

# A VISIT TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

by  
Donald Coolidge Sanborn

The invitation read, "The Inaugural Committee requests the honor of your presence to attend and participate in the Inauguration of Richard Milhous Nixon as President of the United States of America and Spiro Theodore Agnew as Vice President of the United States of America."

The focal point of the Inaugural weekend for us was the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Ordinarily, Inaugural activities were held in local Washington hotels. The use of public buildings represented a significant departure from tradition.

Kennedy Center was plagued with many problems during its construction. The structure stood as a sleeping steel skeleton for many months. The finished product now houses three separate auditoriums providing physical space sufficient to entertain about 10,000 people simultaneously.

The Thursday Night event was labeled, "A Salute to the States", designed to honor the State Governors. Performing entertainers included Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, the Les Brown Band, the Serendipity Singers, Pat Boone Family, Wayne Newton and Henry Kissinger. Kissinger and his blonde female companion were not noticed until half time. At this point, a small army of photographers, press, TV cameramen and autograph seekers swarmed around him. He seemed well protected by a secret service agent and his female companion who appeared about a foot taller than Kissinger. It should also be mentioned that the Vice President was officially introduced upon his arrival for the first half of the performance.

We will never forget Friday night for the rest of our lives. We again returned to the Kennedy Center for dinner and the Inaugural Concert. Upon emerging from the elevator at the roof terrace for the dinner, we were transported back to 18th Century Williamsburg. The fife and drum announced the dinner for the 1,200 guests who were seated by hostesses gowned from the past. The dining area had been

elegantly transformed by candlelight twinkling on the fresh fruited centerpieces. The silver dishes held plantation pineapple and fresh strawberries. The entree consisted of colonial roast duckling, Lafayette sauce, wild rice and heritage salad. "Spirit of '76 Souffle" signaled the conclusion of a superb meal.

While we were in the midst of this delicious souffle, our hostess coralled us. Suddenly we looked up and were being introduced to Governor Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger. Now, friends, have any of you ever given any serious thought as to what you would say to these world's greats under such circumstances?

The Inaugural Concert featured Eugene Ormandy's Philadelphia Orchestra at the President's specific request. The program included Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Van Cliburn playing Grieg's Concerto in A minor, and the Valley Forge Military Academy Band and Los Angeles Master Chorale accompanied Charlton Heston's reading of the Declaration of Independence. The President arrived for the second half of the performance as Washington traffic was horrendous. One perhaps significant development was the appearance of John Connolly just out of the spotlight sitting in the box adjoining the President.

We hope we have not lost you yet as there is still another day—Saturday—to discuss. We observed the Inaugural speech in windy, 30-degree weather from the Senate preferred standing room area. Fortunately, we had remembered two very important items—binoculars and a transistor radio to relate what the specks on the horizon were doing. We noted John Connolly again close to the President. Now another interesting development was a small airplane dragging a banner declaring, "Legalize Gold." The wind currents did force the banner to flip and maybe it really did say, "Ezilagel Dlog." As you can imagine, after two hours, the wind chill factor is noticeable. Fortunately, we met a friend who invited us to bring our brown bag luncheons to Senator Jackson's warm office. The Senate Office Building was a major gathering area for frozen Inaugural listeners. We were amazed the buildings were heated on a Saturday. We viewed the Inaugural Parade from temporary wooden stands at Pennsylvania and Seventh opposite the FTC building. The President led the parade in his warm, half open car. We thoroughly enjoyed the floats, bands, and

many horses, over our bread, cheese, Paul Masson pinot noir and pinot chardonnay.

Saturday night we again returned to Kennedy Center for the Ball. If you can conjure up a picture of the 42nd Street subway at rush hour, this was the Ball. It took about one half hour to arrive at the coat check counter. Shortly thereafter, we decided to head for the Ball at the Smithsonian. The situation was improving, as it took only about fifteen minutes to fight our way back to the coat check counter. Our Ball tickets entitled us to free favors. Seeking these favors was, without a doubt, the most dangerous part of the weekend. If you have ever seen a feeding time in a pig pen, these were the conditions under which the Ball-goers were gathering the favors. Transportation around Washington was treacherous. Our formally dressed party of eight fit beautifully into a six-passenger car for the trip to the Smithsonian Ball. This Ball was again a real treat. We were brighter here and simply had members of our party watch the pile of coats. This, of course, was a sitting assignment and we had a number of volunteers. At 1 a.m., we enjoyed our first dance of the evening. As we were leaving, the President was talking somewhere on the Smithsonian horizon. We knew he was there because we could see the backs of all those heads pointing in a westerly direction.

We shall leave it to you to draw your own political, economic and social conclusions from this historic weekend. My purpose in relating this story is to fill you in on the important nitty-gritty and this, to me, is what life is all about.

If you ever have the opportunity to attend an Inaugural weekend, *NEVER, NEVER MISS IT! IT WAS A FABULOUS EVENT.*