice skates strapped to their paws.

GRAPHIC: Associated Press photograph

The White House's holiday decorations wouldn't have that same dash of esprit with-out an appearance from first pets Buddy and Socks with skates strapped to their paws. They are part of an elaborate gingerbread castle in the State Dining Room. And if all goes well, the real-life pets won't get a chance to munch on their gingerbread counterparts, at least before Christmas.

Sacramento Bee, December 8, 1998

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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USA TODAY

December 8, 1998, Tuesday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: LIFE; Pg. 1D

LENGTH: 188 words

HEADLINE: The Clintons deliver 'Winter Wonderland'

BYLINE: Katy Kelly

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- It was an unseasonable 76 degrees here Monday as Hillary Rodham Clinton unveiled Christmas '98 at the White House: "Winter Wonderland."

"When we picked that theme last spring, I'm not sure we could have imagined that we'd have the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," she said.

The first lady also showed off the 1998 White House Christmas card. Painted by noted artist Ray Ellis, it depicts the newly redecorated State Dining Room with table set for a holiday dinner.

At first, Ellis didn't take the White House call seriously. "I thought it was my kid brother calling," the artist said.

Once convinced, he visited 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. and saw the room, which was still being redecorated. He painted the card to match expectations.

The message inside: "May peace and joy be yours at the holiday season and throughout the year."

The White House is festooned with 720 lengths of garland and 344 wreaths. Hot designer Robert Isabell dreamed up the 18 gold-and-silver faux trees and the 14-foot gold-and-silver wreath that hangs from the ceiling in the East Room.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, Color

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December 6, 1998, Sunday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: READER; Pg. 01c

LENGTH: 3092 words

SERIES: Home

HEADLINE: A day in the life of the WHITE HOUSE

BYLINE: Bob Dart

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

The quiet, graceful exterior of this nearly 200-year-old mansion belies the hard work needed to hold down the fort. Equal parts residence, museum and presidential command center, it's a national treasure that endures through the pride and service of its many workers.

A day in the life of the White House begins an hour before midnight when Susanna McGuire rubs her coded photo ID across the electronic scanner at a wrought-iron gate, punches in a personal number, then enters under the gaze of a uniformed Secret Service agent.

An ambitious young press aide who will spend the night clipping papers for President Clinton's morning news summary, McGuire is one of hundreds of human cogs who make the White House a perpetual motion machine --- running day after day, decade after decade, president after president.

Unique in the world, the building where the president lives and works is among the most recognizable symbols of democracy. It is a home and a museum, a fortress and a bureaucracy, a playground and a monument and a backdrop for TV newscasts. It is a place permeated with the temptations of power, of course, but also blessed with the virtues of community and continuity.

During the depths of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, White House correspondents sometimes described a paralysis in the building looming dramatically behind them. Images of inactivity could not have been more misleading, however, in portraying the legions of employees who every day continued to shepherd through 6,000 tourists, open 10,000 letters, answer 1,600 phone calls, entertain foreign dignitaries, cook meals, plan parties, prune shrubbery and oversee operation of the federal governments.

Until he recently fell ill, for instance, 78-year-old John Muffler continued to wind the 85 or so clocks in the White House every Friday --- a routine he had followed for half a century. Now semiretired, the courtly electrician's tasks have ranged from changing light bulbs for Harry Truman to programming a VCR for Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Head florist Nancy Clarke keeps fresh flowers in nearly every room --- careful not to aggravate President's Clinton's allergies with pollen and not to provide tourists with tales of bugs crawling out of blooms.

Overseeing a staff of four full-time designers in the basement flower shop below the North Portico, Clarke has accommodated floral tastes of first ladies since Nancy Reagan hired her in 1981. Regardless of the time of year, for example, Reagan wanted peonies in arrangements. When the Reagans left, Clarke made for the first lady a needlepoint pillow decorated with a bright peony and the inscription "Peonies Bloom in May."

Theodore Roosevelt officially named this building the White House in 1902. Before that, it was known as the President's House and the Executive Mansion.

In 1909, he added the West Wing and its famed Oval Office to handle the increasing need for offices for presidential staffers. The mansion and West Wing are connected by the press area, built over what was a swimming pool from 1933 to 1969. The president walks from home to office through an open-sided colonnade between the Rose Garden and windowless press rooms.

In 1942, Franklin Roosevelt added the East Wing, where the first lady has her office. The Old Executive Office Building, a massive gray structure that once housed all Cabinet offices next door, now is part of the White House complex enclosed by a protective and decorative wrought iron fence. Also inside the fence are the 19 acres of lawns, gardens and trees that make up the White House grounds.

It is a setting where there are no typical days.

At 8 a.m., Chief of Staff John Podesta convenes the daily meeting of senior presidential staffers in the Roosevelt Room of the West Wing. The photocopied news summary begun by McGuire already has been distributed to their desks. All are stapled except the one bound for the Oval Office. A senior adviser shuffles the summary according to priority for presidential reading.

Small tables are fit together in the middle of the room to make a large conference center. Top presidential advisers on domestic, foreign and political issues fill the leather chairs around the tables and the overstuffed armchairs and sofas along the walls. The Roosevelt Room's namesake presidents look down from portraits --- Teddy on horseback and FDR signing legislation at a desk. The Nobel Peace Prize won by Theodore Roosevelt sits on the mantel over a fireplace.

A 49-year-old fitness buff who likes to jog shirtless, Podesta is regarded as an unpretentious boss and is known for cooking elaborate Italian meals and having a passion for riding roller coasters. However, the chief of staff can be demanding and has a dark side nicknamed "Skippy" by underlings. Nobody wants to provoke "Skippy."

In the workaholic West Wing, where days routinely stretch from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. or later, Podesta sets the standard.

"As we say here every Friday, only two more working days till Monday," he has observed. Indeed, before the 8 a.m. session, Podesta has completed a smaller

meeting in his nearby office.

The day's agenda is set at the senior staff meeting, which usually lasts less than an hour. Afterward, attendees scatter to preside over daily meetings of their departments. Press secretary Joe Lockhart, for instance, holds a communications staff meeting at 8:45 a.m.

By then, the president is usually in the Oval Office. Awakened by a call from a steward, Clinton has breakfast --- often coffee and fruit --- in an upstairs family kitchen decorated with cheery fruit-patterned wallpaper. The Clintons converted a butler's pantry into this "ordinary" room shortly after arriving in 1993.

Most mornings, a national security briefing is an early order of presidential business. The data comes from the top-secret, high-tech Situation Room on the floor below the Oval Office.

The West Wing has three levels, with staffers' offices on floors above and below the Oval Office. The Situation Room is staffed 24 hours a day by experts monitoring trouble spots around the world.

National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, 52, is in charge of the security briefing. A longtime friend, he met Clinton when both worked on George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign.

The briefing takes place beneath the embossed presidential seal on the white ceiling of the Oval Office. Behind Clinton's desk, a table displays pictures of his wife and his daughter, Chelsea, and his collection of political campaign buttons. On his desk are busts of FDR and Harry Truman. On the floor nearby are an African drum and a drum made by Native Americans to commemorate the North American Free Trade Agreement --- showing the shared American Indian heritage of Mexico, the United States and Canada.

A rocking chair sits in the adjoining private study. The president's computer is there, too, connected to the Internet --- though aides won't say whether Clinton ever surfs through cyberspace. There is no TV.

From her adjoining office, Nancy Hernreich helps keep Clinton on schedule. As director of Oval Office operations, Hernreich, 52, is one of the "meanies" whom Monica Lewinsky complained was trying to keep her away from the president. A longtime loyalist, she was Clinton's scheduler in the Arkansas governor's office. Divorced and a diligent runner, Hernreich dotes on her daughter, Ashley, a student at Duke University.

Hernreich is the gatekeeper --- regulating who gets in to see the president and, to some extent, when they leave. However, it is up to the president to decide when a meeting ends.

Phillip Caplan, assistant to the president and staff secretary, manages the flow of presidential paperwork --- moving color-coded binders on and off Clinton's desk. Green for action. Pink for correspondence. Blue for information. Red for classified.

Culinary creativity

By midmorning, White House kitchens are bustling. The holiday season is approaching, and 120,000 cookies and pieces of cake will be baked for a panoply of parties.

Chef Walter Scheib, an imposing figure nearly 7 feet tall from the top of his traditional toque to the toes of his shined shoes, is responsible for all meals served in the White House. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., Scheib was chef at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia when he was hired by Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1993. The first lady was looking for an American cuisine chef with a light touch, and Scheib has worked hard at reducing the fat in the White House fare without sacrificing flavor, texture or appearance. Cooking oil is kept in spray bottles, for instance, and misted onto pans rather than being poured or brushed.

Scheib, 43, grew up in the nearby suburb of Bethesda, Md., and remembers watching his mother cook the dishes Julia Child demonstrated on TV. His wife, Jean, also is a chef, and the two cooked together at the Boca Raton Resort and Club in Florida before moving on to the Greenbrier.

The first family pays for its own food, which Scheib orders from nearby wholesalers and from suppliers all around the nation. He searches for the best ingredients --- buffalo milk mozzarella from upstate New York, Michigan blueberries, Virginia ham --- and the nation's food merchants eagerly solicit his business.

Food bound for the White House is detoured to another facility, where it is checked by the Secret Service before being transported in secure trucks to Scheib's pantries, refrigerators and freezers. Scheib's staff includes two assistant chefs, a kitchen steward and two assistant stewards. For state dinners and other major events, this culinary force is augmented by chefs from local restaurants.

Cooking separately in a tiny kitchen jammed between the state floor and the family quarters is pastry chef Roland Mesnier and his longtime assistant, Franette McCulloch.

Mesnier was born in a French village in 1944 on the day American soldiers liberated the community from Nazi occupation. At 14, he left school and began an apprenticeship at a village bakery. He created pastries in kitchens in Paris, London and Bermuda and was cooking at the Greenbrier in 1980 when Rosalynn Carter hired him for the White House.

Mesnier's themed desserts have become the sweet stuff of legend. At a luncheon for Egyptian officials, he created a pistachio mousse pyramid flanked by two edible palm trees and a marzipan camel. One Christmas, he made gingerbread and chocolate reproductions of the president's boyhood home in Hot Springs, Ark., and the suburban house where Hillary Rodham grew up in Park Ridge, Ill.

For Chelsea's 16th birthday, Mesnier decorated her cake with a replica of her new driver's license, complete with color photo, and a car with a license tag reading "Sweet 16."

"Sometimes, after 18 years, it's hard to come up with ideas," Mesnier said. "Two days before the birthday, I was driving to work listening to the radio and

the announcer said, 'Chelsea will soon be getting her driver's license.' Then, boom! It hit me. Chocolate car and license."
Tourists teem

Shortly after noon, the last of one day's 6,000 or so tourists --- more than a million visit the White House each year --- stops for a final photo of the North Portico before leaving the compound and stepping onto the sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue. The mansion's ground floor and second story are part museum, open to visitors from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesdays through Saturdays. The busiest times are in the summer and December; the slowest are January and February.

Tourists enter on the east side and proceed through the library; the Vermeil Room, featuring portraits of recent first ladies; the China Room; the East Room, where presidential press conferences are held; the Green Room; the Blue Room, where the White House Christmas tree will be placed; the Red Room; and the State Dining Room.

Melinda Bates, 52, director of the Office of Tourism, is a longtime friend of Clinton's. She took him to his first Judy Collins concert in 1964. When Collins visited the White House three decades later, Clinton returned the favor by introducing Bates to the singer.

The White House is a trove of antiques, art and oddities. Original Norman Rockwell drawings adorn the walls of an out-of-the-way West Wing waiting area, for instance. In another reception area, a handsome clock made entirely of wood keeps visitors aware of the time. Historic portraits are everywhere. A photo on an end table shows Calvin Coolidge with the original Boston Celtics.

Curator Betty Monkman, who has worked at the White House for three decades, is responsible for displaying and maintaining the artifacts, furnishings and art.

A job whose title belies its importance is the social secretary --- responsible for every event inside the White House and on the grounds. From state dinners to the annual Easter Egg Roll, social secretary Capricia Marshall juggles VIPs and R.S.V.P.s and a myriad details concerning protocol and logistics.

Three to 10 events take place every week at the White House. More than 60,000 people are entertained annually at official functions.

A Cleveland native and law school graduate, Marshall joined the Clinton presidential campaign in Ohio in 1991 and came to the White House as a special assistant to the first lady after Clinton's initial election. In 1997, at 33, she was appointed social secretary. Marshall made an immediate impact in her new post by posing in Vogue magazine wearing a backless Donna Karan gown.
Mail for Buddy, Socks

It's midafternoon, and Clinton is standing in a sunny Rose Garden promoting his proposals for health care. Irv Williams is concerned about reporters' stomping on the grass.

For more than four decades, chief horticulturist Williams has tended the

trees, grass and shrubbery of the White House grounds.

The groundskeepers work for the National Park Service. Williams helped Jacqueline Kennedy redesign the First Lady's Garden, next to the formal Rose Garden, where speeches are given and treaties are signed.

Every first lady leaves her own special bloom in the garden --- a peach-colored rose for Rosalynn Carter, a yellow rose for Betty Ford, red for Nancy Reagan.

Every president plants a tree on the grounds before leaving. The oldest surviving presidential trees are three magnolias given root by Andrew Jackson. Clinton has planted several trees, including an American elm, a willow oak and a linden.

The gently rolling South Lawn, brightened by flower beds and partly shielded by trees, is the first family's back yard.

In the southwest corner are a tennis court and an outdoor pool. A short chip shot from the Oval Office is a putting green laid out by Dwight Eisenhower in 1954. It was removed in 1971 by Richard Nixon, who built a bowling alley in the White House basement. The green was reinstalled in 1995 by Clinton, who also added a padded jogging track around the South Lawn driveway and subtracted the horseshoe pits dug by George Bush.

While the president is speaking in the sunshine, Dan Burkhardt is managing messages deep inside the Old Executive Office Building --- a massive, foreboding gray building across West Executive Avenue from the West Wing. The prime parking spaces for key staffers are between the "OEOB" and the West Wing.

A political appointee from California, Burkhardt is director of correspondence and presidential messages. The White House receives about 10,000 letters a day at the 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. mailing address.

These are sorted by subject and assigned to volunteers for replies. On a weekday, 100 to 250 volunteers are handling mail. The replies are checked by one of Burkhardt's 70 full-time staffers, who oversee everything from the processing of presidential gifts to responding to the 2,000 or so e-mails the president receives every day to handling incoming calls on 20 phone lines.

In addition to the OEOB operation, there is an auxiliary White House mail room at the Soldiers and Airmen's Home near Capitol Hill. Military retirees process letters addressed to presidential pets --- currently Socks the cat and Buddy the dog.

Many offices in the Old EOB are spacious, with high ceilings and fireplaces. They are not as eagerly sought as the cramped quarters in the West Wing; proximity to the president is prized above all other perks in the White House complex.

Aide Sidney Blumenthal's office, for instance, is a converted barbershop but is coveted by many because it is downstairs from the Oval Office.

The Old EOB houses the staffs of many top advisers whose offices are in the West Wing. It also has a bank, a post office, a cafeteria and a medical unit for

staffers. In the main White House is another medical unit for the first family. On the bottom floor of the West Wing, senior staffers can dine in or carry out from the White House Mess, which is operated by Navy cooks.

Films for First Family

Around 7 p.m., Clinton walks down the colonnade, headed to the White House's top two floors, which are the home of the first family.

He has likened this lifestyle to the way average Americans lived in bygone decades: residing above their stores or on family farms, with their jobs and homes melded. Here, though, White House staffers zealously guard the upstairs private lives of presidential families.

Gary Walters, a discreet former Secret Service agent with the unimposing title of chief usher, is the supervisor of all who serve the first family in their home. With a staff of about 90 to direct and the ultimate responsibility for everything from state dinners to overflowing toilets, Walters has filled this historically powerful post since 1986.

Eight chief ushers have served in the nearly 200-year history of the White House. The improbably named Ike Hoover served the longest --- 42 years beginning in 1891 --- and managed the care and comfort of 10 presidents and their families.

The Clintons are movie fans and regularly invite friends over for films in the 51-seat theater off the East Wing portico. Facing the screen are rows of four to six beige overstuffed armchairs --- the rows rising in tiers toward the rear of the room. When the Clintons show movies, tables stocked with popcorn, soft drinks and other snacks are set up outside the theater.

Many nights, though, Clinton takes memos upstairs to read late into the night, aides say, working even as Susanna McGuire arrives to start another day in the life of the White House.

GRAPHIC: Graphic white house grounds:

1. President's Park

Every president plants a tree on the grounds before leaving. The oldest are three magnolias from Andrew Jackson. The Clintons have given root to several, including an American elm and willow oak. Groundskeepers from the National Park Service tend to the White House estate's 19 acres of trees, grass and gardens.

The quiet, graceful exterior of this centuries-old mansion belies the swarm of activity needed to hold down the fort. Equal parts residence, museum and presidential command center, it's a national treasure that endures through the pride and service of its many occupants.

2. Executive West Wing

The center of American power is tightly controlled by guards, gates, badges, escorts and background checks. The Situation Room hums 24 hours a day to monitor the world's trouble spots. On the West Wing's first floor is the president's suite, which contains the Oval Office, Cabinet Room and private study. The leather-appointed Cabinet Room is used for National Security Council sessions and other top-level meetings.

3. Private quarters

Amid the press conferences and bill signings, it's easy to overlook that the Clintons are movie buffs who often invite friends over to the 51-seat movie theater off the East Wing. Most day-to-day living takes place outside the formal areas, such as the Green Room or the China Room. The first family at ease is more likely to be found in the more contemporary West Sitting Hall or scaled-down Family Dining Room. In the southwest corner of the estate are a tennis court, outdoor pool and putting green.

4. Isn't it grand?

The first family's staff mails out lots of invitations for up to 10 official functions a week. Close to 60,000 guests are received and entertained each year. Often, guests are greeted by the president and first lady at twilight, when the Entrance Hall's stone columns throw long shadows across the red-carpeted, marble floor. The large, formal East Room comes alive with dances, concerts, weddings and special ceremonies. The golden-hued State Dining Room seats 140 and is adorned with exquisite candelabras and tapestries.

Graphic shows White House grounds, including the location of trees planted by former presidents. Consult microfilm for details.

Research by RICHARD GINCEL / Staff

Graphic by DALE E. DODSON / Staff

Graphic Whitehouse 1206.eps:

Inside the White House

THE GRAND TOUR:

Parts of the ground floor and second story are open to non-staff visitors who enter on the east side and proceed on a guided tour through the library, then climb the stairs to the state floor to view four staterooms and the State Dining Room.

East Room*: Seven presidents have lain in state here. Traditionally used for large ceremonies.

State Dining Room*: Sparkling, golden-hued room seats up to 140 guests.

Red Room*: Graceful sitting parlor occasionally used for small dinner parties.

Ground Floor Corridor*: Contains portraits of first ladies.

Green Room*: Refurbished in 1971, the parlor boasts exceedingly rare furniture, much of it from the Federal period.

Other rooms:

- A. South Portico
- B. Family Dining Room
- C. Cross Hall*
- D. Entrance Hall*
- E. Library
- F. Vermeil Room
- G. China Room
- H. Diplomatic Reception Room
- I. Map Room
- J. Blue Room*

*Open to the public

CHRISTOPHER SMITH / Staff

Graphic :

WHITE HOUSE WORK FORCE

A total of 1,500 people are employed in the Executive Office of the President --- posts that range from seven speech writers to four physicians. About 400 work in the White House, including about 90 on the executive residence staff.

The full-time force is augmented by 1,010 volunteers who work at least 16 hours a month --- mostly in the correspondence office. The Clinton administration says these volunteers save taxpayers about \$ 1.2 million in wages per year.

This year, about \$ 8.5 million is budgeted for care, heating and lighting of the historic residence and for official entertainment expenses of the president.

THE BIRTH OF

THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

The presidential mansion, with its familiar columns and porticos, was designed by James Hoban, an Irish-born architect selected by George Washington. The cornerstone was laid Oct. 13, 1792. Eight years later, John Adams moved in, the first president to live there. Built of Virginia sandstone, the central mansion has six floors, including a basement and sub-basement, about 67,200 square feet of floor space, 132 rooms including 34 bathrooms, three mezzanines, 147 windows, 412 doors, 12 chimneys, three elevators, two dumbwaiters and seven staircases.

A WHITE (HOUSE) CHRISTMAS

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will unveil the 1998 Christmas theme and decorations at the White House on Monday, kicking off the traditional round of seasonal tours and parties at the presidential home. During the following three weeks, about 15,000 guests will marvel at Christmas trees laden with 50,000 lights and handmade ornaments from across America.

Photo :

Pastry chef Roland Mesnier labors to create new and different treats. A luncheon for Egyptian officials featured a pistachio mousse pyramid flanked by two edible palm trees and a marzipan camel. Chelsea's 16th birthday cake had a replica of her new driver's license, complete with color photo. / RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Photo :

Head florist Nancy Clarke checks a flower arrangement in the flower shop located in the basement of the residence. / RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

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December 4, 1998, Friday, CONSTITUTION EDITION

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HEADLINE: White House needs elves year round;
The Christmas season starts early each year for the staffers who prepare the president's home for the holiday. Now, their creations are being unwrapped.

BYLINE: Bob Dart

BODY:

Washington - In a cramped hallway, about eight tiny reindeer-lengths from the Diplomatic Room fireplace, White House cooks were merrily stamping out gingerbread men on an autumn afternoon.

"Every slow day is a day we use for Christmas preparation," explained pastry chef Roland Mesnier, guiding a visitor past this culinary assembly line. "If there is an empty corner in the White House, you will find somebody rolling cookies there."

Like Santa's elves, some White House staffers regard Christmas preparation as a never-ending job.

On Monday, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will unveil the 1998 Christmas theme and decorations at the White House, kicking off the traditional round of seasonal tours and parties at the presidential home.

During the next three weeks, about 15,000 guests will marvel at Christmas trees laden with 50,000 lights and handmade ornaments from across America, hear seasonal songs of musicians from every state and consume 50,000 cookies, half a ton of fruitcake and 250 gallons of eggnog.

Such festivities take a tad of forethought. The fruitcake, for instance, was baked in June and stacked in refrigerators in two-pound blocks to await the holiday parties.

"Truthfully, right now I'm making mental notes for next year of what didn't work very well this year," said Nancy Clarke, head florist at the tiny flower shop beneath the North Portico. "When Christmas decorations are still up, we start talking as a group about next Christmas because that's the best time to do it."

"It's certainly a yearlong project," agreed Capricia Marshall, the social secretary in charge of all White House events. "We start in early January thinking about the theme for that year's Christmas."

The tradition of a theme for the official Christmas tree in the Blue Room was begun by Jacqueline Kennedy in 1961. The first theme was the "Nutcracker Suite." Last year's theme was "Santa's Workshop," and ornament designer Christopher Radko served as an artist coordinator to carry the theme throughout the White House.

This year's theme is still a secret, but Marshall hinted that it is "super sweet," and noted that New York cake designer Colette Peters is the coordinating artist.

The theme was chosen in February after meetings between White House staffers and Clinton. Mesnier was consulted on how to portray the theme in the gingerbread house he makes each Christmas. Clarke envisioned ornaments for the Blue Room tree. Clinton had the final say. A fruitcake people like Then the White House enlisted creative people from around the country --- from glass blowers to fashion designers to needlepoint artists --- to come up with ornaments and decorations. Governors' spouses helped select artists from their states.

By early summer, Mesnier had begun to prepare the Christmas party fare. Fruitcake is first because it keeps well in refrigerators.

"We have a fruitcake recipe that was designed for the White House," said Mesnier, who was born in France and was working at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia when he was hired by Rosalynn Carter in 1980. "It has been changed every year since I've been here. We always try to make it more earthier, if you will, by reducing the sugar content, the calories and all that. . . . We use naturally dried fruit.

"Many people have come to me who swear that they hate fruitcake. They detest it. But when they taste this one, they absolutely love it," said Mesnier.

Also months ahead of time, an assortment of unbaked Christmas cookies is cut out and frozen raw. During the party season, "we bake them as we go along to serve fresh," the chef explained.

Other traditional White House Christmas treats are completed months ahead and put in freezers. Yule logs are made of coffee mousse with walnuts and coated with chocolate. There are Christmas cakes --- a raspberry and chocolate combination, pumpkin cake, double applesauce cake and an orange cake similar to pound cake.

"In all, there will be 120,000 cookies or pieces of cake served," Mesnier estimated.

Plans for this year's gingerbread house were finished in August. The sheets of gingerbread were baked in mid-November.

"The gingerbread must be very dry," said Mesnier. "I do not use any support that is not food. Many people use cardboard or plastic to support the house. This house is totally food --- gingerbread, chocolate, sugar icing. It weighs close to 150 pounds."

Florist Clarke can't freeze her creations for later presentation, but plans decorations down to the last red bow and poinsettia.

Months ago, she focused her digital camera on all the public White House rooms. The digital images were converted into computerized stage sets where the virtual furniture could be moved around and would-be decorations inserted or removed.

"That's the easiest way to do it. We have an instant visual," she explained. Then she and Marshall, the social secretary, made a presentation to Clinton on proposed Christmas decorations for each room.

The first lady "is very hands-on in the entire process," said Marshall. Once the presentation is made, Mrs. Clinton "starts tweaking it. She has wonderful ideas."

Clarke oversees a staff of four full-time floral designers and 11 part timers. They are reinforced by 60 volunteers to decorate the White House for Christmas.

Finishing touches under way "The volunteers come in the Monday after Thanksgiving. They go to our warehouse in Riverdale, Md., and start working on bows and all the arrangements and getting everything prepared," said Clarke, a White House volunteer for several years before being hired by Nancy Reagan in 1981.

Everything is readied to move into the White House on the Friday before the Kennedy Center Honors feting prominent artists, which this year are Sunday. The decorating will be finished Saturday night, and the next afternoon the first family welcomes the Kennedy Center honorees to a White House freshly decked out in holiday finery.

This busy weekend requires some precision. Wreaths are ordered from a company in Oregon --- 168 small wreaths, 92 larger ones. Last year, 486 feet of garland were draped inside the White House and another 862 feet on the grounds. The Christmas tree in the Blue Room, chosen by the National Christmas Tree Association, has more than 6,000 lights and 2,000 ornaments. There are a dozen or so other Christmas trees in the White House and on the grounds. The traditional White House creche has 47 figures. The decorations will include more than 1,000 bows.

All must be in place for about 50 parties and for thousands of visitors who will go through on special holiday tours. Official parties, such as the Congressional Ball, are paid for with government funds, and other events are funded by the Democratic National Committee.

Menus and guest lists are planned months in advance, Marshall said. About 2,500 entertainers are recruited from around the country for three weeks of activities. Security checks must be completed on them all long before they actually enter the White House.

Marshall will attend all the parties, making sure everything goes as planned and taking mental notes on how to do the 1999 holidays.

"And oh, yes, there's the Christmas card," says Marshall. In February or so, Clinton selects an artist to paint the traditional White House card. They talk

about what to depict --- the first lady picks the scene. The finished cards will be mailed Monday.

"There is a lot of pressure this time of year," conceded chef Mesnier. "I wake up in the middle of the night and think of Christmas."

