

Letitia Baldrige Hollensteiner, Oral History Interview – 4/24/1964
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Biographical Note

Baldrige Hollensteiner, White House Social Secretary from 1961-1963 and friend to Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, discusses entertaining at the White House, state visits, and humorous anecdotes about the Kennedys, among other issues.

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Letitia Baldrige Hollensteiner

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Oral History Interview

With

Letitia Baldrige Hollensteiner

April 24, 1964
Washington, D.C.

By Mrs. Wayne Fredericks

For the John F. Kennedy Library

FREDERICKS: Tish, why don't you begin at the beginning and tell how you started off in the White House? In 1960, you were leaving Tiffany's to go abroad and start a business of your own. Can you go back to that period?

HOLLENSTEINER: That's true. I was spending six weeks in Big Sur on top of a mountain in a lonely, remote spot writing a novel and ready to go back to Tiffany's and finish up and open up my own business in January in public relations in Milano. One day I was working at my typewriter and a long distance call came from Hyannis Port. This was roughly six days after John F. Kennedy

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had been nominated by the Democrats for the presidency. It was Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] and she said, "If Jack makes it, you've got to come and be social secretary at the White House." Well, I was in an absolute stew with that. I told her I couldn't possibly do that since I was opening my own office. She said, "Now don't be too hasty. Just think it over. And call me back in two days. So I put down the phone and did about one hour's thinking, realizing, of course, that it was something I couldn't turn down. So I started working in December for the Kennedys and my most exciting memory is the work I did on the

Inauguration, of course, helping to get all the family together. I took over the White House cars right from the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] Administration and got everybody to the Inaugural events.

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FREDERICKS: In the snow.

HOLLENSTEINER: In the snow. It was terribly frustrating, but the White House garage drivers became my first friends, and at 12:05 on Inauguration Day, when everybody else was down on Capitol Hill seeing all the exciting events, I paraded into the South Grounds with Provi [Providencia Paredes], Mrs. Kennedy's maid, and George, the valet with the Inaugural ball gown and all the suitcases. We had timed the pilgrimage from Georgetown to the White House so that we would not arrive before twelve noon, because at noon, officially, the new president takes possession of the White House. And so we actually took possession at 12:05. It was the most beautiful, sunshiny day, and as we drove through that driveway the whole South Lawn was covered with white snow and with the blue sky against the White House, I

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have never seen the White House look so beautiful. The head usher and all his staff were beside the door waiting to receive us. We had a very busy afternoon. While everybody else was being very inaugural and watching parades and things, we were already at work changing the house over. Mrs. Kennedy and the President walked in about four o'clock, and we had another party, our first party in the White House.

FREDERICKS: That afternoon?

HOLLENSTEINER: A reception for all the families. And this was a lot of family. When you get all the Kennedys, all the Bouviers, the Auchinclosses, cousins, stepsisters, stepbrothers, nieces and nephews--I think our guest list was about 130 for that party.

FREDERICKS: Tish, when you came down to Washington, what plans did you make before starting? Did the Kennedys have any particular

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ideas about life in the White House that their conveyed to you before they came into the White House?

HOLLENSTEINER: Both the President and Mrs. Kennedy spoke a great deal about her side of the house. They both realized what a very important side of

the presidency the First Lady is and they spent a great deal of time making notes; she wrote copious notes. She relayed these to me and showed what a fantastic sense of organization she had. She already had worked out plans for basic problems and basic organizational patterns before they walked through the doors in January. She arrived at all this after thorough discussions with him.

FREDERICKS: The President was interested then in the running function of the White House?

HOLLENSTEINER: Intensely interested. He was always interested in everything, but he was

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more apt to know what an important job she would play in his life, and there was, no nonsense. This was a young woman who really never had a professional life before except a short experience working as an inquiring photographer, but a great professional sense of organization was immediately apparent. It was a great relief to me because she was a friend and well, I was so glad that here was an organized mind and a very efficient mind.

FREDERICKS: I recall that an announcement was made, I think two or three days after the Inauguration, saying that an attempt at historical renovation would be made in the rooms before the project was fully formulated, or had it been fully formulated before then?

HOLLENSTEINER: They thought a great deal about it before the Inauguration but it was only

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after they were in that Mrs. Kennedy undertook to organize the committees, to line up Mr. duPont and to line up the other members of the committee. It also evolved logically from these first, few meetings with the people who really ran the project, and she got a curator right away.

FREDERICKS: That was Mrs. Pierce?

HOLLENSTEINER: Mrs. Pierce--through Mr. duPont. There were a lot of problems one could not foresee immediately which grew out of these various meetings--worries about getting the peoples' presents tax deductible--do you have to make the White House a museum? What do you do about legal suing? Lawyers and Justice Department officials and tax experts had to be brought in. It became a gigantic project, it needed a big staff and, of course, that evolved.

FREDERICKS: How many were there working on it,

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Tish? Was that a full-time assignment for somebody else or did that fall within your bailiwick?

HOLLFNSTEINER: We handled all correspondence at the beginning, but it just grew to be too much. We just couldn't handle it with all the other correspondence we were handling, so a whole separate department grew up under the White House curator and it was really a part of the Department of the Interior.

FREDERICKS: Can you give me some idea of what a typical day was?

HOLLENSTEINER: In the White House there is no typical day. Every day is bedlam. In the summertime when the President and Mrs. Kennedy were both away on vacation or something like that, we would have a moment's peace; but there really wasn't peace even then because we were knee-deep in planning for Christmas. There were lots of things which had to

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be planned six months ahead. Then there were emergencies day to day. I remember writing a memo to the President saying, "Mr. President: Somebody from your office called my office this morning and said there would be twenty-eight for luncheon this noon. We got the word at 11:00 and you told us the people were coming at 1:00 and they actually came at 12:15 because somebody else told them 12:15." Then I explained that we really can't run a house like this. The food was lousy, the service was lousy, and we just can't go on like this. And he scribbled a note back to me on my note and said: "When the time comes when I know six months before we have a party that we are going to have a party, I promise to let you know." [Laughter.] I realized that we were going to be in for impromptu

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meals from there on in.

FREDERICKS: Was the President wont to call unexpectedly and tell you he was bringing in people?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, he would entertain. When there was some sort of crisis going on--whether it was labor, or a bunch of newspaper publishers would suddenly arrive, whatever it was--he would organize something. He would move fast according to what the situation demanded and if a meal was called for, a meal was prepared. But the chef learned to roll with the punches and hoped the

staff did and we finally got out of our long advanced planning psychosis. Certainly I think you have to have lots of advanced planning. You just can't throw it together because there are so many little frills that are essential. But on the President's stag entertaining we just learned to

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make do with not so many frills. The men didn't notice the difference anyway.

FREDERICKS: No, I don't think they do.

HOLLENSTEINER: Mrs. Kennedy was very aware of how necessary a note of distinction is in the White House in entertaining and he said it too the first day he came in. He said, "You know, we really ought to have the nicest entertaining here with the greatest distinction and I am counting on you to work towards it."

FREDERICKS: Was this the standard the President set for the staff?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes, he was interested in perfection in every department. He was like a wonderful department store manager who goes through the store and knows everybody's name and knows how all the departments work and knows how to wrap packages better than the wrappers

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in the wrapping department. He was very much of a merchant in running the White House. He was a very good administrator. He would stick his nose into departments and call them up and find out what they were doing and what they were up to, and those stories about his picking up mail on people's desks is absolutely true.

FREDERICKS: How often did he come your way, Tish?

HOLLENSTEINER: He didn't come physically our way very much but he called us over a lot. I got summoned to his presence often and would go over with fear and quaking. Sometimes it was to give me absolute hell for something I had done wrong and to demand an explanation and sometimes it was to praise me for doing a good job. Sometimes it was just to pick the old brains on a female point of view on something.

FREDERICKS: Can you give an example of an interview

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that had you with trembling knees or from which you came away with a glow?

HOLLENSTEINER: I remember the first time I ran counter to him. It was early in the game. On Sunday, January 29, which was very close after the opening days in the White House, we gave our first public party which was for all the presidential appointees and their families, all the special assistants, all the bigwigs, the Cabinet officers. We had it in the East Room. We had the Marine Band. We asked certain members of the press corps, and without further ado I ordered good cocktails and very good hors d'oeuvres. Now the Usher's office informed me that under the previous regime they just didn't serve hard liquor at these parties; they served a spiked punch or a fruit punch. I said that the Kennedys wanted to entertain well and they wouldn't hear

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of that, so I surged ahead and had a bar put up in the dining room and another in the East Room, and very good drinks were served and it was a great party. The next morning's papers screamed, you know, "Liquor in the White House," "Bars in the White House." Nobody talked about anything else. This was the whole news. The WCTU got after the President and every Baptist Belt congressman started complaining and finally the President called me up about three days later, in an absolute rage. "What did you do to me?" "Why did you do it?" "For Christ's sake, isn't life hard enough?" And I said, "Well, Mr. President, you said you wanted a good party and I just arranged it that way." He said, "Well, the next time give us the choice of being able to say 'all right, we will do something horrible by having hard

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liquor served' but just don't simply, suddenly do this behind our backs and leave us open to all this!" He really dressed me down, and about eight months after that he passed me in the corridor and said, "You know, I have been meaning to say something to you, Tish." And I said, "What, Mr. President?" And he said, "You know, the fact that you put one over on us and served hard liquor that first party--and we have been serving it ever since--was the greatest thing that's ever been done for White House entertaining. It's relaxed the whole thing and you've proved it to be a success and I just want to say 'thank you'." So that's one reason we loved him so much. As well as dressing us down, he always remembered to compliment us even when we didn't deserve it.

FREDERICKS: Tish, I think you crashed a sound

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barrier of some sort, if they have served liquor ever since.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes. Hard liquor can't be served to 1500 people if you're having a big reception. The budget wouldn't stand it so that's when we

would go back to the old spiked punch and fruit punch, but a party would not be a party without liquor. Sherry and tomato juice were always served, and anyone who didn't want hard liquor had something else.

