
Betty Beale: Washington

Abundance of ribbons and jewels

WASHINGTON — After almost four years of not "hacking it" at the White House, Washington's ambassadorial corps was charmed to be invited by President Ford to dance in the East Room dressed in their ribboned and jeweled dandiest. About 80 of the envoys and wives had never been to a party in the Executive Mansion. And none of them had cut a figure in the White House ballroom to the irresistible beat of Meyer Davis's music. It was a welcome respite in the face of the grim economic picture.

"In a drab world a little glitter is good for us," said Pakistan ambassador Yaqub-Khan, the picture of erect elegance in white tie with sash and medals across his chest.

One of his Asian colleagues had obviously never confronted a dress suit vest before, least of all attempted to wear one. When he appeared at the international soiree, he had the vest on backward and upside-down. The halter neckstrap was under his bowtie and the points of the vest were somehow pointing toward the ceiling instead of the floor!

For the women who had them, the occasion called for tiaras. Lady Ramsbotham, wife of Ambassador Sir Peter Ramsbotham, said her delicate floral wreath of diamonds had been handed down in her husband's family and had either belonged to Marie Antoinette or at least was of that period.

Countess Wachtmeister, wife of the Swedish ambassador, was the exact picture of every American's idea of a fairy queen. A natural beauty with shoulder-length pale blond wavy hair, she crowned her locks with a diamond tiara and decked her slim figure in a glittery white evening gown.

Jerry Ford not only danced with the wives, but, like LBJ, he twirled some of us in the press corps. His wife Betty was getting along fine now, but "you can imagine what it was like a week ago when we didn't know," he said, his expression saying even more. Susan had carried off the hostess's honors beautifully. "I am proud of her," said her dad. He was so attentive to her on the dance floor, he didn't seem aware they were dancing to "Thank Heaven for Little Girls."

Despite knocking knees, Susan looked sure of herself, standing tall and poised in the receiving line.



FLANKING

Ambassador-designate to Ghana Shirley Temple Black are envoy-designate to China George Bush and Mrs. Bush



FAIRY queen, Countess Ulla Wachtmeister, Wife of the Swedish ambassador

"She was wonderful for a 17-year-old," said Yania Kosciusko-Morizet, wife of the French ambassador. "She isn't shy but she isn't pushy. She was natural but some young people overdo being natural. She doesn't."

Watching Jerry Ford from a distance, Argentine ambassador Alejandro Orfila suddenly said, "This man to me represents the real strength and optimism of the American people. A man from inland America who will overcome the market's going down, the oil crisis, the problems abroad and will eventually bring the U.S. up again." That's a large order.

The two Fords went upstairs before midnight, but the indefatigable Meyer, dean of all society bandleaders, kept up his peppy rhythm until 12:30 a.m. and wound up with the hottest rock this side of the Danube. He had converted Richard Strauss' tone poem, "Thus Spake Zarathustra," into a frug beat. "Did you know

that the first president Meyer played for was President Harding?" said one guest. "You don't mean it!" gasped another.

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Ron Ziegler, Nixon's everpresent spokesman, was seen in New York the very day the former President went to the hospital. He and Nixon's book agent, Irving Paul Lazar, were encountered walking down the street together, but it could be they were not even discussing the Nixon memoirs for which Lazar has announced he will seek \$3 million.

Ziegler has another iron in the fire. He is himself writing a book and recently showed what he had done to his friend Bill Pine, head of Wamsutta, the former publisher of Harper's Bazaar. Ron's book will be another one on those controversial White House years, but it may include some surprises — like his comment that he advised Nixon to resign as early as last May.

Barbara Walters and Bicentennial head John Warner, an even more frequent twosome, arrived together at Egyptian ambassador and Mrs. Ashraf Ghorbal's dinner for Senator and Mrs. Bill Fulbright. TV's most successful newswoman and a handsome millionaire divorcee don't disguise their admiration for each other. John's ex-wife is the multimillionaire Cathy Mellon, who now spends her time off on her yacht or chasing life in a commune.

Incidentally, Barbara was really surprised by the critical mail she received for inviting Julie Eisenhower to take over her "Not For Women Only" program during her absence — just because the letterwriters don't like her father.

"I'm among the 8000 students who've come to this country on Fulbright scholarships from Egypt." Am-

bassador Ghorbal revealed in his toast to Fulbright. One of his guests was Ambassador-designate to Ghana, Shirley Temple Black, who is being briefed daily at the State Department and who was heading for New York to learn more about U.S. corporations in Ghana, namely Union Carbide.

Shirley wants to take a lot of American Indian paintings with her to hang in her residence in Accra. Would the Ghanaians think she was playing down to them if she took only aborigines' art? "I didn't think of that. Charlie is one-quarter Cherokee," said Shirley, darting a tender, loving glance at her husband who is proud to be going with her.

● Around the town:

● "President Nixon is lonesome and needs friends," said Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz at the People's Republic of China's huge 25th anniversary reception. He said he telephoned his former boss in California recently and they talked for ten minutes. Nixon had to move his propped-up leg to get comfortable but told him, "I'll make it. I am all right."

● Lady Bird Johnson was speechless when Ambassador Zahedi presented her with an envelope at his intimate dinner in her honor another night. "By command of my beloved sovereign, His Majesty the King," he said, handing her the Shah's contribution to the LBJ Memorial Grove on the Potomac. "I am overwhelmed," exclaimed Mrs. Johnson without even taking a peek at the contents. When she did open the envelope later in privacy, she found a check for \$30,000.