GRAPHIC: Photo LVwhitehouse - xmas3_286938:

Every available space is used for cookies when the White House culinary staff begins baking for Christmas. / RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Photo LVwhitehouse - xmas4_286939:

Head florist Nancy Clarke uses a digital camera to help her decide where she and her staff can place seasonal flowers and arrangements in the White House. / RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Photo :

It's a year-round thing: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton needs 50,000 cookies and half a ton of fruitcake to serve to 15,000 guests at various Christmas functions. So White House chef Steven M. Palumbo, shown working on hazelnut pastries, and his staff got off to an early start. / RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

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December 2, 1998, Wednesday, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: FEATURES, Pg. 2F, People And Places

LENGTH: 688 words

HEADLINE: Clintons kick off season with delivery of Christmas tree

SOURCE: From staff and wire reports

BODY:

Santa Claus was sweating as the White House Christmas tree rolled up to the South Portico yesterday on a horse-drawn carriage. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was joined by tree donors James and Diane Chapman of Endeavor, Wisc., along with St. Nick and two dozen singing schoolchildren on an unseasonably warm day. Along with the 18 1/2-foot balsam fir for the Blue Oval Room, which will be decorated by midnight Saturday, the Chapmans have donated the family tree for the Yellow Oval Room. That will take three or four days to decorate, Mrs. Clinton says: "It takes us a long time, because we have to take out every ornament and say, 'Awww, remember this ornament?' And, 'No, don't put it there; put it somewhere else.' It's one of the things we do together as a family."

DUNG AS ART: Ebullient artist Chris Ofili, whose vibrant paintings are bedecked with elephant dung, yesterday won Britain's top art award, The Turner Prize. "Oh man. Thank God. Where's my check?" the painter asked the glitterati of the art world at the lavish awards ceremony in London's Tate Gallery. Ofili, the first painter to land the controversial \$ 33,000 prize for 13 years, added: "I cannot believe it. It feels like a film. I shall watch the tape when I get home." The prize, won in the past by artists presenting a pickled sheep and a wrestling video, has been mocked as a pretentious publicity stunt. In 1993, art pranksters set up an alternative award for the worst work of the year, which went to Rachel Whiteread -- as did the Turner Prize.

LETTERMAN'S LUCK: Nellie Ruth Shirley, arrested in David Letterman's Connecticut driveway a week before his stalker Margaret Ray killed herself, yesterday was placed on probation for a year and told to stay away from the talk-show host. The 39-year-old from Honea Path, S.C., was arrested Sept. 28 and charged with misdemeanor criminal trespass. She's been ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation.

'PULP' PAPA: Quentin Tarantino isn't talking about estranged dad Tony's plea for a reconciliation. The elder Tarantino, who abandoned Quentin's mother while she was pregnant 35 years ago, is acting in a couple of movies to prove his interest.

'CABARET' CASTING: Lois Lane comes to the cabaret, old chum, when Teri Hatcher stars as Sally Bowles in the national tour of the Tony-winning revival of "Cabaret." Hatcher will kick off the tour Feb. 23 at the Wilshire Theatre in Los Angeles and then travel with the Kander and Ebb musical to Boston, Chicago

The Baltimore Sun, December 2, 1998

and Washington.

JAVA JUNGLE: "Mocha Man" to the stars Jeremy Gurse built up his Mocha Kiss business from a few cups of ice-blended mochas to more than 75,000 coffee drinks on about 100 films and television shows, from "Seinfeld" to "ER." His mobile coffee klatch lets him in on Hollywood's most caffeinated secrets: Harrison Ford drinks double espresso. Juliana Margulies opts for a sugar-free hot mocha with soy milk, hold the jolt. Heather Graham likes double decaf latte, and Tom Cruise's fix is a sugar-free ice-blended mocha. Gurse's thought when he began his business: "Why not create my own version of the drink and bring it to sets? After all, this is an industry that survives on caffeine."

NET BYTE DU JOUR: While the White House puts up its Christmas trees, you can try out holiday recipes used by the White House chefs (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/FirstLady/html/Recipes.html>). Sorry, no hamburgers!

Today's birthdays

Actor-playwright Adolph Green is 83. Actor Leo Gordon is 76. Former Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig is 74. Actress Julie Harris is 73. Country singer John Wesley Ryles is 48. Rock singer Michael McDonald is 46. Actor Keith Szarabajka is 46. Actor Dan Butler is 44. NBC news broadcaster Stone Phillips is 44. Actor Dennis Christopher is 43. Actor Steven Bauer is 42. Rock musician Rick Savage (Def Leppard) is 38. Tennis Hall-of-Famer Tracy Austin is 36. Rock musician Nate Mendel (Foo Fighters) is 30. Rock singer Jimi Haha (Jimmie's Chicken Shack) is 30. Rapper Treach (Naughty By Nature) is 28. Tennis player Monica Seles is 25.

Who has the right of way?

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, ASSOCIATED PRESS, Pedestrian Bill Jackson lets his grandson, Zack Young, 5, have the better part of the sidewalk in Ventura, Calif., Monday.

TYPE: CATCH LINE

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THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

November 29, 1998 Sunday, METRO

SECTION: TRAVEL; Pg. L5

LENGTH: 691 words

HEADLINE: DREAMING OF WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS?

BYLINE: Hartford Courant

BODY:

WASHINGTON - If you've always longed to see the White House decorated for Christmas, then by all means, go.

But empty your mind of visions of sugarplums.

It's not that the White House isn't pretty during the holidays. It is.

It's not that you won't feel Christmasy. You will.

It's just that you might expect more than you'll get, considering that you (or someone who loves you) will have waited an hour or more in the chilly predawn darkness for your free ticket.

And you might expect more, considering that even though you'll get the ticket early, you won't be able to use it until sometime between 10 a.m. and noon.

And even then, after all that waiting around, the entire White House tour will take only about 30 minutes, even if you dawdle.

We're talking about a few pretty rooms with about a dozen gaily decorated Christmas trees. That's it. And you don't even get to take pictures.

Now you might admire this kind of decorating restraint and class if it were your neighbor's house, but somehow people seem to want more, expect more, from the first family.

Last year, the Green Room and the Red Room barely qualified as decorated because the only holiday items were foot-tall displays on the mantles. Cute displays, to be sure - one of nighttime in Santa's village and another of Santa's workshop on Dec. 23 - but nothing that would give Martha Washington sweaty palms.

Now before you get testy, understand that there's a good reason for this functionality.

The White House is not a showcase. It's a place of government business, and its few public rooms are in near-constant use to entertain visiting heads of state, celebrities and honored Americans. That doesn't leave much room for

elaborate decorations, especially anything that couldn't be moved to make room for, say, a dinner for 100 people.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

Despite these logistical restrictions, the White House is open to the public five days a week, making it the only residence of a head of state that is open to visitors so often. About 1 million people a year go through.

During the holidays, the biggest attractions are the East Room, the Blue Room and the State Dining Room.

The East Room is the largest in the White House and is used for receptions, ceremonies, press conferences and other events, but during the holidays it's dominated by six oversize Christmas trees. The trees, decorated in gold glitter balls and burgundy ribbons, flank an antique creche created in 18th-century Italy.

The oval Blue Room is dominated by the official White House Christmas tree, which takes up much of the room. Last year, the 18-foot tree was decorated with ornaments contributed by special groups and people who were invited to donate them.

The green velvet handmade tree skirt was designed by individuals from each of the 50 states, territories and the District of Columbia, and the Clintons have had it since their first Christmas in the White House. It has a sweet, homespun look that probably would look out of place in any other home of a head of state.

A maroon-and-green checked tablecloth covered the table in the state Dining Room, topped by 3-foot tall candles, child-tall angels created from dried grapevines and mauve Christmas balls last year. On a side table was the annual gingerbread house created by White House pastry chefs. It was Santa's Victorian house and workshop. Santa was on a cell phone.

One way to liven up your visit is to spend time in the White House Visitors Center, a few blocks from the big house. You must go there for tickets anyway, so take some time to watch the 30-minute video and see the displays.

Visitors learn lots of interesting history about the White House and get some behind-the-scenes looks at the most famous house in America.

So although the White House for the holidays is probably not worth a special trip alone, if you are in town, stop by. The welcome mat is out from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesdays through Saturdays. A limited number of tickets are issued on a first-come, first-served basis starting at 7:30 a.m. at the White House Visitors Center, which accounts for the early-morning lines outside.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO: Ready for holiday. Hillary Rodham Clinton shows off 1 of 23 Christmas trees in the White House.

KRT

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 30, 1998

DEC-21-98 MON 11:02 AM

White House a Christmas winter wonderland

BY PHYLLIS D. BRANDON
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WASHINGTON — Despite the Scrooges on Capitol Hill, it looks a lot like Christmas at the White House.

On a Dec. 7 when the temperature was more typical of May, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, assisted by Santa and social secretary Capricia Marshall, entertained 100 members of the media at a tea party and a close-up look of the White House Christmas decorations.

But a fantasy winter wonderland this is, all gold, silver and crystal.

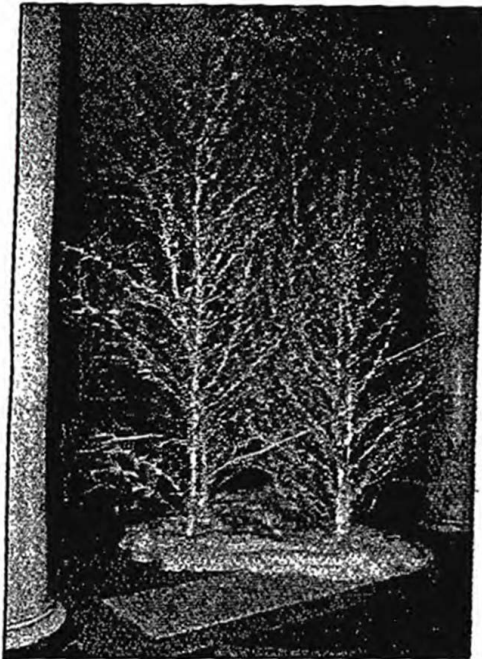
In the State Dining Room, the traditional gingerbread house is a castle almost touching the chandelier with Santa and sled leaving by drawbridge to make his rounds. Guards to the scene are likenesses of Socks and Buddy, the family's famous pets.

White House chefs told the group about the difficulty they had making conical shapes for the steeple out of gingerbread, which doesn't normally bend. It wasn't easy to move to the table — it weighs 150 pounds with 20 pounds of confectioners' sugar and 40 pounds of chocolate.

The official Christmas tree with 50 lights dominates the Blue Room. It's 18 1/2 feet tall and artists from the 50 states were invited to decorate it in the Winter Wonderland theme so the tree holds an abundance of small snowmen.

Arkansans contributing ornaments were Dianne Herman and Y Springer, both of Eureka Springs; Ann Gray of Pleasant Hill; Linda Hardin of McGehee; Stewart of Mountain View; and Ward Wade Jr. of Marianna. Decorative painters were Sammie Ford and Bette Jo Kirkpatrick, both of Hot Springs; Mary Ciontea of Springs Village; and Marion Kelly of Little Rock. Nearly 80 artists from across the nation spent time and talents to create the White House's Winter Wonder-

land at the base of the Blue Room's chandelier is a handmade green-velvet



The Grand Foyer with frosted birch trees

skirt crafted for the Clinton's first White House Christmas. Each panel represents a state and the outline of Arkansas is front and center, with a heart-shaped ruby marking Little Rock's spot on the map.

The tree in the East Garden Room has more than 400 ornaments sent by Peace Corps volunteers and staff from more than 65 countries.

Today, the Barbara Mashburn Scholarship Foundation singers from Fayetteville will perform at the White House. During the holiday season more than 2,600 people of all ages from across the country have been invited to participate in musical programs for White House guests.

The East Room has been decorated with 18 soaring conical gold trees, replacing the green trees of the past at the White House. Mrs. Clinton said it was felt that these trees would provide more room for entertaining. At the almost continuous holiday parties at the White House, not all attended by the Clintons, approximately 12,000 pieces of

shrimp and 285 gallons of eggnog will be served.

With a chandelier off being repaired, Robert Isabell of New York created a special Advent wreath for the room, topped with electric candles. Beginning with a 14-foot aluminum frame, 40 people worked two weeks day and night adding gold holly, white natural branches and assorted pine cones to create this dramatic Christmas fantasy well above the heads of the guests.

The East Room's focal point is a traditional Italian creche, dating to the late 18th century, with 47 carved wood and terra cotta figures. It was a gift to the White House in 1967.

For the Green Room, Collette Peters of New York, a confectionery artist, created an all-sugar mantel decoration featuring an ice palace and a crystal pavilion with three miniature trees inside. It took her three weeks to make it, she said. The pavilion sits on a bed of rock candy with assorted candy trees around it.

For the Red Room's mantel, Peters created a Polar Bear Christmas at the North Pole complete with an igloo, penguins, snowflakes, icicles and a snow tree.

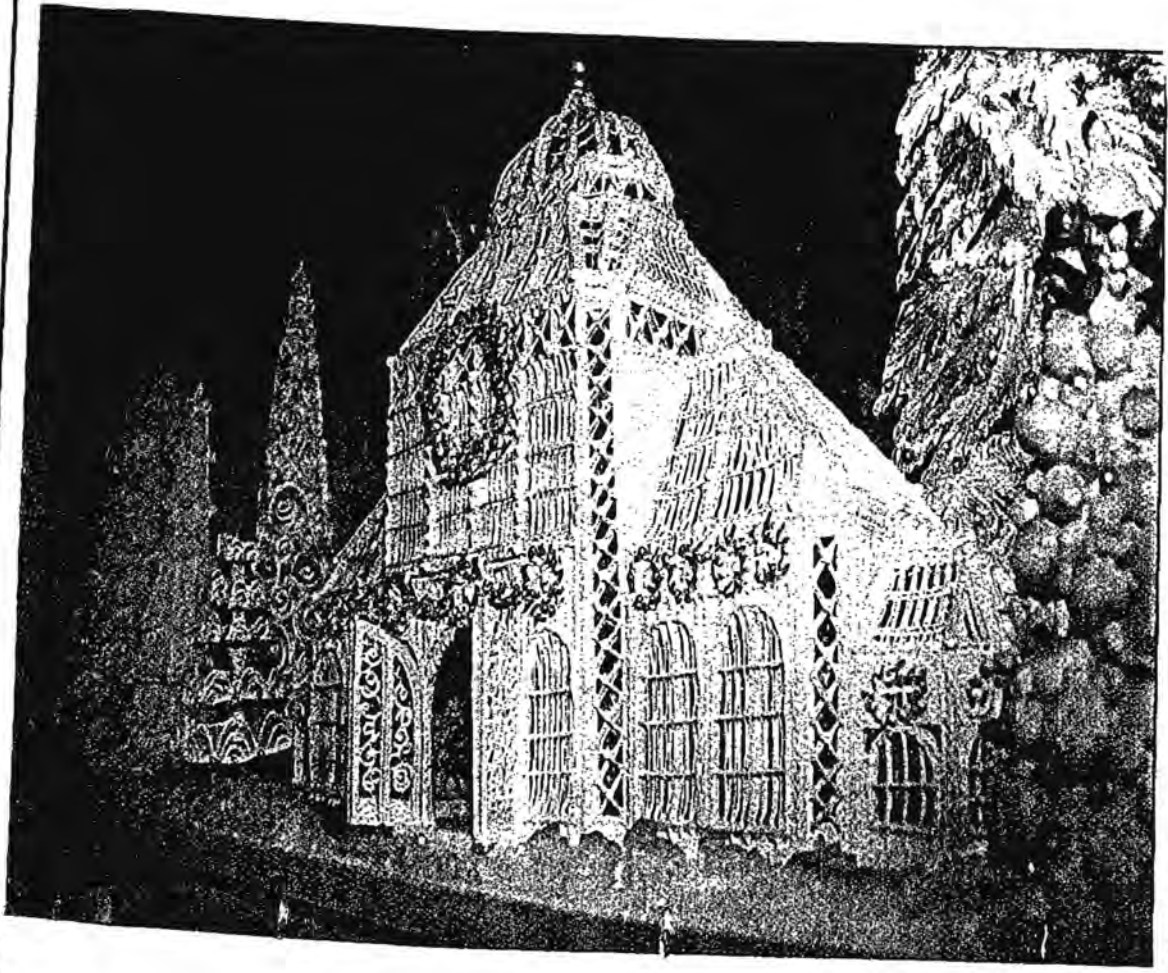
Ray Ellis of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., was selected to paint the White House's 1998 Christmas card. He was contacted Sept. 1 and asked to paint the card's cover which features the State Dining Room. (Ellis has illustrated three books by Walter Cronkite.) Ellis said the time taken to complete the project was about 70 percent deciding how he was going to do it and then, maybe, just a day to paint it.

The drama of the White House's Grand Foyer, its chandeliers glistening, is accented by a forest of frosted birch trees trimmed with mini-lights. Archways are framed by greenery dripping with pendants of gold magnolia leaves and silver branches.

"When we picked this theme, we couldn't have imagined this would be the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," Mrs. Clinton said. More seasonal weather arrived over the weekend.

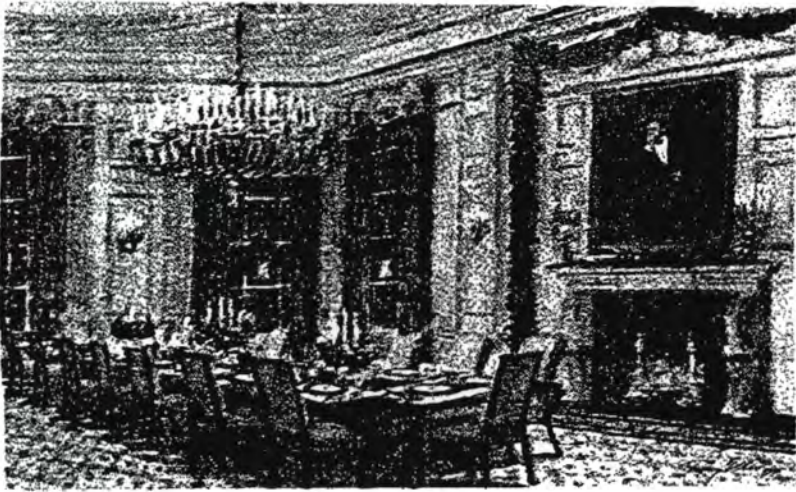


Official Christmas tree in the Blue Room



The all-sugar
crystal pavilion





Clinton Christmas card of State Dining Room

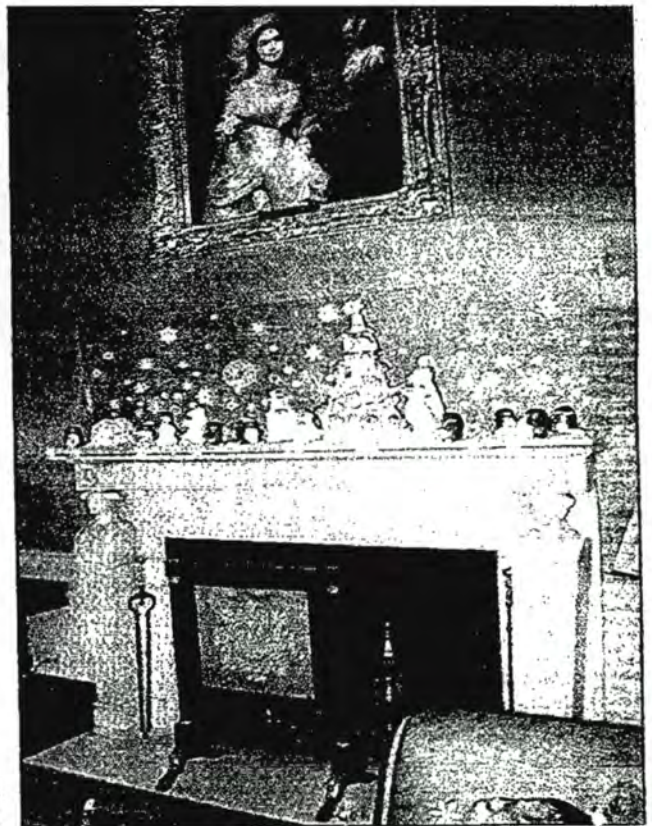


Capricia Marshall talks with media including Helen Thomas

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette photos
by Phyllis D. Brandon



Hillary and Santa with children singers



A polar bear Christmas on the Red Room mantel

AP Online

December 22, 1998; Tuesday 16:36 Eastern Time

SECTION: Washington - general news

LENGTH: 483 words

HEADLINE: Clinton Focuses on Christmas

BYLINE: SONYA ROSS

AP-Clinton ,0514

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

President Clinton busied himself with Christmas activity Tuesday, reading 'A Visit from St. Nicholas' to about 50 children who chimed in with many of the words and gave him hugs.

'If you know the words, you can say it too. If you don't know the words, that's OK,' Clinton said as he and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton settled on a long red bench with Nanna Chen, 8, sandwiched between them.

The children, mostly 4- to 8-year-olds from Washington schools, came through with the better-known stanzas of Clement C. Moore's 1822 poem about a father's Christmas Eve encounter with Santa Claus. It is more popularly known by its opening line, 'Twas the night before Christmas'

When Clinton finished, most of the children raced off for cookies and other treats. A few lined up and hugged the president. Andrew Smith, 6, whispered in Clinton's ear, and Tyron Dingell, 8, shook the president's hand and gave him a Christmas tree made of green construction paper.

Clinton fit the reading in before a regular meeting with aides about Social Security and a pair of holiday receptions in the White House residence for about 500 people.

Wearing a tie featuring Christmas trees, Clinton strode into the White House East Room to read just as some children began to tire after a third rendition of 'Jingle Bells.' Mrs. Clinton followed him, wearing a red-and-green Christmas cardigan sweater and black slacks.

The president paused several times to show the children his favorite illustrations from the book, saying, 'It has great pictures.'

Fortney Stark, the 3-year-old son of Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif., scooted close to Clinton's feet, plopping his worn Winnie the Pooh bear on the floor beside him.

Clare Lockhart, 4 the daughter of White House spokesman Joe Lockhart held first to the seat she staked out on the bench, despite her dad's efforts to lure her to a spot on the floor. Mrs. Clinton sat beside her.

'You knew so many of the words!' Mrs. Clinton exclaimed as she stroked Clare's shoulder. 'I'm very proud of you.'

The Clintons did not sing Christmas carols this year, leaving that job to Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman, a chorale dressed in turn-of-the-century garb and a tall Rudolph the reindeer, whose red nose flashed in time with the singing.

They did pose for a group photograph, with the president coordinating the shot to make sure every child's face could be seen. Mrs. Clinton pulled out a copy of 'Dear Socks, Dear Buddy,' her current book of children's letters to the presidential pets.

'He's a great golfer, Buddy is,' the first lady said, showing the children a picture of the Labrador retriever with Clinton on the golf course. She then surveyed the children to find out who had cats and who had dogs.

'Who has a cat and a dog?' she asked. A third of the children raised their hands.

The president raised his hand too.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

AD-DATE: December 22, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

The materials in the AP file were compiled by The Associated Press. These materials may not be republished without the express written consent of The Associated Press.

December 9, 1998, Wednesday, AM cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 507 words

HEADLINE: Clintons lead lighting of national Christmas tree

BYLINE: SANDRA SOBIERAJ, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

With a "3-2-1, Light the tree!" order from President Clinton, home run hitter Sammy Sosa and a pair of local scouts fired up thousands of green and gold pinprick bulbs on the national Christmas tree Wednesday night.

"It takes all of us to make the world the best it could be," said little Jessica Scott, who sported her Brownie beanie on stage with the president and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Washington-area Cub Scout Edgar Allen Shepard Jr. beseeched the bundled-up crowd on the National Mall to "think about the meaning of the holiday and pray for the homeless and less fortunate."

Just as the House Judiciary Committee Republicans - a few blocks up Independence Avenue - released four proposed articles of impeachment against him, Clinton appeared absorbed in the holiday spirit. He gazed open-mouthed as guitarist Jose Feliciano strummed a stirring rendition "Little Drummer Boy," and the president sang along to the "bah-rum-pum-pum-bum" chorus.

And, with Mrs. Clinton at his side, he nodded along to the groove of Tony Bennett's martini-lounge rendering of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

Clinton recognized Christmas as the celebration of the infant Jesus: "'Blessed are the peacemakers,' he said, and his words still call us to action."

The president took care to find meaning in the Christmas tree's glow for different faiths. "Like the Star of Bethlehem, these lights shine upon us with hope and renewal. Like the candles of Hanukkah, they stand for freedom against tyranny. Like the lamps that will soon light the mosques in the coming months of Ramadan, they evoke a call to community," Clinton said.

Mrs. Clinton invited Sosa to help preside over the annual "Pageant of Peace" after the two met in October, during her hurricane relief travels to his native San Pedro de Macoris in the Dominican Republic. His Chicago Cubs are a hometown favorite of the first lady.

The Santa suit fell to Al Roker of NBC's "Today," while the cast of Broadway's "Cats" and opera singer Leona Mitchell filled out the celebrity lineup for the evening festivities.

The national Christmas tree has stood on the Ellipse between the White House and Washington Monument since 1978, when it was transplanted from a farm in York, Pa.

Surrounded by 56 smaller trees representing the states and territories, the 40-foot centerpiece blue spruce is lighted with the help of solar power - part of "the Clinton administration's commitment to expanding the use of solar power and reducing greenhouse gas emissions for a cleaner environment," the White House said.

The annual lighting ceremony dates back to Christmas Eve 1913, when President Woodrow Wilson staged a "civic Christmas" on the Capitol plaza. Sir Winston Churchill made a surprise cameo appearance with President Franklin Roosevelt at the 1941 tree lighting, which took place in the shadow of the Pearl Harbor bombing. Wartime blackouts kept the tree dark from 1942 until 1944 and, after the Korean War, the lighting ceremony was officially named "Pageant of Peace."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 9, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 08, 1998; Tuesday 04:12 Eastern Time

SECTION: Washington - general news

LENGTH: 422 words

HEADLINE: White House Decked Out for Holidays

BYLINE: ROBERT BURNS

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Edible polar bears decorate an ''iceberg'' in the Red Room. Sugar-coated likenesses of Buddy and Socks ice skate in the State Dining Room. Frosted birch trees stand in the Grand Foyer.

With Christmas approaching, the White House has been transformed for the holidays.

''Winter Wonderland'' is the theme chosen by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and brought to life by armies of artists from across the nation who designed their interpretations of snowmen for the 181/2-foot balsam fir Christmas tree that stands in the center of the Blue Room, sparkling with 2,700 lights.

President Clinton and the first lady are hosting a series of Christmas parties in the White House, starting with the annual Congressional Ball for the 535 members of Congress on Monday evening.

The centerpiece of the White House's winter wonderland is the Blue Room tree, which was donated by Jim and Diane Chapman of the Silent Night Evergreens tree farm in Endeavor, Wis. Its branches are covered with lights, silver balls, colorful wooden ornaments and miniature snowmen from all 50 states.

Also hanging from the tree are knitted mittens and hats made by members of the Knitting Guild of America. The tree's green velvet skirt has individual quilted panels designed by artisans from every state.

