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## Nixon Hails Reader's Digest on Jubilee

The Reader's Digest celebrated its 50th anniversary in the White House last night, a long way from the modest quarters in which it was born in New York's Greenwich Village.

The white-tie party given in the State Dining Room by President and Mrs. Nixon drew a blue-chip attendance to pay tribute to the thick, little magazine of miscellany and homily that sells 30 million copies a month here and abroad.

Among the 100 guests invited were Secretary of State William P. Rogers, Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally, Attorney General John N. Mitchell, and Secretary of Commerce Maurice H. Stans.

### Varied List of Guests

In addition to members of the Government, the highly diversified guest list included Bob Hope, Lionel Hampton, Fred McMurray, the Rev. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and the Rev. Billy Graham. Also invited were Donald T. Regan, president of Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith; Col. Frank Borman, the astronaut; Peter Mennin, head of the Juilliard School, and Ray Conniff, who brought a group of 16 singers to mark the event in song in the East Room.

There were even writers—Irving Kristol, editor of *The Public Interest*; Sidney Hook, professor emeritus of philosophy at New York University, and James Michener. In short, the guests were about as varied as the topics that, either condensed or full-length, fill the Digest.

The guests of honor, of course, were DeWitt Wallace and his wife, the former Lila Bell Acheson, co-chairman of the Digest and its founders who astutely turned a capital investment pittance of \$1,800 into a rich lode.

At the gathering the President gave Mr. Wallace a Medal of Freedom Citation, noting that "he has made a towering contribution to that freedom of the mind from which spring all our other liberties."

### Congenial Company

The citation described the Digest as a "monthly university in print, teaching 100 million of common life and the scope readers worldwide the wonder of man's potential."

What began as a handy summary of what was running full-length in other publications has been modified to the point of amplification. By Digest count, 60 per cent of its articles are original, a course taken by Mr. Wallace because he wasn't finding the material he wanted elsewhere. To keep the Digest tradition of reprinting pure, the originals often have been planted first in obscure magazines.

A staff of about 35 reads, selects and recommends the remaining 40 per cent. Each morsel fed into the Digest either as originals or reprints is chewed up by as many as five editors who follow progress on a flow chart. The editorial staff is about 110 strong, and Mr. Wallace, now 82, thinks that if they worked as hard, as he used to work the staff itself could be condensed a bit.

The Wallaces, who work out of an elegant Georgian-style mansion at Chappaqua, own the voting stock and what happens when they die is what Mr. Wallace calls "a confidential matter."

The creation of the founding father and mother speaks as much as they do, or vice versa. He utters simple sentences: "Our staff is producing a magazine of immense value to thoughtful people."

She delivers similarly pithy sentiments: "I'm most interested in beauty; where there's beauty, there's no crime. I cleaned up the entrance to the Metropolitan Museum."

### Timeless Headlines

Their magazine has an old-shoe quality with headlines as timeless as the mind of man after man after man after man can make them: "How to Land the Job You Want," "How Wiv Drive Husbands Crazy," "Numbers proliferate: 'Six Steps to Smarter Shopping,'" "Eight Step to a New Life," "Letter From Cloud Nine."

Readers are forever being told what to do about every ill from falling hair to falling arch from backache to bellyache.

Bellyaching does not go down well at the Digest, and so the magazine is currently dissecting one of the most gutsy characters imaginable, organ by organ. After earlier treatment of Joe's spine, ear and adrenal gland, December's feature was "I am Joe's Prostate."

Harper Jr., executive editor: "They said the same thing about sex."

The Digest's pages are especially hospitable to future, present and past Republican Presidents. Dwight D. Eisenhower was a favorite writer. The 50th anniversary issue features an interview with President Nixon, and Mr. Wallace said that he was going to support him for re-election no matter who ran against him.

The Digest opposes the welfare state, bureaucracy in government, labor unions, student militants, leftists and wordy people generally. Abroad, but not in the United States edition, it accepts liquor and tobacco ads.

The magazine has been imitated often, but even such flattery does not pacify intellectuals. The Digest editors return the compliment. When a visitor asked Hobart Lewis, the Digest's president and editor in chief, who advised Mr. Nixon in the 1960 campaign, whether the Digest reprinted anything from *The New York Review*, he replied, "What's *The New York Review*? Should I know it?"

Hope for each issue springs eternal from the page: "Are Dirty Movies on the Way Out?" "Is the Recession Over?"

Mr. Wallace put the policy in context: "I've often thought we'd have a utopia in this country if every community adopted all the advice we offered from time to time."