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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

*File  
Christmas*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mike McCurry  
FROM: Ann Stock *A.S.*  
DATE: November 28, 1995  
RE: Christmas at the White House - Per your Request  
CC: Maggie Williams ✓  
Neel Lattimore  
Evelyn Lieberman

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Prior to you briefing the press on Christmas, 1995 I thought you might like to have the following information.

As you know, each year the First Lady chooses a theme for the White House Christmas Holiday and invites special groups to create ornaments to hang on the various White House Trees. The first year of the Clinton Administration, Mrs. Clinton chose the theme "ANGELS" and the various trees were decorated by Craft Artists from around the country in honor of the designation by Congress as 1993 being the "Year of the American Craft". The following year's theme was "THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS" and three different groups were chosen to create ornaments - Art and Design Schools, Blue Ribbon Schools and National Society of Decorative Painters. All 50 states were represented by these groups.

The First Lady chose the theme for Christmas, 1995 to be *'T WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS...and all through the House.* The First Lady's choice of this theme is a personal one as this famous fable is one she and the President have read to Chelsea every year since she was an infant. Also, this is the same book the President has read each Christmas in the State Dining Room to local school children.

After the First Lady chose the theme in July, the Social Office Staff conceptualized and formulated a plan for it's execution. Five volunteers from the Social Office put the plan in effect and a total of 80 volunteers have been working since July to put the pieces in place.

The following groups were invited to participate in the creation of ornaments for the various White House Trees reflecting the theme:

- \* AIA Architect and Architect Students -- 433 chapters were invited to invited to make ornaments for the Blue Room Tree to reflect the architectural aspects of the theme, i.e. rooftops, chimney, windows, porch....  
(608 individuals created ornaments)
- \* American Needlepoint Guild and The Embroiders Guild of America --invited to stitch traditional stockings to hang on the Blue Room Tree.  
(204 members of the guilds participated)
- \* Culinary Schools from around the country were invited to create ornaments made out of edible materials for the 4 trees in the Grand Foyer. They specifically patterned their ornaments out of the famous fable to reflect ....*and visions of sugar plums danced in their heads*. Ornaments out of sugar, marzipan, chocolate, breads, etc. were made to reflect dreams children may have the night before Christmas.  
(Letters of invitation were sent to 558 schools and 540 individual culinary artists participated.)
- \* Blue Ribbon Schools, as designated by the Department of Education, were invited to make ornaments for the West Wing Trees and for trees in the Diplomatic Reception Room. (276 Blue Ribbon Elementary Schools were invited to participate and 144 schools responded.)

Each of the above groups were sent a letter in August inviting them to participate in the ornament project. They responded back to the Social Office with their confirmation and sent their ornaments to the Social Office by October 31. Hundreds of phone calls were exchanged with the artists by the volunteer staff. As the thousands of ornaments rolled in, scores of volunteers unpacked, catalogued the ornaments and repacked for the warehouse where they were held until the decoration process began. The work continued as volunteers compiled information on each ornament and artist so that each could be extended an invitation to a special tour. In addition, they prepared for the thank-you Mrs. Clinton will send to each artist after the Holiday Season.

A multi-faceted program was established by a volunteer musical coordinator in the Social Office. 2500 entertainers from across the United States were invited to perform during White House tours and receptions during the entire month of December. The entertainers range from elementary student groups to senior citizens and each has generously donated their time and talents to perform for the First Family as well as for the thousands of tourists who visit the White House.

As you can see, the entire execution of the 1995 White House Christmas has been done largely by White House Volunteers and has fanned out around the country enveloping thousands of generous artists who have donated large amounts of time so that all Americans could enjoy a spectacular White House Christmas.

**The 1995 White House Christmas Theme is:**

***"T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND ALL THROUGH THE HOUSE***

### **BLUE ROOM**

Architects from the membership of the American Institute of Architects and architecture students from around the United States were invited to create ornaments for the Blue Room Tree. We asked the architects and architecture students to depict the verses of this enchanting tale in creative architectural forms. It was our hope that White House visitors would be able to "walk from room to room of this fabled house" as they view the Blue Room Tree. We are overwhelmed with fabulous ornaments resembling rooms of this fabled home bedecked for the holidays. As a note, we sent letters of invitations to 271 AIA Chapters and to 162 architecture schools around the country and from that 608 individual architects created ornaments.