FREDERICKS: Can you recall any of the state visits that caused particular excitement, where the guest was particularly interesting to the president, and where he wanted to do something special?

HOLLFNSTEINER: Well, they took a great deal of interest in everything, in all visits. The two of them were great psychological strategists, and the preparation which they did for it was biographical. They both wanted personal notes on people

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and we would collect that from several sources: from the State Department, from CIA, from the ambassador to that country, from any place you could get it--even from the *New York Times*' files--about their guests' idiosyncrasies, their special likes and dislikes, and particularly notes about their family life. Both the President and Mrs. Kennedy had a great facility for memorizing, so they would come crashing forth with some little detail about a great granddaughter or a cousin who studied in America for one year in 1932, which flattered the heck out of the state visitor. Then the state gifts which the Kennedys gave--they drove us all crazy at the time getting all these ready because there were so many gifts that we had to give to state heads, particularly when we went abroad on trips. We had

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to give gifts to every mayor of every town, to his wife, to his children, and to heads of state, foreign ministers, and their wives, the lady-in-waiting, if there was one. And all of these various officials who fulfilled certain functions of the state visit had to get a little medal of some kind on down to the squad police escort drivers and motorcycle men. The Kennedys cared very much about who got what and its being appropriate. The President's sense of history came forth and he always made the selection on these state gifts. He leaned towards the historical.

FREDERICKS: In other words, you would produce a series of possible gifts and he...

HOLLENSTEINER: That's right. We all carried it out things we thought would be good historical letters from a place in New York City, historical paintings

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and lithographs which pertain to the country from various galleries in New York and Washington. And then I once found an old flag, an Irish Brigade flag which had been used during the Civil War by the Irish Brigade here in this country. He liked that very much, and we got it to give to the President of Ireland. He and Mrs. Kennedy spent a great deal of time deciding how it should be presented; how it should be framed, encased in glass, what the plaque should say. The President, being such an historian, insisted that the plaque tell the whole story of the flag. He made me check and recheck, and he said, "That sounds fishy. Something's wrong with your facts. Get your facts straight." I had to keep calling up people in New York at the Society to get the text right for it. A presentation document

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encased in leather would always go with the gift, whether it was an etching, a flag, or an old print, or whatever it was, telling the whole story of how that tied our country up with the foreign country. This meant a great deal to the recipients. It always had an enormous impact. I remember that the President wanted to be sure that the French gifts were fine, and they were. The Mayor of Paris got a big Vermeil box with the map of L'Enfant, the original map of Washington, engraved on the top--things like that which he really thought up himself. He would get us to do research to prepare things, but he often had the idea first himself and he went right down the line of every single gift that was given--even to the lowly motorcycle driver or waiter or maid in the house where they were staying. He checked

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every single person off to be sure it was right.

FREDERICKS: What was the first great state dinner that you had?

HOLLENSTEIVVER: We had a lot of state luncheons and cocktail parties and things like that that spring, but the first real all-out state dinner was May 3, 1961 for the President of Tunisia [Habib Bourguiba] and Madame Bourguiba, and the President and Mrs. Kennedy decided it would be great to have a military display on the lawn. They said to me, "You arrange it. So I got the military aide to the president and we arranged a complement of about 300 men performing intricate maneuvers and Scotch bagpipers and various things. The President came out of his office and we ran him a rehearsal and he said, where are all the men?" And I said, "Well, Mr. President, there they are." There were 200 or 300 men.

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And he said, "Oh, that's not what I meant at all. We've got to have lots of men and good looking men, good looking young American men, and I want lots of good looking Negroes in there and I don't want any young American boys with glasses on. I want them all to look as if they've got marvelous eyesight and I don't want any fat bellies." So we raised it to 1,000 and he came out again when we were rehearsing on the lawn, and he said, "Where are all the

men?" We said, "Mr. President, there are about a 1,000 out there." And he said, "That's not enough." We ended up with something, I don't know, about 2,000 or 2,500 on the lawn and this finally satisfied him.

I realized then and there that this was someone who really loved military pomp and splendor, and

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searchlights in the skies and marching men coming out of every imaginable tree and bands in all directions. It was an absolute scream. [Laughter] Of course, the military aides were holding their heads, but the Tunisians were impressed. Then, of course, there was the Pakistani dinner. It was one of the worst headaches that any office ever had to contend with.

FREDERICKS: This was the first time that Mount Vernon had ever been used, as I recall, and special permission had to be obtained from the Ladies Society.

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes, and they complained too--the Ladies' Society--and the President kept asking how the Mount Vernon ladies were coming along, with a twinkle in his eye. The logistics involved in that party were enormous because here we had some 137 people, with more in after dinner, so there were really

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about 180 guests, involved in all, plus an enormous amount of manpower. We had to have the Marine Band out there; we had to have all the Marines lining the drive coming up from the pier to the house. We had to have the National Symphony Orchestra and build them a special stage. Before and after dinner we had to worry about the acoustics. We had to worry about feeding the musicians--getting them out there and feeding them; worry about portable johns, where to hide them in the bushes so it wouldn't ruin Mount Vernon.

FREDERICKS: What about the weather, Tish?

HOLLENSTEINER: We worried about the weather. I gave orders to my whole staff to pray. I don't care whether they went to a synagogue, a mosque, a Catholic church or a Christian Science temple--anything--to get down on their hands and knees and pray. And we did. We prayed

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for six months solidly and it worked! They sprayed. It was a terribly buggy summer and they sprayed three times that day against bugs and mosquitoes.

We had a tent put up with a flooring to put the tables on and Gene Moore, my old friend from Tiffany's, the window designer, came down and donated his services and did a

fabulous Job of decorating the inside of the tent with garlands and festooning it. It was all done in yellow and blue and green. It was really a beautiful sight. We went out and rehearsed several times before. It was great fun for those of us who actually ran it because we would go down the Potomac on these various boats that were going to take the guests down. One time we went down on a PT boat; one time we went down on the Honey Fitz and one time on the Patrick J. We had an orchestra on board each boat. We had to try out the hors

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d'oeuvres; we had to try out the logistics of whether you could serve mint juleps on the bow of the PT boat with the spray coming over and we had to worry about getting scarves and sweaters for the ladies because the weather is very deceptive. It gets very cold on the river, even on a hot night, and the scarves and sweaters we had brought down were all used, I might add. We had to worry about doctors and ambulances because in this kind of a place if you had a heart attack, there is nobody there.

It came off without a hitch. The guests were taken down the River; it was a beautiful night, a hot July night, and when the boat stopped opposite the landing at Mount Vernon and the music came forth and they played the Star Spangled Banner and all the military stood at attention saluting

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Mount Vernon, there was not a dry eye on the river. Even the Pakistani were undone by that. Then the guests were driven up in White House cars up the long winding road to the Mount Vernon piazza. We had had a hell of a time rehearsing this because the Marines are so brave and unflinching that the cars just drove right over their toes. We had them on both sides of the lawn along the driveway and as we started up the hill in the cars, we were literally running over their feet. In the final version they lined just one side of the driveway and didn't get their feet run over. We also had the Red Coats--the army riflemen--"The President's Own" as it's called, in their colonial uniforms.

FREDERICKS: Was this a particular tribute to the President?

HOLLENSTEINER: The President really loved this because

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this little ceremony took place in front of George Washington's house. At the end of the drill the Red Coats took their muskets and fired blank ammunition. The press corps happened to be standing exactly opposite so that the Red Coats shot right into them. President Kennedy started to roar with laughter and he said to Ayub Khan [Mohammad Ayub Khan], "That's the press corps." And Ayub Khan laughed and said, "I'm so glad. That's just what we would have done in our country." They really had a wonderful time. Ayub Khan appreciated what the Kennedys were doing for him, and it was

really a brilliant night. The President was in his element and so was Mrs. Kennedy. Things went off so well.

FREDERICKS: I take it they both loved the beautiful panorama and display.

HOLLENSTEINER: They did. They were perfectionists.

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They knew when things were going right. They set a feeling of warmth and ease in all their entertaining which was very catching. Formerly guests would come to the White House in fear and trembling; it is an austere place and usually guests would have a couple of drinks before they came to get up their courage, but immediately, with the Kennedys, the whole atmosphere changed. Their guests were at ease and found it was a good party and lots of attractive people and pretty surroundings.

FREDERICKS: I think the sense of humor that you point out in the President must have aided a great deal to make these things a little less formal and boring.

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes. Another thing that we did right away which had never been done before was to handle this gap between the time the guests arrived in the East Room waiting to be received by

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the President and the time the President and the First Lady were apt to come downstairs and stand in the receiving line. Up until the Kennedy Administration, nobody ever got a drink and they stood there with their hands tied for anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour, just standing, waiting to be received, and scared to death. Now they are served drinks, but butlers would pass among the guests and pick up all the glasses just before the President and Mrs. Kennedy would appear so that the receiving line was done with great dignity and there was no sign of alcohol around. The guests then were already feeling it was a great party. They would go right off the receiving line into the dinner table.

FREDERICKS: Tish, what about the actual state visitor? As I recall, he and his wife

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would come downstairs from the private quarters with the President and his wife--that they had been received upstairs.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, this was sort of a personal touch. The state visitor and his wife would come up to the private quarters and there Mrs.

