

The original documents are located in Box 3, folder “12/10/74 - Press Preview of Christmas Decorations” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Presents
Wouldn't be a surprise if I told you.

Who came up with the theme for this year's Christmas decorations?

I did. I have always loved handicrafts and really became interested in them when I saw quilts being made first-hand in Appalachia.

I also wanted to use ornaments that could be easily and inexpensively made by people in their homes.

I tried to figure out how I could do both and at the same time apply a strong family feeling to the Christmas decorations. I consulted Bill Dove and Nancy Lammerding who helped implement it for me.

But weren't yours professionally done?

I wanted to utilize the talent in America, as well as put people to work--not only those people in Appalachia but senior citizens across the country. In fact, everything on the tree is hand made from American materials. But people can make these ornaments at home at practically no cost out of scraps of material, milk cartons, shredded newspaper for stuffing and the like. In fact, I have easy instruction sheets on how to make them which I know my staff would be happy to give you.

In fact, I wanted to see how easy it was and made one myself -- a lantern. I'm not a sewer, but it was easy and cost me nothing. I made it out of leftover material that had been used to make White House napkins several years ago and lace that came from my mother's sewing box that she gave me.

Did the ornaments cost alot?

I specifically asked that the ornaments not cost alot. Many, as you know, are on loan and will be returned.

Who put together the instruction sheet?

I asked Celene Mahler and Susan Hutchins to work on it for me.

Who are they?

I think all of that is in the releases but they were a great help finding fabrics, old quilts, and advising us on hand crafts. They worked with Bill Dove who is a well-known florist who lives in Washington. I've really admired his work.

Why didn't you stick with Lidden Pennoch as your consultant?

It was more a matter of being familiar with Bill Dove's work.

Who are you giving the toy ornaments to?

Underprivileged children. I have someone working on that now.

Other Economy Moves

Most people don't realize it, but we have to pay for all family means and personal entertainment out of our own pocket. So I'm very aware of food prices and have to budget like all of you.

We're working on cutting down expenses for State Dinners. For example, using American wines, borrowing centerpieces, cutting down on the number of flowers for the centerpieces. We're thinking about other things too.

What about Christmas cards? When are you sending them out?

This Friday, December 13th. You'll have a chance to see them Thursday, December 12th.

Can you tell us about them?

The card is smaller and less elaborate than those used in the White House in previous years. We wanted to cut expenses. Also, the more cards you buy, the better rate you get.

Who's paying for them?

My husband and I, for both the card and postage. It's not cheap when you have to send so many, and we're cutting back on the number previously sent out by former Presidents.

Is your card very different from the card you sent out last year?

We've always had a family Christmas card. This will be the first year we won't. It was difficult to get the family together this year. Also, I'm not certain if embassies and foreign countries want a family portrait.

Are you going tonight to the Chinese Exhibit?

Yes. I have been looking forward to it for a long time.

Are you going to China?

I have absolutely no idea.

scenes and events that would be extremely embarrassing if it were on the front pages or on television. But it almost never is because the private lives of public figures generally are assumed to be private unless they interfere with their public duties or wind up on the police blotter as Mills did.

So he will now give up Chairmanship of the House Ways and Means Committee, those wonderful folks who brought you Form 1040. It was widely thought that Mills' ran the Committee like a tyrant, but actually he did not. He was a strong Chairman with a strong taste for power, but he protected his power by never taking a position without the Committee's support. That way he never lost.

The result is a tax law of such incredible complexity and unfairness to the point of indecency that Judge Learned Hand, one of the great American jurists, said the language in the tax law was like a lot of bugs running around on the page. The whole pile of it would make a nice bonfire on the Capitol grass with Mills' successor setting himself up to write a new one.

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12/10/74

White House Has Old Fashioned Christmas

All networks covered Mrs. Ford's first press conference since her cancer operation.

On NBC film Mrs. Ford showed reporters the White House Christmas tree which she said has an old-fashioned theme, with handmade ornaments made from inexpensive scraps of material.

NBC's Carol Simpson said Mrs. Ford is happy with her position but that her husband may be having second thoughts.

"Well, after four months of the Presidency, I think he has probably found it harder than he thought it would be," Mrs. Ford said.

When questioned whether any signs of strain were visible on her husband, Mrs. Ford said, "Well, I would say the hours are very difficult; however, he has always been one to believe that eating and sleeping was a waste, so this is not anything particularly new to him."