The Blue Room Tree will also be decorated with traditional needlepoint stockings stitched by 204 members of the American Needlepoint Guild and the Embroiderers Guild of America. These stockings depict the more traditional verses of *"T'WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.*

The Blue Room Tree is an 18 1/2' Fraser Fir from Atwood Dollar Hudler Tree Farms near West Jefferson, in Ashe County, North Carolina. The tree is to be presented by Ronald Hudler and Daniel Dollar who won the honor by being named the 1995 National Grand Champion Growers by the National Christmas Tree Association.

### **GREEN AND RED ROOMS**

The mantels in the Green Room and the Red Room will be decorated by 2 groups from the Washington Architectural Forum. The Forum was established by the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to encourage and foster public participation and involvement in the built environment of the Washington metropolitan area.

The Green Room will be decorated by Community Design Services. This is a group of architects and design professionals who volunteer their time to provide architecture services to non-profit community organizations. Approximately 20 architects from the Community Design Services will be participating in the design and preparation of a townscape for the mantel.

The Red Room Mantel will be decorated by the 6th graders of John Eaton Elementary School in Washington, D.C. with the guidance of professional architects. They work together through a program called *Architecture in the Schools*, a group of volunteer architects and college level architecture students who go into the Washington, D.C. public schools to conduct architecture-based curriculums. Together they will create architectural cityscapes for the mantels in the Red Room. The students will incorporate architectural concepts they have learned such as streetscape, elevation, facade scale and proportion into a three dimensional model using a variety of materials.

### **THE STATE DINING ROOM AND GINGERBREAD HOUSE**

Mixed greenery, along with burgundy and gold ribbons, drape the mantel and decorate the scones to create a festive mood. The showcase piece in the State Dining Room is always the traditional gingerbread house created by the White House Pastry Chef. This year the house is a sentimental favorite of the First Lady, as it is a replica of her girlhood home on Wisner Street in Park Ridge, Illinois. The two front rooms are done as they would appear in "The Night Before Christmas:" the bedroom is filled with children with children "all snug in their beds," and the living room is complete with "stockings hung by the chimney with care." The gingerbread house took nearly five months to create.

### **THE EAST ROOM**

The traditional White House creche is the focal point. The creche was made in Naples, Italy in the late 18th century and features 47 carved wood and terra cotta figures. The creche was a gift to the White House from Mrs. Charles Engelhard, Jr. of Far Hills, NJ, and had been displayed each year since it was presented in 1967.

Six lofty trees, ranging from 12-ft to 20-ft and ornament with burgundy and gold ribbons, are stationed alongside the creche, at the center windows, and flanking the hallway entrance. Mixed greenery and hurricane candles decorate the mantels of the four fireplaces and musical groups from across the country fill the room with sounds of the holidays.

### **GRAND FOYER TREES**

The 4 Grand Foyer Trees will have their own theme in fitting with 'Twas the Night Before Christmas - - ... and visions of sugar plums danced in their heads. Culinary schools from around the country were invited to create confectionery ornaments depicting the dreams that might fill a child's head on the night before Christmas. These culinary delights are being portrayed in the form of gingerbread, marzipan, sugar, cookie dough, salt dough, pastillage and chocolate. Both career and professional culinary programs as well as nonvocational culinary programs are participating in this project. Letters were sent to 558 schools and 540 individual culinary artists are participating.

Also in the Grand Foyer, you will see the needlepoint "kissing ball" made by master needlepoint artist, Hyla Hurley of Washington, D.C. It is a miniature version of the tapestry which hangs in the First Family from the Governor's Mansion in Little Rock, via Monticello and a place called Hope.

### **DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION ROOM**

The Diplomatic Reception Room will be decorated by the Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools. These schools are noted for their exceptional arts educational arts well as their effectiveness in meeting the National Education Goals. Letters were sent to 276 Blue Ribbon elementary schools to create ornaments depicting the theme and 144 schools are participating. (This same group of schools decorated the trees in the East Wing Reception Room as well as in the Oval Office for the 1994 White House Christmas.)

## **WEST WING**

There will be a handmade MENORAH in the West Wing by Zachary Oxman from Hillsboro, VA - - he has loaned us a new menorah created especially for the 1995 Holiday season - - he is one of the craft artists who participate in the White House Collection of American Crafts.

The West Wing trees will also be decorated by the Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools.

## **PAST HOLIDAYS TREES**

### **1993 Holiday Tree "Angel" Tree**

Angel Tree will stand in the East Garden Room - - it has a sampling of the handmade angel ornaments created by American craftspeople.

### **1994 Holiday Tree "The Twelve Days of Christmas" Tree**

The Twelve Days of Christmas tree will stand in the East Foyer (Book Sellers) - - it has a sampling of the ornaments submitted by art and design schools from across the country as well as the National Society of Tole and Decorative Painters.