Reporter's Notebook: The Last Four Days

P&T 1/22/73

By Sally Quinn

The first big event of the inaugural weekend was the Vice President's Reception at the Museum of History and Technology. To take care of the 11,000 guests 30 young women had been chosen as hostesses, each dressed in costumes to depict either a pioneer, an Indian or a Southern bell. One of the Southern belles stood at the front entrance in a rented long pink satin dress with pink lace and a hoop skirt, greeting people as they arrived.

"How were you chosen to be a hostess?" she was asked.

"Connections," she chirped matter-of-factly.

This year's inauguration was billed as the "people's" inauguration, a series of festivities for all Americans, a joining together of the citizens of this country to celebrate, a party with something for everyone.

Everyone who had connections. Everyone who had tickets. Everyone who had a limousine, everyone who had money and everyone who had, above all, credentials.

One inaugural official whose chest was emblazoned with badges, tags, buttons and insignia said, "I haven't seen anything like this since I played Captain Midnight as a child and wouldn't let anyone in my treehouse."

The inaugural officials referred to the inaugural events as "semi-public." The Secret Service agents referred to them as "private."

But regardless of whether the inauguration was public, semi-public or private, it was a commercial venture. Everyone was charged for everything and often not getting what they paid for.

They rarely have at other inaugural celebrations.

As usual, concerts cost money, receptions were not cheap, dinners were expensive. The balls themselves cost

See NOTEBOOK, B4, Col. 1

NOTEBOOK, From B1

up to $1,000 for the box holders. The decision had been made by J. Willard Marriott, inaugural chairman, to hold the functions in public or semi-public buildings rather than hotels to cut costs.

Last-minute decisions to sell drinks at the receptions were scotched only because the lack of liquor licenses and at the balls six drinks were $9 even for boxholders.

One of the problems was freebees. Every high administration official and especially Jeb Magruder, Inaugural Committee executive director, was impounding blocks of over 1,000 tickets for all events to give away to VIPs and at the last minute had to "paper" the seats when they found they hadn't been able to give them all away.

The inaugural weekend was planned as an essay in efficiency. And as far as the president's schedule was concerned, it was. He sailed through the city from event to event, through traffic jams as though there weren't a car in the streets, his Inaugural Address started only one minute late, the floats in the parade ran on time and his visits to the five Inaugural Balls were logistically near-perfect, including his dancing time on the floor.

But for many other officials and revelers the weekend was a nightmare of snafus—as it has been at most inaugurals.

The Vice President's reception. About 15,000 persons went through the receiving line to shake hands with the Vice President.

He shook hands in shifts. Once he went to the men's room and the waiting crowd got a little hostile but many were even more hostile when they found out Agnew had left. One exuberant fan got to hear him make a short talk and screamed from the chair she was standing on, "Our next President, our next President."

She was 75-year-old Mary L. Grant Spriggs, black and a long-time Republican campaign worker. Mrs. Spriggs has been a Republican since Teddy Roosevelt's time. "yes, sir," she said. "I used to be a good friend of Alice Roosevelt when we were little. We'd to Sunday school and then play on the White House playground and Teddy Roosevelt would pull my pigtails and he'd tell my daddy I was the prettiest little girl. That's why I like Spiro Agnew, because he's a Republican like Teddy and Alice." Mrs. Spriggs says she doesn't see too much of Alice Roosevelt Longworth these days.

She had a whole coterie of white businessmen supporting her enthusiasm for the Vice President, at least partly because she was the loudest and one of the few blacks. "Atta girl," said one man, "give em hell, tell it like it is."

Those who didn't get to see the Vice President (as well as those who did) made the affair successful in any case by taking stacks of free (used) plastic glasses or getting drunk or both.

That night was the Salute to the States. It was action-packed, filled with performers, two shows going on in the Kennedy Center at once with Bob Hope as the big guest star, Pat Boone, Hugh O'Brian, Miss America and everybody. But the rehearsal that afternoon was more fun than the show.

Pat Boone was in white bucks and blue jeans, wearing a cowboy shirt with a glass of milk on the back, a cross around his neck and chewing gum. He talked about his involvement in the free-form Jesus movement and the spiritual emphasis he placed on his show. He talked about how he was thrown out of the Church of Christ for writing a book about miracles. He talked about how he fell out of love with his wife, Shirley, for two years and then a miracle brought them back together. And he talked about the importance of family in America and how Richard Nixon believes in family. And how he feels he represents the same things Nixon does.

Hugh O'Brian didn't have his little talk for that night planned out at all. "I don't need to know what I'll say," he said. "It will come from the emotion of the moment."