Conspicuous in the collection of holiday decorations are the first family's pets, Buddy the brown Labrador and Socks the cat. They are featured in an elaborate gingerbread castle crafted from 100 pounds of gingerbread dough, 20 pounds of icing and 30 pounds of chocolate in the center of the State Dining Room. Edible likenesses of the pets also stand on either side of the castle, ice skates strapped to their paws.

Mrs. Clinton dropped by the State Dining Room on Monday to view the decorations and hear carols sung by students from Oak Ridge Elementary School in nearby Arlington, Va. She said her winter wonderland theme was a departure from tradition.

''In the past years we had lots of green lots of green trees, lots of green everywhere as part of the decorations,'' she said. ''This year we decided to do something a little different to create this kind of silver, gold, crystal winter wonderland.''

The decorations in both the State Dining Room and the East Room are dominated by gold hues. The East Room features 18 slender conical trees and a traditional Advent wreath made of gold holly. The State Dining Room is accented with gold trees trimmed with gold holly, cinnamon sticks, pine cones and crystallized fruits.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 08, 1998

December 7, 1998

SECTION: Washington - general news

LENGTH: 542 words

HEADLINE: FIRST LADY UNVEILS WHITE HOUSE DECORATIONS PHOTOS to accompany this story are being placed in the National folder on the Cox server. 550 words

BYLINE: BOB DART

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

With the weather outside more delightful than frightful, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton opened the holiday season in the nation's capital Monday by revealing a Winter Wonderland inside the freshly and festively decorated White House.

"We wanted to try something different this year," said Mrs. Clinton, showing reporters a White House gleaming with chilly shades of white, silver and gold instead of the season's usual red and green.

With temperatures in the 70s and sidewalk Santas sweltering beside their iron kettles, a family of snow folk welcomed White House visitors to the East Colonnade. Mantels over fireplaces in historic rooms were filled with penguins, polar bears, igloos, an ice palace, an ice garden and Christmas packages wrapped in icy silver and white.

The mantelpiece decorations were all edible -- the sugary creations of Colette Peters, a confectionery artist from New York.

Beside being starkly beautiful, the decorations "are wonderful to smell," the first lady noted.

In addition to announcing "A Winter Wonderland" as the holiday theme -- a tradition begun by Jackie Kennedy in 1961 -- Mrs. Clinton presented this year's White House Christmas card. A watercolor painting of the State Dining Room, the card shows a table set for a holiday dinner and a cheery fire in a hearth below a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. The painting is by Ray Ellis, an artist from Martha's Vineyard, the Massachusetts island where the Clintons have spent several summer vacations.

Following the Winter Wonderland theme, this year's gingerbread house is a castle with oversized versions of presidential pets Socks the Cat and Buddy the Dog ice-skating at both ends. Resting on a table in the state dining room, the completely edible castle comprises 90 pounds of gingerbread, 40 pounds of chocolate and 20 pounds of sugar icing.

"It's been a challenge -- especially the round tower," said Roland Mesnier, the pastry chef whose culinary creations have become another White House tradition.

A chocolate Santa and laden sleigh, pulled by sugary reindeer, are preparing to leave the castle while Mrs. Claus decorates a Christmas tree inside its walls.

The official White House Christmas tree -- so tall that the snowman on top is pushed forward by the 20-foot ceiling -- is the centerpiece of the Blue Room. Its ornaments were made by artists from all 50 states, and a handmade green velvet tree skirt has a panel from every state and territory.

Of course, Christmas trees abound in the White House. In the East Foyer stands a tree decorated with ornaments made by hundreds of Peace Corps volunteers stationed in remote spots around the globe. The library features two trees decorated with pine cones from every region of the country. The Grand Foyer is a glistening forest of frosted birch trees.

The traditional White House creche is the focal point of the East Room. Made in Naples two centuries ago, it features 47 carved figures and has been displayed every Christmas for the past three decades.

The White House will feature its usual array of holiday parties, said Mrs. Clinton, but the president and first lady will not be able to attend some because of their trip that begins Friday to the Mideast.

ENDIT

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 08, 1998

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Clintons kick off season with delivery of Christmas tree

Santa Claus was sweating as the White House Christmas tree rolled up to the South Portico yesterday on a horse-drawn carriage. First lady **Hillary Rodham Clinton** was joined by tree donors **James** and **Diane Chapman** of Endeavor, Wisc., along with St. Nick and two dozen singing schoolchildren on an unseasonably warm day. Along with the 18½-foot balsam fir for the Blue Oval Room, which will be decorated by midnight Saturday, the Chapmans have donated the family tree for the Yellow Oval Room. That will take three or four days to decorate, Mrs. Clinton says: "It takes us a long time, because we have to take out every ornament and say, 'Awww, remember this ornament?' And, 'No, don't put it there; put it somewhere else.' ... It's one of the things we do together as a family."

An executive arrangement

N.H. florist behind White House festivity

By Stacy Milbouer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NASHUA — People may not be surprised to learn there will be no star on top of the White House Christmas tree this year. But truth be told, there never is, according to a New Hampshire florist who has helped decorate the White House for Christmas since the Nixon administration.

Ed Gage, owner of Fortin-Gage Limited florists in Nashua, said the gloomy atmosphere of the impeachment hearings hasn't dimmed the Christmas glow at the White House.

First Ladies usually pick the theme for the holiday decoration, and this year Hillary Rodham Clinton chose "a winter wonderland."

"It looked truly beautiful," said Gage who was on hand to deck the halls with holly and other greens two weeks ago and to set up the giant tree in the Blue Room at the White House.

"Everything is all gold and silver. The White House is getting old and it needs a lot of work," he said, "but the decorations transform it and it looks just beautiful."

Each year Gage is among two or three florists and 40 volunteers who go to Washington about a month before Christmas to decorate. Gage said the volunteers are mostly retired military personnel and their spouses as well as women from garden clubs in the Clintons' home state of Arkansas.

Gage said he helps hang the ornaments from each state from the White House boughs. "The New Hampshire one is very beautiful," he said. "It's a lavender ball with lilacs



AP PHOTO

President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, pose with the Christmas tree that New Hampshire florist Ed Gage helped decorate.

and purple beads . . . the Park Service puts up the lights and we do the rest. It really makes for a festive atmosphere."

But what about the other atmosphere in the White House? Gage says, "things are just too busy to be

depressing."

"The president flew in on the helicopter when we were there. He came in and said hello and seemed very cheerful," he said. "The First Lady looks very, very good."

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Talk show host and American **LARRY KING** will appear Sunday, December 20, 11:30-12:30 AM, WCVB-5, on Dr. Schuller's national and national telecast "Hour of Power" program. Mr. King will discuss his new book, *Prayers*, with Dr. Schuller. Hour of Power can also be seen on CNBC (paid program), U.S. TBN--consult your local listings.



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / DOMINIC CHAVEZ

DORCHESTER BLAZE — A paramedic wheeled a woman down Park Street for medical attention after a fire broke out in a triple decker on Greenbrier Street last night. The fire, which spread to two neighboring buildings, displaced nearly two dozen residents and injured two people, including a firefighter.



December 13, 1998, Sunday, 0 South Pinellas Edition

SECTION: FLORIDIAN; PEOPLE; Pg. 10F

LENGTH: 831 words

HEADLINE: Engineering winter at White House

BYLINE: MARY EVERTZ

BODY:

America's home, the White House, has been transformed into a Winter Wonderland for the holidays.

When first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and her staff came up with the idea for this year's decorations they never dreamed it would be 76 degrees in Washington in early December.

"When we picked the theme last spring, I'm not sure we could have imagined

that we'd have the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," Mrs. Clinton said as she unveiled Christmas '98 at the White House on Monday.

In keeping with the theme, the White House is festooned in "a shimmering excess" of silver and gold garlands and swags, with white birch trees twinkling with lights and walls drenched in glitter. The mantle in the Red Room is decorated as a Polar Bear Christmas at the North Pole, complete with igloo, penguins, snowflakes and ice cube-shape presents.

The centerpiece of the White House's "Winter Wonderland" is the 18 1/2-foot balsam fir that stands in the center of the Blue Room. The tree has 2,700 lights, strings of small silver balls and colorfully painted wooden ornaments and miniature snowmen for all 50 states.

Designer Robert Isabell also came up with 18 gold and silver faux trees and the 14-foot gold and silver wreath that hangs from the ceiling in the East Room.

A handmade menorah decorates the West Wing Lobby. The menorah is on loan from the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving Jewish homestead in North America.

Coordinating and masterminding the Christmas decorating along with the first lady is her social secretary Capricia Marshall.

"You try to dream up ideas, how the house, the decorations, the ornaments will go, how to find artists," Marshall says.

She contacts and contracts with artisans from around the country to create ornaments and other crafts that perpetuate the year's theme. Some are for one season; others, such as the green velvet tree skirt that circles the Christmas tree in the Blue Room, can be used year after year. The tree skirt was made by

- More -

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

St. Petersburg Times, December 13, 1998

quilters from the 50 states and seven U.S. territories. "People love walking around the tree and finding their state," says Marshall.

Florida is well represented in this year's White House Christmas decorations. Some 40 painters, knitters and artists have contributed original works. Among the artists creating snowmen were Rebecca Gifford and Laura Militzer Bryant of St. Petersburg. Martha Street of Largo was one of the knitters, and Michelle Shrover and Betty Dowe of Tampa and Jill MacFarlane of Seminole were among the decorative painters.

During the holiday season, some 150,000 visitors will come through the White House to see the 23 decorated evergreen trees, 344 wreaths, 720 lengths of garlands and 47,950 tree lights.

Equally involved is White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier, who last August already was thinking about Christmas 1999. His responsibilities include the White House's gingerbread house. A professional architect draws up the plans for Mesnier's gingerbread masterpiece. "We don't fool around," says the pastry chef. The masterpiece of edible architecture holds the place of honor in the State Dining Room.

A mountainous forest surrounds the gingerbread castle and its towers and bridges. Miniature versions of Socks and Buddy, the White House cat and dog, are included in the display.

"Christmas 1999, we will really have to come up with something special because of the passage from one century to another," Mesnier said. "To show you that we have not been wasting any time, I have been thinking about the things the president has said in his speeches."

Could this mean a gingerbread bridge to the 21st century? asks the Washington Post's Annie Groer. White House Holiday Card

The Clintons have sent out 300,000 Christmas cards this year. The card, painted by noted artist Ray Ellis of Martha's Vineyard, is of the newly redecorated state dining room, decorated for the holiday. The painting is awash in shades of gold and cream. The message inside: "May peace and joy be yours at the holiday season and throughout the year." Charity Bags Purses

Sotheby's, one of the world's master auctioneers, raised some \$ 253,905 Wednesday night to benefit the Community Research Initiative on AIDS. Among the items auctioned were the elephant-head minaudiere with garnet eyes and rhinestone tusks created by Judith Leiber, and donated by former first lady Nancy Reagan, and a green-leaf patterned silk crepe bag carried by Madonna to the London premiere of Evita.

Tiffany Dublin, Sotheby's fashion director, said the monies raised from the auction will make it possible for the AIDS group to pack its bag and move to a new location. "Collecting high-fashion accessories may have been spurred by the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis auction, but the real impetus may be the difficulty in finding things with great craftsmanship," Dublin notes. "Besides, people love collecting things as social history."

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO, Associated Press; COLOR PHOTO; First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton poses with a gingerbread house in the State Dining Room of the White

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 22, 1998, Tuesday 122498

SECTION: NATIONAL; Pg. 1A

LENGTH: 756 words

HEADLINE: White House's party for media lacks dazzle

BYLINE: MARY JACOBY

BODY:

The intimacy and joviality are missing; the refreshments are limited. Many suspect the scandal's to blame.

WASHINGTON - If this were a normal year in Washington, the White House Christmas party for the press corps Monday evening would have seen reporters sipping eggnog in the stunningly decorated rooms of the East Wing, posing for photographs with the president and first lady as carolers sang.

The carolers were still there. But two days after Clinton became only the second president ever impeached, in large part thanks to aggressive press coverage, almost nothing of the intimate mood of past White House media parties remained.

Instead, those beautiful rooms of the East Wing were roped off to the scribes. Reporters and their guests were treated more as tourists, asked to shuffle through and look, not mingle.

There was no sign of Bill or Hillary Clinton, much less an opportunity to take a photograph with them.

The White House also allowed the guest list to swell to more than 6,000 instead of severely limiting it. The only refreshments this time around were a few soft drinks and cookies in a hot, cramped tent outside the White House. A Marine warned the crowds jostling to enter: "No pushing! No kicking!"

Many journalists expressed their disappointment. "It's usually more intimate," said Cam Gilbert, a freelancer. "This year, it looks like we can't even get a bite to eat." Gilbert's father, Joe Gilbert of Lynchburg, Va., agreed. "It was a lot better last year. It seems like there's a lot of standing and waiting in line."

The theme was "A Winter Wonderland," evoking a fantasy world of brightness and dazzle. The grand foyer of the White House was decorated with frosted birch trees, as if the room were covered in snow and ice.

In the East Room, 18 conical trees painted gold ringed the room, and a massive gold wreath with lighted candles hovered over the floor like a giant crown.

- More -

St. Petersburg Times, December 22, 1998

The official White House tree adorned the Blue Room, nearly touching the ceiling. It was decorated with snowmen dolls made by people in all 50 states.

Nonetheless, pampered and perk-hungry reporters grumbled that the party was Clinton's revenge. "This party sucks! And you can quote me on that. It sucks!" yelled one angry White House correspondent. However, when asked for her identity, she retreated. "I mean you can quote that the party" is terrible, she said without giving her name.

In fact, many reporters were unwilling to give their opinions publicly for fear of missing the 1999 party.

"No, please, don't talk to me! Talk to my husband," said a regional television reporter, who only half-jokingly said, "I don't want to get taken off the list for next year."

Her husband, Mike O'Grady, was not shy in expressing his disappointment. "This is the first year we haven't met the president," he said, holding his 2-year-old daughter, who was asleep on his shoulder. A spokesman for Vice President Al Gore, when asked if there was hidden meaning in this party's differences from those in years past, chuckled nervously and pointed to White House deputy press secretary Amy Weiss, who gave the official line.

"No, not at all," she said. "Because everyone's worked so hard this year and haven't seen their families, we thought it would be nice to make this more family-oriented, versus sort of the more formal traditional party."

Thus, the Clintons decided to open up the party to kids, White House officials said.

"We are going to try something different. I think it's going to be better. If it's not, I am sure you'll let me know," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said of the party in his official briefing last week.

"So it's not because he's mad at us?" a reporter asked, to laughter.

Lockhart chuckled, but did not offer any answer to the contrary.

Indeed, many children seemed to enjoy the party, with tables set up for making cookies and a center stage in the tent featuring a storyteller and other acts. But it made for an unpleasant time for the adults, who had to shout to converse over the amplified sounds of "Babbit the Rabbit" and other tales.

But Mary Anne Akers, a reporter for the Washington Times, said her experience, as she paused to meet the family of an acquaintance, seemed to sum up the feeling of the White House toward the press this holiday season. A Marine guard approached her and said she was blocking the stream of people trying to exit.

"Would you just please leave, ma'am," he said.

Most of the media guests were obliging as quickly as they could.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 8, 1998, Tuesday , FINAL

SECTION: NEWS, Pg. A3

LENGTH: 626 words

HEADLINE: FIRST LADY VISIBLE AND FESTIVE-AND UNAVAILABLE TO REPORTERS

BYLINE: ANN McFEATTERS SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

There was plenty of eggnog and shrimp, glitter and gold, but answers from Vogue cover girl Hillary Rodham Clinton were as scarce as reindeer wings.

As visible as she has become to the public through photo opportunities and political speeches in this year of her worst angst - she's gloriously arrayed in an Oscar de la Renta velvet gown for the cover of Vogue this month, the first time a first lady has been on the front of the fashion bible - she has been generally unavailable for questions from reporters.

Yesterday, as the first lady unveiled unusually lavish White House Christmas decorations, redoubtable veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas tried to ask her a few questions. Suddenly, the music swelled, and out came one Santa Claus a-ho-ho-hoing, two chefs a-waiting, three decorators oohing and 12 military aides not smiling. Poof! The first lady had vanished. She had gone upstairs to dress for the congressional ball last night. More than a thousand members of Congress and spouses RSVP'd they would attend the White House gala, impeachment proceedings notwithstanding. "It's the people's house, not a Republican house or a Democrats' house," said Joe Lockhart, the White House spokesman, saying that it was hoped Republicans would show up.

Also yesterday, Hillary Clinton appeared on a pretaped segment of "The Rosie O'Donnell Show," where she sang a duet with the star and hawked her new book, "Dear Socks, Dear Buddy: Kids' Letters to the First Pets."

The first lady has said that she and President Clinton would have to break tradition this year and not attend all the White House Christmas parties. She said the reason was Clinton's upcoming trip to the Middle East.

But the buzz around Washington is that it would be above and beyond the call of duty for the first lady to stand beside Clinton for hours shaking hands and smiling for thousands of White House photos, seeing the curiosity in thousands of eyes watching for body language, listening to thousands of platitudes and bearing sympathetic pats on the back.

With public opinion polls reflecting astronomical public approval over how she has handled her unwanted status as the wronged woman, Hillary Clinton has wowed the media elite in Hollywood and New York. She's been called ravishing, glowing, radiant, glamorous, well-coifed and, that highest of accolades in some of her new circles, thin.

Even Republicans gossip that she might be a formidable candidate for the Senate when she leaves the White House, or perhaps even for president in 2000. There's talk she could be appointed to the Supreme Court if Vice President Al Gore becomes president. Such scenarios seem unlikely, but just a few months ago they would have been unthinkable.

Last January she chose this year's theme of Winter Wonderland for the Christmas decorations. Yesterday, she unveiled a fairyland of white birch trees, sparkling lights and gold garlands on a day the temperature climbed into the 70s.

There's a giant gingerbread castle in the State Dining Room with 90 pounds of gingerbread and 40 pounds of chocolate as well as a sugary Buddy and Socks; a polar bear's Christmas scene made of spun sugar and egg whites in the Red Room; and an 18-and-a-half-foot balsam fir in the Blue Room hung with miniature snowmen, sleighs and mittens made by volunteers around the country.

The East Room features clusters of sprayed gold branches, pine cones, ribbon and leaves shaped into 18 tall conical trees, an Italian terra cotta creche set donated in 1967 and an enormous gold advent wreath as a chandelier.

The White House Christmas card this year is a painting by Massachusetts artist Ray Ellis of a festive holiday dinner in the newly painted and decorated State Dining Room.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

TYPE: PROFILE

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 9, 1998 Wednesday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: EDITORIALS & FORUM; Pg. 11B

LENGTH: 801 words

HEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE DECORATED IN PURE FANTASY

BYLINE: By Marianne Means

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Outside the White House, life is neither festive nor traditional as the House of Representatives lurches erratically toward impeachment and the unseasonable hot weather produces furry buds on the tulip magnolias outside first lady Hillary Clinton's office window.

Inside the White House, 'tis nonetheless the season to be jolly in a lavishly decorated winter wonderland enveloping the president's house in fir boughs and wreaths, frosted magnolia leaves and birch trees, gilded pine cones, glittering gold and silver ornaments and delicate, edible confections depicting elaborate Christmas scenes.

This year, the great mansion gleams with 344 wreaths, 18 decorated Christmas trees, 2,700 lights on the central Blue Room tree, 843 fancy bows and countless hand-crafted ornaments. Plus, a chandelier dripping with gilded holly, golden swags, silver icicles, golden garlands and silvery bows. And similarly draped grapevine angels tooting their horns before each of the East Room's four mirrors.

This is a wow. It is the most elegantly dressed-up Christmas White House in my memory, although the decorations there always are spectacular. You cannot try to duplicate them at home.

This year's display is pure fantasy in every sense. The atmosphere is magical and serene.

On the public floors of the White House, outside reality dare not intrude. The holiday social cocoon is impenetrable.

What life is like in the off-limits upstairs family quarters or in the his-and-hers offices is strictly private. We cannot know about that. The Clintons are practiced at compartmentalizing. They never let their opponents see them cry.

Composed and smiling, the first lady showed reporters the cheerful seasonal transformation Monday, revealing nothing more serious than a minor struggle to keep their dog, Buddy, away from the tempting gingerbread castle in the State Dining Room. Blandly, she said she hoped the White House parties and special events would be "as beautiful and welcoming and hospitable as they always have been."

- More -

The Plain Dealer, December 9, 1998

That evening, the Clintons were hosting their annual Christmas party for Congress, a bipartisan affair that included some Republicans panting to impeach the president. The parties for other groups and even the press also will go on as usual.

She had barely finished her tour when her husband's press secretary, Joe Lockhart, began in a nearby undecorated room to explain to other reporters how President Bill Clinton's lawyers intended to defend him before the House Judiciary Committee.

This could be the most dangerous period of the Clinton presidency, with only a few days left of final impeachment arguments before a committee vote at the end of the week. It is not inconceivable - although not likely - that this could be their last Christmas as occupants of the White House.

Yet it is the symbolic burden of the president and his wife to carry on in public as though all is well, no matter how trying the moment, how ominous the future. Only in this way does the republic, and the White House, endure. We cannot be strong if our presidents are weak.

That the Clintons are so skilled at keeping what the British call a stiff upper lip is one of the reasons the public still gives them both high marks for performance and does not want to see him kicked out of office.

What a difference a year makes. At last year's Christmas celebration, Clinton was as strong and popular politically as he had ever been. The Paula Jones suit was chaotic and stalled, independent counsel Kenneth Starr had been unable to produce an indictment in the Whitewater probe that reached into the White House, and Clinton had pulled off a widely hailed balanced-budget deal in Congress.

He could not run again, which made him a lame duck vulnerable to defiance from various political rivals. But he seemed comfortably positioned to maximize the remaining three years of his second term in productive ways.

We learned of Monica Lewinsky the following month. And that was that for the year 1998.

But Clinton is not the only president forced to soldier on through the Christmas holidays with a smiling face and heavy heart.

In 1990, President and Mrs. George Bush celebrated with outward normality, although between their joyful holiday rounds the president was weighing whether to go to war. One month later, on Jan. 16, he opted to attack Iraq's Saddam Hussein for invading Kuwait, mounting a risky military confrontation that had won Senate approval by only five votes.

Then, as now, the mood in Washington beyond the White House was one of tension, partisan suspicion and a mounting sense that the president was a flawed link in the majestic sweep of history.

History, however, takes care of itself. In the meantime, a temporary holiday spirit of peace and good will is a good thing.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

The Fresno Bee

December 9, 1998, HOME EDITION

SECTION: TELEGRAPH, Pg. A2, PEOPLE -- QUOTE OF THE DAY

LENGTH: 904 words

HEADLINE: White House decks the halls

BYLINE: Bee News Services

BODY:

For the holidays, the White House has been transformed into a "winter wonderland," a shimmering excess of silver and gold garlands and swags, with white birch trees twinkling with lights and walls drenched in glitter.

"When we picked this theme, we couldn't have imagined this would be the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said Monday, referring to the unseasonable temperatures licking up against wreathed windows.

She did not mention that she couldn't have known that holiday jingle would collide with impeachment jangle, but she didn't need to: Many in the crowd of nearly 100 reporters came to see how the first lady was bearing up in these least festive of times and murmured to themselves about the surreal nature of it all.

But the show goes on, the gingerbread house must be admired, as well as decorator Robert Isabell's incredible gilded vision. And the brilliant Hillary smile is at the ready. The White House throws open its doors to welcome about 10,000 guests in more than a dozen receptions over the next few weeks.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 8, 1998, METRO FINAL

SECTION: MAIN NEWS; Pg. A2

LENGTH: 282 words

HEADLINE: DECKING THE HALLS IN D.C.

BYLINE: Deborah G. Guadan, from Bee news services

BODY:

The mood might be chilly on Capitol Hill, but at the White House the holiday decorations are top news, with frosted birch trees in the Grand Foyer and sugar-coated likenesses of Buddy and Socks ice-skating in the State Dining Room.

"Winter wonderland" is the theme chosen by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and brought to life by the artistically inclined from across the nation who designed their ver-sions of snowmen for the 18 1/2-foot balsam fir Christmas tree that stands in the center of the Blue Room, sparkling with 2,700 lights.

President Clinton and the first lady are hosting a series of Christmas parties in the White House, starting with Monday evening's annual Congressional Ball for the 535 members of Congress.

The centerpiece of the White House's winter wonderland is the Blue Room tree, which was donated by Jim and Diane Chapman of the Silent Night Evergreens tree farm in Endeavor, Wis. Its branches are stuff-ed with lights, strings of small silver balls, colorfully painted wooden ornaments and miniature snowmen from all 50 states.

Also hanging from the tree are knitted mittens and hats made by Knitting Build of America members. The tree's green velvet skirt has individual quilted panels designed by artisans from all 50 states.

Conspicuous in the collection of holiday decorations are the first family's pets, Buddy the brown Labrador and Socks the cat. They are featured in an elaborate gingerbread castle crafted from 100 pounds of gingerbread dough, 20 pounds of icing and 30 pounds of chocolate in the center of the State Dining Room. Edible likenesses of the pets also stand on either side of the castle, ice skates strapped to their paws.

GRAPHIC: Associated Press photograph

The White House's holiday decorations wouldn't have that same dash of esprit with-out an appearance from first pets Buddy and Socks with skates strapped to their paws. They are part of an elaborate gingerbread castle in the State Dining Room. And if all goes well, the real-life pets won't get a chance to munch on their gingerbread counterparts, at least before Christmas.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 9, 1998

December 2, 1998, Wednesday, ALL EDITIONS

SECTION: Front, Pg. 2A

HEADLINE: WISCONSIN TREE ARRIVES

GRAPHIC: Associated Press

'When you think about this weather, it's a little hard to get into the Christmas spirit,' says Hillary Rodham Clinton, a comment on Washington's summer-like weather on the first day of December. But the arrival Tuesday of the 18 1/2 -foot White House Christmas tree will help, according to the first lady. Joining her were James and Diane Chapman, who grew the winning balsam fir at their Silent Night Evergreens Farm in Endeavor, Wis. The tree will be placed in the Blue Room.

LOAD-DATE: December 03, 1998

December 2, 1998, Wednesday, THREE STAR EDITION

SECTION: MAIN, Pg. A2

LENGTH: 265 words

HEADLINE: White House welcomes Christmas tree

BODY:

The kids singing ''Jingle Bells'' on the White House steps wore furry red caps and short-sleeve shirts. Santa Claus broke a sweat over his thick white beard. And for Hillary Rodham Clinton, it just didn't feel like the Christmas season.

An improbably warm, summerlike sun greeted the 18-foot White House Christmas tree Tuesday as it rolled up to the South Portico on a horse-drawn carriage.

''When you think about this weather, it's a little hard to get into the Christmas spirit. Except that I think it'll start building here at the White House,'' the First Lady said.

She was joined by James and Diane Chapman -- who grew the winning balsam fir at their Silent Night Evergreens Farm in Endeavor, Wisc. -- as well as two dozen local schoolchildren in the Mann-Murch Chorus, and a fully costumed Santa.

The White House will be shuttered this weekend, the First Lady said, as teams of volunteers ''with a Santa's-workshop feeling'' scurry to finish the mansion's elaborate holiday decorations by midnight Saturday, including the main tree in the Blue Oval Room.

