

See also WXPost 25 Feb 75,
Maxine Cheshire, this file,

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VIP

The Missing Silver Mystery

By Maxine Cheshire

PEOPLE/LEISURE

asked to buy enough china, crystal and silver to feed 90 guests of the President and First Lady. Everything was to be in Thailand by military plane within 24 hours.

The tableware eventually found its way back to her, the silver shipped unpolished in manila envelopes. At this point, she had it all buffed and packed into specially purchased storage chests.

It was her understanding, she says, that the silver was going to be kept available for future Presidents to use when traveling abroad.

She hasn't seen it since and began wondering what happened to it recently when the government decided to buy new silver.

She ordered the 60 new place settings of "Strasbourg" for the Vice President's residence, and the White House has acquired 130 new place settings of "King Charles."

She tried tracing the missing silver but everyone who

The White House, which recently acquired a new \$100,000 set of sterling silver flatware, misplaced or lost another set worth about \$45,000 before President Ford took office.

The missing silver, 90 place settings of an International Silver Co. pattern known as "Joan of Arc," was purchased by the State Department in 1966 for a banquet that President Johnson gave in Bangkok, Thailand, for the king and queen. OCT 66

Used that one time, the silver was returned to Washington after the trip, tarnished but intact.

What happened to the silver after that is a mystery of some concern these days to a bureaucrat named Mary Frances Breckenridge.

Mrs. Breckenridge is the State Department design expert who buys such items as silver for our embassies abroad and for such presidential accommodations as Air Force I, the yacht Sequoia and Camp David.

It was Mrs. Breckenridge who was called out of a dinner party on a Sunday night nine years ago and

might know anything about it seems to have retired, resigned or died. "I've given up trying," she says.

First Lady Betty Ford's press secretary, Sheila Wiedenfeld, said last week that no one currently working in either the curator's office or the chief usher's office "has ever heard of the silver." A protocol office spokesman said he had been unable to locate anyone in the State Department who can shed any light on the silver's whereabouts.

The Johnson Library in Austin, Texas, has no record of the silver.

Rep. James Symington (D-Mo.), who was chief of protocol at the time, has no memory of the silver. Neither does Bess Abell, the White House social secretary who staged the dinner in Thailand.

If there are career civil servants anywhere in Washington, or elsewhere, who have any information about the silver, Mrs. Breckenridge would appreciate hearing from them.

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