The technicians were rehearsing the timing to the evening, scheduling Pat Nixon as they would the performers, their diamond rings glistening as they talked about the "First Lady-O and Pat-baby."

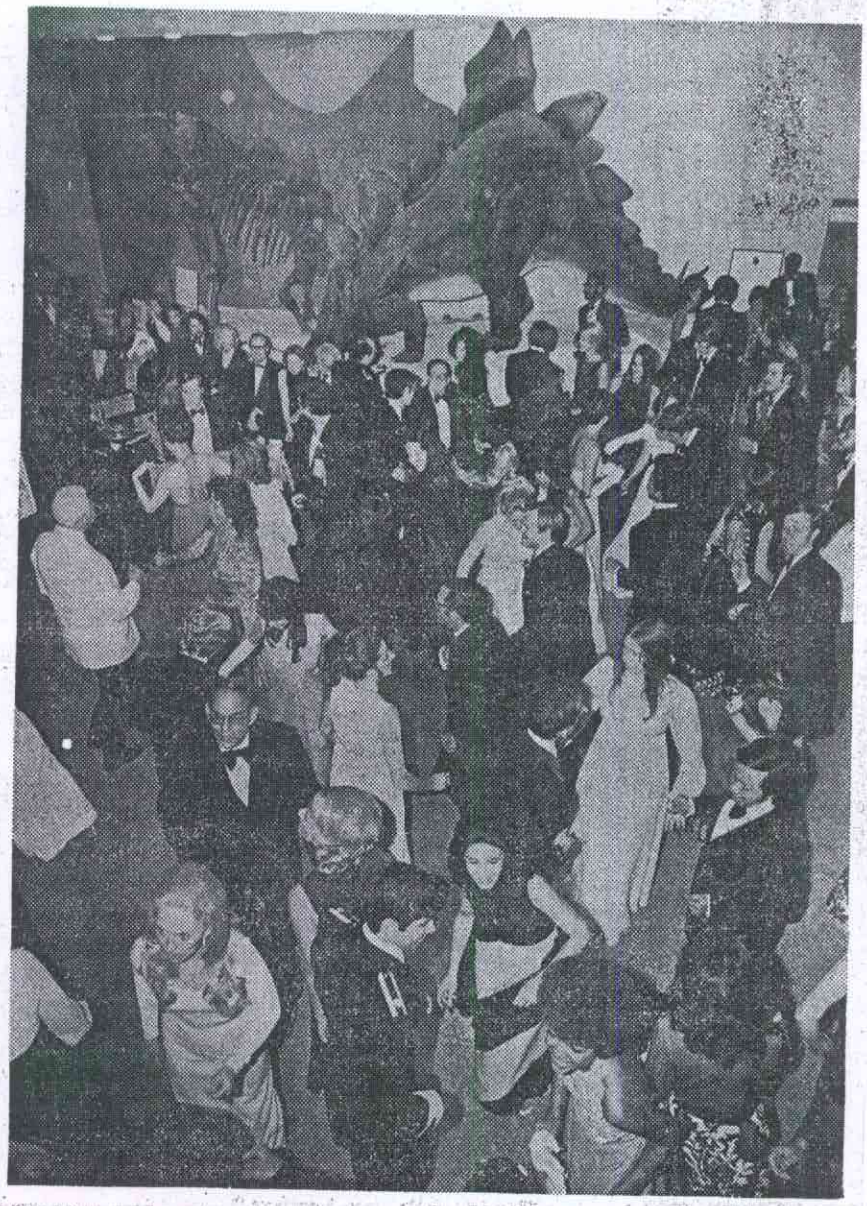
Hollywood came to the Potomac and Hollywood was less than happy with everything except the free publicity they would get by appearing. "Where's the action," said a producer of Wayne Newton's act as they were rehearsing the biggest show Washington has seen in four years.

Only Bob Hope looked in place. "There's the secretary of defense," said an out-of-towner as Hope slipped into his waiting limousine. Hope had a press conference earlier in the day. He was asked which President had the best sense of humor. "I guess I'd better say Dick Nixon," said Hope and went on to talk about Jack Kennedy's spontaneous and original wit.

Friday night was when things really began to happen. The first event was "A Salute to Amreica's Heritage" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. It would have been a terrific party for 1,500 but the 12,000 who came slowed things down a little. Also there were a few mishaps. The Secret Service forgot the list of employees' names and they couldn't get in. The police reneged on their promise to let the diplomats out the front door because of traffic and they fumed in the rain at the back door while their chauffeurs waited in their limousines in the front. None of the celebrities, (Zsa Zsa Gabor, Desi

Arnaz, Ricardo Montalban, all the ethnics) showed up. And Henry Kissinger, according to an inaugural official, had to go upstairs to rest.