It will take much longer for the Clinton family to dress the tree -- also donated by the Chapmans -- in the Yellow Oval Room of their personal living quarters.

''It takes us a long time, because we have to take out every ornament and say, 'Awww, remember this ornament?' And, 'No, don't put it there; put it somewhere else.'''

''We decorate over three to four days. It's one of the things we do together as a family. Then, as friends and family come in they all get to kibitz and add to it,'' she said.

LOAD-DATE: December 3, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 6, 1998, SUNDAY, FINAL EDITION

SECTION: APPEAL, Pg. F2

LENGTH: 733 words

HEADLINE: WHITE HOUSE HOLIDAY DECOR MAY DISAPPOINT

BYLINE: Naedine Joy Hazell The Hartford Courant

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

If you've always longed to see the White House decorated for Christmas, then by all means, go.

But empty your mind of visions of sugarplums.

It's not that the White House isn't pretty during the holidays. It is.

It's not that you won't feel Christmasy. You will.

It's just that you might expect more than you'll get, considering that you (or someone who loves you) will have waited an hour or more in the chilly predawn darkness for your free ticket.

And you might expect more, considering that even though you'll get the ticket early, you won't be able to use it until sometime between 10 a.m. and noon.

And, even then, after all that waiting around, the entire White House tour will only take about 30 minutes, even if you dawdle.

We're talking a handful of pretty rooms with about a dozen gaily decorated Christmas trees. That's it. And you don't even get to take pictures.

Now, you might admire this kind of decorating restraint and class if it were your neighbor's house, but somehow people seem to want more, expect more, from the first family.

Last year, the Green Room and the Red Room barely qualified as decorated because the only holiday items were foot-tall displays on the mantlepieces. Cute displays, to be sure - one of nighttime in Santa's village and another of Santa's workshop on Dec. 23 - but nothing that would give Martha sweaty palms.

Now before you get testy, understand that there's a good reason for this functionality.

The White House is not a showcase. It's a place of government business, and its few public rooms are in near-constant use to entertain visiting heads of state, celebrities and honored Americans. That does not leave much room for elaborate decorations, especially anything that couldn't be moved to make room for, say, a dinner for 100 people.

Despite these logistical restrictions, the White House is open to the public five days a week, making it the only residence of a head of state that is open to visitors so often. About 1 million people a year go through.

During the holidays, the biggest attractions are the East Room, the Blue Room and the State Dining Room.

The East Room is the largest in the White House and is used for receptions, ceremonies, press conferences and other events, but during the holidays it's dominated by six oversize Christmas trees. The trees, decorated in gold glitter balls and burgundy ribbons, flank an antique creche created in 18th Century Italy.

The oval Blue Room is dominated by the official White House Christmas tree, which takes up much of the room. Last year, the 18-foot-tall tree was decorated with ornaments contributed by special groups and people invited to donate them.

The green velvet handmade tree skirt was designed by individuals from each of the 50 states, territories and the District of Columbia, and the Clintons have had it since their first Christmas in the White House. It has a sweet, homespun look that probably would look out of place in any other home of a head of state.

A maroon-and-green checked tablecloth covered the table in the state Dining Room, topped by 3-foot tall candles, child-tall angels created from dried grapevines and mauve Christmas balls last year. On a side table was the annual gingerbread house created by White House pastry chefs. It was Santa's Victorian house and workshop. Santa was on a cell phone.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

- More -

The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN), December 6, 1998

One way to liven up your visit is to spend time in the White House Visitors Center, a few blocks from the big house. You must go there for tickets anyway, so take some time to watch the 30-minute video and see the displays.

Visitors learn lots of interesting history about the White House and get some behind-the-scenes looks at the most famous house in America.

So, while the White House for the holidays is probably not worth a special trip alone, if you are in town, stop by after Thanksgiving (the decorations usually go up during that long weekend). They have the welcome mat out from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday to Saturday. A limited number of tickets are issued on a first-come, first-served basis starting at 7:30 a.m. at the White House Visitors Center, which accounts for the early-morning lines outside. Also, be prepared for airport-like security before you're allowed into the White House.

Because special events might make it necessary to cancel public visits, call ahead at (202) 208-1631.

LOAD-DATE: December 8, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 10, 1998, Thursday, Final Edition

SECTION: HOME; Pg. T04; HAPPENINGS

LENGTH: 672 words

HEADLINE: CAPITAL ORNAMENTS

BYLINE: Sarah Booth Conroy

BODY:

Decking the tree with history is a handsome way to have a White House Christmas without having to be elected or invited.

The White House Historical Association captures presidential history through its series of three-inch square ornaments, traditionally hung on the Blue Room tree. Based on research by White House curator Betty Monkman and historian William Seale, the collectibles number 18. Presidential families give them as presents, and collectors snap up each year's new trimming at \$ 11 and \$ 14. (Proceeds go to acquire historic furnishings and art for the White House permanent collection and to preserve its public rooms.)

The ornaments honoring the presidents are mostly chronological, interspersed by historic events. Fifteen commemorate specific presidents. This year, a white bisque American eagle flies over a Union shield insignia from crystal dinnerware bought by President Andrew Jackson, used later President James Buchanan. The 24-karat gold-finished wreath blooms with white magnolias and pink camellias, a design suggested by Harriet Lane, Jackson's niece and hostess. She was fond of turning the White House into an indoor garden with camellias embellishing magnolia blossoms from a tree planted by Jackson still flourishing in the White House garden.

This is the second design related to Jackson. The 1988 decoration was inspired by an invitation about 150 years ago: "The children of President Jackson's Family request you to join them on Christmas Day at 4 p.m. in a frolick in the East Room."

The nonprofit historical association produced its first decoration in 1981, a Christmas angel in flight honoring George Washington. The 1983 ornament shows the White House's north facade, without wings, as John and Abigail Adams, its first occupants, saw it when they rode into Washington on Nov. 1, 1800. Their son, John Quincy Adams, is recalled on the 1987 design taken from the sandstone portal and double mahogany White House doors, adorned with evergreen wreaths and red poinsettias.

William Henry Harrison, in full military regalia topped with a plumed headpiece, rides across the 1991 ornament. Millard Fillmore designed the 31-star seal superimposed over the north portico on the 1996 ornament.

Thomas Jefferson in 1803, Seale says, was the first to celebrate Christmas in the house. The 1984 ornament Peace symbols--crossed peace pipes and handshakes--is based on Jefferson's peace medal, minted in 1801 to be presented to Indian dignitaries.

The 1992 edition marks the bicentennial of the White House cornerstone-laying; the 1989 one marks the bicentennial of the office of the president.

Call 800-555-2451 to order.

Sarah Booth Conroy writes the Chronicles column in Style. "Ulysses S. Grant Claus." Flag needlepoint pillow, from Decatur House. \$ 10.50. 202-842-1856 1998 White House ornament. \$ 14. 800-555-2451 Lincoln Memorial, from National Building Museum. \$ 22. 202-272-7706. Limited edition Supreme Court ornament with red velvet from the courtroom's original draperies. \$ 21.95. 202-554-8300. George Washington "Epaulet" ornament commemorating the bicentennial of his death. Mount Vernon. \$ 16.50. 703-799-6301. Robert E. Lee Claus, carved mantel Santa from the South Pole, to pair or not with Ulysses S. Claus from up North, lower left. U.S. Capitol Historical Society. \$ 36. 800-887-9318. Smithsonian Castle ornament. At shops in the Museum of American History (202-357-1528) and the Museum of Arts and Industry (202-357-1367). \$ 10.95. Washington Monument ornament. American Institute of Architects/Rizzoli bookstore. \$ 34.99. 202-626-7541. Marble Capitol ornament made from the original East Front steps of the House of Representatives. \$ 19.95 from U.S. Capitol Historical Society. 800-887-9318. Kennedy Center "Honors Star" blown-glass ornament by Christopher Radko. \$ 35; 202-416-8346. Decatur House Museum White House. \$ 33. 202-842-1856. Washington Capitol, from American Institute of Architects/Rizzoli bookstore. \$ 39.99. 202-626-7541.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD DATE: December 10, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

December 20, 1998, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Real Estate; Part K; Page 1; Real Estate Desk

LENGTH: 1189 words

HEADLINE: HOT PROPERTY;

HIS ELVES ARE LIKE NO OTHERS;

In a Yuletide departure for "Hot Property," this week's column looks at how several celebrities are decking their halls and homes for the holidays.

BYLINE: RUTH RYON, TIMES STAFF WRITER

BODY:

Even as they were in the Middle East last week, Hillary and Bill Clinton were planning to spend a couple of days after they return decorating the Christmas tree in the first family's quarters of the White House.

It takes them that long because they like to reminisce over every ornament, which they have collected since they were married in 1975, said Julie Mason, the first lady's deputy press secretary. "They decorate the tree all themselves," she added, "and because they have been collecting ornaments for so long, the tree really gets weighted down."

The Clintons' tree is a 14-foot Fraser fir. The tree was donated by the same Wisconsin tree farm that gave the White House its official Christmas tree, an 18 1/2-foot balsam fir that sits in the Blue Room. There are 18 Christmas trees in the White House and 10 on the grounds.

Decorations in the first family's quarters were described as traditional, with many garlands and poinsettias. The rest of the White House is decorated in the white, silver and gold "Winter Wonderland" theme chosen by Hillary Clinton in June.

Among the official decorations is a gingerbread house in the State Dining Room. The edible castle, with towers and bridges, has miniature versions of Socks and Buddy, the Clintons' pets.

And in recognition of Hanukkah, the White House has a handmade brass menorah on display in the West Wing lobby. The menorah is on loan from the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving Jewish homestead in North America.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: December 20, 1998



Christmas tale

President Clinton reads "A Visit from Saint Nick" — to the delight of Nanna Chen, 8, and other children from the District. Mr. Clinton read the story at the White House as Hillary Rodham Clinton looked on.

USA

*White House pastry chef creates
sweet memories that last a lifetime.*

Just desserts for the president

By James N. Thurman

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON - There are few pots in Washington this holiday season that aren't boiling over with impeachment news and scandal speculation.

But in a quiet corner of the White House, just a stone's throw from the Oval Office, a rarefied holiday air reigns supreme.

It's found here in the kitchen of White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier, where Christmas delicacies are imagined and prepared from one presidency to the next. A sort of holiday pilot light, Chef Mesnier ignites this time of year as an undaunted spirit of Christmas, no matter who's in the Oval Office or what political currents swirl outside.

"It's very special here," smiles Mesnier, attired in chef garb and white clogs. While he does not forbid talk of current events in his kitchen, the veteran chef, who has served four presidents from both political parties, is more intent on preserving the one-of-a-kind experience visitors receive when invited to the White House - especially the thousands fortunate enough to be invited during the holidays.

"You should see this place at Christmas," he says, adding that preparations for the winter celebration actually begin back when the jonquils are blooming.

"Right after Easter, we start cooking and planning for Christmas. That's when I begin making a thousand pounds of fruitcake," Mesnier says, offering a slice.

Cranking out cookies

Each year Mesnier cranks out tens of thousands of macaroons and leckerle, linzer cookies and chocolate truffles, not to mention the legion of gingerbread men - each individually decorated. There are hundreds of buch de Noel logs and dozens of loaves of panettone.

According to the White House, Mesnier will use 500 pounds of sugar and 300 pounds of chocolate in making tens of thousands of cookies and bite-sized pieces of confectionery, proudly presented to guests.

Many invited to holiday events can be seen slipping one of these cookies, delicately wrapped in a White House napkin, into a coat pocket or purse for someone back home.

"You want them to know it came from the White House," the pastry chef says, "and that it's special."

Mesnier was somewhat overwhelmed to learn that his first interview for the White House job in 1979 would be with the first lady herself, then Rosalyn Carter. Even

more unnerving - a state dinner for Margaret Thatcher was under way that very day. To hear Mesnier describe it, it was like interviewing for a quarterback job the day of the Super Bowl.

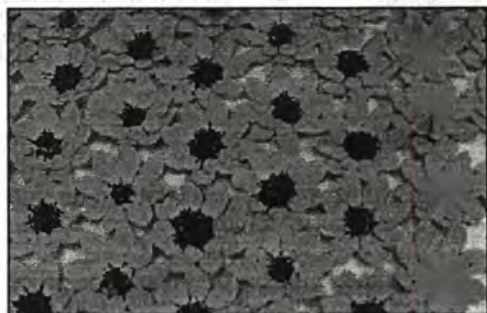
In the years since, he has continued the White House's standard of quality, insisting everything be made in-house by expert hands.

Remarkably fit given his vocation, Mesnier exudes the quiet confidence of a clean-shaven Sean Connery. The French native, one of nine children, has come a long way from his quaint village of 120 people to uphold a White House tradition.

"There have always been French pastry chefs," says William Seale, author of "The President's House" and a White House historian. "Most of them became preeminent

as a result."

Fourth US President James Madison, Mr. Seale explains, enjoyed the efforts of Jean-Pierre Sioussat, nicknamed "French John." This French chef was known for creating and rushing frozen-on-the-inside, hot-on-the-outside pastries up backstairs before



they melted.

Mesnier has, in fact, achieved a preeminent status in his field, not only for his holiday creations but for his indefatigable efforts throughout the year.

His desserts, wheeled out during official state dinners, are highly anticipated Washington events. Mesnier carefully researches the background of each visiting head of state and then incorporates a national and personal theme in his creations.

"We listen carefully when the desserts go in, to the sounds of the voices and the laughter," he beams. "[Desserts] are like the fireworks."

Doing his pastry homework

Before a recent state dinner for Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, Mesnier did his homework. He learned the leader's home town of Bologna is also home to a large twin tower. So the pastry chef crafted more than a dozen sets of the towers from confection and chestnut ice cream - Prime Minister Prodi's favorite. They were a huge success.

Evidenced by the fact that none of the towers began leaning, it's apparent Mesnier has learned much about engineering over the years, including the delicate architecture involved in making the traditional gingerbread house centerpieces displayed in the State Dining Room.

This year's gingerbread house, a castle really, is built from 40 pounds of chocolate and 90 pounds of gingerbread, complete with towers and bridges. It's surrounded by an edible forest and inhabited by Santa's clan and confectionery versions of first pets Socks and Buddy.

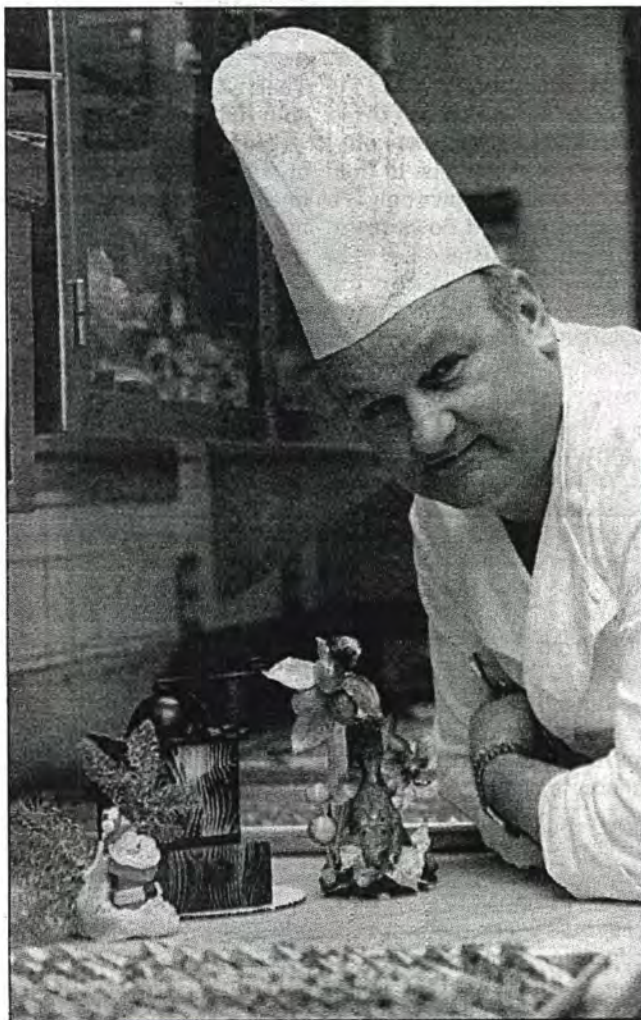
All of Mesnier's work is done in an impossibly small workspace, which he customized to his liking. He measured every inch, placing ovens and refrigerated counters to optimize the tiny space.

Nevertheless, the brightly lit, immaculate kitchen reflects Mesnier's positive work-with-what-you-have attitude.

"To be creative, you have to be happy," he winks. "If I am unhappy or grumpy, then the people who work for me are. It's not a way to spend your very good days."

That philosophy has created for Mesnier a reputation that flies in the face of the temperamental, rolling-pin wielding chef who screams when the cookies burn. It's also earned a genuine affection from those he's touched.

"He's in a league of his own," says Dan Michel, pastry chef at the Monarch Hotel in Washington. "He's a nice and humble person in a league of his own, and he likes to help bring people along with him."



PHOTOS BY ANDY NELSON - STAFF

FEAST FOR THE EYES: White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier is charged with creating thousands of memorable delicacies (like those above) for White House events. He is kept especially busy during the holiday season, and begins planning for it in April.

*By Annie Groer and Ann Gerhart***Take My Husband. Please!**

■ You're the boss and guest of honor at the office Christmas party. But you've pulled a muscle in your back and need to take it easy.

What to do? Send the husband alone, of course.

Thus **President Clinton** arrived at the home of **Melanne Verveer**, **Hillary Rodham Clinton's** chief of staff, for Hillaryland's annual Christmas fete Monday night. (Earlier in the evening, he briefly appeared in a jammed tent outside the White House to welcome 4,000 newsies, their kids and kin to enjoy cookies, gingerbread and live clowns.)

"She aggravated a back muscle that she injured earlier in the year by climbing a bunch of stairs late last week," said the first lady's spokeswoman, **Marsha Berry**. "She's trying to stay off her feet when she can."

Clinton's staff sang to her by phone and sent over her holiday gift of ski togs. The president, no doubt grateful to be among friends, stayed about two hours.



Clinton, recuperating.

FILE PHOTO

6A · WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998 · USA TODAY

CLINTONS' CHRISTMAS: President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton plan to spend Christmas at the White House with family members, spokesman Joe Lockhart said. The Clintons will make their annual trip to the Renaissance Weekend in Hilton Head, S.C., on Dec. 30, and return to Washington on New Year's Day. Hillary Clinton is trying to stay off her feet this holiday season because she aggravated a back muscle she injured in the spring, aides said. The first lady moved slowly but showed no apparent discomfort Tuesday as she and the president read a holiday story to children at the White House.

— Bill Nichols

www.usatoday.com



Life

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1998

The Clintons deliver 'Winter Wonderland'

By Katy Kelly
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — It was an unseasonable 76 degrees here Monday as Hillary Rodham Clinton unveiled Christmas '98 at the White House: "Winter Wonderland."

"When we picked that theme last spring, I'm not sure we could have imagined that we'd have the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," she said.

The first lady also showed off the 1998 White House Christmas card. Painted by noted artist Ray Ellis, it depicts the newly redecorated State Dining Room with table set for a holiday dinner.

At first, Ellis didn't take the White House call seriously. "I thought it was my kid brother

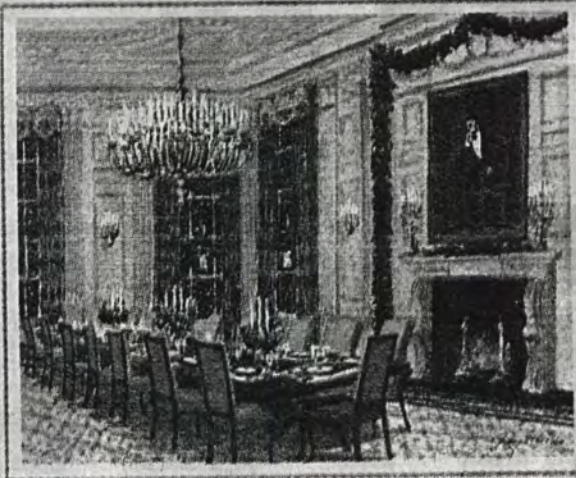
calling," the artist said.

Once convinced, he visited 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. and saw the room, which was still being redecorated. He painted the card to match expectations.

The message inside: "May peace and joy be yours at the holiday season and through-

out the year."

The White House is festooned with 720 lengths of garland and 344 wreaths. Hot designer Robert Isabell dreamed up the 18 gold-and-silver faux trees and the 14-foot gold-and-silver wreath that hangs from the ceiling in the East Room.



THE WHITE HOUSE, THE STATE DINING ROOM, 1998

Waiting at the White House Is No Holiday

Visitors Endure Outside Cold To Be Able to See Inside Glow

By PAMELA CONSTABLE
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sophie Sawatzki said she wanted her sons to feel "neighborly" with the Clinton family at Christmas. Standing in the chilly, three-hour line yesterday for the annual Christmas Candlelight Tour of the White House, the 40-year-old Northwest Washington mom kept Atticus, 5, and Augustus, 4, distracted with candied popcorn.

Paul Toombs, 55, a bartender from Arlington and a serious aficionado of first family Christmases, said he hoped for something between the "elegant and splashy" decor of the Reagan era and the "homey" holiday look of the Bush White House.

Mary King, 76, who had left Clinton, N.C., in a van at dawn, kept her muffler wrapped tightly around her face and hoped the wait was worth it. "At least it's not snowing," she said. "And I've heard it's like a real wonderland inside."

These hardy souls joined thousands of people, including tourists from as far away as South Africa, who spent the afternoon in line outside the executive mansion waiting for a glimpse of holiday magic. They sipped coffee from thermoses, walked in circles to keep their feet warm and made new



Sophie Sawatzki and keeps sons Atticus, 5, and Augustus, 4, busy while waiting for the Christmas Candlelight Tour.

friends in the fast-fading light.

Some had never been to Washington before; one or two claimed not to have missed a Christmas Candlelight Tour since 1969, when first lady Pat Nixon established the tradition of a free evening stroll through the public rooms of the White House, twinkling with lights and decorated with a different theme each year.

"It's kind of a crazy day, but almost everyone is in a

See TOUR, B5, Col. 4



At the White House, visitors stand in a three-hour line for the chance to see the Christmas decorations by flickering light.

Waiting for White House Twilight Tour

TOUR, From B1

good mood," said Phil Walsh, a National Park Service ranger monitoring the line. "They wait a long time in the rain or the snow, but they still say, 'Merry Christmas.'" Walsh said he expected 4,000 to 6,000 visitors would make it into the White House between 5 and 7 p.m. yesterday. The tour also is offered today and tomorrow.

In the line, there were numerous remarks about President Clinton's current woes; some ribald, but almost all generous of spirit. Several people wondered whether they would get a glimpse of Monica S. Lewinsky or imagined what holiday greeting they might offer Clinton if they bumped into him.

"His morals are not too good, but he's been a good president," said King, as her two sisters nodded. "If I saw him in there, I'd say, 'Merry Christmas, Bill, why'd you mess up?'"

Dagmar Painter, 48, a dealer of antique textiles from Falls Church, expressed a feeling shared by a number of people in line: that the majesty of the White House in holiday regalia could not be tarnished by the problems of its current occupant.

"This building will last longer than any particular president, and it is always very festive at Christmas," she said.

Among the few children in line, there was particular interest in the possibility of glimpsing Socks or Buddy, the first pets.

And for some visitors, the chance to see the glittering White House was far less important than being reunited with loved ones for a few days. Carlotta Burt, of Arlington, Tex., beamed as she clung to her son Casey, 19, who recently joined the Army and was assigned to Fort Myer.

"They said he couldn't come

home for Christmas, so we decided to come here and be with him," she said. "It's his first Christmas away from home."

Once 5 p.m. arrived and the White House security men began motioning visitors inside, conversation faded and anticipation rose. Guides offered brochures describing the 18th-century carved crèche in the East Room, the 18-foot balsam fir tree in the Blue Room and the North Pole scene in the Red Room.

First allowed in was a group of 25 senior citizens from a Baptist church in Largo. Their eyes lit up as they tiptoed past the gold-ribboned trees, the garlands and wreaths, the white lights flickering on graceful bare branches.

A lively flute melody filled the air.

Outside, in the cold and the dark, thousands more waited for the fantasy to begin.

The Washington Post
METRO
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE

THE GRAND TOUR:

Parts of the ground floor and second story are open to non-staff visitors who enter on the east side and proceed on a guided tour through the library, then climb the stairs to the state floor to view four staterooms and the State Dining Room.

East Room*: Seven presidents have lain in state here. Traditionally used for large ceremonies.

Red Room*:

Graceful sitting parlor occasionally used for small dinner parties.

State Dining Room*:

Sparkling, golden-hued room seats up to 140 guests.

Other rooms:

- A. South Portico
- B. Family Dining Room
- C. Cross Hall*
- D. Entrance Hall*
- E. Library
- F. Vermeil Room
- G. China Room
- H. Diplomatic Reception Room
- I. Map Room
- J. Blue Room*

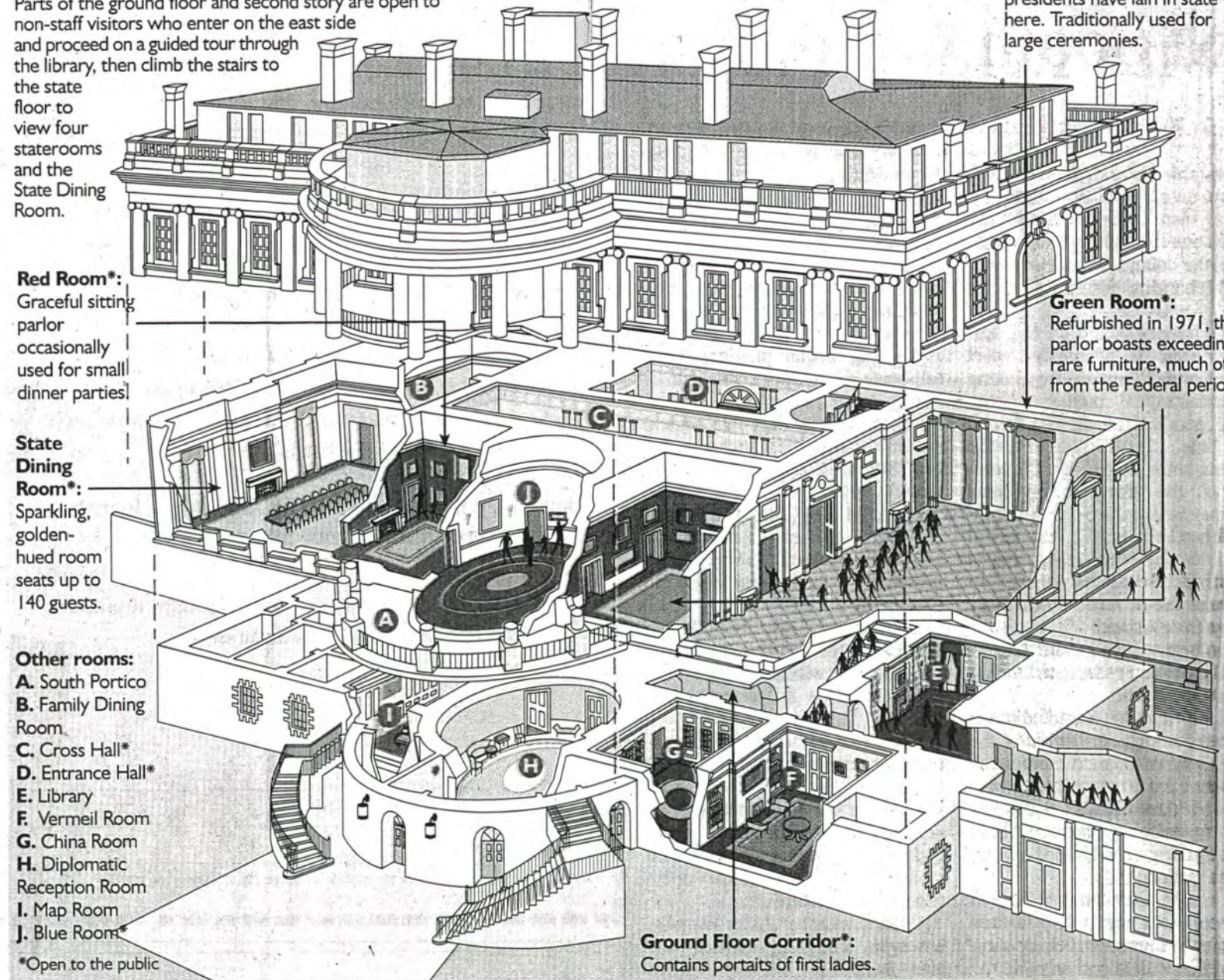
*Open to the public

Green Room*:

Refurbished in 1971, the parlor boasts exceedingly rare furniture, much of it from the Federal period.