Kennedy would have very cunningly put all the gifts which that foreign visitor had given them right outside the entrance to their little private living room. So both the President and Mrs. Kennedy would discuss the gifts, how much they enjoyed them, how great they were, and how this signed photograph will be on our piano forever, and so forth, pleasing the foreign visitor enormously. Then they would go in and have a quiet cocktail with the Secretary of State [Dean Rusk] and Mrs. Rusk [Virginia Rusk], and perhaps the Dukes [Angier Biddle Duke] (Chief of Protocol), and with the

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Ambassadors of the two countries and their wives. Then at a certain moment I would give the order to the Head of the Color Guard and he would come upstairs into the Yellow Room and say: "Mr. President, may I take the colors?" The President would nod and then the Color Guard would form right outside their private living room. The President and Mrs. Kennedy would come behind the chiefs of state and the various official guests and they would all come down the stairs in a grand march, get their pictures taken at the bottom of the stairs and go into the East Room to do the receiving.

We had to work this out because there was the question of getting a photograph of them all together and a question of making a very formal exciting entrance to the East Room. There were all sort of things to be

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considered, but we worked that out in a formula that succeeded very well. The first year the President was always impatient and always moving off fast. Once he got started, he really went! It was terrible trying to teach him not to walk off until the first strains of "Hail to the Chief;" trying to teach him to stand still for the photographing. Once he got started he wanted to move and the young social aides were much too nervous to grab hold of him and physically bar his way. Or if he started to go in the wrong direction--held go into the Dining Room when he was supposed to go into the East Room. I used to run after him and grab him, so early in the game he said, "I've got a new name for you--it's Miss Push-and-Pull." When Mrs. Kennedy wasn't with him--when he was on stag things--or when she was away--when we would have

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to march down the stairs, or if we had to go into a different room--if we had to go into the Blue Room first or to the Red Room, he learned to look over and catch my eye and I would make the old sign with the head and the eye and he would go in the right direction. The first time he had a stag luncheon--I don't remember who the person was it was some African president, he came down the elevator to the first floor and I heard the doors open and he said, "Now, Mr. President, we have a very handsome house." And with that he walked straight ahead--right into the butler's pantry where they were preparing all the cocktails in their shirt sleeves and aprons! All of us were clutching after him for having gone into the wrong room. And he said to me, as he walked unceremoniously back out, "Well, this isn't quite where

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we are supposed to be. Maybe after a few more months I'll learn the floor plan of this house."

FREDERICKS: Tish, what about the innovations, the idea of having music and art and drama in the White House? Was he actively interested in the Shakespearean productions that came?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes. He relied on Mrs. Kennedy's imagination and good taste. She always discussed it with him and he always had a smart idea if something wasn't right, and would have a good idea of how to make it right. He was very interested. He went over the program wing of the Shakespearean production. We had a very fine performance by our American Shakespeare Theatre from Stratford-on-Avon in Connecticut and, let me see, who was that for?

FREDERICKS: It was for the Sudanese wasn't it?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, it was for President Ibrahim Abboud

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of the Sudan--October 4, 1961. The President wanted to know exactly which excerpts were going to be done because he said he didn't want blood flowing all over the stage for an African president who might be a little nervous about his position in his own country. He knew his Shakespeare and he passed on every single part they were going to be doing. The things that threw him were concerts. He never knew when a concert was over and he never knew when to clap for an encore or not. So he said to me one day, "You've got to figure out something to do about this because I'm left with egg all over my face. Last week I got up at the wrong time and congratulated the performers and you should have this figured out for me. I can't follow the program on this." They often did perform one

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encore or two encores and he just didn't know which was what, and I don't blame him myself. So we figured out a strategy whereby he was to keep on clapping, and when the thing was definitely over I was to open wide the big doors in the East Ballroom. Then he would know that the concert was over and he would spring up and congratulate the performers. Often this would occur when Mrs. Kennedy wasn't with him to spring up and she always knew when it was over.

FREDERICKS: When you entertain at the White House there are times when you entertain for family and friends as well. It couldn't all be official. I

take it that the same rooms weren't used and the same care and thought were not given to the details.

HOLLENSTEINER: Well, Mrs. Kennedy cared very much about the food for her friends. She really worked hard on those menus. It was always

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done, though, upstairs in the family quarters, which were much more cozy and the children were running around. Of course, the children were always a part of their life, official and non-official, and one of the greatest hits made with the state visitors was having the children introduced to them--having the children around.

FREDERICKS: It is always an icebreaker too, I think.

HOLLENSTEINER: A great icebreaker. Nobody can resist children, and particularly little Caroline [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] and John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.]. They were great celebrities in their own rights and everyone was always fascinated to see them so that the President of the Sudan, for example, could go back and talk to his grandchildren about Caroline and John Kennedy and what they said and what they did. Even on stag luncheons where Mrs. Kennedy didn't participate

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at all, the President would always make sure that she would be there with the children at lunch even if she had just come in from playing tennis or whatever it was. She would greet them, the children would greet them, and there was a tremendous little family scene always, which the President knew was important and relaxing to a state visitor.

FREDERICKS: I can remember one story about a rather serious meeting taking place one evening in the White House. It was Halloween and the men had just concluded a lengthy and serious debate and were picking up their papers when all of a sudden there was a tap on the window glass and five or six little masked figures all crying "who o o o o o-who o o o o o" were seen outside. I am told that the President feigned alarm and signaled to the men in the room to pretend to be

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afraid, and then he let the children in.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, I remember hearing that story. He was so close to any children. He was really marvelous. One day I had my nieces and they were then ages nine and eleven. I was taking them through the White House and there was a buzz, a familiar buzz came from the ground floor elevator,

meaning the President was coming on his way from the private quarters en route to this office. So I said to Alice [Alice Baldrige] and Jean [Jean Baldrige], "You mustn't let him see you. We'll duck into Dr. Travell's [Janet G. Travell] office and hide behind the door." So I literally hid myself behind the door because I didn't want the President to see his staff playing hide and seek in the hallway and I let Jean and Alice peek out behind the door as the president strolled by. I knew he had Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis with him and the Greek

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Ambassador. They were having a very important meeting, and were accompanied by at least twelve other men. The president saw these two little freckled-faced noses peeking out of Dr. Travell's door. So he threw open the door and when he saw me, he said, "For God's sake, we have games around here. Who are these?" And he stopped and talked to both Alice and Jean Baldrige--just undoing them and making them burst into tears of excitement after he had gone and he kept all the men waiting in the corridor while he talked to these two little girls just because they were children.

And another time when he really did move not only me to tears but the White House guards as well. He had been late in his office. He was held up with a labor meeting or something and was due at the State Department

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auditorium for a press conference at two o'clock. The House kept calling over saying, "Mr. President, your lunch is getting cold, your lunch is getting cold." They wanted him to have something to eat before he went to the press conference. He had been working so hard. He finally started over to get some lunch at one-thirty and he saw a group of us out in the garden with spastic children in wheel chairs. I couldn't understand most of them--their minds were all right but their speech faculties had been very heavily affected by their ailments. He came rushing out into the garden, and talked and talked and talked, and listened and listened until he could understand what they were saying. The patience he showed was absolutely incredible. One little boy's father had been in a PT boat squadron--he got that out of the child.

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The President and the child had a great rapport and he went back into his office and got one of his old PT boat hats and put it on this little boy's head. And it was a most touching scene. It was five minutes of two and the car was there to take him to the State Department. He stepped right into it and missed his whole lunch. There was no press around to record this and there was no chance of any votes being won by this, but it showed the really humane side of this man and his great love of children. The White House policemen had some tears in their eyes. We all did.

FREDERICKS: These were spastic children that had been brought on a special tour

of the White House?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, on a special tour and they never expected even to get into the Rose Garden much less see the President.

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There was never any question of it. But it's something for their whole lives and for their families whole lives that they will remember and treasure.

FREDERICKS: Tish, this man evidently had tremendous vitality and tremendous interest in the everyday things of life as well as in the great pressing affairs of state. I think that it is quite astonishing how he could learn to compartment himself for both rather than being totally involved by the burdens of the office.

HOLLENSTEINER: Well, I think that this is one of the things that kept him on an even keel. His interest in everything helped refresh him and get his mind off some of the weightier problems. The East Wing really did amuse and fascinate him and he used to love the war that went on between the East and West Wings. We were always fighting with Pierre

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Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] and Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] about our rights and privileges because the men in the West Wing would just simply go ahead and plan things including our functions and walk all over us. I am not the shy type, though Pam was; but she learned not to be the shy type! So we fought back and this amused the President enormously. Sometime we would complain in memos, saying, "Now we can't stay this way; it can't be this way." And he would always take our side. On the fine spring days when the swimming pool door was open, many is the time I would walk from the West to the East Wing and he would call to me and I would walk in through the door. He would be doing his exercises and he would say, "Now what's with the East Wing? What are your problems today?" And no matter how small or insignificant the problem, he wanted

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to hear about it. He always got us out of some of our really big problems. I inadvertently got Mrs. Kennedy into a war with the whole DAR on two occasions and he had to extricate me from it.

FREDERICKS: How, Tish? Was it the war about the famous chairs or...?

HOLLENSTEINER: The first war was the fact that we did not receive them in the White House for their annual convention. It was so unpleasant that I just

don't want to go into it. The second war occurred when one of my pet charities, UNICEF, the Children's Fund, was attacked by the DAR as being a Communist front and the women of America were exhorted not to buy their Christmas cards which was their sole fund-raising activity--because it would be putting money into the hands of the Communists or some such palaver. So I rose in anger and talked to Kenny O'Donnell and said,

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"Listen, don't you think it would be all right if Mrs. Kennedy bought a few hundred UNICEF Christmas cards right this very minute and that we release it to the press?" Kenny said, "I think it is a great idea." So without further ado, we did it. Now Mrs. Kennedy was totally innocent in this. This is the kind of thing that I really didn't have to bother her on and she suddenly became the butt of an enormous war because the DAR rose in furor.

FREDERICKS: But how did the President extricate you? He was entertained and fascinated by all this, but how did he get you out of it?

HOLLENSTEINER: He found a very neat little gesture we could make to the DAR to sooth them down which, if these tapes were to be released a hundred years from now, I would tell the whole story, but let's leave it right there.