He recovered within 15 minutes, enough to go to Henry and Christina Ford's party around the corner at the F Street Club. The Fords, who are Democrats and were big buddies of the Johnson's, have this big party the night before the Inauguration every four years. They invite all the ingoing administration fat cats and all the outgoing administration fat cats and the Congress and any stars who happen to be around.



By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

Inaugural dancing at the Museum of Natural History.

At the very beginning of the evening Kissinger appeared with Nancy McGinnis. John and Martha Mitchell came and so did Bob Hope. But they all had to go on the American Music Concert dinners and stayed only a few minutes. Later, a guest complimented Christina Ford on her lovely party. "Oh yes," she said, "it's nice but all the glamor ones left." Only Imelda Marcos, wife of the president of the Philippines, stayed to give Mrs. Ford a little competition. "Everyone wants to meet Mrs. Marcos," she complained.

During the party several hundred George Washington University students had lined the doorway outside and began chanting to the partygoers inside. Henry Ford, who was a little bored, decided to go out and talk to them. He walked down the steps to cheers and told the crowd, "I'd much rather be out here with you. They're all a bunch of stuffy asses inside." He went back to join his guests, many of whom were huddled in fear inside the door, too scared to leave. The kids began to chant that they were hungry so

By Gerald Martineau—The Washington Post

Where the eggs aimed at the President landed.

By Ken Feil—The Washington Post

Imelda Marcos

1972 photo

Frank Sinatra with Spiro Agnew and Tricia Nixon Cox.

Associated Press

Nancy McGinnis with Henry Kissinger.

Ford went to the kitchen and picked out several trays of petit four's, caviar hors d'oeuvres and watercress sandwiches and headed toward the door. His three Ford company vice presidents began to tremble, all of them urging him "for the image of the company," not to go outside again.

As Ford began to descend the steps with a silver tray of food, one of the vice presidents grabbed him and shrieked, "For God's sake, Henry, not the silver!"

The kids turned out to be benign, sang "We love you He-en-ry," "2-4-6-8, who do we appreciate," and "Ford's got a better idea." He told them all to go home and study and they started to disperse.

"That's the only guy in Detroit who's got any -----," said another vice president in awe.

Christina Ford, try as she might, just can't seem to appreciate Washington power circles the way her husband does. People aren't chic enough in Washington, and besides, she doesn't know that many of them and they keep changing all the time. Christina looked divine in black satin pants and a black decollete sweater trimmed in red. Her wide eyes glistened and she was distraught most of the evening. First of all she didn't know most of her guests. "I must find my friends," she kept murmuring as she circled the room. She looked horrified at one woman guest with a hairclip. Then, spotting someone she knew at the door she squealed "There's a friend of mine," and raced to embrace her.

There were other exciting events. Frank Sinatra, deciding not to disappoint an audience of bystanders at a party later in the evening in the lobby of the Fairfax Hotel, gave one of his renowned performances.

Sinatra was in town as a guest and friend of Vice President Agnew's and had failed to show up as the much publicized emcee for the American Music Concert in the Kennedy Center two hours earlier.

Vice President Agnew spends holidays and vacations with Sinatra at his Palm Springs estate and Sinatra is a frequent visitor to Washington.

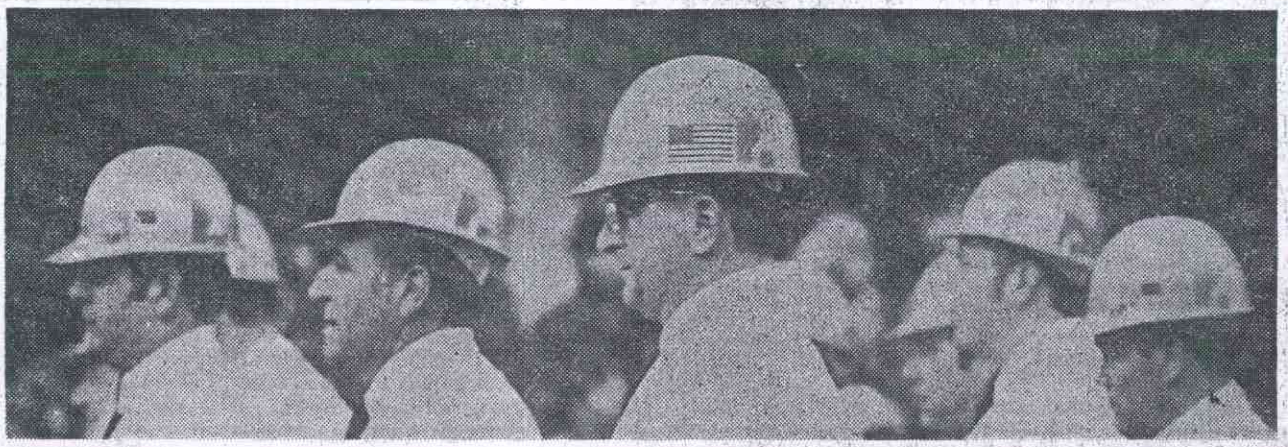
Sinatra has a reputation for being difficult. He had agreed to emcee the American Music concert Friday night with Sammy Davis Jr. as lead entertainer. Davis bowed out, citing "the flu" and Sinatra sent no explanation for his absence, leaving Hugh O'Brian (on crutches from a cartilage operation) to fill in.