Ground Floor Corridor*:

Contains portraits of first ladies.



White House: Every family adds tree, bloom

► Continued from C1

National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, 52, is in charge of the security briefing. A longtime friend, he met Clinton when both worked on George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign.

The briefing takes place beneath the embossed presidential seal on the white ceiling of the Oval Office. Behind Clinton's desk, a table displays pictures of his wife and his daughter, Chelsea, and his collection of political campaign buttons. On his desk are busts of FDR and Harry Truman. On the floor nearby are an African drum and a drum made by Native Americans to commemorate the North American Free Trade Agreement — showing the shared American Indian heritage of Mexico, the United States and Canada.

A rocking chair sits in the adjoining private study. The president's computer is there, too, connected to the Internet — though aides won't say whether Clinton ever surfs through cyberspace. There is no TV.

From her adjoining office, Nancy Hernreich helps keep Clinton on schedule. As director of Oval Office operations, Hernreich, 52, is one of the "meanies" whom Monica Lewinsky complained was trying to keep her away from the president. A longtime loyalist, she was Clinton's scheduler in the Arkansas governor's office. Divorced and a diligent runner, Hernreich dotes on her daughter, Ashley, a student at Duke University.

Hernreich is the gatekeeper — regulating who gets in to see the president and, to some extent, when they leave. However, it is up to the president to decide when a meeting ends.

Phillip Caplan, assistant to the president and staff secretary, manages the flow of presidential paperwork — moving color-coded binders on and off Clinton's desk. Green for action. Pink for correspondence. Blue for information. Red for classified.

CULINARY CREATIVITY

By midmorning, White House kitchens are bustling. The holiday season is approaching, and 120,000 cookies and pieces of cake will be baked for a panoply of parties.

Chef Walter Scheib, an imposing figure nearly 7 feet tall from the top of his traditional toque to the toes of his shined shoes, is responsible for all meals served in the White House. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., Scheib was chef at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia when he was hired by Hillary Rodham Clinton in 1993.

The first lady was looking for an American cuisine chef with a light touch, and Scheib has worked hard at reducing the fat in the White House fare without sacrificing flavor, texture or

appearance. Cooking oil is kept in spray bottles, for instance, and misted onto pans rather than being poured or brushed.

Scheib, 43, grew up in the nearby suburb of Bethesda, Md., and remembers watching his mother cook the dishes Julia Child demonstrated on TV. His wife, Jean, also is a chef, and the two cooked together at the Boca Raton Resort and Club in Florida before moving on to the Greenbrier.

The first family pays for its own food, which Scheib orders from nearby wholesalers and from suppliers all around the nation. He searches for the best ingredients — buffalo milk mozzarella from upstate New York, Michigan blueberries, Virginia ham — and the nation's food merchants eagerly solicit his business.

Food bound for the White House is detoured to another facility, where it is checked by the Secret Service before being transported in secure trucks to Scheib's pantries, refrigerators and freezers. Scheib's staff includes two assistant chefs, a kitchen steward and two assistant stewards. For state dinners and other major events, this culinary force is augmented by chefs from local restaurants.

Cooking separately in a tiny kitchen jammed between the state floor and the family quarters is pastry chef Roland Mesnier and his longtime assistant, Franette McCulloch.

TOURISTS TEEM

Shortly after noon, the last of one day's 6,000 or so tourists — more than a million visit the White House each year — stops for a final photo of the North Portico before leaving the com-

Mesnier was born in a French village in 1944 on the day American soldiers liberated the community from Nazi occupation. At 14, he left school and began an apprenticeship at a village bakery. He created pastries in kitchens in Paris, London and Bermuda and was cooking at the Greenbrier in 1980 when Rosalynn Carter hired him for the White House.

Mesnier's themed desserts have become the sweet stuff of legend. At a luncheon for Egyptian officials, he created a pistachio mousse pyramid flanked by two edible palm trees and a marzipan camel. One Christmas, he made gingerbread and chocolate reproductions of the president's boyhood home in Hot Springs, Ark., and the suburban house where Hillary Rodham grew up in Park Ridge, Ill.

For Chelsea's 16th birthday, Mesnier decorated her cake with a replica of her new driver's license, complete with color photo, and a car with a license tag reading "Sweet 16."

"Sometimes, after 18 years, it's hard to come up with ideas," Mesnier said. "Two days before the birthday, I was driving to work listening to the radio and the announcer said, 'Chelsea will soon be getting her driver's license.' Then, boom! It hit me. Chocolate car and license."

pound and stepping onto the sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue. The mansion's ground floor and second story are part museum, open to visitors from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesdays through Saturdays. The busiest times are in the summer and December; the slowest are January and February.

Tourists enter on the east side and proceed through the library; the Vermeil Room, featuring portraits of recent first ladies; the China Room; the East Room, where presidential news conferences are held; the Green Room; the Blue Room, where the White House Christmas tree will be placed; the Red Room; and the State Dining Room.

Melinda Bates, 52, director of the Office of Tourism, is a longtime friend of Clinton's. She took him to his first Judy Collins concert in 1964. When Collins visited the White House three decades later, Clinton returned the favor by introducing Bates to the singer.

The White House is a trove of antiques, art and oddities. Original Norman Rockwell drawings adorn the walls of an out-of-the-way West Wing waiting area, for instance. In another reception area, a handsome clock made entirely of wood keeps visitors aware of the time. Historic portraits are everywhere. A photo on an end table shows Calvin Coolidge with the original Boston Celtics.

Curator Betty Monkman, who has worked at the White House for three decades, is responsible for displaying and maintaining the artifacts, furnishings and art.

A job whose title belies its importance is the social secre-

tary — responsible for every event inside the White House and on the grounds. From state dinners to the annual Easter Egg Roll, social secretary Capricia Marshall juggles VIPs and R.S.V.P.s and myriad details concerning protocol and logistics.

Three to 10 events take place every week at the White House. More than 60,000 people are entertained annually at official functions.

A Cleveland native and law school graduate, Marshall joined the Clinton presidential campaign in Ohio in 1991 and came to the White House as a special assistant to the first lady after Clinton's initial election. In 1997, at 33, she was appointed social secretary. Marshall made an immediate impact in her new post by posing in *Vogue* magazine wearing a backless Donna Karan gown.

MAIL FOR BUDDY, SOCKS

It's midafternoon, and Clinton is standing in a sunny Rose Garden promoting his proposals for health care. Irv Williams is concerned about reporters' stomping on the grass.

For more than four decades, chief horticulturist Williams has tended the trees, grass and shrubbery of the White House grounds.

The groundskeepers work for the National Park Service. Williams helped Jacqueline Kennedy redesign the First Lady's Garden, next to the formal Rose Garden, where speeches are given and treaties are signed.

Every first lady leaves her own special bloom in the garden — a peach-colored rose for Rosalynn Carter, a yellow rose for Betty Ford, red for Nancy Reagan.

Every president plants a tree on the grounds before leaving. The oldest surviving presidential trees are three magnolias given root by Andrew Jackson. Clinton has planted several trees, including an American elm, a willow oak and a linden.

The gently rolling South Lawn, brightened by flower beds and partly shielded by trees, is the first family's backyard.

In the southwest corner are a tennis court and an outdoor pool. A short chip shot from the Oval Office is a putting green laid out by Dwight Eisenhower in 1954. It was removed in 1971 by Richard Nixon, who built a bowling alley in the White House basement. The green was reinstalled in 1995 by Clinton, who also added a padded jogging track around the South Lawn driveway and subtracted the horse-shoe pits dug by George Bush.

While the president is speaking in the sunshine, Dan Burkhardt is managing messages deep inside the Old Exec-

utive Office Building — a massive, foreboding gray building across West Executive Avenue from the West Wing. The prime parking spaces for key staffers are between the "EOB" and the West Wing.

A political appointee from California, Burkhardt is director of correspondence and presidential messages. The White House receives about 10,000 letters a day at the 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. mailing address.

These are sorted by subject and assigned to volunteers for replies. On a weekday, 100 to 250 volunteers are handling mail. The replies are checked by one of Burkhardt's 70 full-time staffers, who oversee everything from the processing of presidential gifts to responding to the 2,000 or so e-mails the president receives every day to handling incoming calls on 20 phone lines.

In addition to the EOB operation, there is an auxiliary White House mail room at the Soldiers and Airmen's Home near Capitol Hill. Military retirees process letters addressed to presidential pets — currently Socks the cat and Buddy the dog.

Many offices in the Old EOB are spacious, with high ceilings and fireplaces. They are not as eagerly sought as the cramped quarters in the West Wing; proximity to the president is prized above all other perks in the White House complex.

Aide Sidney Blumenthal's office, for instance, is a converted barbershop but is coveted by many because it is downstairs from the Oval Office.

The Old EOB houses the staffs of many top advisers whose offices are in the West Wing. It also has a bank, a post office, a cafeteria and a medical unit for staffers. In the main White House is another medical unit for the first family. On the bottom floor of the West Wing, senior staffers can dine in or carry out from the White House Mess, which is operated by Navy cooks.

FILMS FOR FIRST FAMILY

Around 7 p.m., Clinton walks down the colonnade, headed to the White House's top two floors, which are the home of the first family.

He has likened this lifestyle to the way average Americans lived in bygone decades: residing above their stores or on family farms, with their jobs and homes melded. Here, though, White House staffers zealously guard the upstairs private lives of presidential families.

Gary Walters, a discreet former Secret Service agent with the unimposing title of chief usher, is the supervisor of all who serve the first family in their home. With a staff of about 90 to direct and the ultimate

responsibility for everything from state dinners to overflowing toilets, Walters has filled this historically powerful post since 1986.

Eight chief ushers have served in the nearly 200-year history of the White House. The improbably named Ike Hoover served the longest — 42 years beginning in 1891 — and managed the care and comfort of 10 presidents and their families.

The Clintons are movie fans and regularly invite friends over for films in the 51-seat theater off the East Wing portico. Facing the screen are rows of four to six beige overstuffed armchairs — the rows rising in tiers toward the rear of the room. When the Clintons show movies, tables stocked with popcorn, soft drinks and other snacks are set up outside the theater.

Many nights, though, Clinton takes memos upstairs to read late into the night, aides say, working even as Susanna McGuire arrives to start another day in the life of the White House.

WHITE HOUSE WORK FORCE

A total of 1,500 people are employed in the Executive Office of the President — posts that range from seven speech writers to four physicians. About 400 work in the White House, including about 90 on the executive residence staff.

The full-time force is augmented by 1,010 volunteers who work at least 16 hours a month — mostly in the correspondence office. The Clinton administration says these volunteers save taxpayers about \$1.2 million in wages per year.

This year, about \$8.5 million is budgeted for care, heating and lighting of the historic residence and for official entertainment expenses of the president.

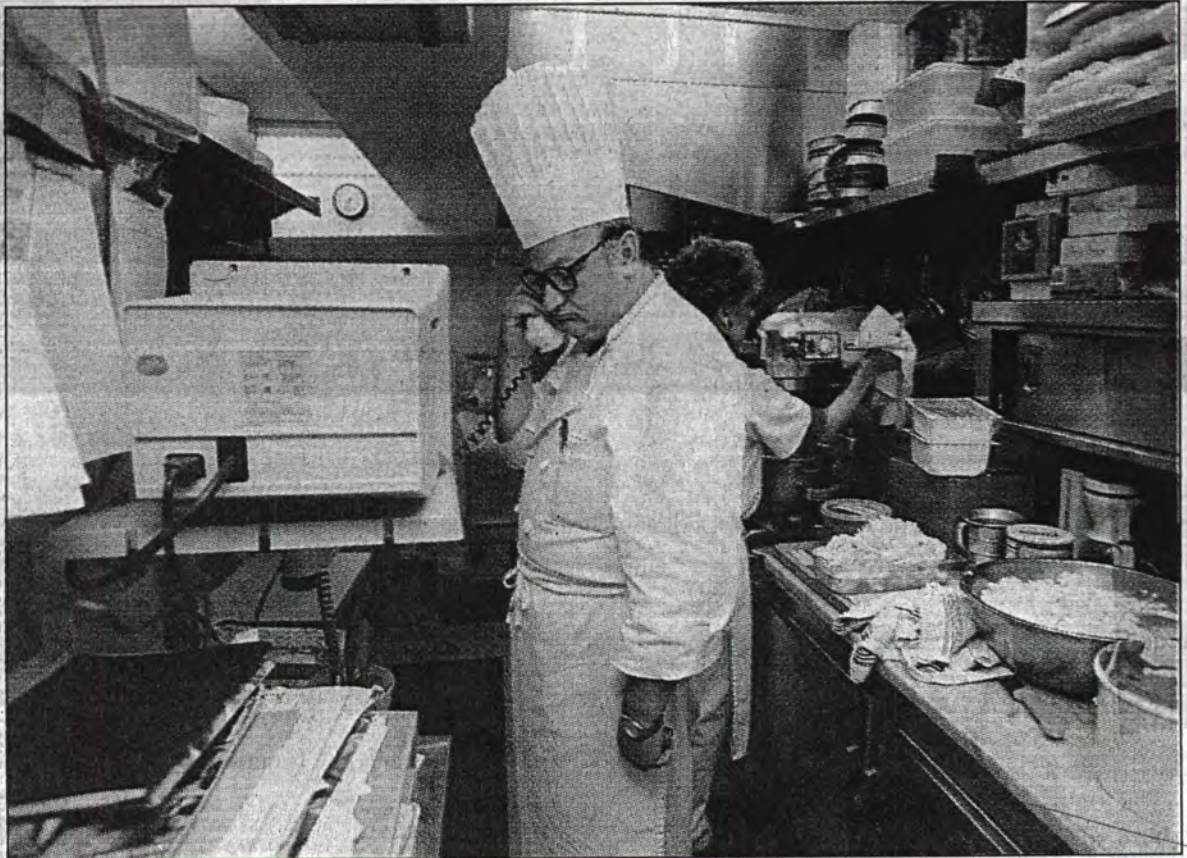
THE BIRTH OF THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

The presidential mansion, with its familiar columns and porticos, was designed by James Hoban, an Irish-born architect selected by George Washington. The cornerstone was laid Oct. 13, 1792. Eight years later, John Adams moved in, the first president to live there. Built of Virginia sandstone, the central mansion has six floors, including a basement and sub-basement, about 67,200 square feet of floor space, 132 rooms including 34 bathrooms, three mezzanines, 147 windows, 412 doors, 12 chimneys, three elevators, two dumbwaiters and seven staircases.

A WHITE (HOUSE) CHRISTMAS

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will unveil the 1998 Christmas theme and decorations at the White House on Monday, kicking off the traditional round of seasonal tours and parties at the presidential home.

During the following three weeks, about 15,000 guests will marvel at Christmas trees laden with 50,000 lights and handmade ornaments from across America.



RICK McKAY / Washington Bureau

Pastry chef Roland Mesnier labors to create new and different treats. A luncheon for Egyptian officials featured a pistachio mousse pyramid flanked by two edible palm trees and a marzipan camel. Chelsea's 16th birthday cake had a replica of her new driver's license, complete with color photo.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

[The Atlanta Journal Constitution - December 6, 1998]

The Washington Times

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WASHINGTON, D.C., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1998 ★★

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WHITE HOUSE WONDERLAND



Photo by Karen Ballard/The Washington Times

Announcing the White House's 1998 Christmas-decorations theme, "A Winter Wonderland," yesterday, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton finds figures of presidential pets Buddy and Socks amusing. Story, A4.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

'Winter Wonderland' arrives at White House

First lady introduces annual holiday-theme decor

By Ann Geracimos
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Holiday decor was officially presented yesterday at the White House, complete with Santa Claus in a red-and-white imitation fur-trimmed suit.

Given the day's temperatures, Santa might have been more comfortable in swimming trunks.

Following tradition, Hillary Rodham Clinton led a preview of the predominantly gold, silver and white effects that will be displayed in the mansion through the end of the month. The theme "A Winter Wonderland" was introduced by the first lady as "the only winter wonderland on the East Coast because of the weather this season."

Some 180,000 people are expected to visit on tours and for special events, with members of Congress invited last evening for the first of 15 formal parties. The Clintons, who are leaving soon on a trip to the Middle East, will not be attending all of them.

This year's highlights include a 600-pound, 14-foot wreath of golden dried ornamental objects and candles, created by New York designer Robert Isabell, suspended horizontally over a buffet table in the East Room. A 2,000-pound wreath of greens with blue lights hangs outdoors over the South Portico.

An 18½-foot fir from Wisconsin, the official White House Christmas tree touching the ceiling in the Blue Room, is decorated with interpretations of holiday snowmen made by individuals and groups from around the country. They include mittens and hats from members of the Knitting Guild of America, a sled from Las Vegas and an American Indian sculpture ornament from South Dakota.

Models of Socks and Buddy, the house pets, are featured in a spectacular turreted gingerbread castle that is the centerpiece of a tableau in a refurbished State Dining Room.

"They really do depict their personalities very well. Buddy is about to have an adventure and Socks, as usual, is in his own world," Mrs. Clinton noted. The two animals are shown twirling together amicably on either side of the structure and in smaller versions around the 150-pound house. A Santa Claus and his reindeer sleigh are rushing through the front gate.

Eighteen conical trees fill the East Room, where the focal point is an 18th century Italian-made creche that has been shown in the White House since 1967.

The Green and Red parlors, as well as the Grand Foyer, are decorated with delicate edible iridescent sugar sculptures from the hand of New York confectionery artist Co-



Photo by Karen Ballard/The Washington Times

The White House Christmas tree from Wisconsin features handmade ornaments from people all over the country.



AP

An array of ornaments decorate the 18-foot White House Christmas tree.

lette Peters, a former designer for Tiffany.

The 1998 White House greeting card is a painting of the State Dining Room by Ray Ellis, a resident of Martha's Vineyard, that Mrs. Clinton described as "a very warm card. I'm very fond of it."

The Washington Post
12/14/98

The President's Plans For Thursday Night? Rocking

■ By Thursday night, after the House will have conducted hours of impeachment debate, **President Clinton** may well want to lose himself at a feel-good holiday party.

Of course, if he'd rather slink off and sulk, too bad, because rank has its responsibilities and he and first lady **Hillary Rodham Clinton** are set to host a high-decibel, high-wattage gala marking the 30th anniversary of the Special Olympics.

Eric Clapton, Mary J. Blige, Sheryl Crow, Jon Bon Jovi, Run-DMC, Tracy Chapman and **Vanessa Williams** are all scheduled to sing Christmas songs in a giant heated pavilion—"don't call it a tent," instructs Hillary Clinton spokeswoman **Julie Mason**—on the South Lawn of the White House.

The 90-minute show will be emceed by **Whoopi Goldberg** and taped for broadcast Sunday night on Turner Network Television. TNT has been promoting the show on CNN, but the ads say only that it originates in Washington, not at the White House. (You can't mention the people's palace in a commercial.)

The Special Olympics program, founded in 1968 by **Eunice Kennedy Shriver**, provides training and sports competition for the mentally retarded around the world.

"She had a great interest in sports and in camps for children and young adults with retardation," said **Tim Shriver**, her son and Special Olympics president. "It was a tremendous novelty that these people who had been hushed up in institutions should be given a chance to swim and play kickball and compete."



FILE PHOTOS

Good sports: Eric Clapton and Tracy Chapman will play at the White House.





By Joel Rennich, AP

Going up: Workers erect the Capitol Christmas Tree on Monday. The lighting ceremony is next Tuesday.

Christmas trees spruce up D.C.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

A 50-foot-tall Fraser fir arrived on Capitol Hill from the Unaka Mountains of western North Carolina. The lighting ceremony is next Tuesday.

The National Christmas Tree, on the Ellipse south of the White House, will be topped today with a 42-inch ornamental star. Tipper Gore, wife of Vice President Gore, will ride in a hydraulic lift to put the ornament atop the live, 40-foot Colorado Blue Spruce that was planted on the Ellipse in 1978. The tree is adorned with more than 4,000 lights and traditionally is illuminated from dusk to midnight through New Year's Day.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will receive the White House Christmas tree today. It will be displayed in the Blue Room. This year, the tree comes from James and Diane Chapman of Endeavor, Wis. They won the annual National Christmas Tree Association contest to provide the ceremonial tree and two smaller ones for the Clinton family private quarters in the White House.

Written by Paul Leavitt with staff and wire reports

White House press party isn't what it used to be

By Andrea Stone
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — In this season of good cheer and impeachment, the White House is hosting nine holiday parties. President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton are shaking hands and posing for pictures with partygoers at eight of them.

But not Monday evening, when there was no receiving line for the White House press corps.

The Clintons made a quick stop. The president said a few words from the bandstand.

In the past, several smaller holiday parties for the news media were held in the State Dining Room and the East, Red, Green and Blue rooms, each decked out for the holidays. This year, there was one larger gathering, one of only two holiday parties being held on the South Lawn.

Press guests Monday visited the decorated rooms, then headed out to the tent for cookies and cakes.

The White House says the change from a fancy adult party in the state rooms to a more casual family "festival" with children was meant to repeat the fun of last summer's press picnic, which included a carnival.

"I don't blame the White House for wanting to minimize the amount of time spent with reporters who have been covering ... the impeachment story," says *Washington Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz. "It always seemed like cruel and unusual punishment for the president and Mrs. Clinton to have to stand through so many hours of forced smiles with journalists who want souvenir pictures."

Now that the president has been impeached, Kurtz says, "It's going to be awfully strange for media types to be yukking it up on the White House lawn just days later. In past years, some of the president's harshest journalistic critics have shown up and hit the buffet table, but this time around, it may be nothing short of surreal."

James Warren, Washington bureau chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, says smiling for pictures with the president would be "too bizarre." But he was going Monday, as were some USA TODAY staffers.



By Ron Edmonds, AP

Buddy and Socks ornament: The media got a close-up look at White House decorations.

"It might be almost foolish to turn down the opportunity to get a sense of what the guy looks like at a time when his presidency could conceivably be going down the tubes," Warren says.

CBS White House correspondent Bill Plante, who attended other fetes during the Reagan and Bush years, says there's no reason not to take children to see the executive mansion's festive decorations.

"It's still the White House," he says. "It's the people's house. It's not just theirs."

Still, some colleagues told Plante they weren't going to go to Monday's party because they didn't want to make small talk with the Clintons. But eliminating the receiving line, he says, "relieves them of the obligation to be nice to us."

Adds Steve Holland of Reuters News Service: "I'm not even sure the holiday spirit can overcome this."

By Ann Gerhart and Annie Groer

White House Braces for A Cold Spell

For the holidays, the White House has been transformed into a "winter wonderland," a shimmering excess of silver and gold garlands and swags, with white birch trees twinkling with lights and walls drenched in glitter.

"When we picked this theme, we couldn't have imagined this would be the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," first lady **Hillary Rodham Clinton** said yesterday, referring to the unseasonable temperatures licking up against wreathed windows. She did not mention that she couldn't have known that holiday jingle would collide with impeachment jangle, but she didn't need to: Many in the crowd of nearly 100 reporters came to see how the first lady was bearing up in these least festive of times and murmured to themselves about the surreal nature of it all.

But the show goes on, the gingerbread house must be admired, as well as decorator **Robert Isabell's** incredible gilded vision. And the brilliant Hillary smile is at the ready. The White House throws open its doors to welcome about 10,000 guests in more than a dozen receptions over the next few weeks. This year, **President Clinton** and the first lady will stand in fewer receiving lines and mingle more with their guests.



PHOTOS BY RON EDMONDS—ASSOCIATED PRESS

Warm wishes: Hillary Clinton with gingerbread house, and an ornament on the White House tree.

More than 1,200 members of Congress and staffers accepted the Clintons' invitation to the annual holiday party last night, where the official photographers were standing by.

"I have seen a wonderful mixture from both sides of the aisle," said White House social secretary **Capricia Marshall**. "I think quite a few people put partisan politics aside during the holidays."

Or at least they do while gorging on lamb chops and eggnog and getting their grip-and-grin photo op for the office fame wall.

"You'd be stunned at the biggest bashers who bring the whole family and want the picture," said a former White House official.





Howard Rosenberg
TELEVISION

Tuning In D.C. for the Holidaze

Wednesday morning. Like a bad TV movie with a predictable script, President Clinton's champions were in place, and the speech-making, rigidly partisan members of the House Judiciary Committee were on their way to making a public decision on impeachment that they had already made privately.

About the time a witness was exploring "substantiality vs. materiality" with the committee, and you were hoping Jack Kevorkian would arrive and put you out of your misery, Katie Couric was celebrating Christmas in the White House with Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

It was one of those surreal TV moments when realities clash and overlap.

While Los Angeles viewers of CNN, MSNBC, the Fox News Channel and C-SPAN watched Clinton's friends and foes debate impeachment, viewers of NBC saw a videotape of Couric, the first lady and the president engage in yule small talk as if the Republican drive to depose him over the Monica Lewinsky matter were occurring on Jupiter.

The nation's capital is a city where appearance matters, "Nightline" correspondent Chris Bury noted on ABC late Wednesday night. "The appearance of holiday cheer by a White House in peril. The appearance of debate by a committee that had already made up its mind."

This White House in peril?

"Today" viewers saw staffers and volunteers decking the halls like Santa's elves. They met the White House pastry chef and saw his gingerbread castle. They met the floral designer and the cake designer and her edible sculptures of sugar as part of a "winter wonderland" theme created by New York designer Robert Isabell.

Nearly everyone was present but Frosty the Snowman.

Then entered the stars of this production, the first couple.

"Are you all looking forward to the holidays?" Couric asked.

"Very much," Clinton replied. "Chelsea will be home pretty soon, and we always love it."

Couric wondered if they had big plans.

