

FILE -

Local Artists
(Christmas 98)

290TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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December 30, 1998, Wednesday, AM cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 323 words

HEADLINE: Georgian gets chance to decorate 'the people's White House'

DATELINE: VIDALIA, Ga.

BODY:

After waiting 12 years to decorate the White House for Christmas, Andy Thompson finally got the chance. Then he was invited back to do New Year's decorations.

Thompson, who works at his family's Pearl Price Florist in Vidalia, was one of 37 florists chosen by the White House for this year's Christmas decorations.

He worked 12 hours a day from Nov. 30 to Dec. 6 decorating the Oval Office, the cabinet room and the office of presidential secretary Betty Currie. He also helped decorate the Blue Room and the rose garden colonnade.

This week, he returned to Washington to help decorate for a New Year's Eve event.

"I would've been thrilled if they'd let me mop the floor of the place," said Thompson, 41, who had applied for the job every year since 1986.

He said decorating the Oval Office was a memorable highlight.

"I don't care what your politics are, to be in that place where so much of our history has taken place... It's the people's White House," he said.

While in Washington, Thompson got to meet Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State Madeline Albright and, unexpectedly, President Clinton.

"He asked where I was from. I said, 'Vidalia, Georgia.' He said, 'Is that the onion place?'" he recalled.

"All I could think was that I had just shaken the hand of the president of the United States with two knives, a pair of scissors and pruning shears in my pockets. I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm armed!'"

When he first applied for the job during the Reagan administration, Thompson said he was told the same decorators are used each year for security reasons. He also learned that applicants often wait years for a vacancy.

"I had people tell me, 'They're not gonna pick some old hayseed like you,'" Thompson recalled. But he kept applying anyway.

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In August, the call came. A White House staff member asked if he was still interested in decorating the house for Christmas.

"I said, 'Are you kidding?'" he said.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 30, 1998

345TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Richmond Times Dispatch

December 30, 1998, Wednesday, CITY EDITION

SECTION: TRI-CITIES PLUS, Pg. N-2

LENGTH: 579 words

HEADLINE: KNIT WITS ON WHITE HOUSE TREE;
HAT-AND-MITTEN SET AMONG 110 OTHERS

BYLINE: Wes Allison; Times-Dispatch Staff Writer

BODY:

The Knit Wit Knitting Guild has made warm sweaters for orphans in overseas, lap robes for aging war veterans in Richmond, and hats for newborns in Richmond.

Now, the group is helping America celebrate Christmas.

The Knit Wits were among hundreds of artisans from across the United States asked to contribute ornaments to the national Christmas tree at the White House.

On Dec. 18, six members of the group traveled to Washington and took advantage of an invitation for the artisans to tour the White House to see their crafts on display.

Judith Spindler, a longtime Knit Wit and retired Chesterfield County elementary school teacher, said there were no refreshments, but they were given maps so they could find their hat-and-mitten set.

"We knew it was on the north side, bottom part of the tree. But with the tree being so big, the bottom part was over our heads," she said. "That Christmas tree was so tall, not even with the panoramic camera could I get the whole tree."

The group's president, Marga Fowler, and member Debra Bucklen, knitted the child-size pair of mittens and hat.

They had used the guild's colors, royal blue and white, so they would show up against the green boughs of the balsam spruce from Wisconsin, but "that tree was so chock-full you couldn't see any of the tree - you couldn't see the greenery," said Spindler, who lives in Chester.

At the White House, Fowler learned there were 110 such hat-and-mitten sets from chapters of The Knitting Guild of America from around the country, as well as snowmen of various materials and painted wooden figures.

Three of the snowmen were contributed by artists at Virginia Commonwealth University: associate craft professor John Hawthorne, craft professor Susan Iverson and Renee Rendine, a graduate student in sculpture.

When the tree comes down, the handicrafts will become part of a permanent display of the Smithsonian Institution.

The Richmond Times Dispatch, December 30, 1998

Fowler said the social secretary of the White House contacted the Knit Wits and other knitting guilds in the summer, asking them to knit mittens and a hat, as the letter put it, to "capture the warmth a child would enjoy on a cold winter's day."

They were admonished to keep the project a secret until First Lady Hillary Clinton announced the theme, Winter Wonderland, earlier this month.

The opportunity was a high point for the Knit Wits, a group of about 20 women from Chesterfield County, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, Goochland and Richmond who meet monthly to knit.

"It was beautiful," Fowler said. "We just had a great time. The ornaments and the decorations at the White House were just beautiful, and we met people from other guilds from other states who flew in just to see their items."

She and Spindler were joined in Washington by fellow members Emily Filippi, Ruth Comstock, Yu Mei Wu and Christel McCullaugh. Members of the group range in age from their 30s to their 60s. They've been meeting 10 years and have knitted literally thousands of items for the American Red Cross, which distributes them to the needy from Southwest Virginia to the former Soviet republics to South Africa.

And the hours they spend with needles and yarn are countless.

"We carry our knitting around with us," said Spindler, who worked on a potholder en route to Washington and is unable to remember when she didn't knit.

"It's our way of doing our charity work. We don't have the money to give, so we give of our time and expertise."

LOAD-DATE: December 31, 1998

31ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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THE FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

December 20, 1998, Sunday ARLINGTON AM EDITION

SECTION: HOMETOWN STAR-GRAND PRAIRIE; Pg. 31

LENGTH: 381 words

HEADLINE: Arlington painters invited to a White House Christmas

BYLINE: Abbi Hertz, Star-Telegram Writer

BODY:

Skaters, skiers, sleds and snowmen adorn both large and small Christmas trees in the White House. The decorations made by artists across 50 states weigh less than four ounces each, but earned their creators invitations to a White House Holiday tour.

Eleven members from Arlington's Bluebonnet Tole and Decorative Painters were invited to view the trees and ornaments Friday afternoon. All artists who created ornaments for this year's theme, I'm Dreaming of a White House Christmas, were from the Society of Decorative Painters and the Knitting Guild of America.

Artists received invitations only two weeks ago, so Yvonne Lowrie was the only local member to attend. She and her husband flew to Washington D.C. to attend the party and to visit her sister.

At the group's annual Christmas party, Lowrie said she hoped to find her jumping skater ornament at the White House.

"I've been to the White House, but I've never been at Christmas," she said. "And I've definitely never seen my ornament hanging there. "

She said she also is looking forward to meeting other decorative painters.

Lowrie said this is the second time the 75-member group has had the opportunity to make ornaments for the White House, but this is the first invitation they have received to view the ornaments. In past years, ornaments have been made for the Vice President's Mansion, the Library of Congress, the state capitol and the Smithsonian Museum.

Members of the group who made decorations are: Lowrie, Margaret Schroeder, Pat Waymon, Angie Grimm, Libby Conant, Mary Crabb, Muriel Havran, Carol-Lee Cisco, Diane Goodwin, June Weddle and Connie Alexander.

More members would have liked to attend, but said invitations came too late.

"We're not going to get to go, but at least we'll have the invitation to look at and know we were invited," Crabb said.

THE FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM December 20, 1998, Sunday

This is the organization's 25th year in Arlington and it is the oldest chapter in the nation. Members come from across the area but meet in Arlington at the Vandergriff Community Center six times a year for daylong workshops.

"We learn about decorative painting methods, including lights and darks to create realism," Lowrie said. "We also create folk art. "

PHOTO(S): Brian Lawdermilk

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998

42ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

December 20, 1998, Sunday, VOICES NORTH EDITION

SECTION: METRO, Pg. VN-2

LENGTH: 1452 words

HEADLINE: LACE MAKER FASHIONS SNOWMAN FOR WHITE HOUSE TREE

BYLINE: JENNIFER KISSEL

BODY:

Several decades ago in her native Pescocostanzo, Italy, Antonella DiIanni could pass a quiet evening by sitting on her mother's front stoop and listening to a sound similar to hundreds of delicate wooden chimes tinkling in the breeze. The almost-musical sound was made as DiIanni and the women of the village manipulated wooden bobbins that clicked together as nimble fingers braided and wove linen threads, creating intricate pieces of lace.

The lace makers in DiIanni's native village northeast of Rome still sell their work to a large tourist population. But the art of bobbin lace making is dying because young women no longer seem interested in learning the centuries-old art their ancestors had perfected.

When DiIanni was in her 20s and moved to Pittsburgh's Bloomfield section in the early 1960s, she brought with her a love for the lace. Her intent was to stay here for a year or so with her father, an American citizen, then return to Milan to dressmaking school. Marriage kept her in Pittsburgh, though, and she lent her seamstress talents to Mary Bean's and Maxine's, former dress shops on Wood Street, Downtown. Later, the Monroeville resident worked for Horne's and now for Adele's in Squirrel Hill.

Over the years, she has created exquisite lace pieces such as table runners, doilies, lace collars and napkins. Because of the time involved in making a piece and the high price it demands, she does not sell her work here.

DiIanni recently was invited to create a snowman ornament, using the art of bobbin lace, for the Blue Room Christmas tree in the White House. The theme of this year's tree is "Winter Wonderland." Six traditional artisans were chosen from each state to make decorations for the tree.

Her snowman is almost 12 inches tall. Its body is burgundy and white satin, with 25 lace snowflakes of varying sizes and designs sewn around it. The green scarf, black hat, eyes and nose also are lace. DiIanni estimates that she worked about 60 hours on the assembly, in addition to creating the pattern. The lace hat alone took eight hours. The snowman will remain the property of the White House after the holidays.

DiIanni and her son, Michael, were scheduled to attend an official tour Friday of the White House. Correspondent Jennifer Kissel recently visited with DiIanni in her home, decorated with DiIanni's watercolor paintings and lace creations. They spoke about the ornament and about DiIanni's lifetime of learning the art of bobbin lace making.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 20, 1998

When the invitation to make the ornament came in my mail, I was in Italy. By the time I saw the invitation, the date to accept had passed. I called to decline, but I was told I still could accept the offer. I felt I did not have enough time to devote to the ornament, but after I said "no," I could not sleep at night. My son, Michael, encouraged me to reconsider, saying not everyone has this opportunity.

I thought, "I have never done anything special for this country." This was my chance to give something back. So I called the White House again and I was given extra time to make the ornament.

I worked on the ornament on my days off. I got the idea for the design from looking at the cover of a book dedicated to my father, Luigi Zappa, a builder and a stone artist. The book is called "Cristalli di Neve in Una Trina," which loosely translates to "Snowflakes in Trim."

The snowman's hat was the first hat I ever made, and it took me about eight hours. His scarf took about six hours, and each snowflake took one and a half to two hours.

Like the pattern for the snowman, the designs I use are my own or those passed down through my family. I never work from a book. I do not like to work from a photocopy because there is too much detail that cannot be seen. Instead, it is best to work from a design drawn on good, thick paper, with little fine detail.

After World War II, when money was tight and good paper was difficult to find in Italy, we took an original design, pressed it to the window so light shone through, traced the pattern onto waxed paper, then glued it to cloth or layers of paper.

It is difficult to share designs, because everyone's control of the bobbin is different. The thread is so fine that if I pull tighter than someone else when I am using her pattern, the piece is ruined.

The thread I use is fine linen that I get from New York. It has a nice luster and stays crisp. I wind the thread around the bobbins by hand, although in this country, many people do it by machine. I can do it just as quickly by hand, because that's how I learned.

The bobbins are simple, thin wooden spindles, about 5 inches long and 3/8 inch thick with notched ends. In the United States bobbins are machine-made, but in Pescocostanzo, the lace makers still like to use the bobbins made by the local artisans to keep the tradition.

I pin the pattern to a pillow. I pin small areas of the pattern at a time, placing the pins through the design into the pillow.

Then I begin by hanging the bobbins by their threads on the pinheads. Depending on the pattern, I start with four bobbins and then can use any number I want. For example, one type of netting I make takes about 42 bobbins just to make a 1 1/4-inch width of lace.

I can hold only about 12 bobbins at a time. I use more bobbins in a loose part of the design, and fewer bobbins in a tighter part. The key is to keep

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the tension on the bobbins smooth as I weave the thread around the pins.

Belgian lace is made using the same techniques, but the Belgian bobbins are fancier, and the bobbins aren't held in the hand. I need to feel the bobbins in hand and hear the sound so that I can control the tension.

The women of Pescocostanzo perfected the art of bobbin lace making. Many years ago, this lace was thought of as peasant lace. Needle lace, done in Burano, Italy, was considered the lace of the elite, done by noblewomen. But the women of my town refined the bobbin lace so much that it is now considered just as fine. The lace was used for tablecloths and linens, and to adorn dresses and priests' robes.

The town is known for the lace and as being an artisan town, where artists make embroidery, rugs and a type of delicate gold jewelry. It is very beautiful and many of the 2,500 or so people are artisans. In August and December, tourists come from all over to see an exhibition of the artists' pieces.

When I was growing up, almost all women made the lace as a second income for the family. The lace was like an industry for the town. There were people from my town who traveled, taking orders for the lace that we women filled. Because it is so expensive, the townspeople could not afford it, but it was sold all over Europe.

For example, a small doily, about 6 to 10 inches in diameter, might sell for \$ 500 if it is well done. A tablecloth would sell for thousands of dollars, although people don't seem to attempt the large and complicated pieces anymore.

I started making lace when I was 7, attending private instruction for two hours each day and, when I got older, a government-run school. I wanted to learn dressmaking, and attended design school. But after the war, I needed to continue making lace for income for my family.

There are 15 steps to learn the basics, and another seven, called "the sequence of perfection," needed to become an advanced lace maker. When I was young, to reach a certain level we had to be able to do at least a meter of work for each step. We made something useful, not just a piece to throw away. And for the higher steps, we usually made at least a pillowcase or table runner. Today, students need only do 10 inches, and they almost always rely on a book instead of working from memory.

When I demonstrate the lace making, people will say, "Please teach me." But it's not that easy. It takes a long time to learn, and many years to become good. Now tourists in my hometown will pay for the "thrill" of making lace. They pay for many lessons, but get discouraged after one or two because they realize how difficult it is.

In my town, people do not consider this a craft; they consider it a traditional art. A craft one can learn in an hour, and produce the same result. In this type of work, it takes a year or more just to learn the basics.

I returned to school in Pescocostanzo this summer to refresh my skills. There was a young woman teaching who was very good. She said she wished all of her students had such passion for the lace. The art is disappearing, even in my hometown. It is not easy to transfer to the new generation the love for the

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 20, 1998

lace, because most of the secrets were passed down orally and through practice, much practice.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO (3), PHOTO: Robert J. Pavuchak/Post-Gazette: Above Antonella Dilanni shows; the bobbin lace Stelline that gave her the idea to make snowflakes for the; White House ornament.; PHOTO: Left, Bobbin lace made by Dilanni.; PHOTO: Below, the snowman ornament made by Dilanni for the White House; Christmas tree.

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998

53RD STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Times-Picayune

December 20, 1998 Sunday, ORLEANS

SECTION: LIVING; Pg. E3

LENGTH: 552 words

HEADLINE: HELLO, DOLLIES!

BYLINE: By David Cuthbert

BODY:

This is one Christmas Barbara Trevigne isn't likely to forget. She was asked to design a doll to decorate the White House Christmas tree in the Blue Room (which may be a little bluer than usual this year) and attend the holiday tour where the tree would be unveiled. The theme for the tree was snowmen, "and whatever we did was supposed to represent our culture," Trevigne said. "So I created a little Creole snow person, with a gold lame tignon with feathers, a gold shawl, a red crepe skirt with little rosettes and a crocheted bag. I call her Madame Zoline. Actually, she looks something like a cross-dressing Mr. Bingle!"