Mrs. Ford said she had not cut down on the number of First Family Christmas presents, but their gifts will be "less elaborate."

As for her Christmas wishes: "A good economic program for the country. Personally for myself, I am quite satisfied with everything I have as long as my family and my husband and I are all able to be together."

CBS' Susan Peterson reported senior citizens and Appalachian women were employed to make many of the decorations. Mrs. Ford and her daughter also got into the make-it-yourself spirit, she reported. They made one hand-embroidered ornament from scraps of material and lace.

"One budget cut was the candied fruit in the Red Room -- salt was substituted for sugar to save money," Peterson said. "But the romance of Christmas wasn't totally cut back for economy's sake. The President apparently approved of one small extravagance -- mistletoe."

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Schlesinger Cautions NATO Against Defense Cuts

Defense Secretary James Schlesinger cautioned the NATO members "not to look toward the United States for protection, should they decide to cut their military budgets," CBS reported. Bill McLaughlin in Brussels reported: "Money is the main theme of this week of top-level meetings of NATO. Runaway inflation and soaring oil prices are threatening the West's ability to defend itself. Saving money while bolstering the West's military strength is the hope and many delegations, including the U.S., see the answer in the standardization of weapons.

"Presently the NATO armies and air forces consist of a bewildering variety of military hardware. There are 25 different kinds of planes, 15 different kinds of tanks, plus a massive range of entirely different spare parts and ammunition. If it came down to a real war, the NATO forces would be hard put to help each other."

"The U.S. and West Germans are pushing weapons standardization. The problem is, who makes what. Everyone wants to sell arms; no one wants to buy them."

"Schlesinger is concerned about the increasing mobility of the Soviet Union's overseas forces and the severe domestic pressures on the European NATO members to spend less on defense and more to shore up their faltering economies."

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 10, 1974

TO: WHITE HOUSE POLICE

FROM: Nancy Chirdon *nce*

SUBJECT: Press Attending Preview of Christmas Decorations,
Tuesday, December 10, 1974

The following members of the press will cover the preview of the Christmas decorations on December 10th:

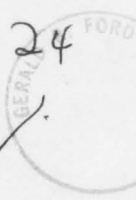
Sally Steele	Enid Daily News
Isabelle Shelton	Washington Star-News
Tish Avery	US News & World Report
Naomi Nover	Nover News Service
Malvina Stephenson	Tulsa World
Vera Glaser	Knight Newspapers
Ann Blackman	Associated Press
Asta Rice	Voice of America
Bonnie Angelo	Time
Fay Wells	Storer Broadcasting Company
Virginia Sherwood	ABC
Kandy Stroud	Women's Wear Daily
Garnett Stackelberg	Palm Beach Life & Baltimore News American
Fannie Granton	Johnson Publications
Grazina Kravikas	Lithuanian World Wide Daily
Clare Crawford	Time
Dorothy McCardle	Washington Post
Ann Schmidt	Denver Post
Lillian Levy	NASA
Mal Johnson	Cox Broadcasting Company
Frances Leighton	
Janet Green	Early American Antique magazine
Kay Elliott	Washington Star-News
Elizabeth Darden	Baltimore Enterprise
Holgar Faber	German TV
Ehrhart Franke	German TV
Jurgen Fraedrich	German TV
Mary Lou Humphrey	German TV
Jacques T. Iziou	Sigma News Agency

Gordon Smith

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

80 Florists from 24

[Handwritten signature]



D.C.

- | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|
| 1 Okl. | 7 Flor | 2 Ken. |
| 10 Va | 2 N.C. | 4 Ind. |
| 2 SCar | 2 Ill. | 1 Kan. |
| 1 Wash | 1 Wisc. | 1 Ariz |
| 16 MD | 3 Tex | 1 Mass |
| 5 DC | 1 Conn. | 3 NJ |
| 3 Calif. | 5 NY | 2 Neb |
| 3 Mich | 3 Pa. | 1 Tenn. |

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The item described below has been transferred from this file to:

- Audiovisual Unit
 Book Collection
 Ford Museum in Grand Rapids

Item: 2 8"x10 color photos of Betty Ford at the press preview
for the 1974 Christmas decorations in the White House.
12/10/74

White House photos:

10DE 74 A 2372 - 30

10DE 74 A 2372 - 28

The item was transferred from: Weidentfeld, Box 3
12/10/74 Press Preview of xmas decorations.

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