"Well," said Hillary Clinton, "our idea of a big holiday is to go

Please see Rosenberg, D28



NBC

As seen on "Today" show, all is cheerful at the White House with the president and Hillary Clinton.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Rosenberg

Continued from D1
nowhere and do nothing."

They have "a tree of our own on the second floor," she added. "And then our family starts coming in, and we've got these two little nephews who are just fabulous, and getting smarter and brighter every day and year. And so we just hang out. Y'know, we eat too much and hopefully sleep a little bit more to try to catch up on the year's deficit, and just have a good time together."

Bill and Hillary could have passed for Ozzie and Harriet.

It was another remarkable performance by two of TV's best actors in a city of actors, and an example of how even an embattled president—one who many in Congress hope will soon become an ex-president—can still command the camera.

Actually, Couric's White House chat with the president and first lady was taped last weekend when the Clintons were wearing formal attire and Hillary Clinton looked especially radiant in her black gown. And before ending it Couric did try twice gently to get the president to comment on the House Judiciary Committee's "big week comin' up." But he declined.

Meanwhile, as a Democratic member of the committee was grousing about its GOP majority's plans for a "vote on impeachment of the president of the United States on Saturday," Couric was mentioning to the Clintons, "This is a time of year when people count their blessings and reflect on . . . the things they have to be thankful for."

She asked them: "Anything in particular that leaps to mind for you all this year?"

These days, because everything connected to the Clintons is presumed to have layers of meaning, you tend to read between the lines of both the questions asked them and the responses they give. So what was Couric trying to get them to say with her question about "blessings," and what was Clinton telling the nation with this portion of his reply?

"I hope that next year we can continue to do well. I've done what I could to try to calm the turmoil elsewhere in the world, and I hope we can keep our economy going and keep making programs."

Forever more, in fact, everything the Clintons say or do will push the public's memory buttons. At one point, when Couric commented to Clinton that "your wife looks incredible," you wondered if

she looked incredible enough to keep him from philandering.

When Couric noted that Hillary was "wearing the dress you wore on the cover of Vogue," and her husband added, "Yes, this is the Vogue dress," you thought of Lewinsky's historic semen-stained blue dress.

And your mind went back to the gifts exchanged between Clinton and Lewinsky when Couric wondered if the Clintons had done their Christmas shopping, and Hillary replied, in part: "Many of us give too many gifts, and we certainly receive too many."

Her response was framed broadly to urge generosity to the nation's neediest, of course, but your brain framed it narrowly, as a double-entendre.

Meanwhile, back in the judiciary pit, someone was making "a unanimous request consent." And then Republican Chairman Henry Hyde was saying, "The gentleman may finish his answer." And someone else was saying, "I respectfully submit" in a charade of civility mixed with acrimony leading to the Republicans drafting four articles of impeachment even before Wednesday's session had ended.

The tragedy of all this happening was evident enough in an arena that "Nightline" host Ted Koppel that night would accurately title "mundane" and "inglorious." The smaller tragedy was that so few Americans were watching it and witnessing the machinations of this committee, some of whose gentlemen and gentlewomen earned being sent to the head of the list for personality transplants.

More surrealism.

The committee's Wednesday ended publicly with a jolting tirade against Clinton by Rep. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. The Clintons' day ended publicly with them on TV lighting the national Christmas tree at the White House.

The impeachment agenda went forward Thursday, both behind closed doors and on TV, as Democratic minority counsel Abbe Lowell began his comments by challenging the committee's constitutional grounds to proceed, and viewers saw videotape excerpts of Clinton's deposition and grand jury testimony in the Paula Jones case.

Whether the president's various sins, perceived and otherwise, rose to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors remained to be seen. As did whether the crucial actors on this stage would rise to the level of the public trust placed in them.

Maybe the latter will happen. And maybe there is a Santa Claus.



BY RON EDMONDS—ASSOCIATED PRESS

Putting on the dog (and cat): First pets Buddy, left, and Socks are the subjects of this ornament displayed in the White House State Dining Room.

Chronicles

The White House's Holiday Corps de Decor

By SARAH BOOTH CONROY
Special to The Washington Post

Warm sunshine melted some holiday spirits. Never mind: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's "Winter Wonderland" is the most glittery and glorious White House Christmas decoration the Chronicler remembers. The theme was chosen last spring, Mrs. Clinton said during last week's balmy weather, "but the only winter wonderland this season is inside the White House."

On the Blue Room's 18-foot balsam fir, given by the Chapman family's Silent Night Tree Farm in Endeavor, Wis., 2,700 lights shine on 2,343 ornaments. The snowmen, mittens and hats, wooden sporting equipment, balls, glass icicles, bead strings and some indescribable objects were made by 737 artists from all 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

Another 18 trees are on view, five in the West Wing. A centuries-old brass menorah in the West Wing lobby was lent by the Gomez Mill House in Marlboro, N.Y., the earliest surviving North American Jewish homestead. The East Garden Room tree has 400 ornaments made in 65 countries where Peace Corps volunteers served. The Oval Office tree was decorated by students from the Fillmore Art Center, a D.C. school.

Some 80 volunteers, paying their own expenses, come annually from near and far to deck the White House halls in a three-day dawn-to-midnight marathon.

Nancy Clarke, who volunteered some 20 years ago, now is the White House's chief florist. She and Robert Isabell, a noted New York floral designer, collaborated on the decorations, with Isabell and his staff of 40 spending almost a month gilding long garlands of magnolia leaves. They also made a 600- to 700-pound wreath topped with flickering candles that hangs from the East Room ceiling, and a massive 2,000-pound, 24-foot lighted wreath mounted from the South Facade roof to the Truman balcony.

Ed Gage of Nashua, N.H., has volunteered for 25 years. "I remember the years when the decorations in the big house were very traditional, magnolias on the mantels, poinsettias in the hall," he said. "In the Blue

Room, we used to put a wreath of wet moss, dripping all over the place. This year everything is different. I hung the grand staircase with ferns, silver branches and baby's breath greens. I said 'wow' when I saw the huge wreath in the East Room. The president and Mrs. Clinton walked through and spoke nicely to everybody. They're very gracious."

Charlie and Wendy Heather Elsasser of Heather and Honey Florists in Alexandria volunteered 15 years ago. Back then, she lived in New York, he in New Jersey; they courted while trimming the White House. Charlie Elsasser still volunteers—this year ornamenting the West Wing. His wife is now on the White House's florist staff and this Christmas was charged with festooning the second floor, where the first family lives. "They have a real tree in the Oval Yellow Room," Wendy Elsasser said. "We use silk flowers in deference to President Clinton's allergies. We wouldn't want him to lose his voice."

The most traditional trappings are the green tree skirt sewn by needle artists from every state, territory and the District for the Clintons' first White House Christmas, and a kissing ball by Washington needlepoint master Hyla Hurley and associates.

Even the gingerbread house seems to have been built with a magic wand. This legendary castle is built of 40 pounds of chocolate and 80 pounds of gingerbread, and features a sugary Socks and Buddy. White House pastry chef Roland Mesnier and his colleague Franette McCulloch, wearing the high white hats of their profession, accepted congratulations at the preview. Fondant fantasies by New York confectionery artist Colette Peters adorn mantelpieces. In the Green Room are an edible (you wouldn't dare) ice palace and garden and in the Red Room an igloo, penguins, icicles, snowflakes and trees.

Buddy, from all reports, is under 24-hour guard.

White House visiting hours are 10 a.m. to noon, Tuesday through Saturday. For information about free White House tour tickets, call 202-208-1631 or go to the White House Visitors Center at 1450 Pennsylvania Ave. NW.

PUBLIC LIVES

Flights of Fancy From a Floral Designer for the Stars

By ELISABETH BUMILLER

HERE are some important pronouncements from Robert Isabell, the Manhattan florist who did Caroline Kennedy's wedding, Jacqueline Onassis' funeral, last year's Versace tribute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and, this year, the White House.

White lights on Christmas trees have become so tiresome that he has switched to the mixed colors considered so hideously downmarket in the 1980's. Poinsettias are overdone, but they last. Carnations can actually be chic, like the burgundy ones he used at the opening of the New York Public Library's Reading Room. ("Oscar de la Renta called and asked, 'What were those beautiful flowers?'")

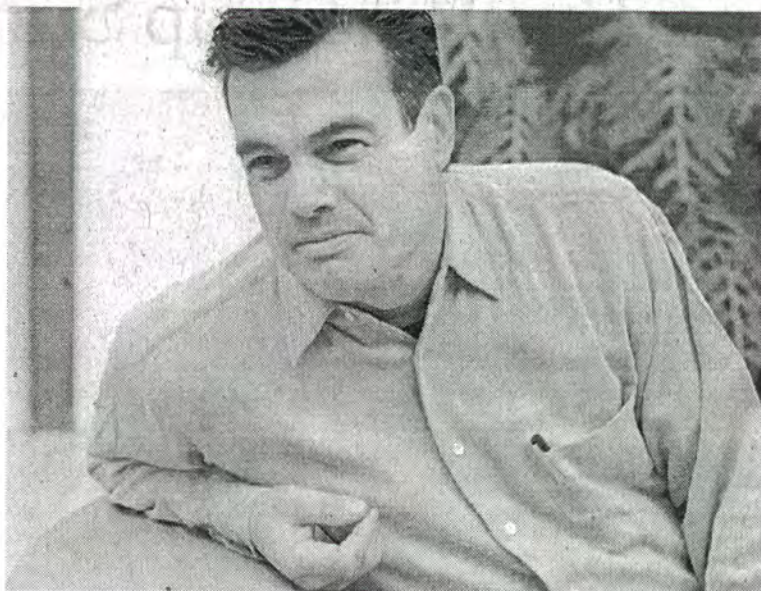
Sunflowers are an unfortunate trend, but marigolds, like those he used for the opening of the Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, are marvelous. Magnolia leaves on Christmas mantels have become very big in the North. But never, ever use a vanilla-scented candle at dinner, unless you're in Bali.

"In New York City," he said, "it's just all wrong."

So went a conversation last week with Mr. Isabell, which started on his daily morning prow through the 28th Street flower district, continued in his black Cadillac en route to his 13th Street office (where his staff was making snowmen out of, yes, carnations, for a "winter wonderland" party), and ended up at his West Village town house, a modernist villa with an atrium of cascading walls of philodendron, where he talked about his decorations for the White House.

"It was a great honor," he said, "maybe even more this year than other years. I hope we brought some happiness to the Clintons."

Mr. Isabell worked with Nancy Clarke, the chief White House florist,



Barbara Alper for The New York Times

Robert Isabell produces flower-laden parties for the rich and famous.

rist, who has been there since the Carter Administration. He made 18 gold-leafed conical trees for the East Room, a lot of crystallized fruit for the State Dining Room and an enormous outdoor wreath of noble fir and blue lights for the South Portico. This he considers his masterpiece. He and his staff hand-dipped 1,500 bulbs into a blue gel used for theater lighting to get just the right hue — "Presidential blue," as he calls it.

"Royal blue is not the color of the Presidency," he said. "That's too dark. It has no life. And Navy blue is very blackish. This is a very intense, memorable blue. You'll always remember seeing a wreath of blue lights."

Mr. Isabell has been the premier florist and party producer for New York society and people with enormous amounts of money for more than a decade, but this is his first foray into the White House.

"We knew about him, of course,"

said Capricia Penavic Marshall, the White House social secretary. "And Mrs. Clinton had seen his work before, and noted it." In June, Mr. Isabell was invited to a White House dinner, and by September, Mrs. Clinton had her office give him a call. "She gave me the directions, specifically," Ms. Marshall said. "She said, 'I would like to bring in Robert Isabell to work with Nancy Clarke.'" Mr. Isabell got along famously with the First Lady, Ms. Marshall said.

"They had a wonderful time," she added. "They walked from room to room, deciding where they were going to place things."

MR. ISABELL, who says he is in his "late 30's," said he came to Manhattan from Duluth, Minn., 20 years ago, which means he arrived in his late teens. This is entirely possible, since he didn't go to college. (Although in 1995, Vanity Fair said he

was 41.)

In any case, Mr. Isabell is murky and sensitive about his past. His mother was a homemaker; Vanity Fair described his father as a power-plant operator. "I don't want to talk about my father," Mr. Isabell said last week. "I just don't want to even get into it."

Mr. Isabell, who is tall, dark and handsome, with a soft Minnesota accent, did say he worked in a Duluth greenhouse from a very young age, then for the society florist Renny when he first arrived in New York. Soon he had started his own business — and was planning events for Studio 54. In August 1988 he created the 50th-birthday party for Saul Steinberg at which two children dressed as cherubs wheeled out a five-tier cake covered in gold and silver leaf. But his biggest party to date was the three-day celebration in 1995 of the wedding of Marie-Chantal Miller, the second daughter of a billionaire, and Crown Prince Pavlos of Greece. For the pre-ceremony ball, Mr. Isabell created a Greek temple at an estate outside London.

"The party went on until six in the morning," he said. "I've never seen so many young girls wearing couture."

Nonetheless, friends describe Mr. Isabell as shy, a little mysterious, and private. "You run into him at these places, and there's Robert in the corner, in a little denim jacket, watching everything," said Wendy Wasserstein, the playwright.

And yet, Mr. Isabell does 300 to 400 events a year, from the 50-foot moss-covered Eiffel Tower he once built for Bendel's to Carolyn Besette Kennedy's lily-of-the-valley wedding bouquet.

Why flowers? "I don't even know," he said. "It always brings joy to people. People use them at the important moments of their lives."

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1998

Holiday Decorations Fit for the White House

By MARIAN BURROS

THE call came in from the White House on Nov. 10. Could Colette Peters, fantasy cake decorator to Bette Midler, Whoopi Goldberg, Al Pacino, Joan Rivers and Rockefeller Center, make edible Christmas decorations for the mantels in the Red Room and the Green Room and for the Grand Foyer? And could she have them installed by Saturday night, Dec. 5?

Not too many people say no to the White House. Neither did Ms. Peters, who gave up a career as a painter — that thing about making a living — to bake and decorate cakes for the rich and famous. The cakes turned out to provide a very nice living.

To prepare for the holiday request, which came through Robert Isabell, the New York party designer and florist who is also doing some White House decorations, Ms. Peters cleared her shop on Washington Street in the West Village and set to work with the tools of a painter and sculptor. This week, her workroom looked like a set for "The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy": any visitor standing still risked being coated with rolled fondant and decorated with nonpareils.

With royal icing, gum paste, fondant, pastillage, silver and gold dragées, Karo syrup, lemon extract and a plastic-foam base, she has created an edible Christmas tree decorated with elegantly wrapped packages for the foyer, a lacy ice palace and ice garden to sit on the mantel in the Green Room under a portrait of Benjamin Franklin, and for the Red Room, a whimsical

A supplier of cakes to the stars turns her attentions to another form of artistry.

tableau of polar bears, igloos and snowflakes.

It is the painstaking details that make Ms. Peters's work so unusual — closer to sculpture than to cake decoration. The snowflakes look like tracery. The white wrapping paper and silver and gold ribbons for the packages on the tree are all patterned icing.

After studying at the Pratt Institute and the Rhode Island School of Design, Ms. Peters decided to give up the life of an artist for the life of a designer at Tiffany's, where she also did all the cakes for John Loring's Tiffany books. Twenty years ago, she went into cake decorating full time. Last year, Tiffany's asked her to do its Christmas windows.

That's the kind of work she likes best, leaving the baking to her assistants. "If I never had to bake a cake again, I'd be happy," she said. "I'd rather spend the time decorating."

Although she did not put a price tag on her White House creations, she estimated that it would cost her at least \$2,000 in supplies and trips to and from Washing-

ton for herself and her staff. And in order to take on the White House project, Ms. Peters has had to turn away about \$10,000 in commissions.

The minimum price for a Colette Peters cake is \$250; most cost \$1,000. The six-foot cake for the wedding of Marie-Chantal Miller to Crown Prince Pavlos of Greece in 1995 was "more than \$25,000, but less than \$100,000," Ms. Peters said. It was decorated with the same flowers that are used on Flora Danica, the pricey Danish china originally made for the Prince's royal northern relatives.

Since each of the 1,500 guests at the wedding had an individual cake, the main cake remained untouched. So Ms. Peters brought it back to New York and, from time to time, scavenged flower decorations from it.

Barbra Streisand's wedding cake, from a Los Angeles bakery, looked exactly like her design for the Prince, Ms. Peters says, and others have lifted ideas from her books. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery Ms. Peters must be flattered to death. But credit, she said, would be even better.

Which is all she will be getting at the White House. Still, "I didn't think a minute about accepting the job," she said, adding: "It's a great honor. And it's a chance to do something of my own design."

Glimpses of Ms. Peters's designs can be had during public tours of the state rooms, starting Monday and continuing through Dec. 31. What with 4-year-olds who cannot resist snacking and grown-ups who cannot resist touching, the icing, gum paste, pastillage and fondant will not be recycled.



Sam Lahoz for The New York Times

A PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (NO SNACKING)

Colette Peters with her edible lacy ice palace.

First lady unveils White House 'Wonderland'

By Bob Dart

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington — With the weather outside more delightful than frightful, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton opened the holiday season in the nation's capital Monday by revealing a "Winter Wonderland" inside the festively decorated White House.

"We wanted to try something different this year," said Mrs. Clinton, showing reporters a White House gleaming with chilly shades of white, silver and gold instead of the season's usual red and green.

With temperatures in the 70s and sidewalk Santas sweltering beside their iron kettles, a family of snow folk welcomed White House visitors to the East Colonnade. Mantels over fireplaces in historic rooms were filled with penguins, polar bears, igloos, an ice palace, an ice garden and Christmas packages wrapped in icy silver and white.

The mantelpiece decorations were all edible — the sugary cre-



RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Hillary Rodham Clinton shows off this year's White House gingerbread house.

ations of Colette Peters, a confectionery artist from New York.

Beside being starkly beautiful, the decorations "are wonderful to smell," the first lady noted.

In addition to announcing "A Winter Wonderland" as the holiday theme — a tradition begun by Jackie Kennedy in 1961 — Mrs. Clinton presented this year's White House Christmas card. It's a watercolor painting of the State Dining Room, showing a table set for a holiday dinner and a cheery fire in a hearth below a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. The painting is by Ray Ellis, an artist from Mar-

tha's Vineyard, the Massachusetts island where the Clintons have spent several summer vacations.

Following the Winter Wonderland theme, this year's gingerbread house is a castle with oversized versions of presidential pets Socks the cat and Buddy the dog ice-skating at both ends.

The official White House Christmas tree is the centerpiece of the Blue Room. Its ornaments were made by artists from all 50 states, and a handmade green velvet tree skirt has a panel from every state and territory.



Reuters

President Clinton and his wife, Hillary, helped Conna Simons, left, and Jill Mueller, right, ladle lasagna yesterday at a Washington soup kitchen.

THE NEW YORK TIMES **NATIONAL** THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1998



At left, Sammy Sosa and his wife, Sonia, joined Mr. Clinton and his wife, Hillary, to sing carols and light the national Christmas tree.

OPINION

Clinton's frigid Christmas party

BESET WITH WATERGATE a despondent Richard Nixon sulked in his family quarters, unwilling to show up for his last White House Christmas party for the press. We journalists, and our wives, waited and waited. Finally, Pat Nixon and daughter Tricia arrived, looking less than happy. It was a sad party — but one that truly reflected the president and the fix he was in.

But President Clinton didn't let impeachment get in the way of his Christmas partying. A national TV audience saw Democratic members of the House whoop it up for Mr. Clinton at a pep rally following the impeachment vote. And then, that night, the president and Mrs. Clinton appeared to be having a very good time as they schmoozed with nearly 500 donors and friends.

Then, two nights later, the president put on a "party for the press," as the invitation read. For years, since the days of Lyndon Johnson, I have been attending such parties.

In the 1960s and '70s these evening affairs were small. But in recent years the parties have grown bigger and bigger; certainly hundreds have been on hand. But this last bash of Clinton's can only be described as a mob. A marine who was acting as a guide that night told us there were 4,500 at the function. Some newspapers put the attendance at 6,000. For my wife and me it was, simply, a mess.

We waited in line for over a half hour to get inside the outside gates. Then we waited for another 40 minutes inside the White House so that we could wait in another line before we could be seated inside the big tent on the South Lawn where the president was to greet us. So we waited outside that tent, up near the front of a huge crowd, for nearly an hour. And when we were then told it would be another half hour before we could get in — well, we just gave up and went home. Mercifully the cold wave that was coming in had held off for a few hours — or we would have frozen.

A young reporter friend of mine, who had stuck it out and finally was admitted to the tent, has given me this report: "It was

a madhouse inside the tent. We had to wait in long, long lines just to get a little punch. And the president, who was supposed to arrive in 15 minutes, kept us waiting for nearly an hour. Then he made a short, perfunctory welcoming speech, shook hands with a few people in the crowd, and left."

Mrs. Clinton didn't attend.

The previous year she and the president had stood in a receiving line and shaken hands with all of their guests. Indeed, presidents and their wives have been doing precisely that for all the years that I've been attending these parties. Except for President Nixon when he hated us so for all those nasty — but

true — things we were digging up about him.

In past years, too, there has always been food — lots of luscious food — for the press. But not this year. In fact, I heard this sardonic comment several times: "He's getting even with us."

I don't know whether it was really a press party, although there are thousands of reporters in Washington who could have made up the guest list. "Who are they?" my wife kept asking. We usually see so many of our old friends at these gatherings. That would be part of the fun. But this time we only saw a handful of those we knew.

One White House reporter has told me that the President and Mrs. Clinton had mandated that the party be enlarged so that it would be clear to all that it would be impossible for them to shake hands with all of us as they had in the past. He said they didn't want to be that friendly with us this year. Could be.

Mark Twain attended a reception at the White House on the eve of president Andrew Johnson's impeachment and later wrote: "I never saw a man who seemed as friendless and forsaken."

I can't give you an up-close report on how the president looked. But my friend who got into the party said Clinton "looked good." He said he was "buoyant" and "sounded confident, as if nothing bad was going on."

It's surreal. What else can you call it?

**Godfrey
SPERLING**

**Except for Nixon
— and now Clinton
— the president
stood and shook
hands with all
the guests.**

Austin American-Statesman

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1998

KEEPERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S PEACE

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Around the clock
with the legion of
aides the White
House is built on

By **BOB DART**

American-Statesman Washington Staff

WASHINGTON—A day in the life of the White House begins an hour before midnight when Susanna McGuire rubs her coded photo ID across the electronic scanner at a wrought-iron gate, punches in a personal number, then enters under the gaze of a uniformed Secret Service agent.

An ambitious young press aide who will spend the night clipping papers for President Clinton's morning news summary, McGuire is one of hundreds of human cogs who make the White House a perpetual motion machine — running day after day, decade after decade, president after president.

Unique in the world, the building where the president lives and works is among the most recognizable symbols of American democracy. It is a home and a museum, a fortress and a bureaucracy, a playground and a monument and a backdrop for

TV newscasts. It is a place permeated with the temptations of power, of course, but also blessed with the virtues of community and continuity.

During the depths of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, White House correspondents sometimes described a paralysis in the building looming dramatically over them. Images of inactivity could not have been more misleading, however, in portraying the legions of employees who every day continued to shepherd through 6,000 tourists, open 10,000 letters, answer 1,600 phone calls, entertain foreign dignitaries, cook meals, plan parties, prune shrubbery and oversee operation of the federal government — accomplishing the mundane as well as the

See Who, A6



Rick McCay/AA-S Washington Bureau

Who keeps the president's peace — and how

miraculous.

Until he recently fell ill, for instance, 78-year-old John Muffler continued to wind the 85 or so clocks in the White House every Friday — a routine he had followed for half a century. Now semi-retired, the courtly electrician's tasks have ranged from changing light bulbs for Harry Truman to programming a VCR for Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Head florist Nancy Clarke continues to keep fresh flowers in practically every room — ever mindful not to aggravate President's Clinton's allergies with pollen and not to provide tourists with tales of bugs crawling out of blooms.

Overseeing a staff of four full-time designers in the basement flower shop below the North Portico, Clarke has accommodated floral tastes of first ladies since Nancy Reagan hired her in 1981. Regardless of the time of year, for example, Nancy Reagan wanted peonies in arrangements. When the Reagans left, Clarke made a needlepoint pillow for the departing first lady — decorated with a bright peony and the inscription "Peonies Bloom in May."

Muffler and Clarke are among 1,500 people employed in the Executive Office of the President — posts that range from seven speechwriters to four physicians. About 400 work in the White House, including about 90 on the executive residence staff.

The full-time force is augmented by 1,010 volunteers who work at least 16 hours a month — mostly in the correspondence office. The Clinton administration says these volunteers save taxpayers about \$1.2 million in wages a year.

This year, about \$8.5 million is budgeted for care, heating and lighting of the historic residence and for official entertainment expenses of the president.

Getting started

At 8 a.m. chief of staff John Podesta convenes the daily meeting of senior presidential staffers in the Roosevelt Room of the West Wing. The photocopied news summary begun by Susanna McGuire already has been distributed to their desks. All are stapled except the one bound for the Oval Office. A senior adviser shuffles that summary to prioritize presidential reading.

Small tables are fit together in the middle of the room to make a large conference center. Presidential advisers on domestic, foreign and political issues fill the leather chairs around the tables and the overstuffed armchairs and sofas along the walls. The room's namesake presidents, the Roosevelts, look down from portraits — Teddy on horseback and FDR signing legislation at a desk.

The Nobel Peace Prize won by Theodore Roosevelt sits on a mantelpiece over a fireplace.

A 49-year-old fitness buff who likes to jog shirtless, Podesta is regarded as an unpretentious boss — known for cooking elaborate Italian meals and a passion for riding roller coasters. However, the chief of staff can be demanding and has a dark side nicknamed "Skippy" by underlings. Nobody wants to provoke "Skippy."

In the workaholic West Wing, where days routinely stretch from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. or later, Podesta sets the standard.

"As we say here every Friday, only two more working days 'til Monday," he has observed. Indeed, before the 8 a.m. session, Podesta already has completed a smaller meeting in his nearby

office.

The day's agenda is set at the senior staff meeting, which usually lasts less than an hour. Afterward attendees scatter to preside over daily meetings of their departments. Press Secretary Joe Lockhart, for instance, holds a communications staff meeting at 8:45 or so.

By then, the president is usually in the Oval Office. Awakened by a call from a steward, Clinton has breakfast — often coffee and fruit — in an upstairs family kitchen decorated with cheerful fruit-pattern wallpaper. The Clintons converted a butler's pantry into this "ordinary" room shortly after they arrived in 1993.

Most mornings, a national security briefing is an early order of presidential business. The data

comes from the top-secret, high-tech Situation Room on the floor below the Oval Office.

The West Wing has three levels, with staffers' offices on floors both above and below the Oval Office. The Situation Room is staffed 24 hours a day by experts monitoring trouble spots around the world.

National Security Adviser Samuel "Sandy" Berger, 52, is in charge of the security briefing. He met Clinton when both worked on George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign and the two became friends.

The briefing takes place beneath the embossed presidential seal on the white ceiling of the Oval Office. Behind Clinton's desk, a table displays pictures of his wife and his daughter, Chelsea, and his collection of political campaign buttons. On his desk are busts of FDR and Harry Truman. On the floor nearby are an African drum and a drum made by Native Americans to commemorate the North American Free Trade Agreement — showing the shared

Mexico, the United States and Canada.