Naturally those who had paid $20 to $500 a ticket were not pleased. (Hugh O'Brian said later that Sinatra had made an unexpected visit to the Salute to the States concert the night before, sung "Fly Me to the Moon" and decided he had "done his bit.")

So it was a surprise to many concertgoers who went on to Louise Gore's champagne breakfast at the Jockey Club for the Republican National Committee to see Sinatra arrive around midnight with his constant companion, Barbara Marx. He walked straight through the lobby ignoring fans seeking to shake his hand and back into the adjoining Sea Catch restaurant where presidential Press Secretary Ron Ziegler and his wife were chatting with friends. Approached by one reporter Sinatra snapped, "Who do you think you are? If you want to ask me something, write me a letter."

At this point he spotted Maxine Cheshire, Washington Post columnist, who sought to ask a question.

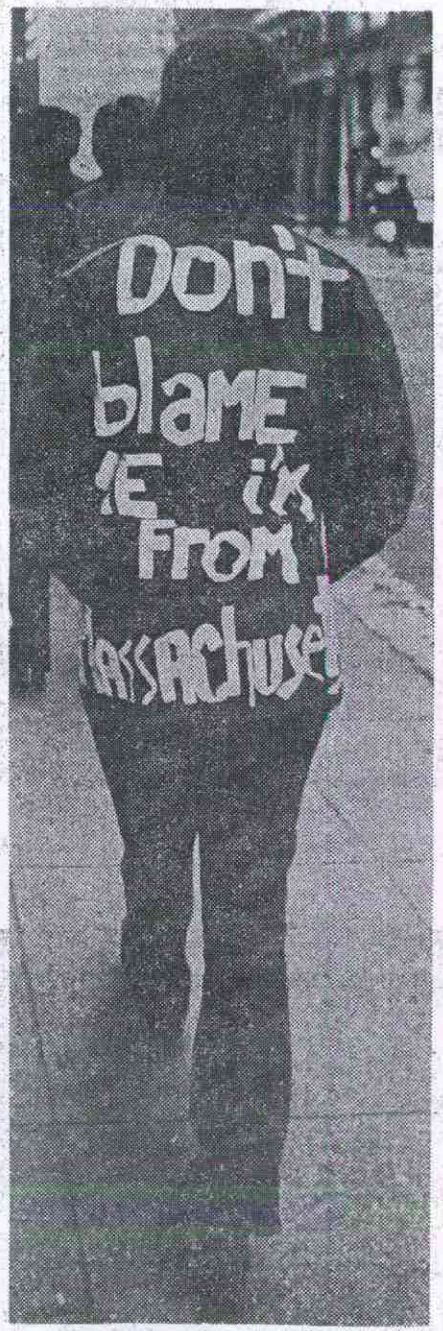
"Get away from me," yelled Sinatra. "You scum, go home and take a bath. Print that Miss Cheshire. Get away from me. I don't want to talk to you. I'm getting out of here to get rid of the stench of Miss Cheshire." He stopped a passerby on his way out and



Hardhats marching in the Inaugural Parade.

1971 photo

Christina Ford.



By Linda Wheeler—The Washington Post

Street scene.

said, "You know Miss Cheshire, don't you? That stench you smell is from her."

Sinatra was getting redder, he was walking faster and his voice was getting louder. He reached the lobby where about 30 bystanders were watching and shouted: "You're nothing but a $2 broad, you know that . . . you're a —. That's spelled —. (He spelled out a four letter expletive referring to a woman). "You do know what that means, don't you?" Sinatra was flushed; Barbara Marx was ashen. She tugged on his arm and whispered, "C'mon baby, c'mon Pete."