The front room of Trevigne's house overflows with dolls of all sorts, both those she's created (an African shaman, who's due to become part of a CAC exhibit, Sophronia, who wears glasses and carries her own bebe) and those she's collected (a standing china bisque doll with a movable head and a pouty expression). A gaily painted Ya-Ya chair looks right at home, with a back that forms a wildly grinning face, while a mannequin named Madame Francine preens in a corner, sporting a black feather boa. In another corner, a small chest of drawers overflows with wigs, costumes and memorabilia. "I have a whimsical house," says Trevigne.

A clinical social worker by profession, Trevigne is also an actress, playwright, storyteller and self-taught artist.

"When I was little, I used to make dolls," Trevigne said, "and about 10 years ago, I started making them again, and they all seemed to have stories to tell about growing up in New Orleans; about going to Corpus Christi church or picking up bottles to sell so you'd have money to go to the Circle show. We had a Greek man in our neighborhood who made 'hand suckers,' a hard candy in the shape of a hand that you'd lick.

"One of my dolls would have a can-can slip, the type you starched so your skirt would stick out, another would be a first communion doll. That doll and another I did are on permanent exhibit now at the old capitol building in Baton Rouge. That's how I got the White House invitation. Maida Owens of the State Folklife Center recommended me. I'm in the Folk Artist's Tent at Jazzfest, and I exhibit with Stella Jones at her gallery.

"My baby dolls evolved into voodoo dolls, which is natural, because I play Marie Laveau a lot, I always do her during Black History Month and for lectures and conventions. Now, for the Christmas Crazy Quilt, I play her at hotels, interacting with other historical characters. I've studied Marie, I've even

The Times-Picayune, December 20, 1998

done a family tree and discovered that she, Thomy Lafon and Sister Henriette DeLisle all had a common ancestor.

"I love dispelling myths, and telling people things they didn't know about Marie. All her symbols came from the Catholic church; she went to church every day. Her voodoo came from the African and Indian knowledge of healing herbs, their knowledge of the alignment between God and Earth. She lived on Rampart Street, worked for prison reform and the outlawing of public executions.

"When I play her, I am her!" As if to prove the point, Trevigne brought out a new Christmas ornament she'd made: "My Christmas chicken feet!" she said, displaying actual painted chicken feet, tied with a green ribbon and attached to a red feather.

Holiday gris-gris!

GRAPHIC: Barbara Trevigne's 'Creole Snow Person' jazzes up the White House Christmas Tree. 2 STAFF PHOTOS BY STEPHEN FORSTER

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COLUMN: CATCHING UP

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998

118TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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December 17, 1998, Thursday, BC cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 373 words

HEADLINE: Nebraskaland Feature

BYLINE: By ANGELA HEYWOOD

BODY:

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP - Last summer, the Nebraska Arts Council asked Julie McCullough to send a snowman to Washington.

"I don't do anything normal," she said, "so I asked them if I could do a snowwoman."

McCullough was one of six Lincoln doll designers to make ornaments for this year's White House Christmas tree. Terri Larson, Toddy Madsen, Judy Crockett, Shelley Thornton and Reida Wrenholt are the others.

The Snow Queen, McCullough's creation, is a big-bosomed, glittery doll with a carrot nose, purple crown and white lace dress covered with pearls and crystals. McCullough said she spent a week making the voluptuous, 14-inch tree ornament.

White House officials invited 300 dollmakers to decorate this year's 20-foot tree. Designers received information about the event in July and had to send their decorations to Washington by Nov. 1.

Each year, White House officials choose a different substance to be used in making ornaments, McCullough said. In the past, artists have made decorations out of embroidery and hand-carved wood. This year, the material was cloth.

McCullough keeps busy with her shop, Magic Threads, which she has operated in the Burkholder Project for 11 years.

The store is filled with completed dolls, fabrics, patterns, threads and pins. Glittery fish, witch, dragon, rocket and flamingo dolls range in price from \$ 25 to \$ 1,000. The Snow Queen's prototype is on sale for \$ 150.

McCullough sells her patterns in more than 300 domestic and foreign stores. She often travels to teach her dollmaking techniques.

McCullough, who has been making dolls for 25 years, started the Mad Doll Makers of Lincoln five years ago. The club, to which all six women belong, now has 30 members.

McCullough said she was excited when she was invited to submit an ornament for this year's "Winter Wonderland" at the White House.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

"It's a nice honor," she said. "You're part of the Smithsonian collection this way."

Regardless of her place in history, McCullough is glad the news is out in the open now. She had to keep it bottled up for a while.

"We weren't allowed to tell anybody the theme, because Hillary was going to announce it," she said with a smirk. "I'm sure that's highly anticipated in Washington."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 17, 1998

145TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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The Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY.)

December 16, 1998, Wednesday EE/EAST END

SECTION: NEIGHBORHOODS Pg.01n

LENGTH: 940 words

HEADLINE: Three Louisvillians create ornaments for White House trees

BYLINE: MARTHA ELSON, The Courier-Journal

SOURCE: STAFF

BODY:

Holiday visitors to the White House in Washington, D.C., will find a warm, fuzzy snowman with a striped felt scarf among the ornaments hanging on the Blue Room Christmas tree.

But they won't find one anywhere else.

He's a one-of-a-kind guy who started off with a 10pound bag of Merino wool from Australia that became felt in Vicki Danser-Fischer's basement in Old Brownsboro Place in eastern Jefferson County.

Danser-Fischer, who is a "felter," made her snowman almost entirely from handmade felt - except for two felt-covered styrofoam balls and the insides of the "twig" arms that he's using to hold on his felt hat.

The snowman is the kind of novel creation the White House looks for every year when it invites artists from around the country to make ornaments for the White House Christmas trees.

Other Louisville and Kentucky artists have participated in the past. This year, DanserFischer, who has a degree in fiber surface design from the University of Louisville, and two other Louisville artists are among six Kentuckians who were asked to participate.

The other local artists are decorative painter Henny Long of Spring Valley in eastern Jefferson County and soft sculpturist Audrey Schulz of St. Matthews. Schulz did a snowman riding a race horse; Long painted a miniature wooden and wrought iron sled in a blue Delft style made famous in her native Netherlands.

The "winter wonderland" theme for the decorations was announced last week by first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, according to Debby McGinn of the White House Social Office, and all three artists are invited to a White House tour Friday. Danser-Fischer and Schulz plan to go.

When Danser-Fischer saw simply "The White House, Washington D.C." on the envelope containing her invitation to do the ornament last summer, she almost threw it out. "I get junk mail that looks more official than that," she said.

But it really was from the White House, and read:

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY.), December 16, 1998

'The beauty and grandeur of the White House is evident every day of the year. However, it is during the holidays that the President's Home is transformed into a beautiful reflection of the spirit and joy of the season.'

In the case of Danser-Fischer and Schulz, the White House asked the governor's spouse of each state to choose the artists. The White House also asked for recommendations from the National Society of Decorative Artists, which chose Long, who is also a portraitist and president of the Kentuckiana Decorative Artists.

Long also was asked to make a White House ornament two years ago, and painted a partridge in a pear tree. She also painted a porcelain ornament with a scene of Mount Vernon that is part of the Smithsonian Institution's collection in Washington.

Long's house is full of boxes, tables, fire screens, chairs, wooden Santas, wreaths and other items that she has hand-painted with floral, folk art and other designs. A wooden chair, purchased for \$ 1 at a yard sale, is painted with a Russian folk floral design and is in the living room. A wooden train with four cars was purchased for \$ 2 and has been painted. She teaches classes here and in Europe and her work is featured in painting magazines. She's also won first-place ribbons in the Kentucky State Fair.

'You can go to yard sales and pick up something very inexpensive and make it look like a \$ 1,000 piece,' she said. 'You can paint anything at all to match any interior.'

Danser-Fischer is interested in demonstrating how versatile felt can be. She buys the raw wool through a U.S. supplier and creates the felt from long, soft tufts that she washes, rolls and presses at the bathroom sink using a bamboo blind.

Then she embroiders, dyes and paints the felt - often with pre-Columbian, American Indian, African and other motifs - and transforms it into everything from mittens and earrings to chair pads, bowls and vests.

She's also been working on a felt Christmas stocking and embroidered star ornaments, in addition to other items for a one-woman show planned in January at Campbellsville University. She has won ribbons at the St. James Art Show, and her work is sold at the Louisville Visual Art Association's gallery in the Galleria.

Both Danser-Fischer's and Schulz's work have been shown in the annual Kentucky Crafted show sponsored by the state.

Since the early 1980s, Schulz has made hundreds of realistic-looking, soft-sculpture fabric horses and other animals that have been sold or distributed all over the world, she said. They also are in the collections of LG&E and other corporations. Among the places her copyright creations are sold are Bittner's and the Kentucky Art and Craft Gallery.

'Each and every thing I create is one of a kind,' Schulz said. 'Everyone that sees them . . . always say(s) they're very unique and whimsical. They have a character all of their own.'

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, KY.), December 16, 1998

In 1993, Schulz was among a larger number of Kentucky artists organized through the state's crafts marketing office to make White House ornaments. That time, she made an 'angel horse' - like a Pegasus.

The White House ornaments are not returned. When people ask Schulz if she feels bad to part with her works, she says, 'I don't feel bad at all. I like to create a new thing and make it better.'

Caption: BY MARY ANN LYONS, THE COURIER-JOURNAL
Artist Vicki Danser-Fischer cut out felt stars in her home studio.

Caption: BY DURELL HALL JR., THE COURIER-JOURNAL
Audrey Schulz, of St. Matthews, made a snowman riding a horse.

Caption: BY MARY ANN LYONS, THE COURIER-JOURNAL
Henny Long showed off one of her painted-wood-and-fabric designs.

GRAPHIC: Vicki Danser-Fischer's snowman is one of a kind.

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: December 17, 1998

149TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Kansas City Star Co.
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

December 16, 1998 Wednesday METROPOLITAN EDITION

SECTION: ZONE/LEE'S SUMMIT; Pg. 8

LENGTH: 1056 words

HEADLINE: Local ornaments adorn state Christmas tree

BYLINE: RUSS PULLEY, Staff Writer

BODY:

Rita O'Hara of rural Lee's Summit had so much fun and success as coordinator of Missouri's state Christmas tree in Washington D.C., she plans to head the project again next year.

In the Capitol, 56 live Colorado Blue Spruces that surround the national tree form a "Pathway of Peace" on the Ellipse between the White House and the Washington Monument. Since 1981 representatives from each state have contributed ornaments to the trees.

O'Hara volunteered to be coordinator this year. She has a business producing fired-clay gift items. She donated 50 ornaments - of two designs she created especially for the tree - and traveled to Washington to place the decorations on Missouri's tree and on Dec. 9 attend the lighting ceremony.

At the ceremony O'Hara heard singers Tony Bennett and Jose Feliciano. President Bill Clinton made remarks and helped flip the switch to light the national tree along with a Brownie, a Cub Scout and baseball star Sammy Sosa.

Her ornaments from this year's tree go to a Washington children's hospital for decorations next year and then will be sold as a fund-raiser for that institution.

One of O'Hara's designs is a clay angel with a poem on it. The other is a clay oval. Both refer to blue birds and dogwood trees, the state bird and tree. Each is scented.

O'Hara also produced others to be sold in area gift shops.

That venture has done better than expected, she said, with orders for about 500 of each piece.

Next year O'Hara hopes to find several other artists to help make ornaments, and possibly some quilters to produce fabric pieces. And she plans to do research on state history, and if possible commemorate the anniversary of some significant Missouri event.

O'Hara will be signing and personalizing items from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at Barbara's, a gift shop, at 215 S.E. Missouri 291, Lee's Summit.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, December 16, 1998, Wednesday

GRAPHIC: Photos (2)

, These ornaments were produced by a rural Lee's Summit woman for the Missouri state Christmas tree in Washington D.C.; Rita O'Hara is pictured here in Washington with the state tree and her ornaments.

LOAD-DATE: December 16, 1998

158TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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THE ORLANDO SENTINEL

December 16, 1998 Wednesday, VOLUSIA

SECTION: LOCAL & STATE; Pg. D1

LENGTH: 546 words

HEADLINE: KNAUGHTY KNITTERS' HANDIWORK WILL BE ON DISPLAY IN THE WHITE HOUSE

BYLINE: By Bo Poertner of The Sentinel Staff

BODY:

This is a naughty Christmas story, sort of.

It's about a group of women who do wondrous things with knitting needles and rolls of yarn. They happen to call themselves the Knaughty Knitters.

The name was chosen during the organizational meeting in DeLand more than three years ago, beating out names such as the Knotty Knitters and the Knitpickers.

"There was just a whole list of names. Then somebody mentioned Naughty Knitters and it stuck. And we decided to spell it with a K," said President Jean Ritchey. "Our newsletter is the Knaughty Knitters Knews."

The 17 Knaughty Knitters have been a special group of volunteers for a long time. They use their time and talents to hand-knit items for the American Legion Auxiliary to give away at hospitals throughout Florida. Twice each year they knit dozens and dozens of hats for cancer patients facing chemotherapy, booties for premature babies, lap robes for wheelchair patients and other items.

Since August, the Knaughty Knitters have been part of an elite group of craftspersons - those who have been invited to produce ornaments for the Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House.

The invitation arrived at Ritchey's house in August, and the Knitters were asked to keep it secret.

"We're affiliated with the Knitting Guild of America. They probably got our name that way. But we don't know how we were selected," Ritchey said. "Maybe one or two organizations in the state were asked to do this. Artisans from all over the nation were asked to do it - glass blowers to needlepoint.

"We were not allowed to talk about it until now - until the official announcement came from Mrs. Clinton. She made the announcement about the Christmas theme at the White House, which is Winter Wonderland."

Ritchey was invited to tour the White House and see the tree this Friday and is allowed to take a member of her club. Names were thrown into a hat, and Lis Willis was the lucky one.

"We're just thrilled to death. The whole group is excited," Ritchey said.

Orlando Sentinel Tribune, December 16, 1998

"I'm still pinching myself," Willis said. She only joined the club in October and feels fortunate to get to represent her fellow members in Washington.

The White House invitation came with instructions. The knitters were to produce a child's stocking cap, size 4, with a pair of matching mittens dangling beneath it on a gold cord so that the shape resembled a bell.

But the chosen theme troubled the knitters at first. "The theme was limiting for Florida. There is no snow or icicles - those things you think of as winter wonderland," she said. "But we thought, we have alligators and palm trees, so why not go that way? So we did."

After talking it over, the knitters designed a cap with green alligators wearing red Santa stocking caps around the base of the hat. At the top of the hat, and on the gloves, are palm trees with Christmas lights. Palm fronds with lights extend from the peak of the white cap.

Seven club members worked on the project - Ritchey and Willis, Cynthia Thorn, Lou Rankin, Wendy Lechner, Doris Smith and Linda Graves.

Meeting the White House deadline - Oct. 30 - was difficult. Willis was a naughty knitter. She said she worked on the project four hours on the last day and finished one hour before the club meeting.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

COLUMN: ACROSS VOLUSIA

LOAD-DATE: December 16, 1998

160TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 P.G. Publishing Co.
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

December 16, 1998, Wednesday, EAST EDITION

SECTION: METRO, Pg. E-1

LENGTH: 648 words

HEADLINE: FOLK FESTIVITIES AT WHITE HOUSE

BYLINE: TIM MEANS, POST-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

BODY:

The Rankin Junior Tamburitzans spent Sunday playing their Croatian music at a holiday gathering at the president's home.

As the Christmas season approaches, it is the custom for staff members at the White House to invite their family and friends to a holiday tour of the presidential mansion.

The guests can stroll from one exquisite room to another, sampling hors d'oeuvres and taking in the historical and present-day flavor of our nation's most honored home.