A rocking chair sits in the adjoining private study. The president's computer is there, too, connected to the Internet — though aides won't say whether Clinton ever surfs through cyberspace. There is no TV.

From her adjoining office, Nancy Hernreich helps keep Clinton on schedule. As director of Oval Office operations, Hernreich, 52, is one of the "meanies" whom Lewinsky complained was trying to keep her from the president. The longtime loyalist was Clinton's scheduler in the Arkansas governor's office. Divorced, Hernreich dotes on her daughter, Ashley, a student at Duke University.

Hernreich is the gatekeeper — regulating who gets in to see the president and, to some extent, when they leave. However, it is up to the president to decide when a meeting ends.

Phillip Caplan, assistant to the

president and staff secretary, manages the flow of presidential paperwork — moving color-coded binders on and off Clinton's desk. Green for action. Pink for correspondence. Blue for information. Red for classified.

Behind the cupboards

By midmorning, White House kitchens are bustling. The holiday season is approaching, and 120,000 cookies and pieces of cake will be baked for a panoply of parties.

Chef Walter Scheib, an imposing figure nearly 7 feet tall from the top of his traditional toque blanche to the toes of his well-shined shoes, is responsible for all meals served in the White House. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., Scheib was chef at the Greenbrier Resort in West Vir-

ginia when hired by Hillary Clinton in 1993.

The first lady was looking for an American cuisine chef with a light touch, and Scheib has worked hard at reducing the fat in the White House fare without sacrificing flavor, texture or appearance. Cooking oil is kept in spray bottles, for instance, and misted onto pans rather than being poured or brushed.

Now 43, Scheib grew up in the nearby suburb of Bethesda, Md., and remembers watching his mother cook the dishes Julia Child demonstrated on TV. His wife, Jean, also is a chef, and the two cooked together at the Boca Raton Resort and Club in Florida before moving on to the Greenbrier.

The first family pays for its own food, which Scheib orders from nearby wholesalers and from suppliers all around the nation. He searches for the best ingredients — buffalo milk mozzarella from upstate New York, Michigan blueberries, Virginia ham — and the nation's food merchants eagerly solicit his business.

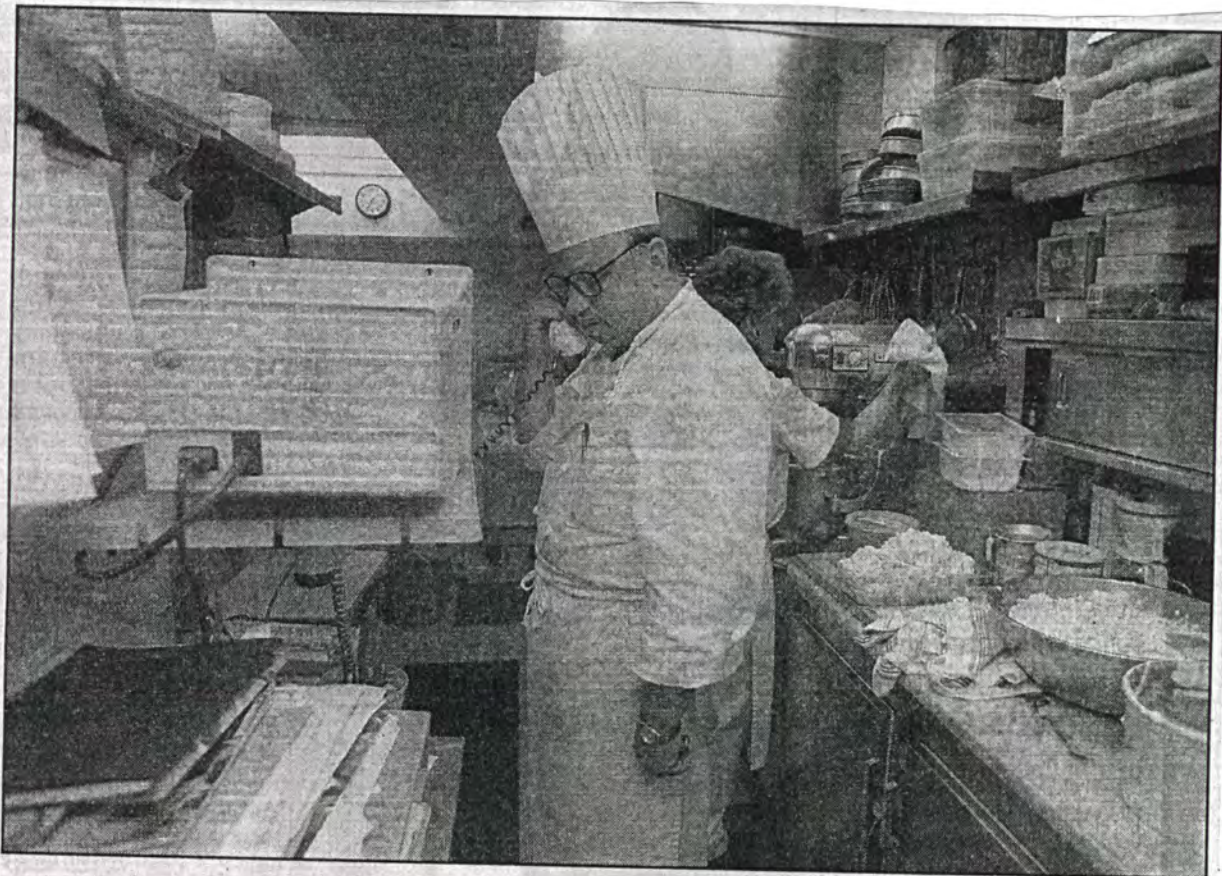
Food bound for the White House is detoured to another facility where it is checked by the Secret

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See What, Next page

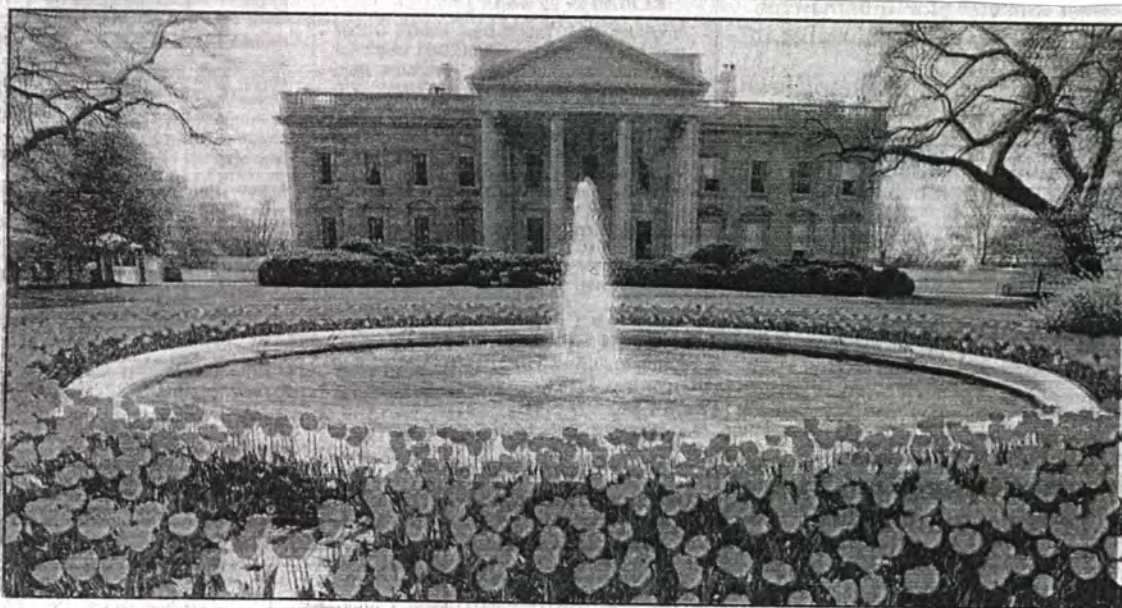
PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION



Pastry chef Roland Mesnier stops to take a call while working in a small kitchen near the Clintons' quarters.

Rick McKay/AA-S Washington Bureau

Mesnier's elaborate desserts compliment meals for both foreign dignitaries and family celebrations.



What does it take to make the White House work? Of the 1,500-person full-time work force in the Executive Office of the President, about 400 work in the White House, including about 90 on the executive residence staff. Among them are White House florists Bob Scanlan, above left, and Wendy Elsasser, who design arrangements in a flower shop in the basement. About \$8.5 million is budgeted this year for care of the most famous address on Washington's Pennsylvania Avenue.

Austin American-Statesman
Friday, November 27, 1998

Friday, November 27, 1998

What goes on in a house that doesn't sleep



Rick McKay/AA-S Washington Bureau

President Clinton talks with National Security Adviser Sandy Berger after recent Mideast peace talks at the Wye plantation. Berger, who met Clinton in 1972, leads morning security briefings at the White House.

Continued from previous page

Service before being sent in secure trucks to Scheib's pantries, refrigerators and freezers. Scheib's staff includes two assistant chefs, a kitchen steward and two assistant stewards. For state dinners and other major events, this culinary force is augmented by chefs from local restaurants.

Cooking separately in a tiny kitchen jammed between the state floor and the family quarters is pastry chef Roland Mesnier and his longtime assistant, Franette McCulloch.

Mesnier was born in a French village in 1944 on the very day American soldiers liberated the community from Nazi occupation. At 14 he left school and began an apprenticeship at a village bakery. He created pastries in kitchens in Paris, London and Bermuda and was cooking at the Greenbrier in 1980 when Rosalynn Carter hired him for the White House.

Mesnier's theme desserts have become the sweet stuff of legend. At a luncheon for Egyptian officials, he created a pistachio mousse pyramid flanked by two edible palm trees and a marzipan camel. One Christmas he made gingerbread and chocolate reproductions of the president's boyhood home in Hot Springs, Ark., and the suburban house where Hillary Rodham grew up in Park Ridge, Ill.

For Chelsea's 16th birthday, Mesnier decorated her cake with a replica of her new driver's license, complete with color photo, and a car with a license tag reading "Sweet 16."

"Sometimes, after 18 years, it's hard to come up with ideas," said Mesnier. "Two days before the birthday I was driving to work listening to the radio and the announcer said, 'Chelsea will soon be getting her driver's license.' Then, Boom! It hit me. Chocolate car and license."

Who pencils them in

Shortly after noon, the last of this day's 6,000 or so tourists — more than a million visit the

Friday, November 27, 1998

White House each year — stops for a final photo of the North Portico before leaving the compound and stepping onto the sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue. The mansion's ground floor and second story are part museum, open to visitors from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesdays through Saturdays. The busiest times are the summer months and December; the slowest are January and February.

Tourists enter on the east side and proceed through the library, the Vermeil Room with its portraits of recent first ladies, the China Room, the East Room, where presidential news conferences are held, the Green Room, the Blue Room, where the White House Christmas tree will be, the Red Room and the State Dining Room.

Melinda Bates, 52, director of the Office of Tourism, is a longtime friend of President Clinton. She took him to his first Judy Collins concert in 1964. When Collins visited the White House three decades later, Clinton returned the favor by introducing the singer to Bates.

The White House is a treasure trove of antiques, art and oddities. Original Norman Rockwell drawings adorn the walls of an out-of-the-way West Wing waiting area, for instance. In another reception area, a handsome clock made of wood, inside and out, keeps visitors aware of the time. Historic portraits are everywhere. A photo on an end table shows Calvin Coolidge with the original Boston Celtics.

Curator Betty Monkman, who has worked at the White House for three decades, is responsible for displaying and maintaining the artifacts, furnishings and art.

A job whose title belies its importance is the social secretary — responsible for every event inside the White House and on the grounds. From state dinners to the annual Easter Egg Roll, Social Secretary Capricia Marshall juggles VIPs and RSVPs and a myriad of details of protocol and logistics.

Three to 10 events take place

every week at the White House. More than 60,000 people are entertained annually at official functions.

A Cleveland native and law school graduate, Marshall joined the Clinton presidential campaign in Ohio in 1991 and came to the White House as a special assistant to the first lady after Clinton's initial election. In 1997, at 33, she was appointed social secretary. Marshall made an immediate impact in her new post by posing in Vogue magazine wearing a backless Donna Karan gown.

More executive privileges

It's midafternoon, and President Clinton is standing in a sunny Rose Garden promoting his proposals for health-care reform. Irv Williams is concerned about reporters stomping on the grass.

For more than four decades, chief horticulturist Williams has tended the 19 acres of trees, grass and shrubbery that compose the White House grounds.

The groundskeepers work for the National Park Service. Williams helped Jacqueline Kennedy redesign the First Lady's Garden, next to the formal Rose Garden where speeches are staged and treaties signed.

Every first lady leaves her own special bloom in the garden — a peach-color rose for Rosalynn Carter, a yellow rose for Betty Ford, red for Nancy Reagan.

Every president plants a tree on the grounds before leaving. The oldest surviving presidential trees are three magnolias given root by Andrew Jackson. Clinton has planted several trees, including an American elm, a willow oak and a linden.

The gently rolling South Lawn, brightened by flower beds and partly shielded by trees, is the first family's back yard.

In the southwest corner are a tennis court and an outdoor pool. A short chip shot from the Oval Office is a putting green laid out by President Eisenhower in 1954. It was removed in 1971 by the non-golfing Richard Nixon, who built a

bowling alley in the White House basement. The green was reinstalled in 1995 by Clinton, who also added a padded jogging track around the South Lawn driveway and subtracted the horseshoe pits dug by George Bush.

Guardians of privacy

Around 7 p.m., President Clinton walks down the colonnade, headed to the top two floors of the White House that are the home of the first family.

He has likened this lifestyle to the way average Americans lived in bygone decades — residing above their stores or on their family farms, with their jobs and homes practically melded. Here, though, White House staffers zealously guard the upstairs private lives of presidential families.

Gary Walters, an aggressive but discreet former Secret Service agent with the unimposing title of chief usher, is the supervisor of all who serve the first family in their home. With a staff of about 90 to direct and the ultimate responsibility for everything from state dinners to overflowing toilets, Walters has filled this historically powerful post since 1986.

Eight chief ushers have served in the nearly 200-year history of the White House. The improbably named Ike Hoover served the longest — 42 years beginning in 1891 — and managed the care and comfort of 10 presidents and their families.

The Clintons are movie fans and regularly invite friends over for films in the 51-seat movie theater off the East Wing portico. Facing the screen are rows of four to six beige overstuffed armchairs — the rows rising on tiers toward the rear of the room. When the Clintons show movies, tables stocked with popcorn, soft drinks and other snacks are set up outside the theater.

Many nights, though, Clinton takes memos upstairs to read late into the night, aides say, working even as Susanna McGuire arrives to start another day in the life of the White House.

MIETRO

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1998

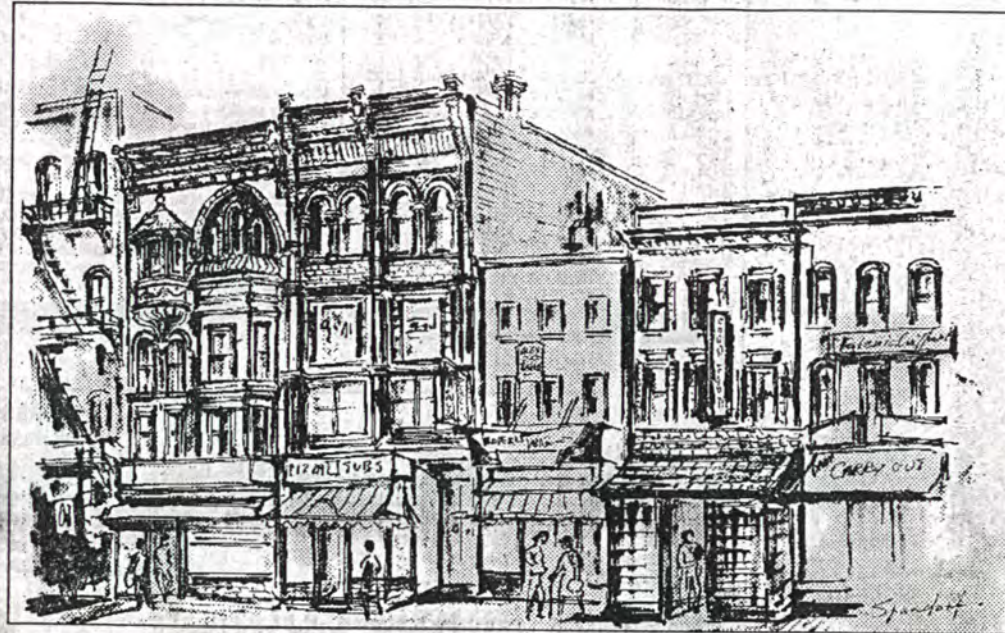
**"She was the only
person who had
maintained any
kind of record of
buildings being
torn down."**

— MARK G. GRIFFIN,
lawyer and history buff

The artist at work: *Lily Spandorf has been using her watercolors and pen and ink to show the holiday decorations at the White House since the Johnson administration.*



BY BILL O'LEARY—THE WASHINGTON POST



Spandorf scenes:
Spandorf is known for street scenes like the one above, a stretch of 11th Street NW slated for redevelopment, as well as White House holiday scenes like these East Foyer snowmen.



A Perennial Draw Pictures Washington

'On-the-Spot' Art Preserves City's Past

By DAVID MONTGOMERY
Washington Post Staff Writer

It's Winter Wonderland time at the White House, and crowds are filing through to ogle the annual profusion of evergreen, glitter and gingerbread. In the Grand Foyer, they spy a little lady with snowy hair and a red blouse hunched over a makeshift easel, painting pictures of the holiday decorations.

Murmurs of "Who's that? Who's that?" ripple through the crowd.

"That's Lily Spandorf," reply those in the know. "She's been doing this for over 30 years."

Cameras flash as people snap instant portraits of the artist.

Spandorf hardly notices. She is on assignment, one of the last great deadline artists.

There was a time not too long ago when it was not an exaggeration to say that a large measure of Washington's physical image of itself flowed directly from the pens and brushes of Lily Spandorf.

When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, she drew the mourners paying respects to the leader lying in state. When the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have A

Dream" speech, she was on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial with her pens and ink. She captured hippies frolicking in Dupont Circle and children rolling Easter eggs on the White House lawn.

Back then, her work would appear the next day in the paper, usually the Washington Star.

The big dailies no longer care much for artistic renderings of news events, except for courtroom scenes from which cameras are barred. And so now Spandorf is dispatched to draw the White House Christmas decorations by the Georgetown.

Pressures of the trade don't get any easier with experience, and in the heat of painterly reportage, Spandorf suffers inquiries from someone whose medium is notebook and pen.

"I have a deadline, too, you know," she says. "I'm rushed and tense and worried and so forth."

Her voice is hued with old Vienna, which she left as an art school graduate in 1938.

Never mind how old she is, she says. Just put this down: "I like doing it, of course. It's my work."

Spandorf at the peak of her

See SPANDORF, B5, Col. 2

Artist Draws on District Scenes,

White House Splendor

SPANDORF, From B1

career was prolific outside her newspaper freelancing, painting for pleasure if not on commission. Almost from the day she arrived in town in 1960, she specialized in street scenes, recording casual yet colorful moments in everyday life.

Eschewing the monuments and other Nation's Capital clichés, she haunted the parks and markets and circles. She called her work "on-the-spot" painting and crafted an aesthetic of the fleeting that was instantly popular. The art was distinguished by Spandorf's canny rendering of Washington's pleasant, old architecture, all mansarded and corniced, before the invasion of the glass office boxes. The city then reminded her of Europe.

Before long, presidents were presenting Lily Spandorf's watercolors to visiting heads of state. The U.S. Post Office issued a stamp of her painting of the National Christmas Tree. A Senate committee ordered the temporary closing of Delaware Avenue NE so Spandorf could set up her easel in the middle of the street, affording a view of the Russell Senate Office Building with the Capitol looming beyond.

A few years ago, a woman in South Africa wanted to send a fan letter but didn't have Spandorf's address or even the correct spelling of her name. The missive reached the artist's door in Dupont Circle anyway, marked simply: "Miss Lily Spandorf. Paints Buildings. Washington, D.C. United States of America."

She explored a paradoxical zone between the quick and the eternal, and her obsession with the quotidian paid off. No one else gave it a thought, and suddenly it started disappearing, like an endangered species.

Lawyer and history buff Mark G. Griffin spotted the artist one day on the sidewalk painting attached commercial buildings on the east side of 11th Street NW, between G and H streets, which were condemned to make way for the Grand Hyatt Hotel. She told him she wanted to rescue the structures in watercolor.

"She was the only person who had maintained any kind of record of buildings being torn down," Griffin said.

It turned out Spandorf had an exhibit's worth of work she called "Washington Never More," which, with Griffin's help, led to a 1988 coffee-table book and a film about the artist by documentarian Barr Weissman.

"She's one of the few artists I've ever seen who supported themselves with their art," Griffin said. "She's very feisty.... She has

created herself and kept herself re-created. Think about someone coming from nowhere and parachuting into Washington with no contacts."

Spandorf didn't exactly come from nowhere. She had had shows and success in New York and Europe. About her deeper past, in prewar Austria, she is resolutely silent, except for a reference in the documentary to a play she wrote that was supposed to be produced "just before the Nazis came." During the war, she volunteered for the Red Cross in Scotland. She never married.

If she was no one to Washington society when she arrived for her first show here in

**"I just develop a feeling
for color and emphasize
it with line work."**

— Lily Spandorf

1960, within months a broken wrist had changed that. Visiting her doctor at Georgetown Hospital, she discovered that Jackie Kennedy was going to have her son, John, christened in the hospital chapel. No photographers were allowed. Before the service, Spandorf slipped in and drew the altar decorations, then used a hospital pay phone to call the Star. Her instinct for the main chance was on target.

"Bring it right over," said an editor of the women's page, and the next day Spandorf's first drawing for the paper was being circulated across the city.

She lives up a flight of stairs in a hundred-year-old apartment building in Dupont Circle. Her former place, on the top floor with the good light at the corner of Connecticut and Q, was leveled to make room for the Dupont Metro station. Before the wrecking ball swung, she memorialized the yellow row house in a painting called "My Old Corner."

Once she told an interviewer: "Houses are like people; they have faces."

One wall of her current living room is given over to tall, deep shelves containing hundreds of paintings and drawings, unframed and slipped in edgewise. Hanging on one wall of a long, high-ceilinged corridor off the living room are two closely spaced rows of framed works.

Her output has diminished somewhat in recent years. After a serious illness, she says,

she is glad to be able to do any work at all. She is self-conscious about her appearance, imagining that age has altered her too much. Yet her hands remain slender and strong, even young-looking, able to create ink lines that are sure and true.

She's also prickly about her image in print. Talking about herself, she edits and censors. Opinionated bursts of self-revelation frequently conclude, "But of course, you can't write that."

Setting out to paint the White House Christmas decorations—which she has done nearly every year since the Johnson administration—she follows her familiar preparations for on-the-spot work.

Her folding stool and her supplies must fit into a heavy-duty plastic shopping bag, which she straps to a two-wheeled cart for travel. The packing job is a miracle of efficiency. Foam trays make excellent pallettes because they are light and disposable. Plastic umbrella sleeves are perfect brush holders. Her easel is a square of cardboard, which she will support on the handle of the cart when she is ready to paint.

"A lot of my medium and technique is by reason of necessity," she says. "I don't drive. I have to have the material at a minimum of bulk and weight. So oils, for instance, aren't for me. Then I just develop a feeling for color and emphasize it with line work."

She rolls her cart into the White House and sets up in the Grand Foyer. She also selects views in the Blue Room, Green Room, Red Room and State Dining Room. Access to the White House is not a problem for her. Head usher Gary Walters has been following her holiday work for nearly three decades.

One year when George Bush was president, according to Spandorf, he looked over her shoulder as she drew the gingerbread house and jokingly instructed her to include first dog Millie playing in the snow, which she did.

Bah-humbuggers might say that when you've seen one White House Christmas, you've seen them all, but Neil Horstman, executive vice president of the White House Historical Association, says Spandorf's systematic impressions of the executive residence over time have documentary value. A few years ago, his group acquired Spandorf's collection of more than 100 White House Christmas drawings.

Subtle trends are evident. The greenery and holiday fantasy scenes grew increasingly elaborate with the Reagans, while the Clintons have brought a more modern, glittering look to the season, especially this year.

"We've always liked her work," says David Roffman, editor-at-large of the *Georgetown*, which has published Spandorf periodically for several years. "It's got a warm feel to it."

Spandorf made her deadline, staying up late to finish this year's White House Christmas drawings.

But newspaper work has its vagaries, alas, and editors are notoriously inscrutable. When Spandorf opens the latest edition of the *Georgetown*, she finds only a single drawing, depicting some East Room trees, cropped and buried on page 19.

A moment of empathy is shared.

She looks up from the paper and glowers at the pen-and-notebook man. "Don't let that happen to my story," she commands.

Twilight in Dupont Circle. The artist surveys the shelves and shelves of work, sheafs of moments, arrested time, adding up to decades.

That spring day in a courtyard in Southwest Washington before urban renewal, when the schoolchildren flocked around her to watch. "A good painting is a poem in color," she had said that day.

The many views of her beloved Dupont, as changeable as Monet's waterlilies, and as worthy of recording in all its guises.

What will become of it all when her time is up?

"That's a big question," she says.

She doesn't know the answer, and it worries her. While pieces of her life's work, such as the White House Christmas images, have been acquired by collectors, the bulk of it lacks a permanent home.

She has specialized in stopping time, and the drama of each image she created is contained in the knowledge that, of course, time doesn't stop.

When those White House tourists develop their photos, they will see the little lady in the red blouse, painting—a classic Washington scene preserved on film. But the cold and literal eye of the camera could never do her justice.

Lily Spandorf belongs in a watercolor.

Public tours of the Christmas decorations continue through Wednesday. An exhibit of Spandorf's Christmas drawings at the White House back to the Nixon administration is on display at the White House Visitors Center, 1450 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, through Jan. 10.

White House needs elves year round

The Christmas season

starts early each year for the staffers who prepare the president's home for the holiday. Now, their creations are being unwrapped.

By Bob Dart

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington

In a cramped hallway, about eight tiny reindeer-lengths from the Diplomatic Room fireplace, White House cooks were merrily stamping out gingerbread men on an autumn afternoon.

"Every slow day is a day we use for Christmas preparation," explained pastry chef Roland Mesnier, guiding a visitor past this culinary assembly line. "If there is an empty corner in the White House, you will find somebody rolling cookies there."

Like Santa's elves, some White House staffers regard Christmas preparation as a never-ending job.

On Monday, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will unveil the 1998 Christmas theme and decorations at the White House, kicking off the traditional round of seasonal tours and parties at the presidential home.

During the next three weeks, about 15,000 guests will marvel at Christmas trees laden with 50,000 lights and handmade ornaments from across America, hear seasonal songs of musicians from every state and consume 50,000 cookies, half a ton of fruitcake and 250 gallons of eggnog.

Such festivities take a tad of forethought. The fruitcake, for instance, was baked in June and stacked in refrigerators in two-pound blocks to await the holiday parties.

