NEW Publication

The White House Social Secretary: Personal Reflections
Featuring Interviews with Social Secretaries and Never-Before-Told Stories from the Kennedy to the Trump Administrations

May 8, 2018 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association has just released its newest publication, *The Role of the White House Social Secretary: Collected Reflections*. The quarterly journal features interviews conducted by Richard Norton Smith with nearly 20 former White House social secretaries dating to Letitia Baldrige of the Kennedy administration with exclusive insights into the dynamic and integral role the social secretary plays in the White House.

Mary Jo Binker, historian and consulting editor for *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, describes in the 49th edition of the journal the importance of the social secretary: “As a member of the president’s staff, the social secretary is responsible for the overall planning, design, coordination, and direction of all official and personal social events in the White House and on the grounds, except for private Oval Office meetings...the sheer range of events modern social secretaries must design, arrange, and staff is daunting—everything from working lunches and bill signings to State Dinners and barbecues on the South Lawn for thousands.”

Although each president and first lady brings a unique entertaining style to the White House, the interviews illuminate the common experiences of social secretaries. Often managing two, three, or even four events in a single day, the demands of the job require 24/7 dedication, with little time off. Despite its demanding nature, “it’s the best job in the White House,” according to Bess Abell, who served as social secretary under President Johnson. “You get to have your fingers in everything...you get to know everybody.”

Ann Stock, social secretary under President Clinton and current WHHA board member, agrees: “The [social secretary] is sort of the go-between, liaising with the White House Usher’s office, the Secret Service, the Office of the Chief of Protocol at the State Department, the White House Military Office, and the office of the White House press secretary.”
William Seale, editor of *White House History*, provides an overview of this issue: “The social secretaries interviewed...cover more than half a century of presidencies. They tell the story of the rise of the position and the vast duties it serves. White House intimates very rarely give interviews, but these social secretaries have honored our historical purposes by talking with us. The result, presented in this issue, is a unique document of history.”

Among the topics discussed in this issue are: formal and informal entertaining; White House weddings; memorable royal moments; the social secretary as part of the White House staff; gaffes and guests behaving badly; how the role of Social Secretary has changed; and private times and goodbyes.

*White House History* is published four times each year by the White House Historical Association and features articles on White House history, architecture, fine and decorative arts, and gardens, as well as the life stories of the White House occupants and their experiences living there.

This 96-page, fully-illustrated issue of *White House History* retails for $9.95. To subscribe, visit whitehousehistory.org or purchase single issues at shop.whitehousehistory.org.

For media inquiries, please contact press@whha.org or Jessica Fredericks, Communications Director, at JFredericks@whha.org.

**About The White House Historical Association**
First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion’s legacy for generations to come. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association’s mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House. Since its founding, the White House Historical Association has contributed more than $47 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

###