On Sunday, as the guests chatted, nibbled and mingled in the Gold Room, upbeat strains of OldWorld Croatian folk music circled the room, adding to the festive atmosphere.

For 25 young performers of the Rankin Junior Tamburitzans, the chance to play at the White House Sunday was the culmination of an exciting but demanding week of rehearsals, travel and fun.

"It was long, but really pretty nice," said Nathan Ellis, 16, of Swissvale. "The decorations were just gorgeous. There was a gigantic Christmas tree in the Blue Room."

Ellis has been playing bass for the group since he was 12, but has been a member of the Junior Tamburitzans since age 5.

"My grandfather was a full-blooded Croatian and he got my mother started when she was a kid. Basically, it's like a big family," he said. "All in all, it is just fun."

Clair Ellis, Nathan's father, helped arrange the White House performance by inviting U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle to one of the group's performances during the summer. In turn, the Swissvale Democrat submitted the group's name on a list for consideration. This year, the local troupe was among 27 to play for the staff party on Sunday.

The Rankin Junior Tamburitzans are one of about 20 similar groups in the Pittsburgh area.

The group started in 1959 as the Rankin Kolo Club. Kolo is a Croatian term that means "circle dance." Five years later, it changed to its present name

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, December 16, 1998

when instruction on the tambura, a family of mostly string instruments from eastern Europe, was added.

In 1968, the group joined the Croatian Fraternal Union Junior Cultural Federation, which allows members to participate in yearly festivals sponsored by the federation throughout the United States, Canada, Croatia, Hungary and Bulgaria. They usually perform 15 to 20 times a year.

The musicians play a variety of stringed folk instruments that produce the unique and colorful sound. Included are the prim, the brac, the bulgarija, the cello and the upright bass.

The troupe usually includes singers, dancers and musicians, but only the musicians were invited to the White House.

"I'm really proud of these guys. They did a great job," said the group's music director, Aaron Skrbini.

"If they felt pressure, they never let on. But when we got on the bus at the hotel to go to the White House, it suddenly became really quiet."

Skrbini said the group held rehearsals for 10 consecutive days at the Rankin Croatian Home prior to Sunday's two 40-minute performances. At the White House, they played a selection of traditional Christmas songs and folk music including "Zupski," "Ples" and "Zestale."

"The coolest thing about any ethnic music is that it comes from the heart," Skrbini said. "The instruments are genuine, not synthesized. The songs are passed from generation to generation."

He said some of the folk songs trace back more than a century to their Croatian roots.

"It was exciting, but it was a really long day," said Annie Trichtinger, 16, of Squirrel Hill.

"I got up at 6 a.m., got on the bus at 8 a.m. We performed at 4 p.m. and got back home at about 3 a.m. It was an honor and I'm really glad we went."

Trichtinger plays the prim (pronounced "preem"), a mandolin-like stringed instrument.

Like her fellow Tammies, she values the group's connection to the past.

"I learn a lot about my heritage. It is important to know where you are from," she said.

An ethnic Christmas

GRAPHIC: PHOTOS (3), PHOTOS: Jeff Keeton/Scripps Howard News Service: The Rankin Junior; Tamburitizans perform Sunday in the East Room of the White House. At top and; below, Tiffany Bartina, 14, performs traditional eastern European music with; the group.; (page E-6) Michelle Spynda, 11, right, and Elyssa Poturich, 11, perform with; other members of the Rankin Junior Tamburitizans at the White House Sunday.

254TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 Bangor Daily News
BANGOR DAILY NEWS (BANGOR, MAINE)

December 12, 1998 Saturday

LENGTH: 566 words

HEADLINE: Hope artist's ornament hanging in White House
Woman's hand-felted craft represents piece of Maine

BYLINE: Tom Groening Of the NEWS Staff

BODY:

HOPE -- It seems others are more impressed than Pam Collins-White about the snowman tree ornament she made that is hanging this Christmas in the Blue Room at the White House.

"I've done four interviews this week, all for this stupid snowman," she said Friday, laughing.

This obviously humble woman even passed up a chance to brag to her 22-year-old daughter, Hillary, the last time she spoke with her on the telephone. Hillary found out through someone else of her mother's success, then asked about it, with some excitement.

Collins-White said she is especially bemused by the attention her snowman ornament is getting from the media because, in a way, she wasn't really selected for the honor.

A fellow crafter, weaver Morris David Dorenfeld, was contacted by Maine's first lady, Mary Herman. The White House had asked the spouses of the nation's governors to find six fiber artists in each of their states to submit ornaments. Since Dorenfeld didn't think his work was right for the job, he thought of Collins-White.

The White House was supposed to send out news releases announcing the local participants, but to date, no one in the local media has seen one.

Fuzzy, fiber hand-crafted animal figures are Collins-White's bread-and-butter work. The elephants, mice, pigs and rabbits are consistent in their charm: carefully shaped bodies, expressive little faces and cleverlysewn attire.

She and her husband left their hometown of Bristol, N.H., and settled in Maine 24 years ago. Her husband, Kevin White, said they turned to crafts as a way of making a living when his carpentry work dried up one winter.

White, an artist in his own right, sells hand-colored photographs. He said that at crafts shows the two attend together, collectors of his wife's work are always on hand. "The show opens and all these people rush in. "

Bangor Daily News, December 12, 1998 Saturday

Collins-White maintains a mailing list of 700 buyers. Those within 150 miles of a show are contacted by postcard, and enough come to scarf up all the figures she has made. "I've never had to advertise," she said.

She asks \$ 52 for her mice figures, and at the last show, she sold out. "They don't even look at the prices," she said.

The nationally distributed magazine Teddy Bear and Friends ran a feature story on Collins-White and her work in 1992 and, just this week, Teddy Bear Review interviewed her. The first story generated orders from all over the world: Australia, Japan and Austria.

The hand-felted ornament in the White House stands about 8 inches high. She crafted its body with three layers of wool, which were worked by hand with hot, soapy water to cause the fibers to interlock.

She put a red-and-black checked coat on the snowman, hoping to achieve a Maine look, which was encouraged in the letter from the White House describing the specifications.

"I couldn't get into it having a bird or a lobster," she said.

"I kept it simple. "

For all her self-deprecating humor, Collins-White admits to a little awe over her work being in the White House, where it will remain part of the permanent collection.

"I like to think of my snowman being where Abe Lincoln was. I like Abe," she said.

Though she has been invited to the White House Dec. 18, Collins-White won't be attending.

"No, it's my birthday. I choose to go out for dinner," she says.

GRAPHIC: Pam Collins-White of Hope presents some of her creations. The snowman (second from right) is similar to an ornament she made for the Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House. (NEWS Photo by Tom Groening)

LOAD-DATE: December 14, 1998

260TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Detroit News, Inc.
The Detroit News

December 12, 1998, Saturday

SECTION: Features; Pg. Pg. C1

LENGTH: 1352 words

HEADLINE: Fiddlers to the White House: Saline's high school musicians are ambassadors of bluegrass

BYLINE: By Tom Long / The Detroit News

BODY:

SALINE -- Fiddles fill the air, climbing, burning, reaching, shrieking, flying every which way toward hoe-down heaven.

It is a Friday night in December and 30 or so teen-agers are on stage in an old elementary school gymnasium. They're decked out in quasi-cowboy outfits, most of them sawing away on fiddles big and small while a few provide rhythm with guitar, mandolin, bass and a washboard.

The music is bluegrass, catchy and insistent. "Buffalo Gals," "Low Down Dirty Boy," "Orange Blossom Special." This is the Fiddlers Philharmonic, performing a free concert following this town's annual Christmas parade, and many of the players are decked out with holiday touches -- antlers growing out of their heads, lights twinkling on their bows, red stocking caps.

It's a small town moment. But on Dec. 21, by special invitation, these kids will be playing the White House.

For now, though, the show is moving along irresistibly. A couple of players put down their instruments and jump offstage to square dance in front of the crowd. Before long the crowd is square dancing too, mothers are swinging their babies around with glee, and people are clapping and yelling out "Yee-hah!"

Fiddlers Philharmonic was born and raised in Saline, which is just south of Ann Arbor. The group plays about 80 gigs a year, everything from Winnebago conventions to mall gatherings to minstrel wanderings through hospitals. Not to mention the annual gathering of the Antique Tractor and Engine Association.

But Fiddlers Philharmonic also has played with some of the biggest names in bluegrass music, played New York, Chicago, Florida, even traveled overseas to Scotland and Wales.

And when the bluegrass believers play the White House this month, it will be for the second time.

For now, though, they're pulling out all the stops for a free hometown show, acting giddy and smiling like a bunch of high school kids on a lark.

Which is, of course, precisely what they are.

The Detroit News, December 12, 1998

A small-town phenomenon

The roots of the Fiddlers Philharmonic are a ways from Saline.

"My family came up from Kentucky and Tennessee to work in the car factories in Detroit," says Bob Phillips, the founder and director of the Philharmonic. "They brought bluegrass with them."

And as young Bob grew, earned his degree at the University of Michigan and went off to teach music at Saline High School, he carried a love for bluegrass in his blood.

When he had children -- twin daughters Becky and Sarah, now 20, and Katy, 17, who is still part of the Philharmonic -- he decided to turn his living room jam sessions into a band, the Phillips Family Fiddlers. Which was so much fun that "their friends heard and wanted to play," says Phillips.

And thus, with the help of a community education program and lots of coaching from Phillips, the Philharmonic was born, going on five years ago.

"That first year, only ninth graders showed up to play because the older kids didn't think it was cool," says Phillips. But within a year, as the number of gigs and the group's popularity grew, teens were fighting to get in. Now there are plenty of middle school kids fiddling like crazy, hoping to audition to join the Philharmonic their freshman year.

"The only thing I'm sad about is that we don't have room for more kids," Phillips says.

But you can only squeeze so many kids on a bus, or into a corner of the White House, for that matter. There are currently 32 kids in the Philharmonic, and virtually all of them will be traveling to Washington this month for the two shows.

The Philharmonic was asked back to the White House this year after wowing last year's crowd. They'll be playing at special, private tours given to ... well, they don't know who, yet. Last year, it was senators and such, all of whom were supposed to keep moving in a line past the Philharmonic as the tour progressed.

Unfortunately, many people didn't want to keep moving when they reached the Fiddlers. Even the guys from the Secret Service were tapping their toes.

"People kept stopping to listen to us and it was backing things up so badly that they moved us," says veteran Fiddler Kari Low, a senior who's been in the group three years.

So they ended up in the East Room, under a picture of George Washington, with a tree on the left. It's where they expect to play again this month.

"There's a piano on the right side which you don't touch without checking with the Secret Service," Phillips stops to tell the Fiddlers during a rehearsal.

The Detroit News, December 12, 1998

"I almost got shot last year when I tried to move it," he says.

Taking it seriously

The kids in Fiddlers Philharmonic aren't just fiddling around. Phillips makes sure they work hard in practice so it doesn't appear they're working at all onstage.

At rehearsal he leads the band while playing mandolin, stopping midway through songs with criticisms.

"Your tempo," he tells the fiddlers, "has nothing to do with the tempo that we set over here," he says pointing to the rhythm section, trying to get everyone on the same page.

Later he concentrates on a specific set of chords with the guitarists. "Can I hear a little bit more rock and roll?" he asks. "Think a little more Eric Clapton or something.

"It's not a volume issue, it's an attack issue," he repeats after another take of the song. He picks up a fiddle and demonstrates the approach he wants. "It's just a rock and roll adaptation of Mozart."

These kids are playing bluegrass music filtered through Mozart and rock. Which might confuse some musicians, but not the Fiddlers.

"It's difficult to find a kind of music that we don't like," says Stephanie Birko, a freshman Fiddler. Most of the Fiddlers are in the school orchestra, and most of them listen to the rock spectrum that other teen-agers listen to.

But when they put on those cowboy hats, they are Fiddlers through and through.

4 years to the day

The Fiddlers Philharmonic is composed of achievers, no doubt about it. The group has an overall grade point average near 3.5. Many of them perform with the Michigan Youth Symphony. Some of them take dance lessons so they can look good cutting loose onstage. And the darn thing is so wholesome it makes clean-cut look dirty.

But there is a downside to being in the Fiddlers Philharmonic. It's only for students at Saline High School.

When you graduate, you're out.

Which means the end of an era for this year's seniors, most of whom are also classically trained.

"I'll probably play in an orchestra at college, but there's not many organizations like this around," says senior Kari Low. "It's kind of sad."

"It's hard to imagine life without fiddling," says Katy Phillips, Bob's daughter. She was a founding member of the group, having started when she was in eighth grade, and now she's looking at the same end her two older sisters had

The Detroit News, December 12, 1998

to face. "It's like a family, it really is."

"There's a lot of people from high school who you know you're just going to forget over the years," Kari says. "But I pretty much think this group is going to be lifelong friends."

And lifelong music lovers, hopefully.

For Bob Phillips, one of the great legacies of the Philharmonic is that formally trained musicians will have learned to have fun with music as well, by improvising and making it part of their daily life.

"There's not a lot of sitting around the living room playing music anymore," he says. "But these kids will sit around and jam anytime."

He's hoping that attitude will last through life.

And besides, how many musicians can say they got members of the Secret Service to tap their toes to bluegrass music?

Too few, probably.

Fiddlers Philharmonic

Formed: August 1994

Home base: Saline

Director: Bob Phillips

CDs available: The Roots Go Deep (1996), Down By The Old Mill Pond (1997), Mother's Request (1998)

Notable gigs: Opening for Junior Brown at Ann Arbor's Power Center; headlining Ann Arbor Summer Festival; International Bluegrass Festival in Oklahoma; the White House, Christmas 1997; and soon, the White House, Christmas 1998.

Information: (734) 994-9236.

GRAPHIC: Photo 1: Donna Eng, 16, and Kari Low, 17, get into the Christmas spirit with costumes and twinkling lights. Kirk Speer

Photo 2: The Fiddlers' White House gig was so popular the group had to be moved. Kirk Speer

Photo 3: Kristin Leutheuser, 16, Roger Rice, 17, Katherine Lambarth, 16, show off their dancing skills. Kirk Speer

Photo 4: Cori Smith, from left, 15, Stephanie Birko, 14, Kari Low, 17 and Jackie Martin, 14 participated in the Fiddler's Philharmonic. Kirk Speer

321ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Des Moines Register, Inc.
The Des Moines Register

December 10, 1998, Thursday

SECTION: Metro Iowa Pg.1

LENGTH: 353 words

HEADLINE: Reluctant artist fast at work
She feels lousy, but she only has two days to make an ornament for President Clinton.

BYLINE: Staci Hupp

SOURCE: Register Staff Writer

BODY:

By STACI HUPP
Register Staff Writer

Jan Scheuerman of Boxholm was given 48 hours to do President Clinton a favor.

She's among a handful of artists who are painting holiday ornaments Clinton will give to Middle East officials when he visits there next week.

Scheuerman, a member of the Society of Decorative Artists, must finish the job and ship it to Washington, D.C., in time for the president's Saturday morning flight to Bethlehem.

Scheuerman's happy to help, but the president's timing was lousy.

"I'm not feeling well. I've got a cold, one of those miserable sore-throat things," said Scheuerman, 52, who is postmaster for the northwest Iowa town of 300. "It hasn't bothered my painting at all, but I was just thinking a minute ago it's time to quit."

Scheuerman has almost two decades of painting and teaching experience. She was notified by the artists' society on Wednesday morning. She spent most of Wednesday afternoon on the project.

"I feel pressured a little bit. Not bad, though," she said. "An ornament's small, so it doesn't take too long."

But it has to be good. Very good.

"I really would like to have a good reputation for our country and our group," she said.

