

## IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

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Description: Eleanor Roosevelt describes what a typical day in the White House is like for her.

Participants: Eleanor Roosevelt

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Over and over again, women ask me these questions: Just what IS the daily routine in the White House of the President's wife? Are you always busy, as we are in our homes, or do you have hours of luxurious ease? I can readily understand that friendly curiosity---- so for my first talk in this series, I have outlined a Typical Day in the White House. Compared to many hurried days, this one would seem exceptionally calm and restful, but ---- let's begin with the morning of that TYPICAL DAY:

Seven-thirty and a cold morning! How I hate to get out of my bed and shut down the two windows between which my bed is placed, but at last I screw up my courage and with a leap I am out on the floor and hastily closing the windows. Then fifteen minutes of setting-up exercises, a cold sponge and on with my riding clothes. Breakfast at 8:15 in my sitting room or if there are a number of children at home or guests in the house, in the West Hall. With my breakfast I read the morning papers if I am alone, otherwise I look them over noting what I must read later on, then I run down and get into my car and drive myself out to the place where the horses are waiting. An hour's brisk ride along the Potomac, a bath on my return. If I am lucky, I will be at my desk between 10:30 and 11:00 o'clock.

Then comes the head usher, Mr. Muir, with his lists and plans for the day — when cars will be needed for the household, or for guests' goings and comings, the arrangements for receiving groups and any number of other things for which he is responsible.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Nesbitt, must be seen each morning and told as nearly as possible how many guests there will be for meals during the day. She brings her menus for the day with her and any state functions are planned for in advance.

After talking with Mrs. Nesbitt, then comes Mrs. Helm whose business it is to attend to the social side of the White House. She plans with me for teas and musicals and state functions and makes sure that no one who should be asked is forgotten. This usually takes until twelve o'clock when the real work of the day begins.

Individual interviews are usually given between twelve and one o'clock and between two and three o'clock.

This has not been uninterrupted time by any means. One or the other of the President's secretaries may have had to ask an important question about the President's plans which include me, or members of my family and friends have perhaps called me on the telephone. My secretary, Mrs. Scheider, who has been with me for fourteen years, has been in and out with questions which have come to her either by telegraph or telephone or mail which must be attended to immediately, and after sorting the morning's mail she brings me my personal mail unopened.

I shall give you a typical list of appointments and engagements.

At twelve o'clock a representative of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration who is in charge of the supervisors of social work throughout the country came in with her fourteen regional supervisors. We discussed the social service work being done throughout the United States and the different problems of these women in different parts of the country.

At one-thirty, having changed my dress, I went to a luncheon given by one of the Cabinet wives. Back at the White House by three o'clock to receive the gentleman in charge of an investigation being made by one of our larger publications as to the attitude of youth on certain questions affecting policies at present before the country.

At three forty-five I received a lady who wished to give the President a very beautiful book which she has just finished. Unfortunately, the President was unable to receive it personally and, therefore, I received it and expressed to her my husband's deep appreciation.

At four o'clock the entire group of Cabinet ladies met to see some moving pictures of the work which is being done to remove the alley slums in the District of Columbia and hear a talk from a housing expert as to what are the problems of housing in the district with the object of trying to throw their influence to planning some useful project for the poorer people of the District.

Five o'clock, a group of some ten people were received at tea. Usually at tea time my small grandchildren come in for a visit and occasionally they romp through the halls and make so much noise that it is a little difficult to hear what my guests are saying.

In the meantime certain people have come to me with questions as to the Diplomatic Dinner -- about those who were ill and therefore unable to come to the dinner scheduled for that evening -- the arrangements for a very gifted dancer who was to dance after dinner, where was she to dress? The change of costume must be made quickly. This last question was solved by building a dressing room with screens beside the stage in the East Room. This particular dinner was the largest ever given in the State Dining Room and it required much thought in having the table arranged to seat the guests and still allow sufficient room for the butlers to serve.

By six o'clock I went in swimming with my husband and after that we dressed and were ready for our guests at eight o'clock which included all the Diplomatic Corps and the Secretary of State and Mrs. Hull with a few others entitled to be asked to this dinner. At the music afterwards some three hundred guests were added to the party. As a rule the President does not wait to say goodnight to his guests but I always remain until I have said goodnight to everyone. On this occasion, the President also remained as he wished to be particularly cordial to his foreign guests.

This is typical of a day in the White House. Each day brings different questions and different problems, but the time is allotted practically in the same way.

Occasionally during the social season I can not get time to ride in the morning and I am not able to look at any of the innumerable letters which I must personally answer during the day, so after my guests have gone another couple of hours in the middle of the night are devoted to doing the mail, and between one and two is the usual hour for getting to bed at this season of the year.

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Transcribed from a script held in the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.