

Post 1-6-73

Sitting Out the Reception

By Donnie Radcliffe

Representatives of both Washington newspapers were excluded last night from a "pool" of 12 reporters covering a White House reception.

The reception, given by President and Mrs. Nixon for the leadership and new members of Congress, was the first test since the Christmas holidays of a new policy for press coverage of White House social events.

Washington Post reporter Dorothy McCardle and Washington Star-News reporter Isabelle Shelton, along with Trude Feldman, who represents newspapers in California, Ohio and New Jersey, were excluded from

the pool selected earlier in the day by White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler.

Thirteen pool reporters were notified in mid-afternoon that they were to cover. A dozen showed up, most of them surprised by their selection, and later briefed the three reporters waiting in the West Press Center.

The Washington Post was left out of four consecutive affairs in December, but The Washington Star-News had been included.

Yesterday, Mrs. Shelton said that she would not have joined the pool even if asked unless The Post had been admitted as well.

"I would not have gone in

if The Post had been kept out," she said, declining comment on whether this was Star-News policy.

Last month, Ziegler told a regular White House news briefing that a new "rotating" system of reporting "pools" was being put into effect. He said the arrangement was designed to "spread" coverage more fairly among a greater national representation of newspapers.

"We don't consider that the White House has a local press, no matter what the view of that particular publication (The Post) . . . We will be inviting a cross-section of newspapers to serve on pools, to cover social events when they occur," Ziegler said.

On the theory that the White House is as much "hometown" as national news to Washington readers, newspapers here traditionally signed up to cover and, virtually without exception, were included in all pools.

None of last night's "pool" reporters, except the wire services, represented media in Maryland or Virginia and were unable to report back how many new members of Congress from those jurisdictions were present at the reception.

They said they were only interested in newcomers in Congress from their home states. Two reporters said they accidentally ran into Rep. Marjorie Holt (R-Md.) when she introduced herself to White House foreign affairs adviser Henry Kissinger.

Normally, "pools" consist of a few reporters, often less than a half dozen, who later brief a substantially larger group of reporters waiting outside.

But, as in yesterday's case, the new White House policy reverses procedures by having many reporters briefing a few.

In three instances last month, Mrs. McCardle was the lone reporter excluded from "pools" varying in size

See EXCLUDE, E3, Col. 1

Sitting it Out in the White House

EXCLUDE, From E1
from six to 10 reporters.
A common practice in designating "pool" reporters at past White House social events has been to select them from a sign-up sheet of those expressing a desire to cover.

Yesterday, still another new wrinkle emerged in the current White House procedure of selecting "pools." There was no sign-up sheet and the previous day, the White House said there would be no press coverage whatsoever.

For most of last night's "pool" reporters, covering a White House social event was something new and they openly sought advice from the trio they were later to brief.

Frank VanderLinden of the Nashville Banner said he had "pooled" once at a dinner for President Nixon in Iran but "I usually leave all this to the girls. It means a lot more to them than it does to us."

Bob Boyd of Knight Newspapers, explaining that "normally, we wouldn't cover this sort of thing," said he had been told by Ziegler's office "if you can't make it send somebody from your organization."

At the reception, Boyd said he argued with Ziegler about The Post and The Star-News reporters being excluded.

"I think that the way to do this," Boyd said he told Ziegler, "is to include both

Washington papers on all pools because this kind of story is of local interest. The other members of the pool could be spread around on a rotating basis."

"I don't agree with you," snapped Ziegler. "The local papers have no special claim here."

Boyd said he did not intend to write a story about the party.

"This is not the kind of news my paper wants. This

is not the kind of event that I cover."

Joe Lastilick of the Kansas City Star, substituting for John Cauley, and Don Kaul of the Des Moines Register confessed they were both newcomers on the White House social beat.

Jerry Ter Horst of the Detroit News said he decided to accept the White House invitation to cover because "I internally sensed an atmosphere that makes a pool of this kind a little more interesting."

After the reception ended, Ter Horst said he would not file a story because "This is off my beat."

Others in the pool were Edgar Allan Poe of the New Orleans Times Picayune, Fay Wells of Storer Broadcasting, Ann Schmidt of Denver Post, Alvin Rosenfeld of NBC, Roger Gittins of UPI Audio, Helen Thomas of United Press International, and Frances Lewine of Associated Press.

Marlene Simons of the Los Angeles Times was invited but did not attend.

A Dog Named 'Fix'

AARHUS, Denmark (UPI) — Even \$2,300 in cash could not persuade gamekeeper Hans Jø Nielsen to sell his favorite pointer, named Fix, to Jacqueline Onassis.

"He's a good dog and I'm not sure a life as Mrs. Onassis' pet dog would suit him," Nielsen told a secretary from the Greek embassy

who turned up at his farm last month.

"Apparently word has gone round to Greek embassies that Mrs. Onassis wanted a first class pointer and this gentleman offered me 16,000 kroner \$2,300 in cash," Nielsen said yesterday. "It's more than I would have asked for, but money is not everything."