But Sinatra would not be appeased. As he strode out under the requee of the Fairfax Hotel he repeated his colorful dialogue about a $2 broad. Then he reached in his pocket and produced two $1 bills. Shouting, "Here's $2, baby. That's what you're used to," he stuffed them in Mrs. Cheshire's empty glass, turned and disappeared into his limousine.

"Well, there goes the inauguration," sighed Nancy Ziegler.

Ron Ziegler saw only the first half of the Sinatra show and wouldn't comment. Agnew aide Peter Malatesta shook his head and looked at the floor.

Sinatra was not seen again—Friday night or at any of Saturday's climactic festivities.

Saturday was Inauguration Day and the day of the March Against Death, the antiwar demonstration.

By 1 p.m., crowds were heading for the Pennsylvania Avenue inaugural parade route, those with tickets to sit in the stands dressed in furs, corsages, boutonnieres, coats and ties. Those without dressed in slacks and jackets. Limousines pulled up along the route. Chauffeurs unloaded flasks and fox fur throws, bottles of champagne and picnic baskets.

A man on the street with two American flag buttons and two Nixon buttons on his collar was selling flag and peace buttons. Questioned, he barked: "If you really have to know, I'm selling more of them peace buttons."

Police allowed those with tickets to cross Pennsylvania Avenue. Those without walked on to cross 10 blocks further down.

Those with tickets got called ma'am and sir. Those without were lady and mister. The stands had many empty spaces but there were thousands trying to get a glimpse of the President any way they could. One access street had a policeman blocking it. "Closed," he announced firmly, "to the general public."

With good reason, it turned out. One of the general public threw eight raw eggs at the President as his open limousine turned the corner at 15th Street. The President ducked.

The peace march and the speeches were successful but repetitive. "After nine years," said an old peace hand, "the only thing that's held up is Haydn's Mass in Time of War" (played at the peace concert at the Washington Cathedral). The peace movie stars (Dustin Hoffman, Melina Mercouri, Ben Gazzara) didn't show up either.

There were five inaugural Balls. Each one was hot, overcrowed) posing a fire hazard) and confusing. They were badly managed—it was difficult to check coats, hard to get drinks, nearly impossible to dance in the main ballroom, hopeless to get souvenirs and generally not very enjoyable, especially for the VIPs who had paid $1,000 each for their boxes.

At the Museum of Natural History California Gov. and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, industrialist Harvey Firestone and his wife, and Ambassador and Mrs. Walter Annenberg left their boxes to greet the President, only to find them later filled with press and other guests standing on chairs to get a glimpse of the President. Sen. Barry M. Goldwater's box ended up being used as a first-aid station when a man who had had a heart attack was brought there to await medical aid.

"This is the closest I'll ever get to the black hole of Calcutta," said a bejeweled box holder as she climbed over a chair to see the President.

The President was hanging loose Saturday night. He was on a euphoric high, making jokes, using slang, picking attractive women to dance with and making a few wisecracks from time to time. He looked heavily made up.

When Les Brown put on his earphones with a cord attached to them, Nixon cracked, "What's that, your umbilical cord." Mrs. Nixon looked embarrassed but continued to smile.

There were several counter inaugural parties. One of them was given by a group of liberals at the home of lawyer Alfred Beveridge. The guests all brought casseroles. Among them were Sen. and Mrs. Walter Monrale (1)-Minn.) and Sen. and Mrs. Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill.) Around 11 p.m. the front door opened and in walked Jack Valenti with Imelda Marcos on his arm.

The guests were less than pleased at the arrival of the wife of Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos, who has imposed martial law upon his country. As a result, Mrs. Marcos remained in the hallway making awkward conversation with Valenti. Hostess Madzy Beveridge asked her if she would like to sit down and she replied, "No." They stayed for a half hour, then left.

One top inaugural official, after he had finished his daily duties on Saturday, found himself in the crush at the Museum of Histody and Technology ball.

Pushed into one of the $1,000-VIP boxes he came face-to-face with an old political friend he hadn't seen in years. The friend was irate. He had nothing but complaints about the Ball, claiming coats were impossible to check, cars impossible to park. He couldn't get a drink. He couldn't dance. There were too many people and you couldn't see or hear the President.

The inaugural official asked his friend whether this party was any different from any other inaugural ball.

The riend replied that it wasn't.

The official asked his friend how many inaugural balls he had attended.

"The last five."