Scheuerman is one of 10 society members nationwide chosen to paint ornaments for Clinton. She was chosen in 1994 to design ornaments for the Christmas tree in the White House's Blue Room. Her work charmed the Clintons, so they asked her the next year to paint ornaments for Blair House, a guest house for White House visitors.

The Des Moines Register, December 10, 1998

For the Middle East trip, Clinton asked only that the gifts symbolize peace. Scheuerman's ornament is a flat, triangular piece of wood adorned with three candles above a ribbon and holly.

In return, Scheuerman doesn't expect much. A thank-you letter similar to the one she received from Hillary Clinton in 1994 would be payment enough, she said.

Reporter Staci Hupp can be reached at (515) 699-7043 or hupps@news.dmreg.com

Jan Scheuerman of Boxholm works on a Christmas ornament for President Clinton to give to Mideast officials on his trip there next week.

GRAPHIC: SHER STONEMAN/The Register

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: December 11, 1998

5TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1998 The Topeka Capital-Journal
TOPEKA CAPITAL JOURNAL

December 05, 1998, Saturday

LENGTH: 256 words

HEADLINE: Topeka woman's ornaments will once again adorn official tree

BYLINE: MIKE HALL

BODY:

The Topeka-Capital-Journal

Once again, Kansans can decorate their Christmas trees with the same ornaments adorning the official Kansas tree in Washington, D.C.

For the 18th year in a row, Topekan Anita Wolgast has designed the ornaments for the Kansas tree. President Clinton will light the tree Wednesday in Washington, D.C., along with the national Christmas tree and the other state trees. The lighting ceremony will be televised nationally. Crowds of nearly 20,000 people typically attend the ceremony in person, Wolgast said. The trees stand in the Ellipse, between the White House and the Washington Monument. More than 100,000 people view the trees during each holiday season.

This year's Kansas ornaments are both in pewter. One recreates the Great Seal of the State of Kansas. The other shows the outline of the state, criss-crossed with the borders of the 105 counties.

The Kansas tree will display 50 ornaments of the two designs. Since 1981, the first year Wolgast supplied the ornaments, she has donated nearly 900 ornaments for Kansas trees.

Kansans can purchase the ornaments for \$20 each. Each comes in a velvet bag and includes a certificate of authenticity. They are available at the Mulvane General Store at Ward-Meade Park and the Kansas Sampler stores in West Ridge Mall and in the Kansas City area.

They may be ordered by mail from Historic Ward-Meade Park, 124 N.W. Fillmore, Topeka 66606. Information is available by calling Ward-Meade at 785-368-3888 or by e-mail to wardmead@ksnews.com.

LOAD-DATE: December 8, 1998

OPINION

Negative
Christmas Clips

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.**

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.

- 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

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

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.

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.



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 Kevoorkian 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 grouching 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.

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, must 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 tress 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

Holiday Clips



Winter 1998



By Joel Rensch, 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

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."

Wisconsin State Journal

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

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 Lights Rockefeller Tree

By Katherine Roth

NEW YORK (AP) — You could hardly hear 11-year-old Shadashja Jackson in the crowd, but one thing was clear: The lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree was her signal for the start of the holiday season.

"I've been singing 'Silent Night' and waiting for this wonderful moment for so long. I can't wait for it to snow," said Miss Jackson, who danced and shouted with joy as the tree was lit Wednesday night in her hometown.

Thousands of people crowded into the midtown Manhattan plaza cheered when the 26,000 lights on the 75-foot-tall Norway spruce twinkled on at 8:52 p.m. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and country singer Garth Brooks switched on the lights.

"I'm thrilled," Mrs. Clinton said. "I've heard about this and seen it on TV so many times but to see it in person is entirely different."

Retired schoolteacher Marie Rivera of North Bergen, N.J., waited hours to get a front row spot to watch the lighting of the tree as she has every year since 1948.

"Oooh, it's beautiful!" she gushed. "It's grand!"

The crowds listened to Christmas music performed by singers that included Brooks, Jewel and Cyndi Lauper and watched Olympic gold medal skater Kristi Yamaguchi do a few elegant turns at the famous ice rink.

"This is so cool," said Friday Malcolm Ruiz, 8, of Elizabeth, N.J., who waited outside for nearly eight hours. "It's my second time, and I love it."

The celebration began humbly in 1931. Depression-era workmen building the center placed a small unadorned evergreen on the muddy site to lift their Christmas spirits. Two years later, another tree was erected, this time decked out in 700 lights.

And in 1951, the tree-lighting was televised for the first time on NBC's "The Kate Smith Show," ushering in a tradition that has grown into a mega-media production. Wednesday's lighting — on an unseasonably balmy day — was televised live by NBC across the country.

The 7 1/2-ton tree arrived on Nov. 12 from Richfield, Ohio, where it graced the front lawn of Ethel and Adolph Szitar's ranch house for 60 years.

On Wednesday, Mrs. Szitar, 81, was impressed with her tree.

"It looked larger and taller than even when I saw it at home. It's very beautiful," Szitar said.

It is not the tallest the plaza has seen. In 1948 and 1996, the tree towered 90 feet over the famous Rockefeller Center skating rink.

And right now there is a tree far above it, at least in Manhattan. A 3-foot tree decorated with toothpaste tubes, gloves and subway tokens is strapped to the roof of the World Trade Center, 1,377 feet above the street.

END

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



Photos by RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Every available space is used for cookies when the White House culinary staff begins baking for Christmas.

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

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**



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.

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.

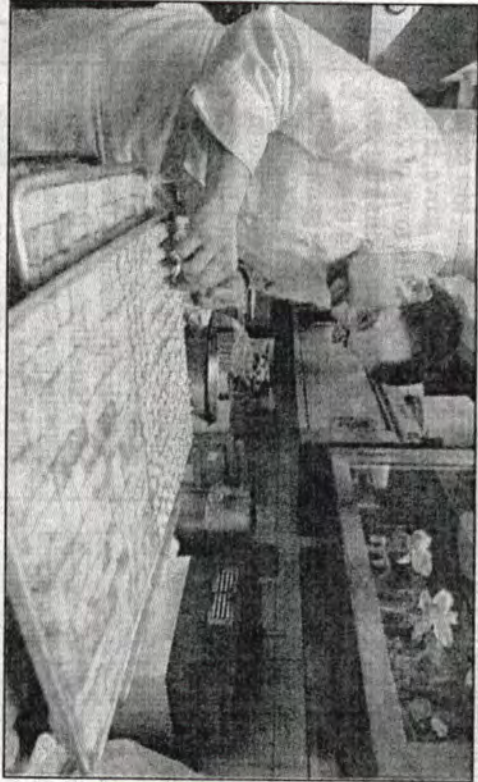
All must be in place for about 50 parties and for thousands of visitors who will go through on special holiday tours. Official parties, such as the Congressional Ball, are paid for with government funds, and other events are funded by the Democratic National Committee.

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.

"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."



RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

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

The Washington Times

FINAL

<http://www.washtimes.com>

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

Prices may vary outside
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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.

'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.



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."

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.



Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1998 **D3**

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.

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Life

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1998

5P

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

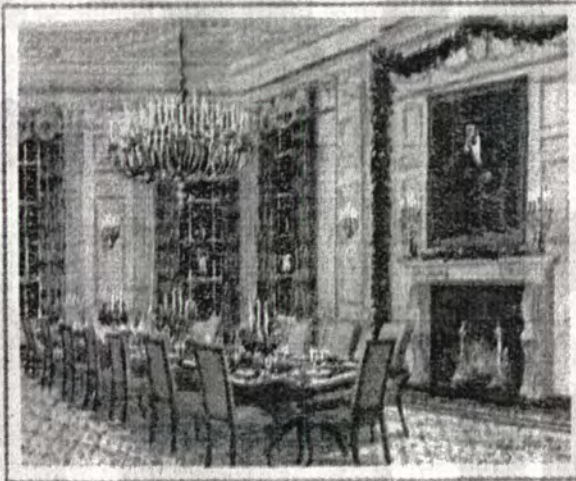
calling," the artist said.

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. 328

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 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.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 9, 1998

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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

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.

Talking It Over

By Hillary Rodham Clinton



Christmas is fitting time to back children's rights

One day, many years ago, when Eleanor Roosevelt was scheduled to give a speech in New York, she was so sick that everyone urged her to cancel. But she refused. She drove from Hyde Park to 125th Street in Harlem, and when she got out of the car, a young child, her face beaming, handed the former first lady a bouquet of flowers. Mrs. Roosevelt turned to the person with her and said: "You see, I had to come. She was expecting me."

Without fanfare, Eleanor Roosevelt went anywhere she thought her presence would make a difference, seeing for herself the everyday violations that rob individuals of their dignity and humanity. Then, she rolled up her sleeves and tried to do something about what she saw.

Part of Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy is to open our eyes and hearts and inspire us to fulfill the promises of what is perhaps her greatest achievement — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The declaration, which was adopted 50 years ago this week, reads, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It does not exclude people of color. It does not exclude women. And it certainly does not exclude children.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — adopted in 1989 and ratified by every country except the United States and Somalia — every child is born with the right to be protected from abuse and abduction as well as from violence and work that threatens his or her development. Every child has the right to worship freely and express opinions and aspirations. And every child has the right to health, education and life.

It is up to each of us to make good on these promises.

In some parts of Africa, neighbors greet each other not by saying, "Hello," but by asking, "How are the children?" The answer today — 50 years after the Declaration of Human Rights and nearly 10 years after the U.N. Convention — is that in some ways, they're doing better, but in other ways, too many are left behind.

Although the health of the world's children is improving, 7 million children still die of malnutrition every year. And although we know that education is the single best investment any country can make, 140 million primary school age children are not in school.

Children are forced or sold into labor every day. In the developing world, 120 million children work full time, deprived of education and a better future for themselves and their families.

On my recent trip to Haiti, I learned that an estimated 230,000 children there are forced by their families' grinding poverty to work as domestic servants. And on a visit to Thailand, I met 12-year-old girls dying of AIDS — children whose parents had sold them into prostitution.

Traditionally, wars have been fought between soldiers, but in the past 20 years, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically. Civilians — including children — are now the targets, the victims and even the instruments of war.

Girls are kidnapped into slave labor and raped; boys are used as child soldiers or human shields. In the developing world alone, 100 million children live on the streets — out of school and without homes or families. Left to care for themselves, they roam their cities in tattered clothing, selling gum, begging and digging through the trash for food.

We cannot condemn homelessness or violence against children in other countries, though, and ignore the plight of children here at home. This is why it is so important to continue to fight for the best education and health care for our children and to protect them from abuse and neglect.

I've been pleased that my husband's administration has put the protection of children around the world on the front burner by fighting against abusive workplace conditions, increasing awareness of children's health issues and working to combat the trafficking of human beings. But so much remains to be done.

We may not have the stature of Eleanor Roosevelt, but each of us can contribute to a child's life. We can make sure we are part of a society that values health care, universal education and strong families. We can continue to promote democracy around the world, giving parents a voice at the ballot box and an opportunity to raise their children free from violence, abuse and war. And I hope we can ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eleanor Roosevelt knew that even on a day when she was sick, a child needed and expected her. In this Advent season, as Christians celebrate the birth of another child who brought a message of peace to a troubled world, it is especially fitting to remember every child today who needs and expects us to fulfill the promises we made 50 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

• To find out more about Hillary Rodham Clinton and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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

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 -

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



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.

BY RON EDMONDS—ASSOCIATED PRESS

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.

We Interrupt This Crisis . . .

At the White House, the Parties Must Go On

By ROXANNE ROBERTS
Washington Post Staff Writer

WHITE HOUSE, From D1

'Twas the night before the impeachment debate and all through the White House, not a creature was acting worried. They were not merely stirring, but eating, drinking and generally whooping it up.

"Pretty rowdy crowd tonight," said President Clinton, who was greeted last night with sustained applause and cheers at a black-tie gala celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Special Olympics.

As missiles glistened in the air over Baghdad and Speaker-elect

Bob Livingston confessed to mid-life indiscretions, hundreds of guests streamed into the executive mansion for another of this month's holiday soirees.

"While certainly what's happening overseas is on everyone's mind, given the season, people are very determined not to be distracted," said Washington lawyer Robert Altman.

There's a party at the White House every night until Christmas Eve: Tonight friends from Arkansas and Tennessee will have a

See WHITE HOUSE, D2, Col. 4

down-home celebration of the season. Tomorrow, Sunday and Tuesday nights, the president and first lady will host donors, supporters and friends at holiday dinners and receptions; Wednesday night is reserved for the resident staff.

Monday's gathering may be the most awkward of all: After reporters spend the weekend combing through the wreckage of the previous few days, they will head to the White House for the annual press party.

"I can't think of a better time to be at a party," filmmaker Michael Moore said last night. "Is something going on I don't know about?"

And that was before the Livingston story raced through the crowd. Reality had, once again, superseded fiction. But the gala, which had been planned for months, went on despite the chaos.

"These are things people count on and we can't disappoint them," said Marsha Berry, press secretary to the first lady.

"The holidays are so busy that truly we focus in on the parties, on the guests, the entertainers, the food and the holiday spirit," said social secretary Capricia Marshall. "I don't have time to focus on anything else."

But this year the White House has to balance the social obligations with a stunning series of current events. As Clinton's tiniest moves are dissected, the decision to attend or skip

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1998

1/2

a White House party is viewed as yet another peek into the presidential psyche. To cancel or curtail a holiday event because of the impeachment battle could be interpreted as a sign of fear or weakness—clearly not the message the president or first lady wants to send out.

War is another matter entirely. It would be unseemly to appear playful while allied troops are at risk, and the president was careful to acknowledge those in Iraq during his toast last night. But as long as the airstrikes have not resulted in any allied casualties, it is considered acceptable to continue the holiday receptions and dinners.

"I think Washington needs a nice night of entertainment," said Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan.

Last night's gala was a feel-good celebrity affair. Whoopi Goldberg, Eric Clapton, Mary J. Blige, Sheryl Crow, Jon Bon Jovi, Run-DMC, Tracy Chapman and Vanessa Williams were all on hand to perform in a huge heated pavilion erected on the South Lawn to accommodate more than 300 guests. The show will be broadcast Sunday on TNT.

"I think it's important for us to celebrate the things about our nation that are so special—like the Special Olympics," Goldberg said. "And you know, it's important for us to be able to say to people, 'Yes, we are in tough times now. But there are great things going on and we can be part of that.'"

This party was off the charts on

the heartwarming scale. The guest list included dozens of Kennedys with adorable children in tow. Even Socks the cat made a quick appearance in front of reporters.

Dinner began with a parade of Special Olympics athletes. Then Hillary Rodham Clinton gave her most generous introduction to date: She was "particularly proud" of "my husband, my partner and our president."

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who founded the Special Olympics in 1968, was even more effusive: "Even if there were 300,000 people on the White House lawn tonight, Mr. President, you would find no greater loyalty, no greater faith in your leadership than right here among us tonight."

The crowd leapt to its feet as the president squeezed his wife's shoulder and looked terribly grateful.

Then it was time to shift from political nurturing to seasonal cheeriness, which proved difficult for this crowd at first. "You all got to wake up!" admonished Goldberg. "This is a party and we have to make America believe we're not depressed!"

The performances were spirited, especially a rousing encore that proved to be unintentionally hilarious. "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" may be a holiday classic, but lusty refrains of "gonna find out who's naughty or nice" and "you better be good for goodness' sake" were just a teeny bit off-message.

"Life goes on," said an uncharacteristically serene Sen. Orrin Hatch. "We have to continue to do the things that count for our country."

Party on.



BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

'Tis still the season to be jolly: The Clintons with Rita Lawlor, right, and other Special Olympics athletes last night.