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FREDERICKS: We have talked of times of crisis and of his never being too busy for the personal touch. He had some terrific crises coming up in the early years. Can you recall for me the man at the time of the Cuban crisis say, at the time of the Bay of Pigs? Did you feel the tension in the White House?

HOLLENSTEINER: When he was in the middle of a severe crisis and was really intensely worried, he would blow off steam in our direction, and we knew it. We came to expect it. He would gruffly lose his temper and without giving one a chance to answer back or defend oneself. I remember during the Cuban crisis he called up to complain bitterly about the menus and got very angry and then his sense of humor really came around and it ended very well. But he called up to say--now this was when he was working day and night on the Bay of

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Pigs--that he had heard from several congressmen that we were getting too Frenchy and too international, and why weren't we more American, and nobody could read or understand the menus. We had a state visitor coming up. I think it was the King of Morocco [Hassan II, King of Morocco]--I can't remember--somebody who spoke French as his regular tongue, other than his own native tongue.

FREDERICKS: You had Senegal, I think, that fall.

HOLLENSTEINER: It may have been. So he said, "Now I want this menu entirely in English. I just don't want any more persons in this house being too French." I said, "All right, Mr. President, but it's just impossible to do." He said, "You're always arguing with me. You say it's impossible, well, just why? Let's take a menu and I'll show you it is possible." That is just the way he was. He really did know people's business better than

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they knew it themselves. So I said, "All right, Mr. President. Lets just take a menu." And I remember it to this day. We started out with *Potage aux Vermicelles*, and he said, "All right, what the hell is that?" And I said, "It is consommé with little things squiggling in it." And he said, "You can't describe that in English very well, can you?" I said, "No, you can't." He said, "All right, instead of *Potage aux Vermicelles*, call it Consommé aux Vermicelles. Anyway they will understand the word 'consommé.' Some of the congressmen will." And I said, "Yes, all right. Next course *Mousse du Salmon Sauce Normade*." He said, "Call it *Salmon Mousse*." I said, "But *Mousse* is a French word, Mr. President." He said, "Well, how would you describe it in English?" I said, "Well, we could always say salmon with

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gelatine." He said, "Oh oooo." "And then for the *Sauce Normande* we could always say a sort of green mayonnaise sauce." He said, "It sounds terrible." I said, "Then we will have to leave it *Sauce Normande*. Then we got to the *Noix de Veau Printanier*, the next course." He said, "What's that?" I said, "It's heart of veal with vegetables all thrown around it." He said, "Oh, call it *Noix de Veau Printanier*." "Then we got to *Salade Verte, Fromages Assortis*." And he said, "Well, that's easy. You can call that green salad and assorted cheeses." And I said, "That's the one point I can concede to you on." And the last thing was a dessert, a very rich elaborate dessert, which was surprise or *D'elice* or something *du Chef*. And he said, "Well, describe it. Just don't call it that." And I said, "All right, mounds of whip cream

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with shaved chocolate on a rum base." He said, "Itch, I give up. Just forget I ever called." And hung up the phone. But he had momentarily distracted himself from affairs of state, blown off some steam, and then had a good laugh over it. We would always get calls from him on little household matters like that when he was undergoing great pressure. That's one way he kept on an even keel. He showed tension in his face and in his manner and in every way, but he did have a wonderful capacity for blowing it off.

FREDERICKS: Tish, what were the things that he was most interested in the running of the White House? What kinds of details did he

particularly enjoy? The ceremonials?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, he cared very much about the ceremonial part and we developed various formulas. For a stag luncheon,

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it would be run one way; for a state lunch where there were men and women, there would be another; for a state dinner, there would be another; and for receptions, we had two or three patterns, and always we used lots of flags. For certain occasions we would get the cadets down from West Point and so forth.

He and I used to have a secret little pact about the Marines. We both loved the Marines and we knew they looked better in their uniforms than any of the other services did. So we always used Marines to line the drive at every state dinner and then we used to work little deals that only he and I knew about. When the Winston Churchill [Sir Winston (Leonard Spencer) Churchill] ceremony was going on TELSTAR--Churchill was receiving an honorary citizenship in the United States—

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the President cared very much about that ceremony. He threw the whole thing in my lap to plan which was very exciting for me. The TESTAR was going on at a certain hour, and I found myself back in the President's office with governors and cabinet officers and everybody out of line. They all had to be in line. And he said, "Here comes Miss Push and Pull again." And I would get them all lined up for their entrance out. Everything had to be timed just so but they would get out of line. They would see old friends. The president said, "You're really having a hard time." So he turned around and said, "Now listen, everybody pay attention to this woman and just get in line." I loved him for that. We worked out a plan where on the steps we would have, framing the ceremony so it would be in the TELSTAR photo lens, all these

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marvelous-looking Marines, including one very fine young Negro. The other services were all represented. We had the Army, Navy and Air Force, but they never looked as smart and as snappy as the Marines did. But at the Churchill ceremony you really got a full blast of Marines during the whole ceremony. These little things were planned. There was favoritism; there's no doubt about it.

FREDERICKS: When we think back on the President, all of us, I know, have an image of a vital, attractive person, a wonderful campaigner, a very personable man. Can you tell us any of the stories about his charm and his sociability in meeting groups who came to visit the White House or dealing with groups as such?

HOLLENSTEINER: He really was a most tremendous charmer of any group. I saw him in action raising money for the National Cultural Center which is now called the John F.

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Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He invited a group, mostly Republicans. They had all the money and he gave a speech and so undid them and charmed them that they all dug deep in their pockets and contributed to the Center. One day we had the Sacred Heart Alumnae, a thousand strong, who took over the whole House for a morning public tour. Mrs. Kennedy was out of town; Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] was pregnant and sick; Joan Kennedy [Joan Bennett Kennedy] was also pregnant and sick; so we were left without any Kennedys to be hostess, and they were bitterly disappointed. The President was in the middle of some crisis and I managed to get a note to him over everybody's objection in his office. There were no Kennedy ladies around and the Sacred Heart were there, a thousand strong, and were so disappointed. Well, he came rushing

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over, gave them five minutes of his time, mentioned every cousin, aunt, or niece who had ever attended the Sacred Heart, and he knew all the Sacred Heart locations and said, "After all, you ladies are the best-looking group of ladies in the world and it was my honor and privilege to come to speak to you." Well, the whole House was in a state of adulation. He had that way with people, and he never disappointed groups.

He used to upset the Secret Service because of his security violations. The first year we had a foreign students' reception and he was mobbed by some four thousand young people and some of them were hotheads--Iranian students who had been demonstrating violently in front of the Iranian Embassy. There were lots of conspirators rumored about. They were very nervous

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so the next year, since everyone admitted the haste about the year preceding, we developed a series of ropes whereby he would come up on to the Marine bandstand, make his speech of welcome to them, then walk around a series of ropes so he could walk around the whole South Lawn and see everybody and shake hands across the ropes, but he would not be knocked over.

FREDERICKS: In effect, you were going to rope him off from the guests.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes. So he started out. He went about four feet along the rope and then he just agilely ducked right under it, right into the thousands of foreign students and the Secret Service lost him until thirty-five minutes later. They had no idea where he was. You couldn't see him. He was being pushed, shoved, his tie torn

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and everything. He couldn't care less. He felt great enormous excitement and pleasure from being close to them and answering their questions and they shot some of the worst questions at him too, you know, insulting questions, and he took them all on single-handedly. The students were all astounded at this because in their own countries, many of these countries--the African and Arab nations--their leaders are always followed by machine-gunned cars or armored tanks so this was quite something to have him mingling among them so freely.

FREDERICKS: And ironic, really, that he should meet his death in a situation where the security precautions were considered total.

HOLLENSTEINER: I know. I think this will go down as one of the great ironies of history. With all the elaborate security

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measures that have always been taken for his movements and the way he used to transgress against them freely worried the Secret Service and then to have been assassinated during a carefully planned security trip is unbelievable.

FREDERICKS: Well, Tish, you told me sometime ago that March 17 was a memorable day in the White House.

HOLLENSTEINER: It was my first knowledge of how you cannot really push the President too much. It was our first St. Patrick's Day and Mrs. Kennedy had just produced John, Jr. and the Irish Ambassador arrived with a special silver christening cup which was a gift from the people of County Wexford where Ambassador Kennedy's [Joseph P. Kennedy] family came from--the President's ancestors. This lovely silver christening cup was to be presented by the Irish Ambassador to

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the President in front of the TV cameras. Well, I got wind the morning of the presentation that Irish Airlines was really getting in on the act. The girl who was going to hand the cup to Ambassador Kiernan [Thomas J. Kiernan] was to be an Irish Airlines stewardess in uniform and Irish Airlines was going to wave a banner; they had flown the cup over and so forth. Having been aware of the screaming and yelling from the American airline companies every time anybody in the Kennedy family got on a foreign aircraft--you know, you have to take our lines and so forth--I realized that this was going to turn into an Irish Airlines commercial. I told the public relations man that the stewardess was going to have to get into a regular dress, and that she would just be introduced as an Irish girl from Wexford County. We couldn't have all

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this advertising. The President wanted to know just who was going to be there. I mentioned this Irish hostess and I said I made her take off her uniform and this was going to turn into an ad and so forth, but that we could handle the situation perfectly. So he attended to the ceremony and the cameras ground away while the Irish Ambassador recited a charming poem, a christening poem for John, Jr. and took the cup from the young girl. The President looked right over at me and thanked the Ambassador for the lovely gift, thanked the people of Wexford County, and then said that the most important thing of all was that this cup was flown here by courtesy of Irish Airlines and that this young girl was a hostess for this marvelous airline and he went on and gave them a five-minute commercial, looking right at me as if to say “You

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see, you really can't tell me what to do or what not to do.” [Laughter.] His Irish blood was boiling! And we did get letters, I must say, from the domestic companies.

FREDERICKS: You can plan some things but you can't plan everything.

HOLLENSTEINER: That's right.

FREDERICKS: Tish, obviously lots of planning was part of your job and part of your life in the White House. We haven't talked about the trips abroad which must have involved more planning than almost anything. Could you tell about some of the grand trips that were such brilliant successes for the President and Mrs. Kennedy?

HOLLENSTEINER: Every one of them was a brilliant success for the President and Mrs. Kennedy. The first one was Canada and this was the first time that the President really saw the power of

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do or what not to do. Mrs. Kennedy. The Canadians were screaming “Jackie, Jackie” in the streets and Canadians just don't scream like that normally. All the members of Parliament said proudly that she, (and both of them), had received a greater ovation than Queen Elizabeth [Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain] had on previous visits. This kind of admission was really something. This was the beginning of her popularity and I think he really looked at her with new eyes on this occasion. She took far too many suitcases and hair dryers and whatnot and he was impatient on the first trip with all this extra stuff along, but then he realized it was all a very important part of her image of impeccable grooming and beauty and style and he was very proud of her and of the lavish descriptions of her personal appearance. So his criticism

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of all those suitcases and the confusion of the hair being washed was greatly reduced after that. In Paris, of course, he was so overcome by her popularity that he was forced to make that wonderful statement, "I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris?" as his introduction to himself. I will never forget doing the advance on that. I went over to Paris about ten days ahead of the President and Mrs. Kennedy and took care of the social entertaining side: the party which they were giving at the Embassy for President [Charles A. de Gaulle] and Madame de Gaulle [Yvonne Vendreux de Gaulle], Mrs. Kennedy's schedule which involved enormous planning, every step she took, what gifts she would give to Madame de Gaulle's favorite charities, who would get the signed photographs, the disposition of the rooms and all these things. I stood at the Quai d'Orsay,

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where we all stayed, on the balcony and watched the procession coming across the Place de la Concorde with marvelous *Garde Republicaine* on the horses and those wonderful steel helmets glittering in the sunshine, their long plumes waving behind and the clipclop of the horses' hooves and the marvelous blaring of the trumpets. And then to see the French, the blasé French, erupting with joy and surprise as this handsome young couple appeared! Mrs. Kennedy made such a hit on that first appearance that people lined the streets all the way for her car when they knew what route she was taking. She drew a larger crowd than he did and he laughed about it and said that he should be jealous. The President was so very, very proud of her and the marvelous way she handled herself because she was with so many older

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people all of the time and pro's who had been--well, Madame de Gaulle has been in this sort of life for so many years and yet her regality and her presence and her poise were far more marked than Madame de Gaulle's or Madame Vanier [Pauline Vanier] in Canada or any of these official ladies anywhere we went. I remember, in Vienna, Jackie's enormous sensitivity to the person involved. In this case it was Madame Khrushchev [Nina Petrovna Khrushchev]. At the Palazzo Ruspoli in Vienna where the daughter of the President of Austria gave a luncheon for Mrs. Khrushchev and Mrs. Kennedy and herself, the crowds in the Platz outside the palace window kept calling for "Jackie, Jackie." So Mrs. Kennedy walked to the open, window and smiled and waved briefly and the crowd erupted and the noise was terrific. Then she realized that Mrs. Khrushchev, after all, was a

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co-guest, and she was very embarrassed by the fact that nobody was calling Mrs. Khrushchev. So she did a very smart, cagey thing. She went over to Mrs. Khrushchev and said, "they want to see you too" and took her to the window and Mrs. Khrushchev waved and the two women stood there together. The President was undergoing a great strain on that trip-

-that meeting with Khrushchev--but he still had a sense of history, and he wanted the sofa in Ambassador Matthews' [H. Freeman Matthews] house where he and Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev] had sat and had one of their hardest discussions. He wanted that sofa as part of his museum and we asked the Ambassador if we could have it. FBO sent the Ambassador another one, and President Kennedy came into possession of that sofa.

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FREDERICKS: Tish, was he very preoccupied on the trip about his meeting with Khrushchev?

HOLLENSTEINER: I think he was. I think even all through Paris he was thinking about this meeting in Vienna. The chips were down and I think he was probably very disappointed. The men in the West Wing are much more capable of discussing that than I am but there was no question but that he was preoccupied and disappointed in an emotional way. Mrs. Kennedy was intensely interested in all of the political successes of his career and reflected it also in herself.

FREDERICKS: So that you feel that there was teamwork--in the sense that she was interested in what he was negotiating as well as the complex mechanics of public appearances?

HOLLENSTEINER: No question about it and here is a great failure in projecting their real

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image to the American public, which thought of her as a wonderful wife and mother, which she was and is, and as a beautiful, poised, young woman of artistic talent, which she is. They also conceived of her as someone who hates politics and hates politicians--no, I don't mean hate. That's too strong a word--having a distaste for it. And in actual fact, although she doesn't like things like political conventions and political meetings and so forth, she is such a bright, intelligent person that she was interested in the issues. She very definitely shared his opinions and interrogated him as to what was going on. She was abreast of what was going on and she helped him. She would write letters to heads of state, friendly social, chatty letters when things were going wrong and, of course, we would go

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wild in the East Wing because we didn't have carbon copies and we didn't know what she was saying. She would write hand-written letters and go on for pages and pages to General de Gaulle and Prime Minister Nehru [Shri Jawaharlal Nehru] and all. But this was her working with him upstairs and seeing how she could help in her way to further the political gains of the United States of America and its foreign policy. I am sure no other First Lady

has ever done that, and I am sure no other president has dared let his wife do that and I hope that history will some day unearth those famous letters.

FREDERICKS: This was her own brand of personal diplomacy?

HOLLENSTEINER: Her own brand of personal diplomacy which she worked out with the President. She was intensely interested in foreign affairs.

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FREDERICKS: Tish, tell me, was Mrs. Kennedy's trip to Pakistan and India part of the plan here? Was there something behind this other than just a sightseeing trip to the Far East?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes. The President, having seen the enormous success of her trips abroad, realized that she could do a big job for him in that part of the world whereas he could not spare time at that particular time of that particular year and he felt that it was an important area that needed attending to. The trip was very difficult on everybody concerned. It was a hard, tough trip.

FREDERICKS: It was postponed once, wasn't it?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, her health became bad and it was postponed. It was postponed for political reasons first because of the Indian elections. There were many postponements. It was a jinxed trip.

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Then she got sick. I was in Rome, ready to leave for Pakistan, when she called and said, "I'm going to be two weeks late." I had to cut off a whole part of my schedule again and, of course, I was delighted to be able to sit in Rome for two more weeks. It was all I needed. But that was one of the worst experiences in my life. When you move abroad with the President and the Air Force Jet One, you move with a wonderful staff equipped to do everything. You've got Medical, you've got Communications, you've got secretaries and mimeo machines. When Mrs. Kennedy made that trip, it was as though the President of the United States were going. There was no question about it. And yet, our staff was at a minimum. I had no secretary; I was

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all alone. I had two Secret Service men to hold my hand and two combo Signal Corps operators wherever I went. And the trouble we had getting things done! The Embassy staffs were not equipped to take care of us and I didn't go to bed for four weeks. I've never been through such a nightmare in my life. I never got out of New Delhi because the logistics of planning her movement--radio operators back and forth, changes of plans and schedules,

movement of people, movement of bottled water--even that became an absolute crisis in our lives.

Of course, so many funny things happened that are funny now but were so disastrous at the time. I remember I ordered forty-five Presidential seals in dark blue leather cowhide frames for the various Indian officials there. I squeezed out of the Embassy a list

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of all of the people to whom she would ever have to give a picture. They're great picture lovers over there. Then I got them all signed in advance by her.

FREDERICKS: A picture of Mrs. Kennedy?

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, and in some cases of Mrs. Kennedy and the President together, and we got them both to sign them. I was so proud of all my mass planning. I had them all cut, had the frames made to fit the various size pictures--they were all different sizes--different sizes for different officials, and got the whole thing shipped out with New Delhi knowing exactly what was coming in the trunk and so forth. Three days before I was to arrive in New Delhi and seven days before she was to come back through, to make her official arrival, I was sitting in Karachi trying to get some sleep—

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sitting is right--and there was a call over the radio again. It was one of the officials in the Embassy in New Delhi. He had just then opened the trunk and had just then seen the frames, and they had just then come to the realization of course, that cowhide won't do in India--the sacred cow. It's an offense, you cannot give leather. Well, I let out a few swear words over the two-way radio which I am sure they are still trying to decode in Lebanon and Jordan, and some other countries in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, but the upshot of it all was that I got on the radio and called one of our agents in Rome and I just said I don't care what you have to do--if you have to buy out a whole silver store, but youth have to get forty-five frames of the following measurements in silver. Luckily, Italian silver was very cheap

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and it only came up in price to the cost of these leather cowhide frames which we were able to use in other places later. But nevertheless we had a real crisis on our hands and all of the pictures had already been wrapped in White House wrappings with the gold and silver seals on them and the cards written with script, the envelopes with the man's name and his title in script. The amount; of work that was undone by that one little radio call is enough to put me in the hospital, just thinking about it. But now I can laugh about it. But that's just typical of what happened and this trip was not without hitches.

There were things that went wrong on it. Mistakes were made, but all in all the crowds she pulled were fantastic. The press was marvelous, both here at home, and, more importantly, in India

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and Pakistan, and there is no question but that she did a great deal of good for our relationships between the countries. And she did smart things like presenting the children's art carnival from the Museum of Modern Art to New Delhi--things like that which are permanent lasting memorials of the American people, but which have the Kennedy name on it and they remember the great lady who came and the children all know who she is. It's very important that we continue to export our First Ladies in this way.

FREDERICKS: Tish, your mentioning the picture frames made me look at a little note here on my tablet, which says "Tiffany calendar." Surely there's a story behind that?

HOLLENSTEINER: In the days of the Cuban crisis on the long-range missiles in October, 1962, the weary President called me over

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to his office and he said, I have been thinking, you know, none of these people have gone to bed. They have all stayed by my side during these thirteen days and I want to record this event somehow for them. I want to give them a present which will remind them of how much it meant to me to have them sticking by me." And he said, "I want you to see if Tiffany's will make a calendar--I've already designed it--which would be a paperweight and which would be a slab of silver." Then he sketched it out for me. He drew the month of October, the way any ordinary calendar would have October 1962, and then he put his initials at the top with the initials of the person who was getting the calendar, and then he put all the days of the month and then he drew a big circle around those thirteen famous days. I called Tiffany's and had the

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silver department draw up a sketch. They changed it several times and, of course, the price was exorbitant in relation to the number of people. He wanted to give the calendar to some forty people, including the people like his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln], and the head of the coding department, and people who really had been slaving on the crisis. And, of course, the Cabinet was involved, and people like McGeorge Bundy, people who just didn't go to bed. So the price--this was a custom-made job, all handmade--Tiffany's would have to make a wood blocking on it--the whole job came to something like forty or forty-five dollars and you multiply that by forty. Coming out of his own pocket, that's a lot of scratch, in anyone's language. So he said, "This is just too much, too much. Let's get it done in lucite.

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Let's get a little thing of silver, put it in a lucite thing that can sit on your desk." He loved all those lucite paperweights, which I think are simply horrible. "Mr. President," I said, "I think they're cheap and cheesy." He said, "I didn't ask for your opinion. I said just find out from Tiffany's what they would charge to do it in lucite."

Tiffany's said, "We will not work in lucite, not even in the name of the President of the United States; for an historic occasion such as this we refuse to let down our store's standards; we will not use that plastic material." Well, he was furious when he heard that, absolutely furious. He got Lem Billings [Kirk LeMoyne Billings] to get orders and designs from something like five lucite companies and he had them coming in from all directions, everybody was giving him designs and

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prices, you know, eight dollars for this, and four dollars from another company, and he would call me up and report maliciously every single low price over the telephone, "You see, you see, you see, that company you worked for? You've just been trying to sell us down the river to Tiffany's all the time, getting those fancy designs and estimates. They're all a bunch of robbers."

Finally one night, it was a Saturday night, at midnight. I had just finally hit the sack, exhausted. There was a telephone call from Camp David. It was the President of the United States himself saying, "I've thought this whole thing over and you're absolutely right. The Tiffany thing is so much better looking, it's so much more lasting, it's in much better taste.

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Get hold of them and tell them to make them right away." He had been trying to save quite a few bucks but his better nature got the best of him and he knew darn well--he was so proud of those calendars. He gave each one personally to each person and, of course, they banded up together and gave one back--in Vermeil--which he treasured.

FREDERICKS: Tish, I think I interrupted you when you were explaining to me about the circle on the calendar at the end of the thirteen day period.

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, this was, of course, to make it leap out at you, and Tiffany's finally persuaded him to have the numbers come up much stronger and bigger and blacker and thicker in engraving. So he finally agreed to that and that's the way it was finally designed. I think, for a man who was as busy as he was, with as many things on his

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mind, to take the time and trouble to work out something like this to show the people who were with him during those gruesome days, really showed the measure of the man.

FREDERICKS: He was appreciative of the tremendous effort that this had meant for other people and the anxiety.

HOLLENSTEINER: And he had imagination. When he had the Harvard dinner, the Harvard Board of Overseers, he sent me a special memo saying, "Be sure this is a very special evening. I don't want just a plain stag dinner. This has really got to be special." He really cared so much about that. And so we had a very special menu and the finest wine and we had crimson and white flowers on the table and we got a little silver gift -- he wanted a little silver memento engraved for each one of the Overseers. And of course I was dying

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to lead into the dining room a big fat bulldog that I had knowledge of in Washington with an Eli blanket over him in the middle of dinner, but I didn't have the courage. And it's a good thing I didn't because one of the Overseers had a heart attack in the middle of the dinner and they would have blamed that on the bulldog.

FREDERICKS: Tish, was the President's devotion to Harvard such that he had arranged to have his Library at Cambridge? Was this done before his death or not? I don't recall.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes. I think he had already picked out the land in October, the month before he was assassinated. I don't know whether that's the land they're going to use because I think they need more space, but he did select a site in October when he was there. He had great devotion to Harvard.

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On the guest list he tried to insert as many of his old professors as possible--give them a free meal. [Laughter.] And the guest list--he went over all of them with a fine-tooth comb. Mrs. Kennedy would go over them and she would make changes and additions and suggestions, and the President always changed everything around again. He was very interested in who came. And then every night before dinner when he was taking his bath or shaving, he would call through the bathroom door for me and I had many conversations around the corner. Sometimes I would sit in a chair around the corner and would brief him on who all was coming. He wanted to know all of the little nonessential information which fascinated him, and he would catch me short. Once we had

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Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber and he really didn't know who they were. And I said, "Well, they are the most famous contemporary American composers." And he said, "All right, give me the names of all their operas and their symphonies and where they have been performed." I said, Well, Mr. President, I can't." And he said, "You've just said they are the most famous contemporary American composers and how can you make a statement like that if you can't back it up?" I pulled *Vanessa* out of the hat for Samuel Barber and he used it or anything I would tell him about the guests. He would go down the receiving line and he would say, "Oh, you're the famous composer of this and that," and they would just be absolutely flattered to death. And somebody who had been Mrs. Kennedy's dressmaker—

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the name would be put in his brain before the receiving line and he would say, "I hear you made the most beautiful clothes. Why aren't you making any now? I am sure my bill would be cheaper!" And this sort of thing just charmed them to death. So he really spent time on the guest lists. The extraneous names that, you know, were not government officials or politicians, he really wanted to know why that person was there and we had to be able to defend everybody on the guest list.

FREDERICKS: Tish, when a man is so pressed that he takes briefings while in the tub, when was there ever time for him with his family? What was his recreation?

HOLLENSTEINER: After all, the children could be playing all over him and he could still be conducting a conference or writing a speech or anything. On the weekends he wanted to be with his wife and

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children. He absolutely closed the door and didn't allow official life, although he was working the whole time even when he was with them, but he closed the door on official people around him. He got back to his family and at dinner time he was with his family and often at lunch time, so that he spent more time with his wife and children in the White House than he had ever done before and more than most men ever have a chance to do.

But he did have a two-track mind. He really could pay attention to them and to his own work at the same time. He could talk on the telephone and be playing with the children. He could talk on the telephone and be talking to Mrs. Kennedy about something entirely different at the same time. It was extraordinary, this double-track.

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The children were great relaxation and he was so proud of the way they behaved, their good manners, and he was so proud of Mrs. Kennedy being able to run a house with distinction and to be able to raise children with distinction too. He was such a perfectionist. If something had been wrong with those children or something wrong with the House, it would

have upset him very much. He would demand that it be changed and rectify it immediately.
[Laughter.]

FREDERICKS: Were the Kennedy cousins in and out of the house much? Was there ever a feeling that it was a family house in the sense that the family came and went?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh yes. The movie theatre was used constantly and the children were in and out. And, of course, at Caroline's morning school, he would be up there

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to see the children constantly. He would go out on the South Lawn and play with them and interrupt their play session and talk to them and they would all troop into his office at the drop of a hat whenever he gave the signal. So the House was full of children morning, noon and night. You never knew when an avalanche of young people would come bearing down on you--runny noses, dropped mittens in the hall, bicycles, and for Caroline's birthday party he would always come down. He was fascinated by the clinging monkey we had.

FREDERICKS: Clinging monkey?

HOLLENSTEINER: A clinging monkey that the Baltimore Zoo sent over. I had an ambassador in my office who had just come in to discuss a state visit of his head of state, and the trainer from the zoo walked into my office. He didn't

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know any other place in the White House, so he came in with the monkey in his diaper and his diaper had to be changed right in my office, which horrified the Ambassador. But the President was fascinated by that monkey and wanted to know why it clung and how. He had this curiosity. Anything that was unusual he really had to get right at the bottom of it. Caroline's activities often gave relaxation from the world and the affairs of state.

FREDERICKS: How often did he get away to the Cape or to Newport, or did he just take business with him when he went?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, he always took business with him. But his father always said, "Get away from the White House. Put many miles between yourself and the Washington scene; otherwise you will never have any objective picture of it." And Ambassador Kennedy used to say that to

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all of us--we'd get all tense, and he would say, "Get away, get away, you know the whole world doesn't revolve around Washington, D.C. The whole world revolves around the world." The President had a much fresher outlook, I am sure, when he was relaxing in the sun, relaxing in the country. But he always had work with him and people cowering out to see him; his appointments went on as usual.

FREDERICKS: Tish, Ambassador Kennedy was stricken the same winter that Mrs. Kennedy went off to India, and I think at one point there was talk of postponing her trip then. Was that a very deep blow to the President? Was he very shocked and startled by this or had the Ambassador been in ill health?

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, no, he had been in great health and it was a terrible blow because although Ambassador Kennedy was never

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around the White House, he was on the other end of the telephone often with his son and the two men loved each other deeply and this was a terrible blow. The President suddenly became the head of the family for the first time. And now the Attorney General Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] is. It is amazing that the succession has passed so rapidly from man to man in this short span of time when it was such a happy, healthy, strong family.

No, the Ambassador stayed away and never got into any one's hair, but he was a source of delight to us all and a comfort to us all. We loved him. The very few times he ever came to the White House, he always came over to the East Wing to see "les girls" as he called us. He always brought gallons of ice cream because he knew we were great eaters and he'd bring over lots of spoons and settle down. He was on

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the board of some ice cream company. He got some super deluxe kind of ice cream. He would put it on the Caroline and bring it down to us and then watch all of us girls eating ice cream with spoons out of the same gallon jar. He had a great pixie sense of humor.

