

Retrieving Mrs. Kennedy's Letter

By Drew Pearson

The reason why the White House was so anxious to retrieve the letter from Mrs. John F. Kennedy to Mrs. Johnson from a New York auction was because Mrs. Kennedy has been rather aloof with the Johnsons, and the White House did not want to increase the appearance of Pearson aloofness.



Pearson

Some people got the impression that Mrs. Johnson failed to answer Mrs. Kennedy's letter and attached no importance to her invitation to view the Nixon-Kennedy debate in October, 1960.

What actually happened was that Lucianne Cummings, one of the Democratic paid workers, brought Mrs. Johnson a sheaf of mail to the airport, including the invitation from Mrs. Kennedy. En route to the Capital, Mrs. Johnson instructed Miss Cummings to reply by telephone that she would have to be in Baltimore with LBJ that evening, therefore could not attend.

The viewing of the Nixon-Kennedy debate was to be held at Democratic headquarters on Connecticut Avenue that evening, not in the Kennedy home.

Miss Cummings made the phone call but kept the letter, and later sold it without permission to Charles Hamilton, the New York collector.

The fact is that the Johnsons have gone out of their way to invite Mrs. Kennedy to the White House and do everything possible for her. She continues to be aloof. Her first cold shoulder came on Dec. 22, 1963, when she declined to attend the final memorial services for her husband at which President Johnson paid him tribute.

Latest and unkindest cut was when she declined to come to Washington for the dedication of the "Mrs. John F. Kennedy Rose Garden." She was in New York, one hour's flight away, was accepting various social engagements, but would not come to Washington to participate in the dedication of the White House garden named in her honor.

Despite the snub, the President placed a special White House jet at her disposal when she flew to England this month.