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1998

2/2

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."

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

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 it is, all gold, silver and crystal.

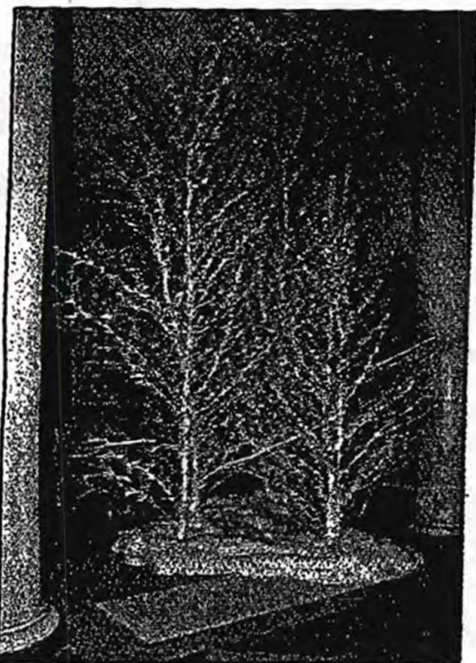
In the State Dining Room, the traditional gingerbread house is a castle almost touching the chandelier with Santa and sled leaving by lawbridge to make his rounds. Guards to the scene are likenesses of Socks and Buddy, the family's famous pets.

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

The official Christmas tree with 0 lights dominates the Blue om. It's 18 1/2 feet tall and artists n the 50 states were invited to orate it in the Winter Wonderl theme so the tree holds an ndance of small snowmen.

Arkansans contributing orna- ts were Dianne Herman and y Springer, both of Eureka ngs; Ann Gray of Pleasant e; Linda Hardin of McGehee; Stewart of Mountain View; and ard Wade Jr. of Marianna. Dec- ve painters were Sammie ford and Bette Jo Kirkpatrick, of Hot Springs; Mary Clontea t Springs Village; and Marion lity of Little Rock. Nearly 80 teers from across the nation ed time and talents to create hite House's Winter Wonder-

the base of the Blue Room's s 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, Collete 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.

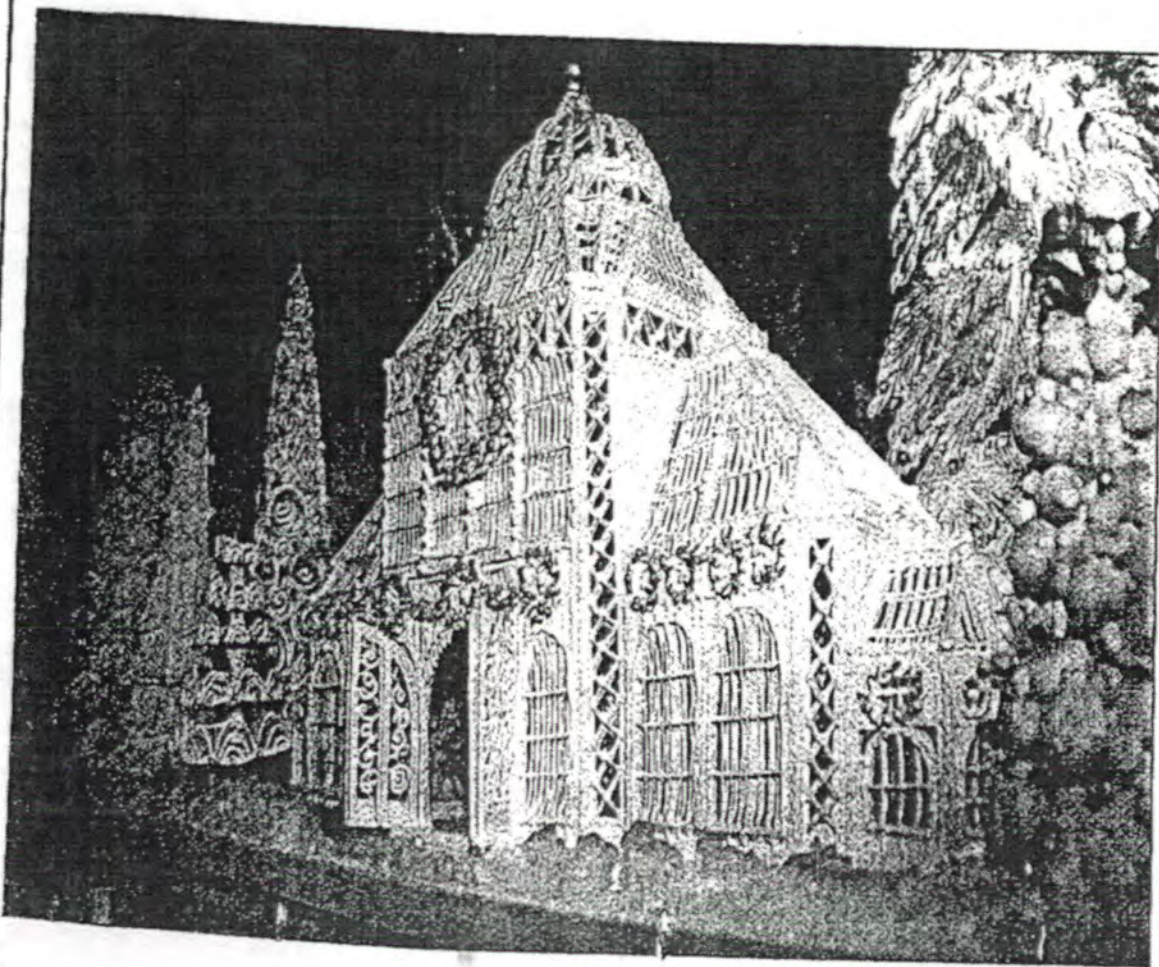
Ray Ellis of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., was selected to paint the White House's 1998 Christmas card. He was contacted Sept. 1 and asked to paint the card's cover which features the State Dining Room. (Ellis has illustrated three books by Walter Cronkite.) Ellis said the time taken to complete the project 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.

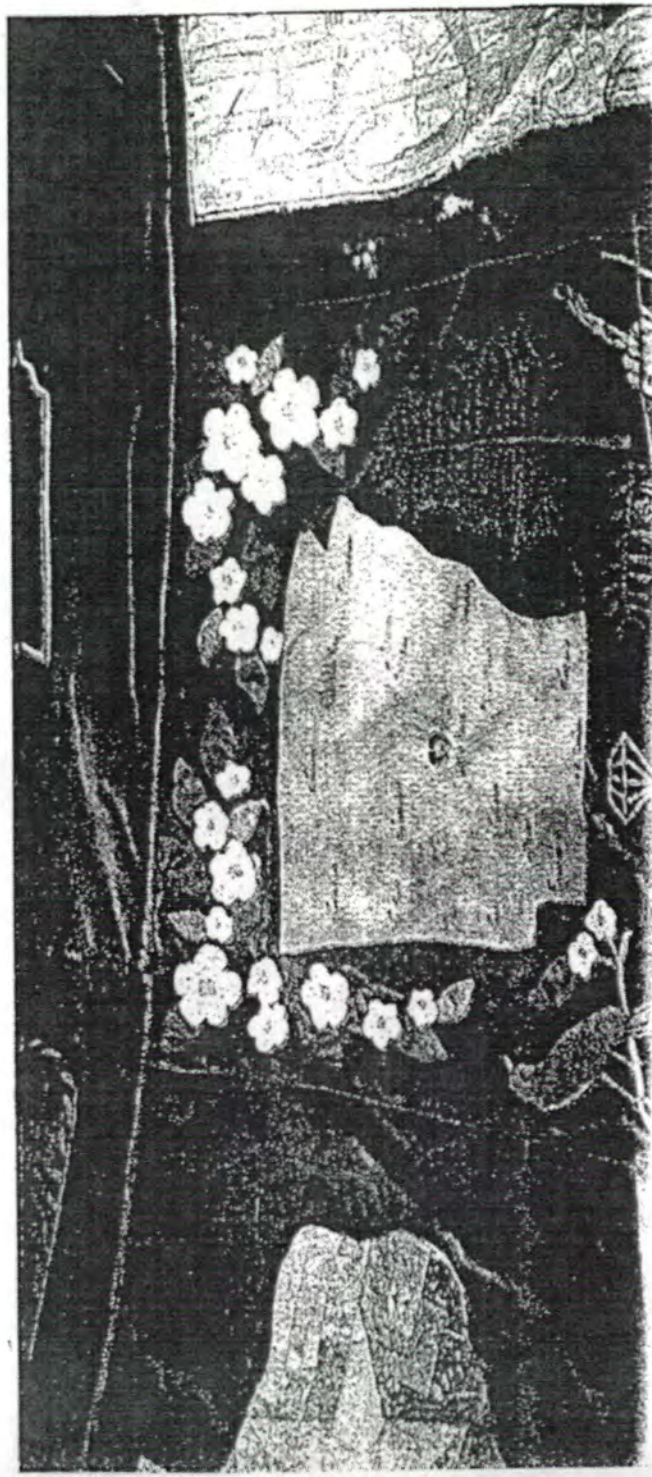
"When we picked this theme, we couldn't have imagined this would be the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," Mrs. Clinton said. More seasonal weather arrived over the weekend.

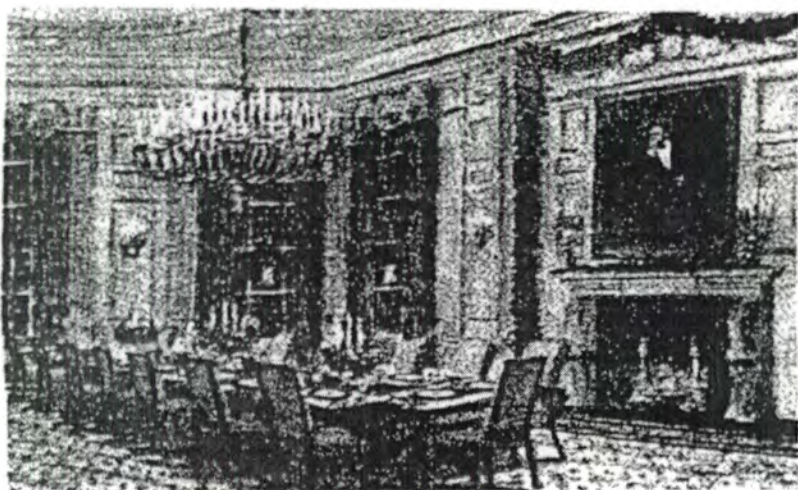


Official Christmas tree in the Blue Room



The all-sugar
crystal pavilion





Clinton Christmas card of State Dining Room



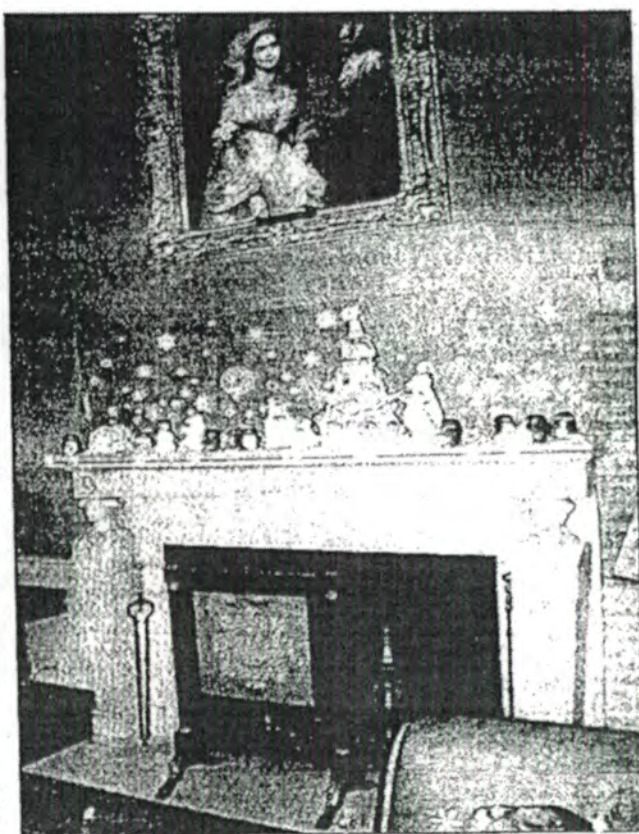
Capricia Marshall talks with media including Helen Thomas

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette photos
by Phyllis D. Brandon



Hillary and Santa with children singers

A polar bear Christmas on the Red
Room mantel



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."

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?'")

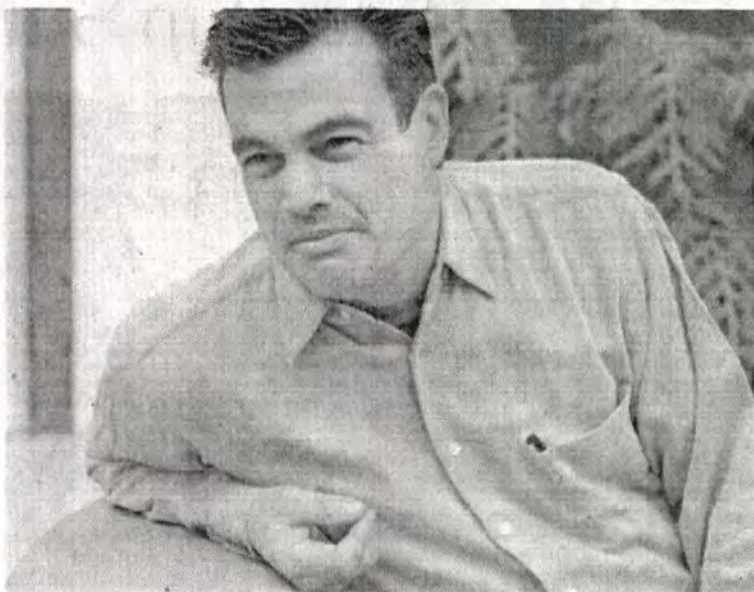
Sunflowers are an unfortunate trend, but marigolds, like those he used for the opening of the Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, are marvelous. Magnolia leaves on Christmas mantels have become very big in the North. But never, ever use a vanilla-scented candle at dinner, unless you're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



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 1989 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."



Reuters

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

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

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998



AP

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.

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

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.

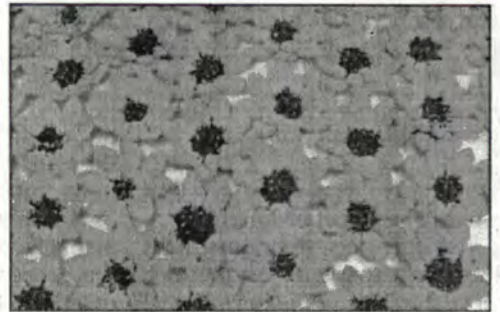
In the years since, he has continued the White House's standard of quality, insisting everything be made in-house by expert hands.

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.

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 palettes 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.

METRO

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 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



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

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



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

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.