"Truthfully, right now I'm making mental notes for next year of what didn't work very well this year," said Nancy Clarke, head florist at the tiny flower shop beneath the North Portico. "When Christmas decorations are still up, we start talking as a group about next Christmas because that's the best time to do it."

"It's certainly a yearlong project," agreed Capricia Marshall, the social secretary in charge of all White House events. "We start in early January thinking about the theme for that year's Christmas."

The tradition of a theme for the official Christmas tree in the Blue Room was begun by Jacqueline Kennedy in 1961. The first theme was the "Nutcracker Suite." Last year's theme was "Santa's Workshop," and ornament designer Christopher Radko served as an artist coordinator to carry the theme throughout the White House.

This year's theme is still a secret, but Marshall hinted that it is "super sweet," and noted that New York cake designer Colette Peters is the coordinating artist.

The theme was chosen in February

after meetings between White House staffers and Clinton. Mesnier was consulted on how to portray the theme in the gingerbread house he makes each Christmas. Clarke envisioned ornaments for the Blue Room tree. Clinton had the final say.

A fruitcake people like

Then the White House enlisted creative people from around the country — from glass blowers to fashion designers to needlepoint artists — to come up with ornaments and decorations. Governors' spouses helped select artists from their states.

By early summer, Mesnier had begun to prepare the Christmas party fare. Fruitcake is first because it keeps well in refrigerators.

"We have a fruitcake recipe that was designed for the White House," said Mesnier, who was born in France and was working at the Greenbrier resort in West Virginia when he was hired by Rosalynn Carter in 1980. "It has been changed every year since I've been here. We always try to make it more earthier, if you will, by reducing the sugar content, the calories and all that. . . . We use naturally dried fruit.

"Many people have come to me who swear that they hate fruitcake. They detest it. But when they taste this one, they absolutely love it," said Mesnier.

Also months ahead of time, an

assortment of unbaked Christmas cookies is cut out and frozen raw. During the party season, "we bake them as we go along to serve fresh," the chef explained.

Other traditional White House Christmas treats are completed months ahead and put in freezers. Yule logs are made of coffee mousse with walnuts and coated with chocolate. There are Christmas cakes — a raspberry and chocolate combination, pumpkin cake, double applesauce cake and an orange cake similar to pound cake.

"In all, there will be 120,000 cookies or pieces of cake served," Mesnier estimated.

Plans for this year's gingerbread house were finished in August. The sheets of gingerbread were baked in mid-November.

"The gingerbread must be very dry," said Mesnier. "I do not use any support that is not food. Many people use cardboard or plastic to support the house. This house is totally food — gingerbread, chocolate, sugar icing. It weighs close to 150 pounds."

Florist Clarke can't freeze her creations for later presentation, but plans decorations down to the last red bow and poinsettia.

Months ago, she focused her digital camera on all the public White House rooms. The digital images were converted into computerized stage sets

where the virtual furniture could be moved around and would-be decorations inserted or removed.

"That's the easiest way to do it. We have an instant visual," she explained. Then she and Marshall, the social secretary, made a presentation to Clinton on proposed Christmas decorations for each room.

The first lady "is very hands-on in the entire process," said Marshall. Once the presentation is made, Mrs. Clinton "starts tweaking it. She has wonderful ideas."

Clarke oversees a staff of four full-time floral designers and 11 part timers. They are reinforced by 60 volunteers to decorate the White House for Christmas.

Finishing touches under way

"The volunteers come in the Monday after Thanksgiving. They go to our warehouse in Riverdale, Md., and start working on bows and all the arrangements and getting everything prepared," said Clarke, a White House volunteer for several years before being hired by Nancy Reagan in 1981.

Everything is readied to move into the White House on the Friday before the Kennedy Center Honors feting prominent artists, which this year are Sunday. The decorating will be finished Saturday night, and the next afternoon the first family welcomes

the Kennedy Center honorees to a White House freshly decked out in holiday finery.

This busy weekend requires some precision. Wreaths are ordered from a company in Oregon — 168 small wreaths, 92 larger ones. Last year, 486 feet of garland were draped inside the White House and another 862 feet on the grounds. The Christmas tree in the Blue Room, chosen by the National Christmas Tree Association, has more than 6,000 lights and 2,000 ornaments. There are a dozen or so other Christmas trees in the White House and on the grounds. The traditional White House crèche has 47 figures. The decorations will include more than 1,000 bows.

All must be in place for about 50 parties and for thousands of visitors who will go through on special holiday tours. Official parties, such as the Congressional Ball, are paid for with government funds, and other events are funded by the Democratic National Committee.

Menus and guest lists are planned months in advance, Marshall said. About 2,500 entertainers are recruited from around the country for three weeks of activities. Security checks must be completed on them all long before they actually enter the White House.

Marshall will attend all the parties, making sure everything goes as planned and taking mental notes on how to do the 1999 holidays.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Friday, Dec. 4, 1998

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

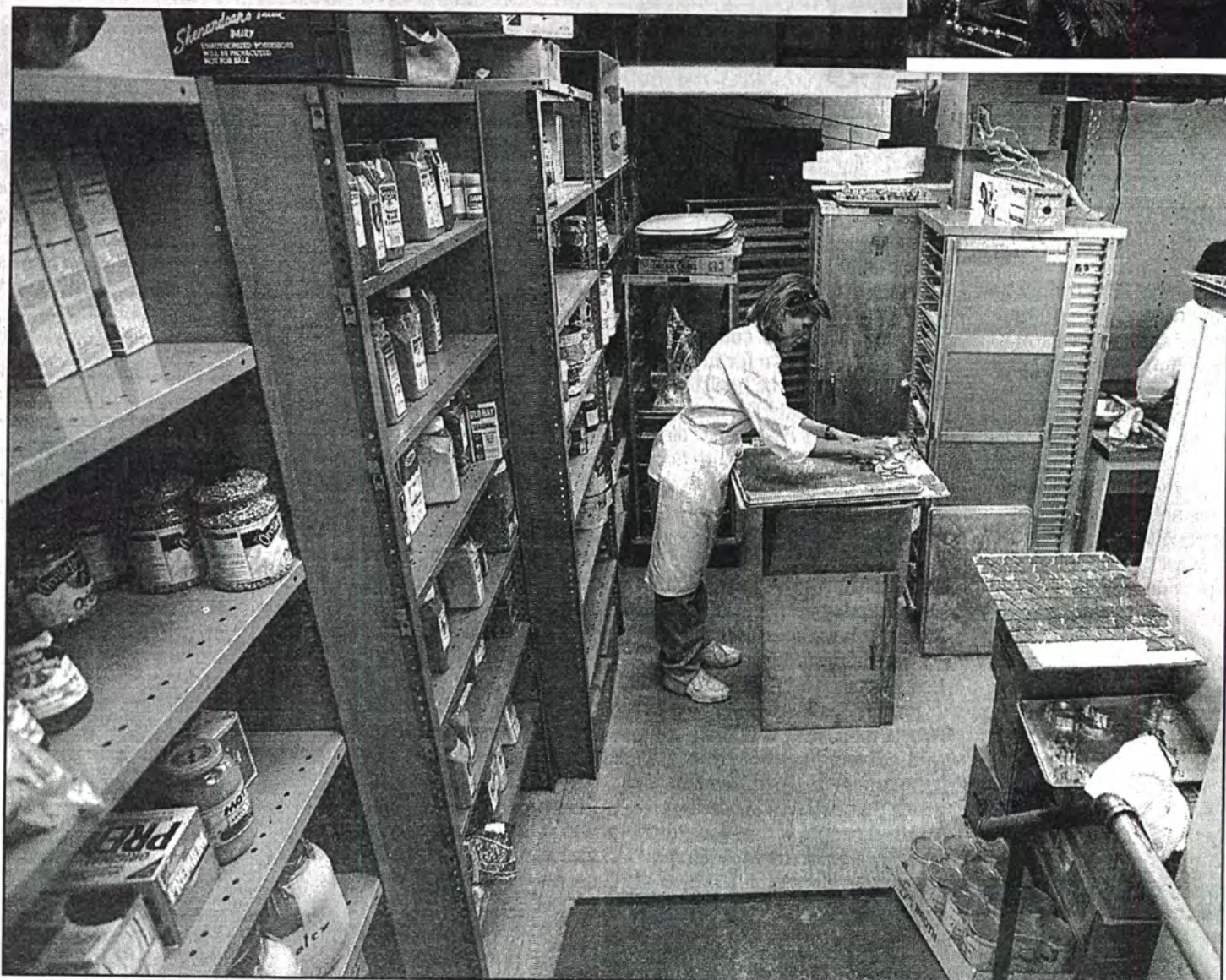
Friday, Dec. 4, 1998

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

"And oh, yes, there's the Christmas card," says Marshall. In February or so, Clinton selects an artist to paint the traditional White House card. They talk about what to depict — the first lady picks the scene. The finished cards will be mailed Monday.

"There is a lot of pressure this time of year," conceded chef Mesnier. "I wake up in the middle of the night and think of Christmas."

Head florist Nancy Clarke uses a digital camera to help her decide where she and her staff can place seasonal flowers and arrangements in the White House.



Photos by RICK McKAY / Washington Bureau

Every available space is used for cookies when the White House culinary staff begins baking for Christmas.

A White House Christmas

It's a year-round thing: First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton needs 50,000 cookies and half a ton of fruitcake to serve to 15,000 guests at various Christmas functions. So White House chef Steven M. Palumbo, shown working on hazelnut pastries, and his staff got off to an early start. **Page E4**



RICK McKAY / Washington Bureau

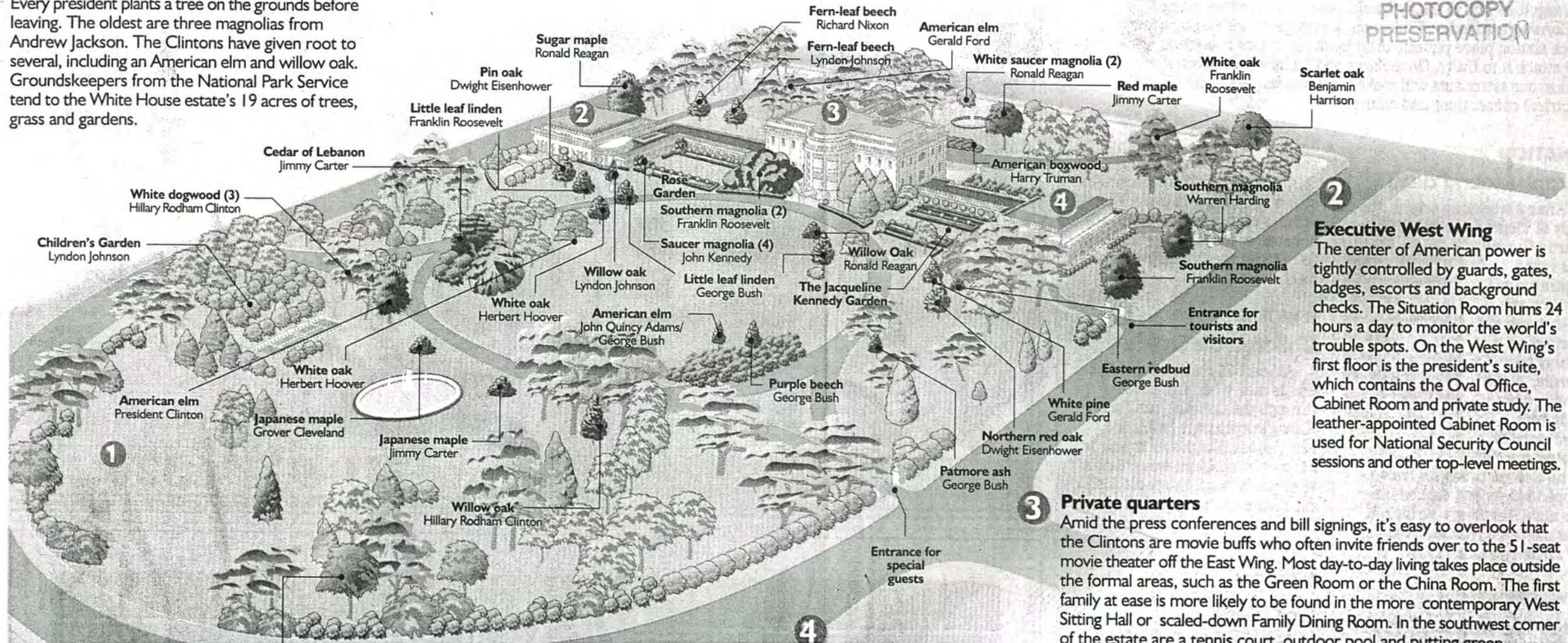
A day in the life of the WHITE HOUSE

The quiet, graceful exterior of this nearly 200-year-old mansion belies the hard work needed to hold down the fort. Equal parts residence, museum and presidential command center, it's a national treasure that endures through the pride and service of its many workers.

1

President's Park

Every president plants a tree on the grounds before leaving. The oldest are three magnolias from Andrew Jackson. The Clintons have given root to several, including an American elm and willow oak. Groundskeepers from the National Park Service tend to the White House estate's 19 acres of trees, grass and gardens.



By Bob Dart

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Washington day in the life of the White House begins an hour before midnight when Susanna McGuire rubs her coded photo ID across the electronic scanner at a wrought-iron gate, punches in a personal number, then enters under the gaze of a uniformed Secret Service agent.

An ambitious young press aide who will spend the night clipping papers for President Clinton's morning news summary, McGuire is one of hundreds of human cogs who make the White House a perpetual motion machine — running day after day, decade after decade, president after president.

Unique in the world, the building where the president lives and works is among the most recognizable symbols of democracy. It is a home and a museum, a fortress and a bureaucracy, a playground and a monument and a backdrop for TV newscasts. It is a place permeated with the temptations of power, of course, but also blessed with the virtues of community and continuity.

During the depths of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, White House correspondents sometimes described a paralysis in the building looming dramatically behind them. Images of inactivity could not have been more misleading, however, in portraying the legions of employees who every day continued to shepherd through 6,000 tourists, open 10,000 letters, answer 1,600 phone calls, entertain foreign dignitaries, cook meals, plan parties, prune shrubbery and oversee operation of the federal

governments.

Until he recently fell ill, for instance, 78-year-old John Muffler continued to wind the 85 or so clocks in the White House every Friday — a routine he had followed for half a century. Now semiretired, the courtly electrician's tasks have ranged from changing light bulbs for Harry Truman to programming a VCR for Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Head florist Nancy Clarke keeps fresh flowers in nearly every room — careful not to aggravate President's Clinton's allergies with pollen and not to provide tourists with tales of bugs crawling out of blooms.

Overseeing a staff of four full-time designers in the basement flower shop below the North Portico, Clarke has accommodated floral tastes of first ladies since Nancy Reagan hired her in 1981. Regardless of the time of year, for example, Reagan wanted peonies in arrangements. When the Reagans left, Clarke made for the first lady a needle-point pillow decorated with a bright peony and the inscription "Peonies Bloom in May."

Theodore Roosevelt officially named this building the White House in 1902. Before, it was known as the President's House and the Executive Mansion.

In 1909, he added the West Wing and its famed Oval Office to handle the increasing need for offices for presidential staffers. The mansion and West Wing are connected by the press area, built over what was a swimming pool from 1933 to 1969. The president walks from home to office through an open-sided colonnade between the Rose Garden and windowless press rooms.

In 1942, Franklin Roosevelt added the East Wing, where the first lady has her office. The Old Executive Office Building, a massive gray structure that once housed all Cabinet offices next door, now is part of the White House complex enclosed by a protective and decorative

wrought iron fence. Also inside the fence are the 19 acres of lawns, gardens and trees that make up the White House grounds.

It is a setting where there are no typical days.

At 8 a.m., Chief of Staff John Podesta convenes the daily meeting of senior presidential staffers in the Roosevelt Room of the West Wing. The photocopied news summary begun by McGuire already has been distributed to their desks. All are stapled except the one bound for the Oval Office. A senior adviser shuffles the summary according to priority for presidential reading.

Small tables are fit together in the middle of the room to make a large conference center. Top presidential advisers on domestic, foreign and political issues fill the leather chairs around the tables and the overstuffed armchairs and sofas along the walls. The Roosevelt Room's namesake presidents look down from portraits — Teddy on horseback and FDR signing legislation at a desk. The Nobel Peace Prize won by Theodore Roosevelt sits on the mantel over a fireplace.

A 49-year-old fitness buff who likes to jog shirtless, Podesta is regarded as an unpretentious boss

and is known for cooking elaborate Italian meals and having a passion for riding roller coasters. However, the chief of staff can be demanding and has a dark side nicknamed "Skippy" by underlings. Nobody wants to provoke "Skippy."

In the workaholic West Wing, where days routinely stretch from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. or later, Podesta sets the standard.

"As we say here every Friday, only two more working days till Monday," he has observed. Indeed, before the 8 a.m. session, Podesta has completed a smaller meeting in his nearby office.

The day's agenda is set at the senior staff meeting, which usually lasts less than an hour. Afterward, attendees scatter to preside over daily meetings of their departments. Press secretary Joe Lockhart, for instance, holds a communications staff meeting at 8:45 a.m.

By then, the president is usually in the Oval Office. Awakened by a call from a steward, Clinton has breakfast — often coffee and fruit — in an upstairs family kitchen decorated with cheery fruit-patterned wallpaper. The Clintons converted a butler's pantry into this "ordinary" room shortly after arriving in 1993.

Most mornings, a national security briefing is an early order of presidential business. The data comes from the top-secret, high-tech Situation Room on the floor below the Oval Office.

The West Wing has three levels, with staffers' offices on floors above and below the Oval Office. The Situation Room is staffed 24 hours a day by experts monitoring trouble spots around the world.



RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

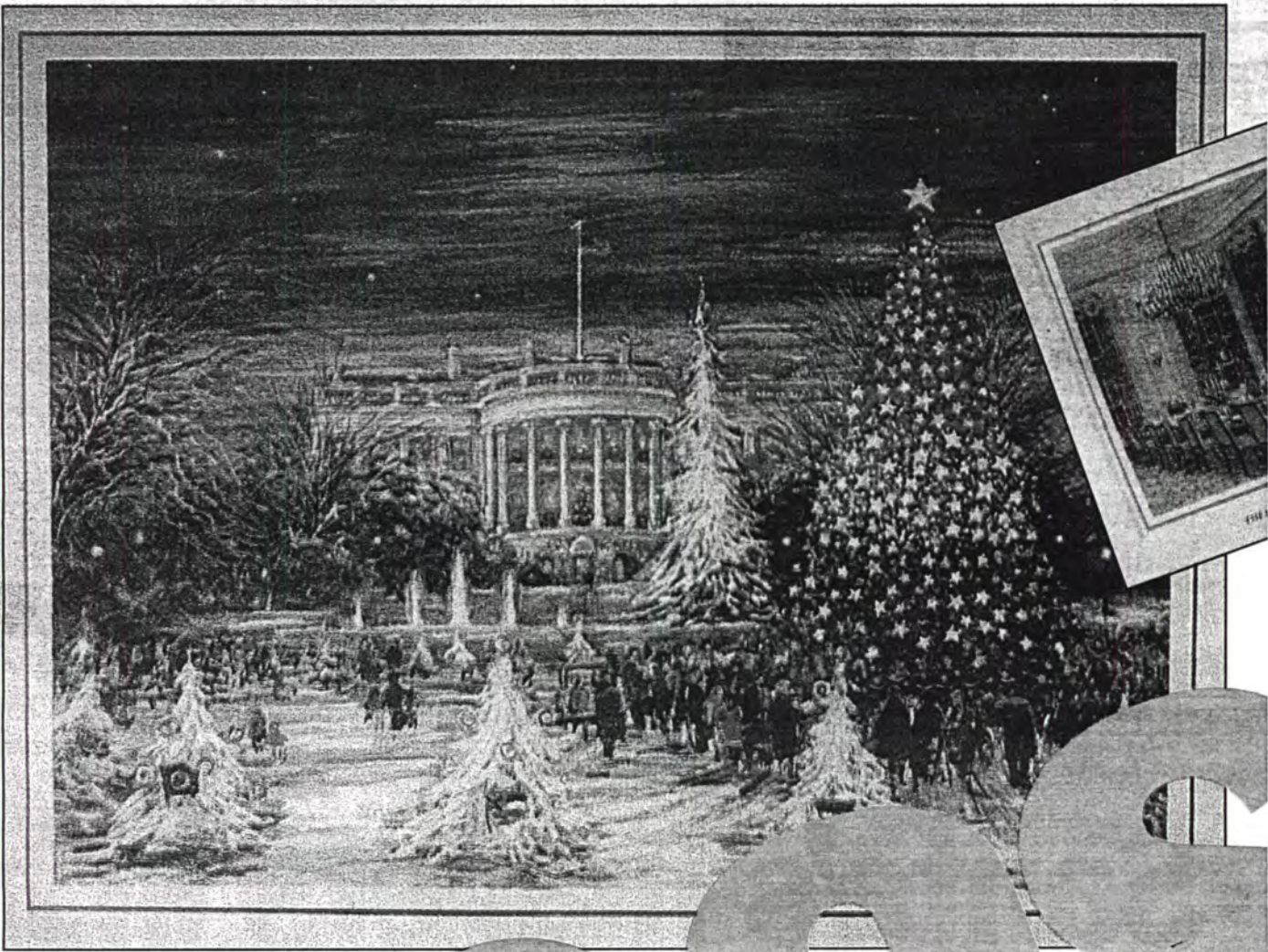
Head florist Nancy Clarke checks a flower arrangement in the flower shop located in the basement of the residence.

The first family's staff mails out lots of invitations — for up to 10 official functions a week. Close to 60,000 guests are received and entertained each year. Often, guests are greeted by the president and first lady at twilight, when the Entrance Hall's stone columns throw long shadows across the red-carpeted, marble floor. The large, formal East Room comes alive with dances, concerts, weddings and special ceremonies. The golden-hued State Dining Room seats 140 and is adorned with exquisite candelabras and tapestries.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The 1992 holiday card from President George Bush and his family is a painted outdoor scene that includes the National Christmas Tree in the foreground. This year's holiday card (right) is a painting of the White House State Dining Room. In 1993, President and Mrs. Clinton (third from right) became one of the few presidential couples to use their photograph on a greeting card.



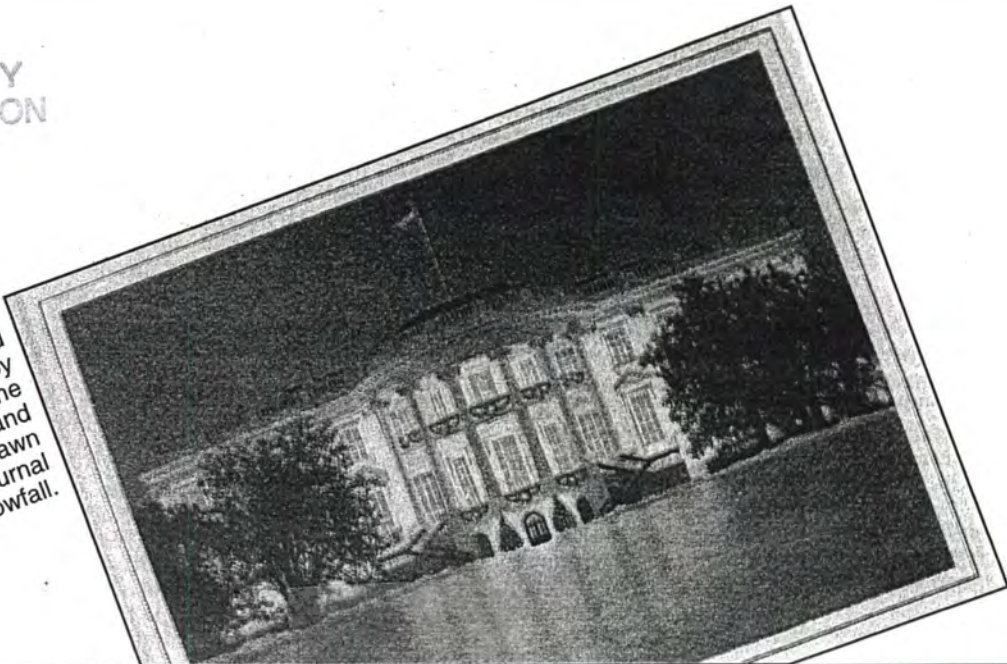
Photos by Barbara Davidson/The Washington Times

Send

May this be a very special Christmas for on

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

The Clintons' 1997 Christmas card shows a painting by Kay Jackson of the White House and the South Lawn under a nocturnal snowfall.



By Christine Montgomery
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998

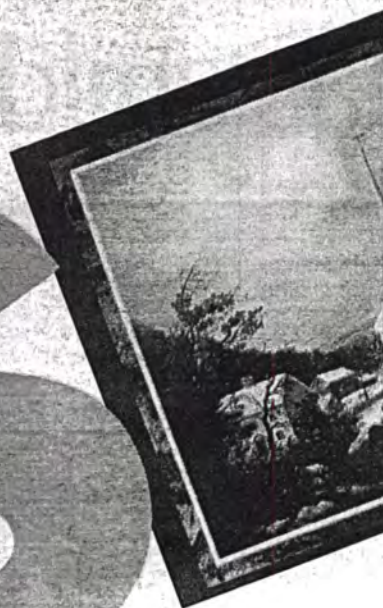
THE WASHINGTON TIMES



The White House, New Dining Room, 1987



The White House, The State Dining Room, 1987



Christmas greetings from The White House

and all

December, Richard Wightman neatly arranges the political messages of Christmases past on a bookshelf in his living room. The White House holiday card collection, which began with President Nixon and continues through the Clinton administration, has 25 presidential Christmas greetings in all, each a stock reminder of his days as a White House correspondent for Fairchild Publications.

Wightman covered the White House during Lyndon B. Johnson's tenure and stayed through Ronald Reagan's early years. When pressed for his age, he only admits to being "old but not senile."

Mr. Wightman got on the presidential mailing list early in his career and continues to get cards almost every year — although sometimes, he says, they don't arrive until January.

This White House tradition began decades ago with President and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the first first couple to mass-mail a holiday greeting. Each White House occupant since then has followed suit, sending cards to reflect his personality and Christmas spirit.

"Nixon is more imaginative," Mr. Wightman says, noting that the cards

from Mr. Nixon include one that bears an 18th-century depiction of the White House by N.C. Wyeth. "Ford is the only one who did not have pictures of the White House. Clinton, his messages are more personal and less formal," he says.

All six Clinton cards include a notation on the back that doesn't appear on any earlier ones in Mr. Wightman's collection: "Paid for by the Democratic National Committee."

It cost about \$300,000 to make and mail some 500,000 cards this year, according to DNC press secretary

Melissa Ratcliff. That includes greetings from the president and from Vice President Al Gore. For this year's card, Clinton commissioned artist Ray Ellis to re-create the famous State Dining Room. He had to use color photographs of the room, as the original curtains and carpets weren't installed by the time he was painting.

The note (a tad happier years past) says: "Merry Christmas and joy be to you and yours throughout the year. Bill and Hillary Clinton." Every White House card ends with the president's name and the year.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1998

THE WASHINGTON TIMES



In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford and his family chose this Christmas card depicting a winter church scene.

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nd 200,000

Martha's
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Richard Wightman poses with two of the 25 White House Christmas cards he has collected over the years.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION