

A Capital Impeachment Ball

By Tom Zito



By Gerald Martineau—The Washington Post

A participant in the Impeachment Ball parades through the crowd with a papier-mâché Nixon headdress on his shoulders.

There are starchy parties in the social life of Washington, and there are frilly parties, and there are parties where marijuana is smoked. Something of each came together in a swirl Saturday night at an Inaugural Anniversary Impeachment Ball that attracted over 2,000 of the Old Left, New Left, liberals, farm workers, organizers, students, lawyers, housewives and the simply curious.

Inside the ballroom of the downtown Ramada Inn it was hot and heavy, not unlike some politically charged fraternity costume party.

There was the woman who came as a "sinister force," dressed as the Wicked Witch of the North but bearing a placard that proclaimed "Tape Erasing a Specialty." There was the "Confirmed Acrobatic Secretary." There was the man inside a giant milk container, there was Arab oil sheikhs, American oil tycoons and hundreds behind Richard Nixon masks or

wrapped in magnetic recording tape.

And outside there were protesters, 150 by police estimate, waving tiny American flags and distributing handbills declaring that "the nation itself is being destroyed in an all-consuming hatred and mockery of its President." Members of the National Prayer and Fast for the Watergate Crisis group started by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, they carried signs announcing, "Let Him Who Is Guiltless Cast The First Stone" and "God Loves Nixon." The group marched around the sidewalks of the hotel until about 11:30 p.m., singing their theme, "The Day of Hope," as well as Irving Berlin's "God Bless America."

The impeachment ball was organized as a fundraiser by the Washington Area Impeachment Coalition. Until Tuesday they shared sponsorship with the Washington area American Civil Liberties Union. Then

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Inaugural Anniversary Impeachment Ball

BALL, From B1



By Gerald Marthneau—The Washington Post
Members of the National Prayer and Fast Committee picket and protest outside the Thomas Circle Ramada Inn, site of the Impeachment ball.

the local ACLU pulled out, claiming that "the focus of the ball will be on matters other than civil liberties aspects of impeachment." All week the coalition maintained it had sold 600 tickets at \$5 each. But on Saturday the crowding in the ballroom made many think there were over more than than the 2,000 the coalition reported with pleased surprise.

Now this was advertised as a ball, and most of the people there, aside from political considerations, seemed to be interested in dancing—particularly the few drowned-out folks who kept screaming "BOOGIE!" throughout the evening.

But like most political events, the fun couldn't begin until the ideological preliminaries were consummated. These included theater by the Earth Onion, a feminist group, addressing the crowd as "Brothers and sisters . . ."; the reading of the "Nixon 23d Psalm" (indecipherable on the room's distorting PA system); obligatory cries of "boycott lettuce"; a folk-singer whose most dramatic moment came when, to "dress for the revolution," as she put it, off came her fur jacket and lame shirt to reveal of scanty white cotton top; the contingent of students from Kent State;

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and this scenario in the men's room, where a number of men stand in a row:

"I'm a farm worker," a fellow says, bursting in. "We're asking you not to buy grapes or lettuce or Gallo wine."

"Yeah, you know I really like wine but I haven't been drinkin' it, you know, because of the boycott," replies a fellow on the verge of swooning.

"Well mahh, you don't have to give up wine, you know," adds the farm worker. "You can drink Almaden or Christian Brothers. That's union grapes."

There were, of course, more traditional modes of expression. Dr. Annalee Stewart, 73, said she came with her 77-year-old husband

"because we support the things that the young people are working for." "I really believe this is a nice expression of what people feel about the President," said Audrey Caskey, a 35-year-old mother, part-time student and shop steward for the American Postal Workers Union. Over her green Lord & Taylor knits hung an "FBI" wanted poster for Richard Nixon. "This is the first time I've ever moved on anything," she said.

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man, a local psychiatrist, declined to give his name.

Frivolity certainly was rampant, from the outrageous costumes worn by many of the mostly young, almost exclusively white crowd, to the auction items including "Martha Mitchell's telephone" (it went for \$10); a pass to the 1972 Republican Convention; a dart board with photos of the President and Spiro Agnew at the bulls-eye; and a Watergate game.

Perhaps the one moment of serious, prolonged applause: came when Phil Ochs, a protest singer from in early '60s, revamped the chorus of his tired "Here's to the State of Mississippi," singing:

*Here's to the land you've torn out the heart of
Richard Nixon find yourself another country
to be part of.*

Then — at about 1 a.m. — it was time to boogie to the music of Zapata, a local third-world rock group.

By 2 a.m., as the crowd was thinning out and the music was stopping, the ballroom of the Ramada Inn of c.c. seem far removed from a pasture hit by a rock

It's littered with beer cans, splintered plastic cocktail glasses, empty wine bottles, the remnants of marijuana cigarettes, fallen red, white and blue streamers and, here and there, an unpunctured balloon.