BRONX NEWS

BRONX, NY
WEEKLY 10,000
DEC 17 1998



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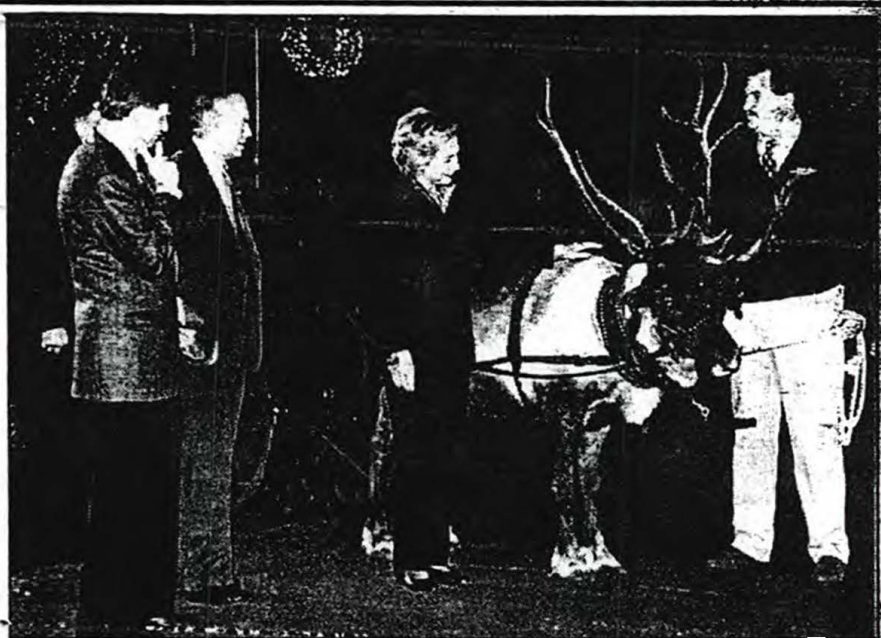
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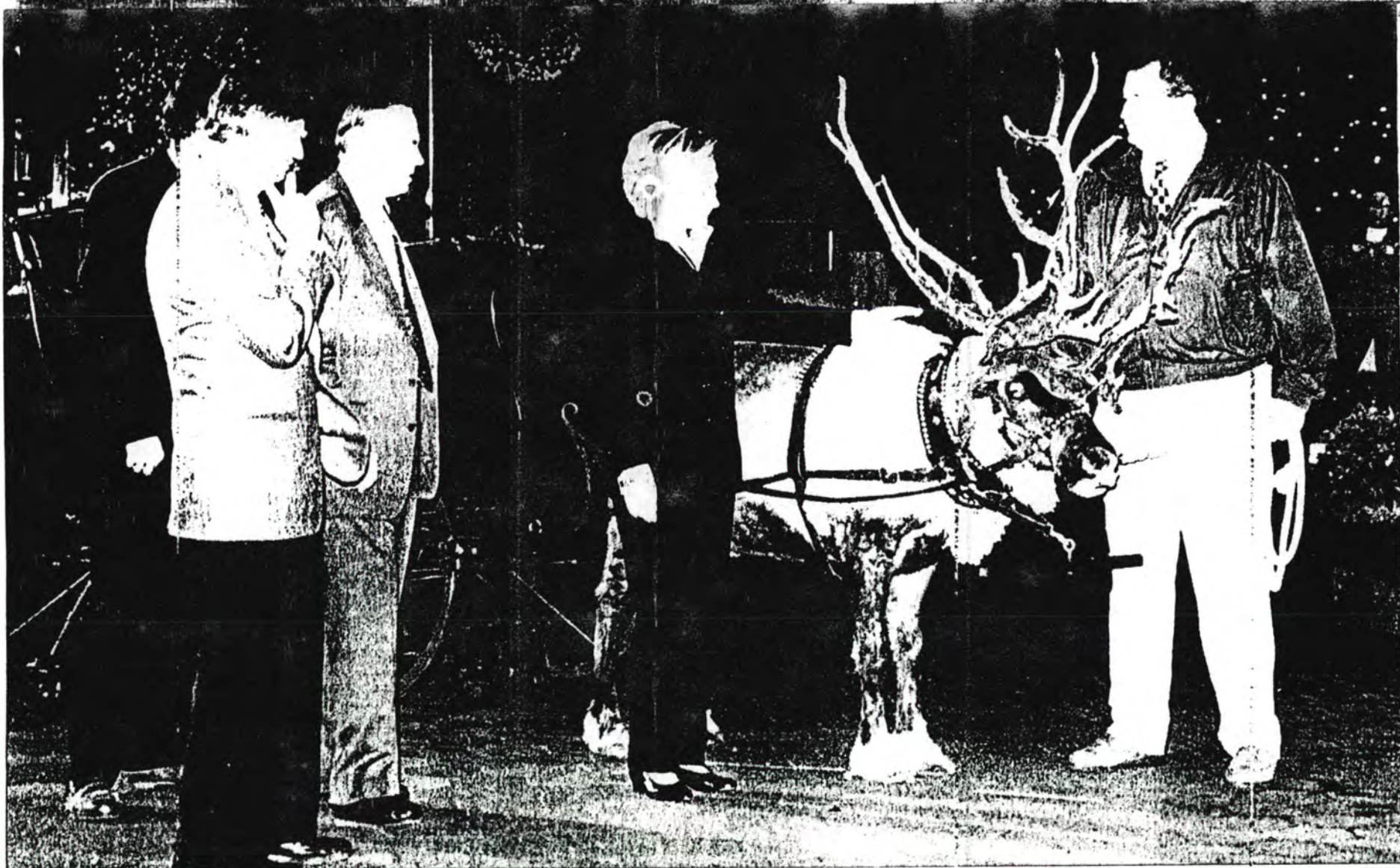
The Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) Bronx Zoo welcomed First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to its annual Holiday Lights display. Upon her arrival, Clinton was greeted by WCS Chairman, David Schiff, WCS President, Dr. William Conway, and Peter Madonia, vice president of the Belmont Small Business Association and owner of Madonia Brothers Bakery. Clinton visited the bakery on a previous trip to Belmont. During her visit, the First Lady enjoyed the after-dark spectacle of thousands of dazzling lights in the shape of giant animals - many with color, some with sound effects. Clinton was given a chance to stroll through Zoo Center to view Asian elephants. She also greeted Eli, the reindeer, who met her in front of the Zoo Center's Rhinoceros garden with a winter sleigh. Holiday Lights features more than 50 illuminated sculptures as well as carolers, ice carving, seasonal storytelling and arts & crafts for children.

Navy Seaman Recruit Simone S. Richardson, a 1998 graduate of Harry S. Truman High School, recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Ill.





Bronx Zoo welcome First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to its annual *Holiday Lights* display recently. Upon her arrival, Mrs. Clinton was greeted by WCS Chairman David Schiff, WCS President Dr. William Conway, and Peter Madonia, vice president of the Belmont Small Business Association and owner of Madonia Brothers Bakery. Mrs. Clinton visited the bakery on a previous trip to the Belmont section of the Bronx.



FIRST LADY SEES SIGHTS, SOUNDS OF BRONX ZOO'S HOLIDAY LIGHTS... The Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) Bronx Zoo welcomed First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to its annual Holiday Lights display. Upon her arrival, Mrs. Clinton was greeted by WCS chairman David Schiff, WCS president Dr. William Conway, and Peter Madonia, vice president of the Belmont Small Business Association and owner of Madonia Brothers Bakery. Mrs. Clinton visited the bakery on a previous trip to Belmont.

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RADIO CLIPS

DATE December 3, 1998
TIME 6:02-6:05 PM
STATION WABC 770 AM
LOCATION New York City
PROGRAM News

ACCOUNT NUMBER 53/2168

George Webber reporting:

Also in town today, first lady Hillary Clinton. She is right now at the Bronx Zoo, and she will then take on a Broadway play.

Curtis Sliwa, co-host:

Wait a second. Is she at the elephant exposition?

Webber: I'm not sure about that.

Sliwa: Because, as you know, there is a specific Republican exhibition in the Bronx Zoo called the 'Elephant Exhibition.'

Too bad. Maybe one of them might--well, you know what I'm saying.

Ron Kuby, co-host:

Hey, don't talk that way about the next Senator from New York.

Sliwa: Oh, heavens to Betsy, no!

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

STATEN ISLAND, NY
MONDAY 78,000
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Liz Smith

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Gwyneth and her men

Gwyneth Paltrow was sensationally glamorous at the premiere of her new "Shakespeare in Love" movie last week. Sporting a long, straight, very blond "do," dramatic makeup and a tight, lacy gown of illusion net — the kind of thing where you spend all your time wondering, "Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing?" — Paltrow was every inch a grand and glorious movie queen.

At cocktails before the screening, in a suite high atop the Rhiga Royal Hotel in Manhattan, Paltrow circulated amiably with her co-stars Joseph Fiennes, Ben Affleck, Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush and Tom Wilkinson. Also celebrating

"Remember Pearl Harbor!"

— I'm not crediting anybody in particular as saying this, because I think we should all say it, and we should all

mix-stained wretches, and in the fame voodoo in general.

The news nugget culled from this night came from writer Marc Norman, who says he is busy scripting a musical for — are you ready? — John Travolta and Jennifer Lopez. Taylor Hackford, the "An Officer and a Gentleman" director, will be at the helm.

Mrs. Clinton was a bit late, having been held up on her way back from the Bronx Zoo. What a week in New York City it was for Hillary — and New York! She looked remarkably fresh and in high spirits. She posed quickly with the cast and then headed for the theater, the Ziegfeld next door, where she received two rousing standing ovations, introduced the movie and then, unexpectedly, stayed for the entire film, munching popcorn and relishing every witty, sexy, poignant minute of it.

I wish I could have seen Mrs. Clinton's face when Dame Judi Dench, playing Queen Elizabeth, looks straight into the

John Travolta



Jennifer Lopez

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NEW YORK TIMES

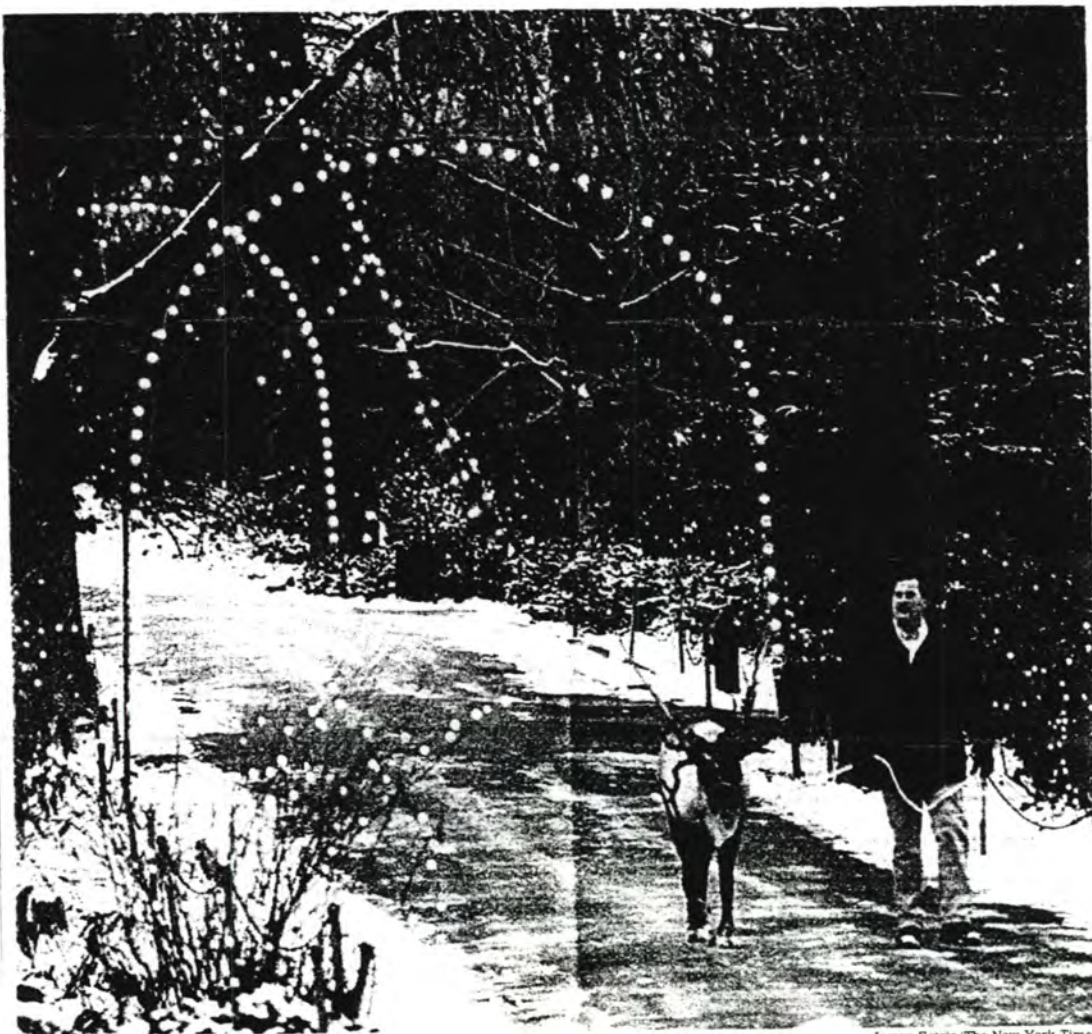
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James Estrin/The New York Times

FRONT PAGE

^{2/168}
Irving Berlin Would Have Been Happy

The Bronx Zoo was transformed last evening as dreams of a white Christmas suddenly came true and a dusting of snow completed the picture begun by

the installation of Christmas lights. Jim Breheny, an animal curator, took a reindeer named Eli for a stroll before the annual holiday light show got under way.



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

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."

Wisconsin State Journal

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

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 Lights Rockefeller Tree

By Katherine Roth

NEW YORK (AP) — You could hardly hear 11-year-old Shadashja Jackson in the crowd, but one thing was clear: The lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree was her signal for the start of the holiday season.

"I've been singing 'Silent Night' and waiting for this wonderful moment for so long. I can't wait for it to snow," said Miss Jackson, who danced and shouted with joy as the tree was lit Wednesday night in her hometown.

Thousands of people crowded into the midtown Manhattan plaza cheered when the 26,000 lights on the 75-foot-tall Norway spruce twinkled on at 8:52 p.m. First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and country singer Garth Brooks switched on the lights.

"I'm thrilled," Mrs. Clinton said. "I've heard about this and seen it on TV so many times but to see it in person is entirely different."

Retired schoolteacher Marie Rivera of North Bergen, N.J., waited hours to get a front row spot to watch the lighting of the tree as she has every year since 1948.

"Oooh, it's beautiful!" she gushed. "It's grand!"

The crowds listened to Christmas music performed by singers that included Brooks, Jewel and Cyndi Lauper and watched Olympic gold medal skater Kristi Yamaguchi do a few elegant turns at the famous ice rink.

"This is so cool," said Friday Malcolm Ruiz, 8, of Elizabeth, N.J., who waited outside for nearly eight hours. "It's my second time, and I love it."

The celebration began humbly in 1931. Depression-era workmen building the center placed a small unadorned evergreen on the muddy site to lift their Christmas spirits. Two years later, another tree was erected, this time decked out in 700 lights.

And in 1951, the tree-lighting was televised for the first time on NBC's "The Kate Smith Show," ushering in a tradition that has grown into a mega-media production. Wednesday's lighting — on an unseasonably balmy day — was televised live by NBC across the country.

The 7 1/2-ton tree arrived on Nov. 12 from Richfield, Ohio, where it graced the front lawn of Ethel and Adolph Szitar's ranch house for 60 years.

On Wednesday, Mrs. Szitar, 81, was impressed with her tree.

"It looked larger and taller than even when I saw it at home. It's very beautiful," Szitar said.

It is not the tallest the plaza has seen. In 1948 and 1996, the tree towered 90 feet over the famous Rockefeller Center skating rink.

And right now there is a tree far above it, at least in Manhattan. A 3-foot tree decorated with toothpaste tubes, gloves and subway tokens is strapped to the roof of the World Trade Center, 1,377 feet above the street.

END

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



Photos by RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

Every available space is used for cookies when the White House culinary staff begins baking for Christmas.

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

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**



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.

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.

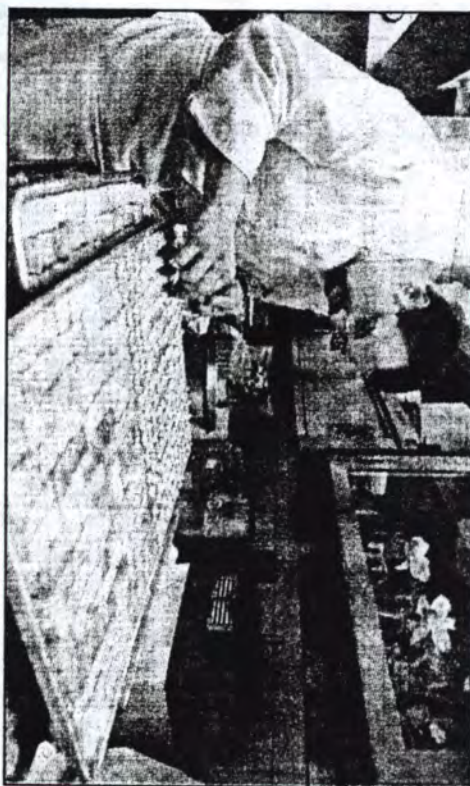
All must be in place for about 50 parties and for thousands of visitors who will go through on special holiday tours. Official parties, such as the Congressional Ball, are paid for with government funds, and other events are funded by the Democratic National Committee.

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.

"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."



RICK MCKAY / Washington Bureau

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

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.

'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.



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."

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.



Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1998 **D3**

First lady unveils White House 'Wonderland'

By Bob Dart

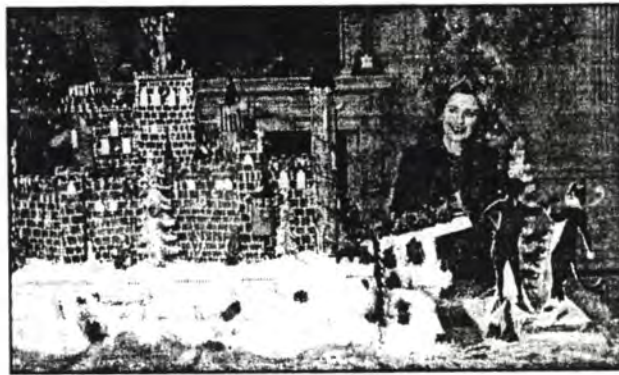
WASHINGTON BUREAU

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.

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

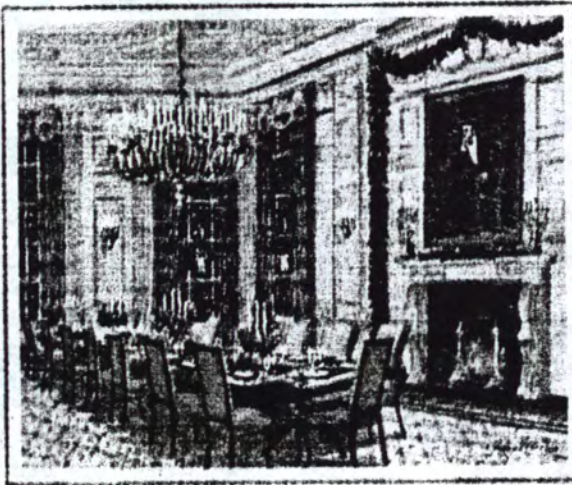
calling," the artist said.

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 1998 Christmas card.

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 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 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 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.

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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

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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



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

Talking It Over

By Hillary Rodham Clinton



Christmas is fitting time to back children's rights

One day, many years ago, when Eleanor Roosevelt was scheduled to give a speech in New York, she was so sick that everyone urged her to cancel. But she refused. She drove from Hyde Park to 125th Street in Harlem, and when she got out of the car, a young child, her face beaming, handed the former first lady a bouquet of flowers. Mrs. Roosevelt turned to the person with her and said: "You see, I had to come. She was expecting me."

Without fanfare, Eleanor Roosevelt went anywhere she thought her presence would make a difference, seeing for herself the everyday violations that rob individuals of their dignity and humanity. Then, she rolled up her sleeves and tried to do something about what she saw.

Part of Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy is to open our eyes and hearts and inspire us to fulfill the promises of what is perhaps her greatest achievement — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The declaration, which was adopted 50 years ago this week, reads, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It does not exclude people of color. It does not exclude women. And it certainly does not exclude children.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — adopted in 1989 and ratified by every country except the United States and Somalia — every child is born with the right to be protected from abuse and abduction as well as from violence and work that threatens his or her development. Every child has the right to worship freely and express opinions and aspirations. And every child has the right to health, education and life.

It is up to each of us to make good on these promises.

In some parts of Africa, neighbors greet each other not by saying, "Hello," but by asking, "How are the children?" The answer today — 50 years after the Declaration of Human Rights and nearly 10 years after the U.N. Convention — is that in some ways, they're doing better, but in other ways, too many are left behind.

Although the health of the world's children is improving, 7 million children still die of malnutrition every year. And although we know that education is the single best investment any country can make, 140 million primary school age children are not in school.

Children are forced or sold into labor every day. In the developing world, 120 million children work full time, deprived of education and a better future for themselves and their families.

On my recent trip to Haiti, I learned that an estimated 230,000 children there are forced by their families' grinding poverty to work as domestic servants. And on a visit to Thailand, I met 12-year-old girls dying of AIDS — children whose parents had sold them into prostitution.

Traditionally, wars have been fought between soldiers, but in the past 20 years, the nature of warfare has changed dramatically. Civilians — including children — are now the targets, the victims and even the instruments of war.

Girls are kidnapped into slave labor and raped; boys are used as child soldiers or human shields. In the developing world alone, 100 million children live on the streets — out of school and without homes or families. Left to care for themselves, they roam their cities in tattered clothing, selling gum, begging and digging through the trash for food.

We cannot condemn homelessness or violence against children in other countries, though, and ignore the plight of children here at home. This is why it is so important to continue to fight for the best education and health care for our children and to protect them from abuse and neglect.

I've been pleased that my husband's administration has put the protection of children around the world on the front burner by fighting against abusive workplace conditions, increasing awareness of children's health issues and working to combat the trafficking of human beings. But so much remains to be done.

We may not have the stature of Eleanor Roosevelt, but each of us can contribute to a child's life. We can make sure we are part of a society that values health care, universal education and strong families. We can continue to promote democracy around the world, giving parents a voice at the ballot box and an opportunity to raise their children free from violence, abuse and war. And I hope we can ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Eleanor Roosevelt knew that even on a day when she was sick, a child needed and expected her. In this Advent season, as Christians celebrate the birth of another child who brought a message of peace to a troubled world, it is especially fitting to remember every child today who needs and expects us to fulfill the promises we made 50 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

• To find out more about Hillary Rodham Clinton and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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

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 -

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



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.

We Interrupt This Crisis . . .

At the White House, the Parties Must Go On

By ROXANNE ROBERTS
Washington Post Staff Writer

'Twas the night before the impeachment debate and all through the White House, not a creature was acting worried. They were not merely stirring, but eating, drinking and generally whooping it up.

"Pretty rowdy crowd tonight," said President Clinton, who was greeted last night with sustained applause and cheers at a black-tie gala celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Special Olympics.

As missiles glistened in the air over Baghdad and Speaker-elect

Bob Livingston confessed to mid-life indiscretions, hundreds of guests streamed into the executive mansion for another of this month's holiday soirees.

"While certainly what's happening overseas is on everyone's mind, given the season, people are very determined not to be distracted," said Washington lawyer Robert Altman.

There's a party at the White House every night until Christmas Eve: Tonight friends from Arkansas and Tennessee will have a

See WHITE HOUSE, D2, Col. 4

WHITE HOUSE, From D1

down-home celebration of the season. Tomorrow, Sunday and Tuesday nights, the president and first lady will host donors, supporters and friends at holiday dinners and receptions; Wednesday night is reserved for the resident staff.

Monday's gathering may be the most awkward of all: After reporters spend the weekend combing through the wreckage of the previous few days, they will head to the White House for the annual press party.

"I can't think of a better time to be at a party," filmmaker Michael Moore said last night. "Is something going on I don't know about?"

And that was before the Livingston story raced through the crowd. Reality had, once again, superseded fiction. But the gala, which had been planned for months, went on despite the chaos.

"These are things people count on and we can't disappoint them," said Marsha Berry, press secretary to the first lady.

"The holidays are so busy that truly we focus in on the parties, on the guests, the entertainers, the food and the holiday spirit," said social secretary Capricia Marshall. "I don't have time to focus on anything else."

But this year the White House has to balance the social obligations with a stunning series of current events. As Clinton's tiniest moves are dissected, the decision to attend or skip

The Washington Post

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1998

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a White House party is viewed as yet another peek into the presidential psyche. To cancel or curtail a holiday event because of the impeachment battle could be interpreted as a sign of fear or weakness—clearly not the message the president or first lady wants to send out.

War is another matter entirely. It would be unseemly to appear playful while allied troops are at risk, and the president was careful to acknowledge those in Iraq during his toast last night. But as long as the airstrikes have not resulted in any allied casualties, it is considered acceptable to continue the holiday receptions and dinners.

"I think Washington needs a nice night of entertainment," said Peace Corps Director Mark Gearan.

Last night's gala was a feel-good celebrity affair. Whoopi Goldberg, Eric Clapton, Mary J. Blige, Sheryl Crow, Jon Bon Jovi, Run-DMC, Tracy Chapman and Vanessa Williams were all on hand to perform in a huge heated pavilion erected on the South Lawn to accommodate more than 300 guests. The show will be broadcast Sunday on TNT.

"I think it's important for us to celebrate the things about our nation that are so special—like the Special Olympics," Goldberg said. "And you know, it's important for us to be able to say to people, 'Yes, we are in tough times now. But there are great things going on and we can be part of that.'"

This party was off the charts on

the heartwarming scale. The guest list included dozens of Kennedys with adorable children in tow. Even Socks the cat made a quick appearance in front of reporters.

Dinner began with a parade of Special Olympics athletes. Then Hillary Rodham Clinton gave her most generous introduction to date: She was "particularly proud" of "my husband, my partner and our president."

Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who founded the Special Olympics in 1968, was even more effusive: "Even if there were 300,000 people on the White House lawn tonight, Mr. President, you would find no greater loyalty, no greater faith in your leadership than right here among us tonight."

The crowd leapt to its feet as the president squeezed his wife's shoulder and looked terribly grateful.

Then it was time to shift from political nurturing to seasonal cheeriness, which proved difficult for this crowd at first. "You all got to wake up!" admonished Goldberg. "This is a party and we have to make America believe we're not depressed!"

The performances were spirited, especially a rousing encore that proved to be unintentionally hilarious. "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town" may be a holiday classic, but lusty refrains of "gonna find out who's naughty or nice" and "you better be good for goodness' sake" were just a teeny bit off-message.

"Life goes on," said an uncharacteristically serene Sen. Orrin Hatch. "We have to continue to do the things that count for our country."

Party on.



BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

'Tis still the season to be jolly: The Clintons with Rita Lawlor, right, and other Special Olympics athletes last night.

The Washington Post

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An executive arrangement

N.H. florist behind
White House festivity

By Stacy Milbourn
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."

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

White House a Christmas winter wonderland

BY PHYLLIS D. BRANDON
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

WASHINGTON — Despite the Scooges 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.

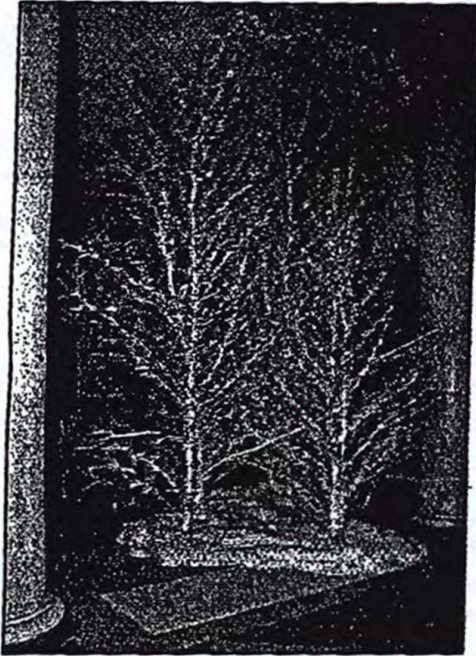
In the State Dining Room, the traditional gingerbread house is a castle almost touching the chandelier with Santa and sled leaving by drawbridge to make his rounds. Guards to the scene are likenesses of Socks and Buddy, the family's famous pets.

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 10 lights dominates the Blue Room. It's 18 1/2 feet tall and artists in 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 of Fayetteville; Ann 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 Hot Springs Village; and Marlon of Little Rock. Nearly 80 artists from across the nation spent time and talents to create the White House's Winter Wonderland.

At the base of the Blue Room's 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.

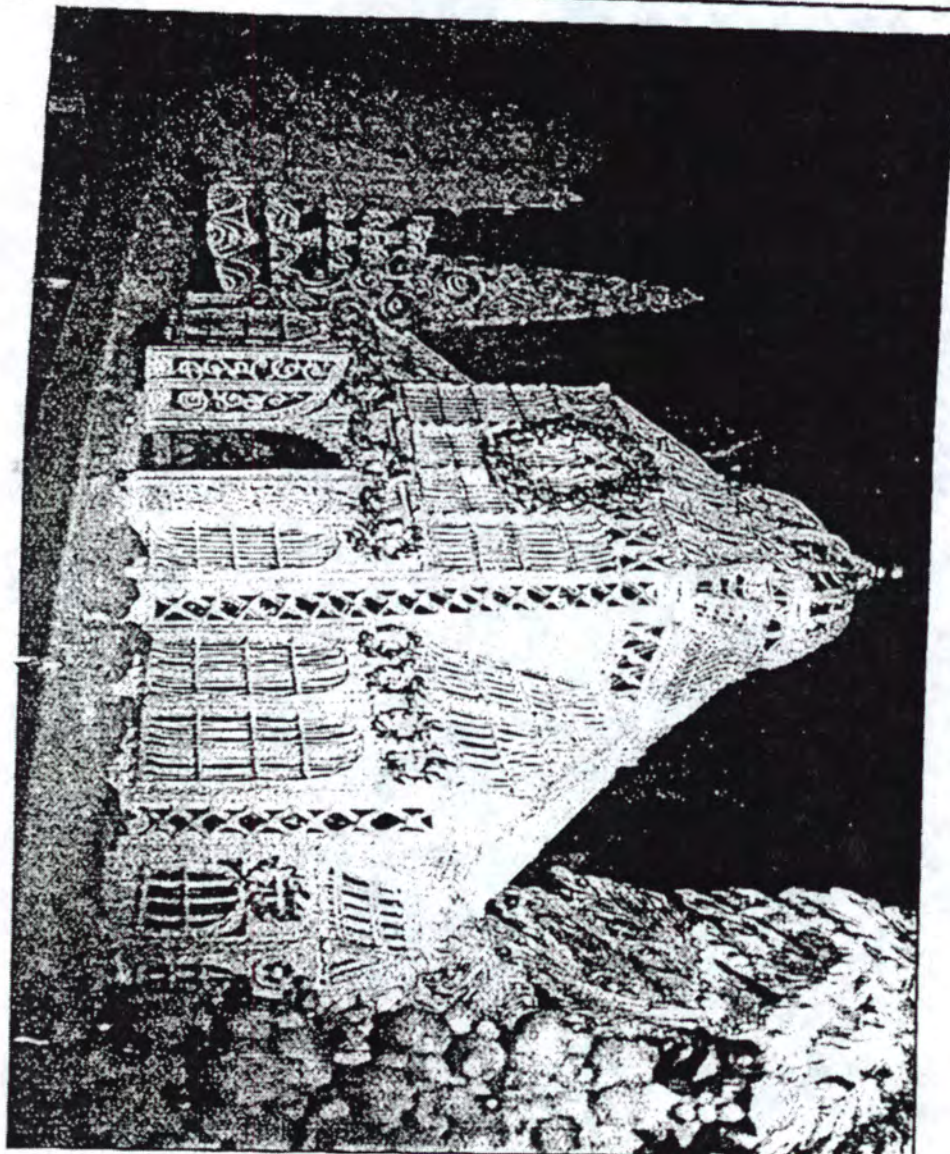
Ray Ellis of Martha's Vineyard, Mass., was selected to paint the White House's 1998 Christmas card. He was contacted Sept. 1 and asked to paint the card's cover which features the State Dining Room. (Ellis has illustrated three books by Walter Cronkite.) Ellis said the time taken to complete the project 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.

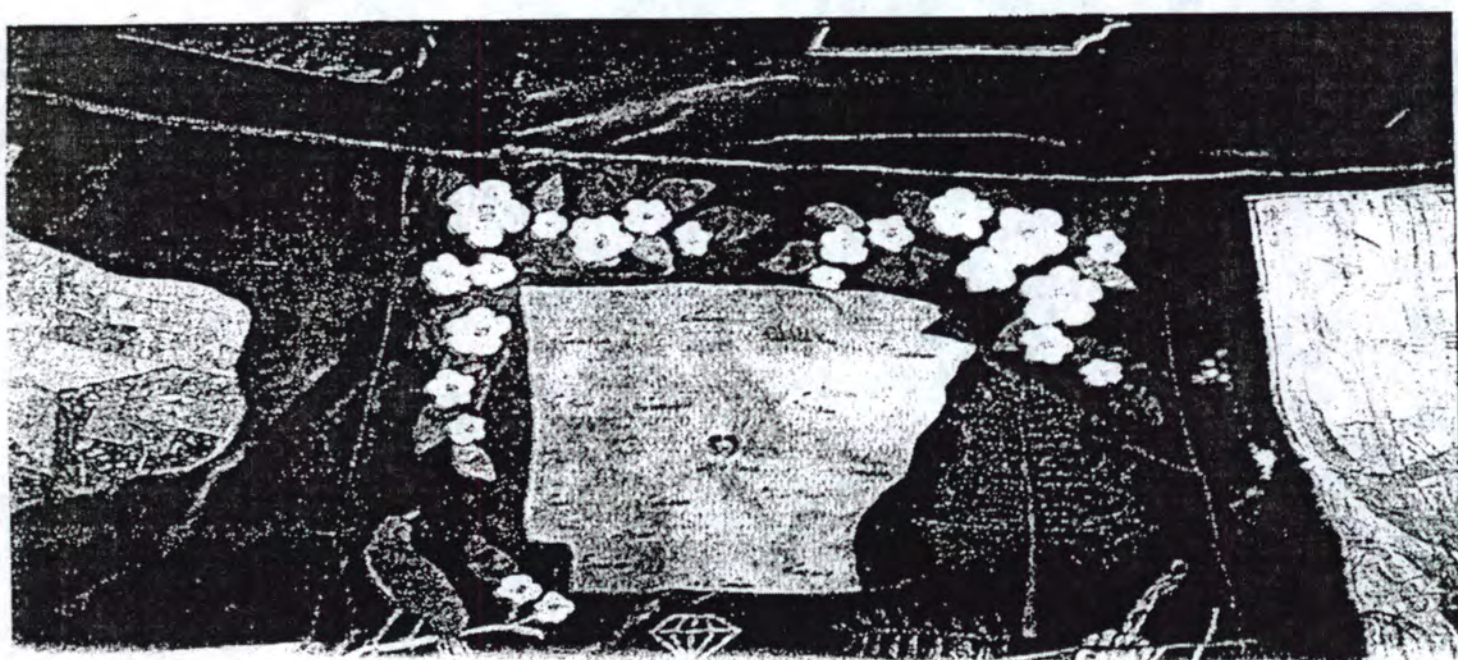
"When we picked this theme, we couldn't have imagined this would be the only winter wonderland on the East Coast," Mrs. Clinton said. More seasonal weather arrived over the weekend.

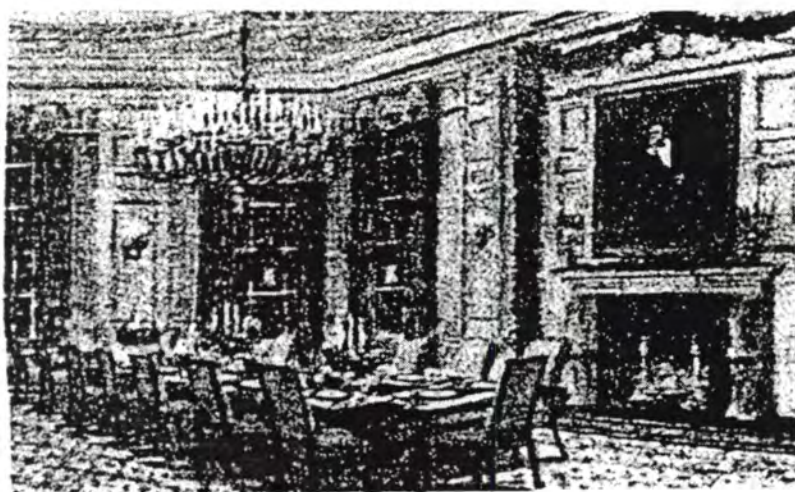


Official Christmas tree in the Blue Room



The all-sugar
crystal pavilion





Clinton Christmas card of State Dining Room



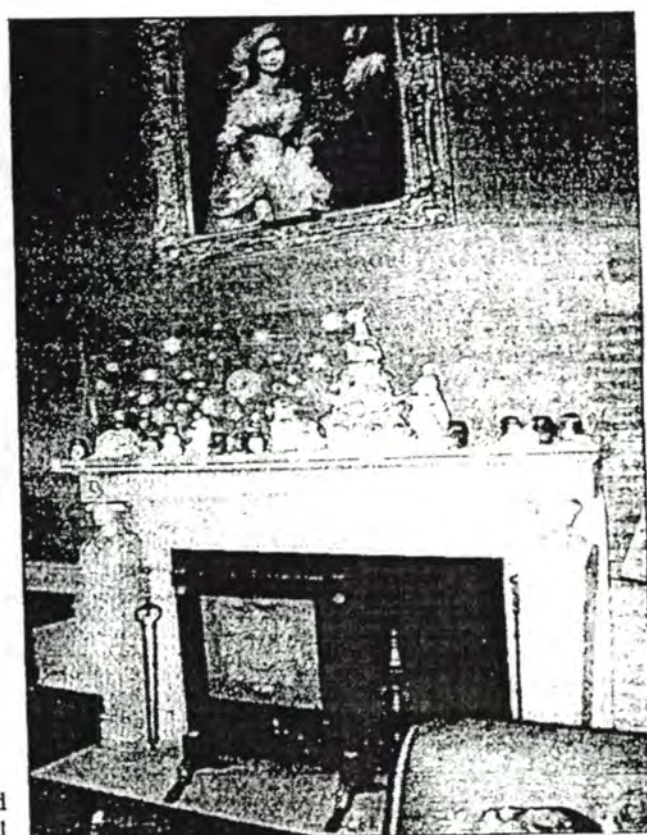
Capricia Marshall talks with media including Helen Thomas

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette photos
by Phyllis D. Brandon



Hillary and Santa with children singers

A polar bear Christmas on the Red
Room mantel



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."

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 prowling 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 flo-



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-leaved 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 1989 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 Bessette 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."



Reuters

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

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.

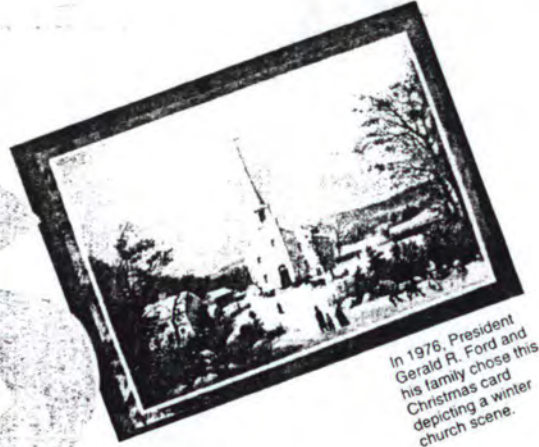
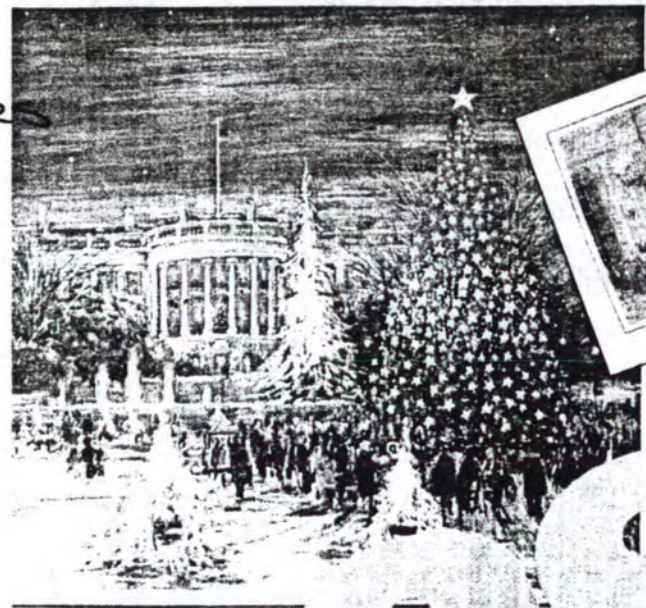
'Who has a cat and a dog?' she asked. A third of the children raised their hands.

The president raised his hand too.

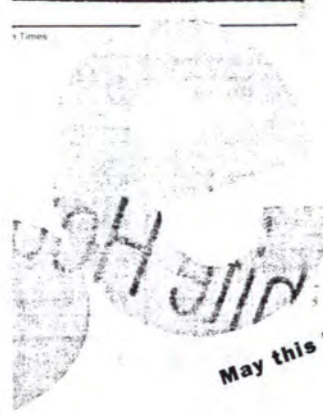
LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 22, 1998

The Washington Times
Wed., 12/23/98



In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford and his family chose this Christmas card depicting a winter church scene.



May this be a very special Christmas for one and all

Season's greetings from The White House

By Christine Montgomery
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Every December, Richard Wightman neatly arranges the political ghosts of Christmases past on a bookshelf in his living room.

His White House holiday card collection begins with greetings from President Richard M. Nixon and continues through the Clinton administration.

This free-lance writer has 25 presidential Christmas greetings in all, each a heavy-stock reminder of his days as a White House correspondent for Fairchild Publications.

He covered the White House during Lyndon B. Johnson's tenure and stayed through Ronald Reagan's early years. "I was pressed for his age, he only admits 'not pressed' 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.

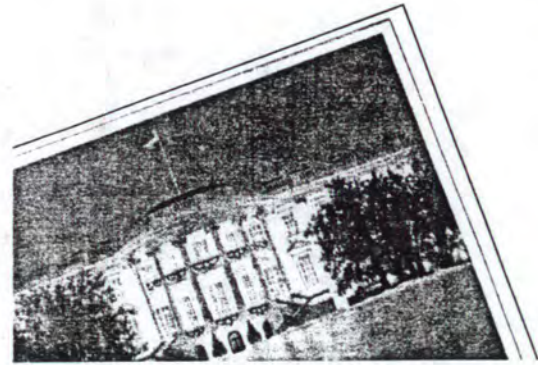
All six Clinton cards include a notation on the back that doesn't appear on any earlier ones in Mr. Wightman's collection: "Paid for by the Democratic National Committee."

It cost about \$300,000 to make and mail some 500,000 cards this year, according to DNC press secretary

Melissa Ratcliff. That includes 300,000 greetings from the president and 200,000 from Vice President Al Gore.

For this year's card, Martha's Vineyard artist Ray Ellis was commissioned to re-create the newly refurbished State Dining Room in watercolors. He had to use color swatches for the curtains and carpets because they weren't installed by the time he began painting.

The note (a tad more formal than in happier years past) says: "May peace and joy be yours at the holiday season and throughout the year." It's signed by Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton; like every White House card, it's embossed with the presidential seal.



Richard Wightman poses with two of the 25 White House Christmas cards he had over



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.

*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

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.

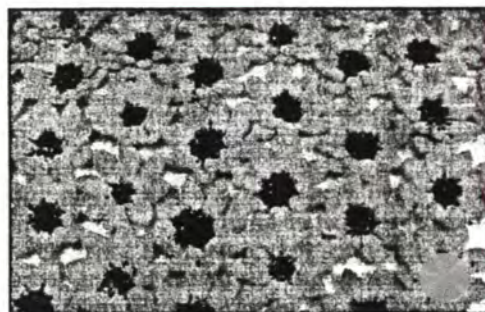


Remarkably fit given his vocation, Mesnier exudes the quiet confidence of a clean-shaven Sean Connery. The French native, one of nine children, has come a long way from his quaint village of 120 people to uphold a White House tradition.

"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.

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 palettes 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.

METRO

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 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



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

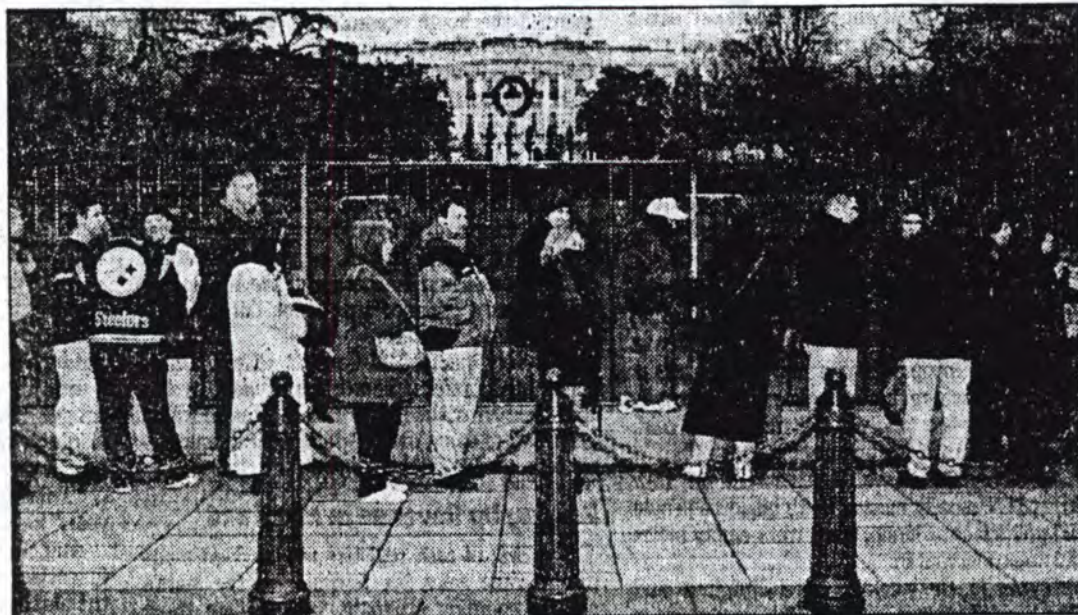
Sophie Sawatzki keeps sons Atticus, 5, and Augustus, 4, busy while waiting for the Christmas Candlelight Tour.

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



BY LARRY MORRIS—THE WASHINGTON POST

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 creche 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.