FREDERICKS: Which seems to have been inherited from some of the stories you have told today.

HOLLENSTEINER: Oh, yes, and his crippling stroke was a great blow to the President. There was no question about it because the Ambassador was never afraid to say anything. He would say anything! He was the most outspoken man I ever knew in my life. Once he said--I had been in trouble--I can't remember what it was--I was in trouble so often--he said "There's just one bit of advice I have to give you and if you follow it, you are going to

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be all right.” I said, “What is that, Ambassador Kennedy?” And he said, “Tell them all to go to hell.” [Laughter.] So that’s the kind of man he was and the President needed that kind of wonderful relaxing quality from his father.

FREDERICKS: The President’s mother [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] at various times acted as hostess too.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, and she did a wonderful job. She’s an old pro at it, having been Ambassadors to London and having been in official life off and on a good many years. She loved it and she always was radiant and beautiful and did a very good job. One thing that was very exciting was his influence on youth. There has never been a President who influenced the world more and gave more hope to young people who wanted to think about politics and government than this young president. He showed a tremendous affinity

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for youth. We had all these youth concerts on the White House lawn and he--Mrs. Kennedy would often not be there--she was away or was having a baby or something--and the President took over and he gave a marvelous speech each time to all the children on the lawn and to the musicians. He would dig up statistics and facts about music students and how many jobs they could get later on. He really inspired them all tremendously and he did his famous phrase each time. He couldn’t sit through the whole concert, he didn’t have the time. But he would say winter, autumn, summer or fall, “I’m leaving my door open, my office door open, so I can hear the whole concert” and he always would. So the children would be playing away on the South Lawn to an audience of children and they knew the President was listening. That

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was very sweet.

Any time we had anything for embassy children inside the House, he always made it a point to come over. I will never forget the Cosi Fan Tutte day. The young Metropolitan Opera Guild performers were in the state dining room. They had just performed the opera and here were all these embassy children, a whole group of them about nine or ten years old from Southeast Asia and Africa in their foreign dress--cute as buttons. The President went over and talked to them. One of the stars of the performance wore a mink turban with large towering ostrich feathers. These large towering ostrich feathers went right into the lit candles on the wall sconce and burst forth into a towering mass of flames. It was quickly extinguished, but it was such a shock and so surprising

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that some of the little children started to cry. The President was standing there with them and he put his arms around them and burst out laughing because there was no more danger. The fire was out, the man was not injured in any way. His ostrich feathers just went up in smoke. But those children with the sight of the President laughing and laughing so that they could start laughing. Then the whole room started to laugh. It showed how really great he was and they all adored him.

FREDERICKS: Tish, is there anything else that comes to mind here that you want to mention? I particularly wanted to ask you at the conclusion of the interview to tell a little bit about coming back to the absolutely unbelievable event, the funeral of President Kennedy, and your role thereafter.

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HOLLENSTEINER: Well, my role primarily was to work on the ceremonial part. Mrs. Kennedy wanted the Black Watch because the President had loved it so much. They had performed for the children just a few weeks previously. So I got the head of the Black Watch out of bed down in Nashville, Tennessee or some place like that, where they were performing. And he said of course they would come up; they would all come. But, there was a question of just getting the absolute correct number to look well and to make the right amount of noise with their bagpipes. So I worked on that with the British Embassy, getting them up here--their transportation and so forth. The British Embassy, I must say, was wonderful and most cooperative, and the Black Watch was very thrilled about coming.

My role was to handle the

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ceremonial. Sargent Shriver [Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.] set up headquarters in Ralph Dungan's [Ralph A. Dungan] office and I worked directly under Sarge, hopefully to implement some of Mrs. Kennedy's desires in the funeral ceremony. She wanted this to be done to absolute perfection exactly as the President would have done for someone he loved very much or for somebody who was very important in the United States. The way in which it was done, so fast and so efficiently and beautifully, was one of the greatest memories any of us will ever have.

The family moved like clockwork. Teddy [Edward Moore Kennedy] took over the Kennedys in Hyannis Port: his mother, his father and Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and so forth; the Attorney General took charge of Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Sargent Shriver took charge of the mechanical arrangements of the funeral. It was the most marvelous

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interweaving of responsibilities, each person knowing what he had to do. Everybody had his role. It was really marvelous to see it work.

We all knew the President loved ceremony and military pomp. I've said that many times and everybody else will say it many times too. Everybody wanted this to be the greatest military ceremonial thing in the world, and I honestly think it was. He loved the Black Watch and Mrs. Kennedy requested that the Black Watch be there and they were. I woke the head of the Black Watch up in some place like Nashville and he got the proper amount of men and we had quite a lot of trouble getting them up on airplanes and getting them there at the right time. They were performing every night on the road so it was not easy for them to suddenly interrupt everything when they had

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tickets sold to full houses, but they managed. We figured out the scenario of who would walk where and how, and I was in meetings with the military and Sargent on this.

But no one had remembered the "President's Own," the Red Coats, the colonial troops, whom the President loved very much. I said, "They've got to be there." So we put them at the base of Arlington Cemetery, in that green lawn apse so that as the cars came across the bridge they came right up the road and saw the revolutionary soldiers standing at attention.

FREDERICKS: And they were the same soldiers who were on the lawn--

HOLLENSTEINER: Who had fired at the press when the President of Pakistan was at Mount Vernon. It had been arranged in the basic plan for the Army Band or the Navy Band, I forget which, to be at

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the graveside, and knowing how Mrs. Kennedy would feel about that, I went against all the general's orders and put the Marine Band there, because, after all, the Marine Band was the President's band. They played in the White House every night for every party or function he had, so of course he would have wanted them there. They played at the graveside. I think the thing that really killed us all at the end was the Air Force Jet One going over. That really....

But Mrs. Kennedy carried through under the greatest amount of strain with more dignity than any woman in public life has ever shown in a moment of tragedy, I think, and this was her last great tribute to him in her role, and just as he would have wanted it. I think that the dignity of the whole family, the way they comported themselves

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and the way everything ran, was not only a tribute to John F. Kennedy, the man, but also a tribute to the United States of America because in the eyes of the world we looked pretty shoddy, having our President assassinated in Dallas. But I think the way the funeral was handled, the way everybody acted, suddenly put Americans back up again in the minds of the people around the world.

FREDERICKS: I think one of the most impressive things was Mrs. Kennedy's consenting to receive the leaders of the various countries at the White House after the funeral.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, this was a great show of strength on her part because she really should have been allowed to give in long before, and to have to suddenly be a hostess again. But it was her last time to be hostess and she wanted to

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do it well. And these were the people who were very important to him and to our country. It was a terrible chapter to end John F. Kennedy's rule in the White House, but no one could possibly criticize it for dignity and rightfulness which was what he would have wanted.

FREDERICKS: Well, Tish, it seems a long way from that beautiful winter morning to the quiet days at the end with the rain falling; and the casket draped in black in the East Room, such a change from the many brilliant parties he participated in. And I want to thank you for coming all the way from Chicago for the interview. I really appreciate your bringing to life for us and for future listeners a very brilliant and dynamic person with whom, obviously as you talked, it was a joy for you to work.

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HOLLENSTEINER: Much more could be said but I think that's enough for now.

[END OF FIRST SESSION]

FREDERICKS: Tish, today I wonder if you could sum up more memories and events in the White House. You recall that when we closed last time you said there were so many more things to tell. I would like very much today to have you recall some of the little events we just simply did not have time to get to last time.

HOLLENSTEINER: I will try to remember a couple of them. One took place when we first heard that the Prince [Rainier III, Prince of Monaco] and Princess [Grace Rainier, Princess of Monaco] of Monaco were coming to lunch. I had always jokingly called Prince Rainier "Prince Reindeer" and I referred to him in all my conversations with the president as "Prince Reindeer and Princess Grace" even in my memos. After the luncheon the President stopped

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me in the hall and he was laughing and he said, "For heaven's sake, Tish, don't do that to me again." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Consistently call someone like Prince Rainier, Prince Reindeer, because at one point at today's lunch I turned to him and called him 'Prince Reindeer'." He was laughing about it, but I think underneath it all he was a little bit angry and I don't blame him.

Then another time he got amused-angry at me was early in the game when he gave a state lunch for the President of Finland [Urho Kekkonen] and Madame Kekkonen [Sylvi Kekkonen]. Mrs. Kennedy was down in Florida at the time, so he asked me to be the hostess. It was a great thrill to do this, of course, and since it was so early in the game he had forgotten procedures and protocol and he forgot to stand up and raise a toast. So I looked at

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him and tried to catch his eye and pointed to the glass. He didn't quite understand it and finally I wrote on the back of my place card, "You're supposed to toast." He rose to his feet and announced ceremoniously, "The social secretary has informed me that I am supposed to make a toast." He laughed about that but actually we were half an hour behind schedule and I felt I was being a little presumptuous to be giving orders to the president like that; but it was necessary.

FREDERICKS: I think that anyone who ever saw him always sensed that laughter was very close, that this was a person with a great deal of wit and humor.

HOLLENSTEINER: Always, always--a great sense of humor about everything. His curiosity and interest in things was always couched in a frame of reference of good humor and fun. He was always

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seeking fun and funny things; always wanted to know the latest jokes and always wanted to know any funny repartee that anybody had heard anywhere. He had to be in on it. He often said he felt so cut off from his former outside life of conviviality and seeing people in a relaxed way. But he liked to have it brought into his official life whenever possible. He used to question us about when he had heard that some of us had been to New York for a weekend. He'd question us all about the theatre, and the latest restaurants, and was the food still as good at the Pavillon, and places like that--a great longing, I think, for some of his former life.

I remember when President [Harry S. Truman] and Mrs. Truman [Elizabeth Virginia Wallace Truman] came to dinner, he wanted to do something after dinner for them that would really please them and he

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thought a great deal about it and he changed his mind. I can't remember some of the things he decided to do: entertainment, movies, various things. Finally he threw them all down the

drain because he heard that a man named Eugene Liszt used to play the piano for Harry Truman a lot. He said, "It would be fun to get him back.." And evidently Truman hadn't heard him play for many, many years. So we got him down from New York and after dinner Listz did sit down and play and Harry Truman had tears in his eyes and then Harry Truman sat down and played. President Kennedy said, "Now we've got to hear from the real musician" and evidently President Truman played all night long until practically one o'clock in the morning.

FREDERICKS: Good heavens! I didn't realize his talent went beyond the "Missouri Waltz."

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HOLLENSTEINER: No, he really enjoyed that. He told President Kennedy that he had given him a really delightful evening and the Kennedys felt that it was a great success, having someone who was out of Harry Truman's past.

FREDERICKS: Of course, this again shows his sensitivity to other people and his desire to make an event pleasing to them that I think we talked about the last time.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes, so true. Oh, then, I remember the second Congressional reception. He remembered very vividly the first reception, and the next year he said, "I didn't want to speak to you about it last year, but I tasted the punch and it was so God-awful that if we want to have any friends left in Congress, for Peters sake, do something about it." So I said, "All right, Mr. President, but the only way we can do something

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about it that will please you really is to have you taste it." So darn, if he didn't come down to the butler's pantry, down in the kitchen on the ground floor, after an official lunch one day. We had Charles, the butler, Rene, the cook, myself and a couple of other people; and we all tasted various concoctions of punches. He really didn't like any of them. But he said finally, after tasting six different brews and trying to judge them, "I suppose if you drink enough of this stuff you really don't know what it's tasting like after all, anyway." But he said, "Let's try a little harder." So the next day we tried a little harder and sent him up a tiny bit at the end of his lunch that day, and he said, "Now this is it. This will do." So the first person he asked-- he asked someone like Senator Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen], I can't

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remember who it was, what he thought of the punch that night and the Senator in question said, "It is quite undrinkable, Mr. President." The President looked at me again and said, "I

guess it's all a matter of taste." [Laughter.] We never did succeed. We never got the proper texture or the proper recipe. I hope that in future administrations they do.

FREDERICKS: You mention so much the care and thought that the President gave to his formal functions. I think one of the most outstanding functions during his administration was the Emancipation Proclamation reception. I believe this was the first time that such a function has been held at the White House...

HOLLENSTEINER: He gave the reception really for the Negro people.

FREDERICKS: Yes, exactly.

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HOLLENSTEINER: That's really what it was.

FREDERICKS: A reception for Negroes of distinction and achievement.

HOLLENSTEINER: Precisely, and the leaders. At that reception there were a lot of the Negroes who had really been vilifying him and criticizing him for not going far enough in civil rights. He invited all of them and he invited the Cabinet and all the top officials and he saw to it that they were there. And he spent a whole two hours at that party and he watched all of the preparations for it very carefully. It meant a lot to him.

FREDERICKS: The President and the Attorney General were both very deeply involved in the whole civil rights issue at that time. This must have been a very significant period.

HOLLENSTEINER: Yes. He brought it into the White House activities as often as possible.

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It was because of him that Grace Bumbry, the great Negro soprano, came and sang. She was the first Negro artist of this caliber to sing in the White House except for Marian Anderson. Grace Bumbry was unknown in America, really. She hadn't even made her debut. But this was a great thing for the Negro people, for Negro musicians, when her first chance in the United States of America came right in the White House. She was very deeply pleased by that, as you can well imagine.

FREDERICKS: Yes, I recall that at that reception the President elected not to stand in the receiving line but simply to mingle with his guests. Is this a pattern that he adopted frequently?

HOLLENSTEINER: Well, the President and Mrs. Kennedy decided very early in the Administration that it's better not to have a receiving line if you have over three hundred

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people because they are going to stand in line forever and ever and nobody is ever going to get into the House so we just abandoned the receiving line and they walked amongst all their guests. Everybody this way was served drinks and food and there wasn't a great, long, snaky line right out into the driveway. In previous administrations some times they would wait a whole two hours before they could get into the House to be received by the President, and if somebody is very old and tottering, this is very hard on them. People used to faint and everything else, waiting in the receiving line so this new scheme made things much more comfortable. A lot of people complained. The people who complained were just talking off the top of their heads to be antagonistic and they are the people who complain about everything anyway. It was a successful formula.

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The President loved my telling him Bernard Baruch's [Bernard M. Baruch] remark when some press lady said, "Mr. Baruch, you have no social secretary and you entertain so much. How do you cope with protocol?" And he said, "I don't have any protocol in my household. Those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter." President Kennedy loved that and he used to quote it on many occasions.

The night of the state dinner for the Shah of Iran [Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi], he twitted Mrs. Kennedy by saying, "You'd better watch out, Jackie. You'd better watch out and see what kind of jewels come out. You'd better put on all your jewels." So she was borrowing jewels like mad from everybody right and left trying to come up to Her Royal Highness, Queen Farah [Farah Diba Pahlavi]. But finally Mrs. Kennedy did a very crafty thing. She took off all her jewels and just put one jewel in her hair and was totally unjeweled. And,

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of course, Farah arrived with the Shah in a gold embroidered dress glittering with sequins and every jewel in the whole Iranian Kingdom on her back, front and head. And the President just kept laughing at his wife and pointing and saying, "Are you sure you did the right thing?" And, of course, she had done the right thing. It was very clever, her wearing no jewels at all. The President was very cute because he kept saying, "You know, she's pretty good looking, Jackie, and that dress is pretty good. I bet her clothes bill is more than yours."

FREDERICKS: Did the President enjoy the sensation that Mrs. Kennedy caused, the sensation in the popular press because of her good looks, her

lovely clothes? Was he aware of this? Was he interested in her clothes, or did he leave that very much for her to choose?

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HOLLENSTEINER: Well, he left it up to her, of course, but he always commented as to whether he liked it or not. He was very proud of her taste. He loved beautiful clothes. He didn't love all the publicity she got for being a clotheshorse, nor did she. She hated all this attention and the asking how much this or that cost, and how many things she ordered and from where. She just wanted to be well dressed and not have people asking all those questions, and I don't blame her one bit.

FREDERICKS: Did the President have any favorite colors or effects that he particularly liked?

HOLLFNSTEINER: No. There were certain dresses that he liked very, very much. He loved the orange skirt and the black velvet top, a French evening gown she had; and then also an Oleg Cassini one, a

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pink and silver lace. It was a Dior fabric and she wore it to General and Madame de Gaulle's reception at Versailles and she also wore it for a state dinner in Washington. He very much liked that dress and told her to wear it often and she did as a result. She was very sensitive to his likes and dislikes in clothes.

He seemed to be fascinated by all the logistics of our entertainment in the East Room after the state dinners. And when we had a very ambitious ballet--we had the New York City Center Ballet--Brigadoon--he said, "Well, how are you going to get all that symphony music? It's very important." And we said, "We're going to have to record it on tape." He said, "What if the tape machine breaks?" And we said, "Oh, we're prepared for that. The Signal Corps has two machines going at once and if one breaks down then the other one takes over." So in the middle of the performance one

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of the electricians put on an extra trooper light and as a result all the fuses in the ballroom blew and both tape recorder machines blew. The music stopped and the', dancers froze exactly as they were and all the lights were off. I died a thousand deaths and when finally the electricity went on again, the dancers were in the exact positions at which they stopped. It was a miracle and they went right on again. The President turned to his guest, the King of Morocco, and said, "Of course you see, Your Highness, that's all part of our ballet." And the King of Morocco thought so. He took it in and thought that was exactly what was supposed to happen. It was a

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dramatic effect. So then the President came to me afterwards and said, "You may think you have all of these scientific problems figured out. Tish, but you don't. Don't let that happen again. We don't like sitting in the dark in the middle of entertainment. At least have an accordionist there or somebody to entertain when all the lights go out and all the music stops."

Another thing that endeared him to us was his marvelous respect for elderly people, elderly people who had accomplished a lot in their lives. I think this was probably sparked by his own respect for his father. He organized a beautiful little reception for Florence Jaffray Hurst Harriman who had been our Minister to Norway and was caught there by World War II and who had disposed

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of her duties with great distinction. The President had a special citation and design made for her and he made the most marvelous touching speech. He really did it because of his father, because Daisy Harriman had known Ambassador Kennedy very well and he realized that when people get older and they have never been really recognized properly in their lives and the Government has never done anything for them, that this should be rectified before they die. You could tell that Mrs. Harriman realized that this was the high point in her whole life before her death and she kept saying, "Mr. President, I thought I was forgotten; I thought nobody remembered; I thought nobody cared." This was without a doubt the most exciting moment in her whole life. It was wonderful of President Kennedy to think of it and

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to act on it and to do it.

Another time which had us all highly emotional was the Congressional Medal of Honor Winners' reception. It was the annual military reception held in May--always held outside on the lawn. It was a beautiful day and all the Congressional Medal of Honor winners had been brought back by the Army to Washington and there was a special reception for them in the Rose Garden ahead of time, and the President came out and spoke to them. And then the, President said, "Now I want my picture taken with every single one of you as a souvenir." Oh, there were, I don't know how many hundreds were there, and he stood patiently with each one while the separate photograph was taken which they could have to keep all their lives, and he talked to the ones in wheel chairs and he really ran the whole

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party. He decided all the ceremonial procedure himself; he decided who would be what, where and when; he ran that whole party himself because he thought it was to be the most marvelous military reception we'd ever have. It was the most meaningful one because of our guests. It was the first time that they all had been brought to the White House ever in the whole history of the Congressional Medal.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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